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Collin Cornell Date

Divine Aggression in Royal Psalms and Inscriptions

by

Collin Cornell
Doctor of Philosophy

Graduate Division of Religion
Hebrew Bible

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Divine Aggression in Royal Psalms and Inscriptions

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Collin Cornell
M.Div., Princeton Theological Seminary, 2013
B.A., Columbia International University, 2009

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An abstract of
A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the
James T. Laney School of Graduate Studies of Emory University
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2018

Abstract:

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Collin Cornell

Since the 19th century, biblical scholarship has oftentimes drawn a stark dividing line between the profile of Yhwh, the God of the Hebrew Bible, and that of the "gods of the nations." A few influential interpreters like Julius Wellhausen and Walther Eichrodt articulated the theological contrast in terms of *divine aggression*: Yhwh alone, they argued, shows capacity to aggress against his own client king and country. This thesis has gained fresh traction in recent scholarship on biblical prophetic literature insofar as its oracles of unconditional doom appear to lack analogy in other forms of ancient prophecy.

The present study interrogates the proposed contrast between Yhwh and other patron gods. Its inquiry faces in two directions: after arguing on rhetorical and literary grounds that Syro-Palestinian memorial inscriptions and biblical royal psalms make fitting and productive objects of comparison (ch 1), it surveys memorial inscriptions to determine how they present the divine aggression of patron gods (ch 2). It next surveys select royal psalms from the Hebrew Bible to determine the character of Yhwh's aggression (ch 3). These chapters find that instead of a contrast, the two kinds of text share many theological features, especially in that they absolutely exempt the individual client king from the deity's aggression. However, the following chapter examines two royal psalms (Psalms 89 and 132), which, it argues, consider Yhwh's aggression against his client king as a definite past event (ch 4). The following chapter probes one more textual data-set that underscores the proposed contrast of Yhwh and other gods, namely, prophetic texts of defeat (ch 5). The study concludes by modulating the thesis of a strong contrast between Yhwh's aggressiveness and that of other, comparable patron deities—a result that will interest scholarship on biblical psalms, ancient inscriptions, and Hebrew Bible theology (ch 5).

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Acknowledgements

At least four intellectual tributaries have led into this project—and each tributary itself drew momentum from several intellectual and spiritual conversation partners and supporting communities. Let me name them.

The first stream that runs into the present project is Walter Brueggemann. My brother Arley gave me Brueggemann's Old Testament Theology as a Christmas gift in 2009, and I read it devotionally. What excited me most about this book was its searching and intensive preoccupation with *God*, and the presentations of God in the Old Testament. Brueggemann took each biblical text and pushed and probed it as if it were—for the moment and heuristically—the only source of knowledge about God. I loved this exercise, and the surprising results it yielded to serious and open-ended exploration. I would myself reprise this same procedure for almost every paper I wrote in seminary, asking as a thought experiment: what if I treat this biblical text, or this theological author, as the sole witness to God's character? In a real way, this dissertation is more of the same, a sustained and provisional answer, anchored in specific texts, to this God-question. I have my undergraduate Greek professor Joel Williams to thank for first setting me on a theological trajectory that would even consider Brueggemann as a viable resource, and my seminary professors for treating my repeated attempts to think about God with and from various biblical texts as a worthwhile enterprise.

The second stream begins with Choon-Leong Seow, my esteemed seminary professor. He permitted me to join an informal, extracurricular seminar on West Semitic inscriptions. I was hopelessly out of my depth, but the experience was electrifying. I especially remember the moment of first translating through the Mesha Inscription—and the kind of theological vertigo it induced! What could it mean that this other god named Kemosh looked so similar to the biblical God, Yhwh? I knew that whatever the answer was, the process of finding it would be theologically interesting and productive. I was at that time an avid and regular blogger, and I wrote a piece shortly after completing this seminar entitled "God's Anger on the Surface, God's Love Beneath." In it I reflected on the practice—shared by the Hebrew Bible and the Mesha Inscription alike—of reading the divine pleasure or anger off the surface of the nation's history. King and temple and land operated as metrics of the national god's will. But once all of these were destroyed in Israel, the disposition of Yhwh floated radically free; God's love had to be discerned "beneath" the vicissitudes of national life. This dissertation doesn't get very far into the second part of these observations, but it does go some way towards filling out the first: the theological characteristics, that is, shared between Yhwh and his counterpart Kemosh (among others!). I thank Jacob Wright for leading a crucial independent study on patron deities of the Iron Age Levant, which layered real knowhow onto these interests, and I thank Brent Strawn for allowing me to write one of my comprehensive exams on the god Kemosh. Josey Snyder also deserves recognition for her seminal role in founding the "Emory Kemosh school," to which I can only hope this work makes a contribution. (My friend Philip Ryan rightly calls Kemosh my "second-favorite god.")

The third stream finds its font in (once more) Jacob Wright, who introduced me to Wellhausen: or rather to the current-day European revival of Wellhausianism. He it was who first recommended I should read Reinhard Kratz, whose writings now pepper the footnotes of my own publications, and whose article on "Chemosh's Wrath and Yahweh's No" inspired the main

questions of the present dissertation. Jacob's own pioneering work on the catalytic role of defeat on ancient Judah's heritage forms an important subtext of the present work, and I am thankful for his encouragement.

The last stream originates with Brent Strawn, a man of boundless intellectual energy and roving academic interests. I came to Emory University, in a nutshell, because I wanted to study with an Old Testament scholar who could write an article on Ernst Käsemann and also on Ugaritic poetry; on Herodotus and on the genre of Jonah. There aren't many like that out there! Some of Brent's own foremost preoccupations seeped into the present project: his own work on *rhetoric*, his attention to comparison and the hermeneutics thereof, and his commitment to reading ancient texts as witnesses to powerful, real, religious energies in the lives of ancient people. Indeed, in an important conversation around Christmastime of 2016, Brent complimented the nimbleness of my Psalms exegesis—but also urged me to make sure I was just as nimble in my interpretation of the memorial inscriptions. I hope the present work lives up to that charge. Brent has been far more than a *Doktorvater* to me during my Emory career: at various times he has been my teacher, my editor, my independent study leader, my employer, my reference, my collaborator, my editorial mentor, and my publishing guide, among other roles.

Alongside these tributaries, the present work has also benefited from the friendship and collegiality of my cohort-mates, The Justins (Pannkuk and Walker). It was a rare gift and joy to progress together through our time at Emory, and I could not have asked for a more personable, encouraging, or brilliant pair of colleagues. Many others at Emory exercised generosity towards me that made the journey lighter: Myron McGhee, the Pitts librarian, deserves special thanks, as does the interlibrary loan staff at Woodruff, to whom I was a constant pest for the past several years. Joel LeMon gave me the chance to workshop some ideas from the dissertation in his Psalms seminar in Fall 2016, and Brent's invitation to be a special guest instructor for his seminar on ancient Near Eastern religions in Fall 2017 offered the ideal "finishing school" for the dissertation project. Mike Suh has been a stimulating conversation partner and friend. Ted Smith and Kendall Soulen showed me the best of Emory collegiality, going above and beyond to offer me opportunities to teach and write and discuss. I also thank the Candler summer Hebrew class of 2017, on whom I tested a few of the dissertation ideas, and whose collaboration in learning refreshed me at a slow and low point in the dissertation. Continuing in friendship and Hebrew translation (and theology-talk) with Julian Reid has been vitalizing.

An acknowledgments page would not be complete without mentioning three friends who have really helped to shape my life, and so also my scholarship: Claudia Kern, a wise and holy soul, inspired me to study Old Testament in the first place, and has mentored me more than she knows; I hope indeed I can receive a double portion of her spirit. Charles Treichler has been a friend and fellow-traveler since boyhood, and our talks are oil running down Aaron's beard (so to speak). Alex Smith and I switched off hosting dinner and praying together for almost the whole time I was here in Atlanta, and I cherish his good company and love for God.

I thank my parents for their unrelenting support and love. (As my dad said after reading the first fifteen pages of the dissertation, "well, I'm learning just how pissed off God can get—so thanks for that.") I thank my wife Vienna—the *maḥmad 'ênay* ("desire of my eyes," Ezek 24:16). Our marriage has been a place of safety, peace, and fruitfulness, a pool of water in the desert; her companionship and steadfast love are priceless to me. Also, she has become something of a minor

expert herself on Elephantine and Kemosh and Brevard Childs (etc.!) for no other reason than to show love to her eclectic husband. I love her.

Finally, I have petitioned from the start that this work would be somehow an act of "subterranean praise." It is not mine to decide whether I have succeeded, and though this stage of the writing and preparation has come to an end, I have not rested my case.

TABLE OF CONTENTS – DIVINE AGGRESSION IN ROYAL PSALMS AND INSCRIPTIONS

CHAPTER 1: DIVINE AGGRESSION IN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

1.1. Introduction.

"God damn America!"—so the Reverend Jeremiah Wright infamously declared in a sermon on April 13, 2003. He made the pronouncement, of course, in direct counterpoint to the beloved civil benediction, "God bless America." "No, no, no!" Wright insisted, "not 'God bless America,' 'God damn America'—that's in the Bible."[1]

A video clip of this moment from Wright's preaching would surface nearly five years later during the presidential campaign of 2008. It generated a media firestorm.[2] White Americans were shocked. They called Wright anti-white and anti-American, and reviled then-candidate Barack Obama for his connections to Wright and to Wright's congregation. But they also responded to an additional, theological dimension of Wright's sermon. Wright had, as it were, lodged a fundamentally disorienting claim about God—which commentators then sought to re-stabilize. Literally thousands of think-pieces appeared in the aftermath of the video clip's circulation. Mark Steyn's is especially telling. In his column for the *National Review*, he plies the phrase "God bless America" no fewer than seven times, and he contends in closing that "God *has* blessed America, and blessed the Obamas in America, and even blessed the Reverend Jeremiah Wright." Steyn works by force of assertion to recoup the national deity's role—because whoever the patron deity is that blesses America, that is his only job.[3] To proclaim that this god would damn his own client

[1] "Unofficial Transcript" from Carolyn J. Sharp, "Hewn by the Prophet: An Analysis of Violence and Sexual Transgression in Hosea with Reference to the Homiletical Aesthetic of Jeremiah Wright," in *Aesthetics of Violence in the Prophets*, ed. Chris Franke and Julia M. O'Brien, LHBOTS 517 (London: T&T Clark, 2010), 50-71, here 71.

[2] For an overview of this event, see Carl A. Grant and Shelby J. Grant, *The Moment: Barack Obama, Jeremiah Wright, and the Firestorm at Trinity United Church of Christ* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2012).

[3] Mark Steyn, "Uncle Jeremiah," *National Review* (March 15, 2008), URL: http://www.nationalreview.com/article/223934/uncle-jeremiah-mark-steyn

country presents, then, "a paradoxical thought—as if the national God were to cut the ground out from under His own feet!"[4]

Wright's line was theologically shocking and category-jamming to white Americans in 2008. But comparable claims were no less shocking and category-jamming in antiquity. Rightly did Wright say that his malediction is "in the Bible." The character Amos in the biblical book of his name declares, for instance, that the king of Israel, Jereboam, shall die by the sword and his country will go into exile (Amos 7:11). The national deity, that is—the god named Yhwh—would prosecute the destruction of his own client king and nation. In other words, "God damn Israel!" In response to this announcement, the book of Amos narrates how a priest of the royal administration commanded the prophet Amos to leave. "Never again prophesy at Bethel, for it is the king's sanctuary, and it is a temple of the kingdom" (Amos 7:13b). Words of damnation simply did not belong in the national sanctuary, dedicated as it was to Yhwh's patronage of king and country.

In the late 19th century the great biblical critic Julius Wellhausen gave forceful expression to the paradoxical quality of this scenario. He wrote of Amos's prophecy of imminent national doom at the hands of the patron god that "[i]t was nothing short of blasphemy to utter anything of this kind…for the faith in Jehovah as the God of Israel was a faith that He intervenes on behalf of His people against all enemies." Elsewhere Wellhausen characterizes the default relationship between Yhwh and Israel as a "natural bond":

> As for the substance of national faith, it was summed up principally in the proposition that Jehovah is the God of Israel. But 'God' was equivalent to 'helper;' that was the meaning of the word…the relation between the people and God was a natural one as that of son to father; it did not rest upon observance of the conditions of a pact.[5]

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[4] Julius Wellhausen, *Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel*, trans. William Robertson Smith (New York: Meridian Books, 1957), 471.

[5] Idem, *Prolegomena*, 469. See also Hywel Clifford, "Amos in Wellhausen's Prolegomena," in *Aspects of Amos: Exegesis and Interpretation*, ed. Anselm C. Hagedorn and Andrew Main, LHBOTS 536 (London: T&T Clark, 2011), 141-56.

Yhwh's job (so to speak) was to bless and protect and help his country—and its head of state, the king.[6] By announcing that Yhwh would destroy them both, Amos effectually "severed" the "natural bond" that had been thought to exist, according to Wellhausen, between deity and country.[7] In doing so, Amos radically reenvisioned the divine character. If Yhwh could be decoupled from Israel—if he were free either to bless *or* to damn—then the foundation of their relationship must lie elsewhere than in the simple "fact that Jehovah was worshipped in Israel and not among the heathen."[8] Yhwh's loyalty to Israel must instead reflect his own free choice, and so must remain revocable. This was also the theme of Wright's sermon that day: that God is freer and more enduring than any human government. God's freedom, for both Amos and Wright, was visible precisely in his damning aggression.

Wright was preaching from the Bible and taking up a long tradition of defiant black preaching.[9] Amos on the other hand, as Wellhausen saw it, had no real antecedent. "Amos was the founder," Wellhausen wrote, "and the purest type, of a new phase of prophecy."[10] Amos's theological innovation would, however, prove immensely successful. When doom befell Israel and

[6] For a good recent summary of Wellhausen's view of Israel's early and "natural" religion, see Aly Elrefaei, *Wellhausen and Kaufman: Ancient Israel and its Religious History in the Works of Julius Wellhausen and Yehezkel Kaufman*, BZAW 490 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2016), 55-74. See also, *inter alia*, Friedemann Boschwitz, *Julius Wellhausen: Motive und Maßstäbe seiner Geschichtsschreibung*, Libelli 238 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1968), 18-32.

[7] Wellhausen, *Prolegomena*, 474.

[8] Ibid., 473.

[9] E.g., Brian K. Klardy, "Deconstructing a Theology of Defiance: Black Preaching and the Politics of Racial Identity," *Journal of Church and State* 53 (2011): 203-221.

[10] Wellhausen, *Prolegomena*, 472. On the prophets as "Wegbereiter des Judentums," see Uwe Becker, "Julius Wellhausens Sicht des Judentums," in *Biblische Theologie und historisches Denken: Wissenschaftsgeschichtliche Studien: Aus anlass der 50. Wiederkehr der Basler Promotion von Rudolf Smend*, ed. Martin Kessler and Martin Wallraff, Studien zur Geschichte der Wissenschaften in Basel 5 (Basel: Schwabe, 2008), 279-309, here 289-292, as well as Lothar Perlitt, "Hebraismus—Deuteronomismus —Judaismus," in *Deuteronomium-Studien*, FAT 8 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1984), 247-260. See also James Pasto on the context of the ancient Israel / early Judaism distinction during 19th c. German nationalization ("When the End Is the Beginning? Or When the Biblical Past Is the Political Present: Some Thoughts on Ancient Israel, 'Post-Exilic Judaism,' and the Politics of Biblical Scholarship," *SJOT* 12 [1998]: 157-202); also and relatedly, Walter Brueggemann and Davis Hankins, "The Invention and Persistence of Wellhausen's World," *CBQ* 75 (2013): 15–31; and Gillian M. Bediako (*Primal Religion and the Bible: William Robertson Smith and his Heritage*, JSOTSup 246 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1997), 74-104.

the Assyrian empire devoured all the petty kingdoms of Syria-Palestine, "the prophets of Israel alone did not allow themselves to be taken by surprise…or to be plunged into despair. Where others saw only the ruin of everything that is holiest, [the prophets] saw the triumph of Jehovah."[11] By envisioning Yhwh as independent of his client nation, they laid the groundwork for the worship of Yhwh to survive national downfall. By absorbing the destructiveness of Assyria into their God-concept, they inoculated themselves theologically against it. The whole Bible, Wellhausen argued, lies downstream from Amos and his prophetic colleagues. The book of Deuteronomy, for example, whose theology saturates much of the Hebrew Bible, "is the progeny of the prophetic spirit."[12] The psalter, too, Wellhausen thought, derives from these same headwaters.[13] The Bible at large follows Amos: Yhwh freely chose to love Israel—and can choose (and has chosen) to aggress against his client country.

If Amos's preaching had no antecedent, Wellhausen also alleged that it had no parallel. The nations around ancient Israel shared a civil religion much like Israel's, each centered on the worship of a single patron god.[14] The job of such a patron deity was to bless and protect his client country. Wellhausen wrote that "Israel and Moab had a common origin, and their early history was similar. The people of Jehovah on the one hand, and the people of Chemosh on the other, had the same idea of the Godhead as head of the nation, and a like patriotism derived from religious belief."[15] In the face of Assyrian conquest, however, these other nations nearby to Israel did not make the theological adaptation that Amos and the Hebrew Bible did. The paradoxical thought

[11] Wellhausen, *Prolegomena*, 473.

[12] Ibid., 487. Cf. Lothar Perlitt, "Hebraismus—Deuteronomismus—Judaismus."

[13] Julius Wellhausen, *The Book of Psalms: A New English Translation with Explanatory Notes and an Appendix on the Music of the Ancient Hebrews*, trans. Horace Howard Furness, Sacred Books of the Old and New Testaments 14 (New York: Dodd, Mead, and Company / Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, 1898), 163.

[14] Wellhausen wrote that "Moab, Ammon, and Edom, Israel's nearest kinsfolk and neighbors, were monotheists in precisely the same sense in which Israel itself was" (*Prolegomena*, 440).

[15] Julius Wellhausen, "Moab," in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, ed. William Robertson Smith, 9th ed., 25 vols. (Edinburgh: Adam and Charles Black, 1878), 16:533-36, here 535.

that Kemosh could damn Moab, cutting out the ground from under his feet, did not arise or take root, and the aggression of these patron deities remained more limited and occasional. A patron god of this kind "might indeed, of course, hide his face for a time, but not definitively."[16] Consequently, Wellhausen thought, these countries—and their gods—faded.

The contrast Wellhausen drew would exert massive influence on academic biblical scholarship: on one side, the gods of the nations, whose aggression remained limited and occasional—and on the other side, Yhwh, the God of the Hebrew Bible, whose aggression, through the preaching of the prophets, became distinctively fierce, in that it could encompass even his own client king and country.[17] The deep impact of Wellhausen's contrast is apparent from the fact that even scholars who disagree fundamentally with his account of Israel's religious history still reproduce the same difference. Walther Eichrodt was a Swiss Calvinist scholar of a generation later than Wellhausen, who would rejuvenate the enterprise of Old Testament theology. He argued that Israel's primordial experience with Yhwh at Sinai was the taproot for the theology of the entire Hebrew Bible—and *not* the preaching of 8th c. prophets, as Wellhausen proposed.[18] At Sinai Yhwh made a covenant with his people, a relationship which "God has entered freely and which he on

[16] Idem, *Prolegomena*, 471.

[17] On that influence, see again Brueggemann and Hankins, "The Invention and Persistence of Wellhausen's World." Another current-day iteration of the (theological) contrast that Wellhausen drew are vexed discussions of the so-called *proprium* of Old Testament prophecy, especially "oracles of unconditional doom" (*unbedingte Gerichtsankündigung*); for an overview, see Matthijs de Jong, "Biblical Prophecy—a Scribal Enterprise: the Old Testament Prophecy of Unconditional Judgement Considered as a Literary Phenomenon," *VT* 61 (2011): 39-70; also Erhard Blum, "Israels Prophetie im altorientalischen Kontext: Anmerkungen zu neueren religionsgeschichtlichen Thesen," in *'From Ebla to Stellenbosch': Syro-Palestinian Religions and the Hebrew Bible*, ed. Izak Cornelius and Louis Jonker, ADPV 37 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz in Kommission, 2008), 81-115. The crux of these arguments is to explain how biblical depictions of Yhwh's unique aggression arose. Also, in point of fact, forms of Wellhausen's contrast antedate him; thus Pasto: "the distinction between a pre-exilic Hebraism and a post-exilic 'Judaism' was de Wette's invention" ("When the End Is the Beginning?" 162).

[18] D.G. Spriggs: "In many ways it is possible to consider Eichrodt's *Theology* Deuteronomistic, not only because of the place given to the Mosaic covenant, but also, for instance, because it is a combination of prophetic and priestly approaches, with an eschatological orientation, because of its concern for unity and its subordination of wisdom traditions and the monarchy to the covenant tradition. Many other points can also be supplied" (*Two Old Testament Theologies: A Comparative Evaluation of the Contributions of Eichrodt and von Rad to our Understanding of the Nature of Old Testament Theology*, SBT II/30 [Naperville, IL: A. R. Allenson, 1975], 109n78).

his side may dissolve at any time."[19] Indeed, the golden calf episode illustrates just how close Yhwh could come to dissolving the covenant. The "possibility of annulment," raised so vividly at Sinai, stood always and from the outset before Israel, according to Eichrodt.[20] Except his people obey, Yhwh could and would destroy them.

Eichrodt's emphasis on the *solubility* of the relationship between deity and country emerges through contrast with another possible understanding. Eichrodt sees the covenant concept as a "safeguard against an identification of religion with the national interest."[21] The latter form of national religion dominated Israel's religious environment:

> [Israel's] covenant agreement excluded the idea, which prevailed widely and was disseminated among Israel's neighbors as well, that between the national God and his worshippers there existed a bond inherent in the order of Nature, whether this were a kind of blood relationship, or a link between the God and the country which created an indissoluble association between himself and the inhabitants. This type of popular religion, in which the divinity displays only the higher aspect of the national self-consciousness, the national 'genius', or the *mysterium* of the forces of Nature peculiar to a particular country, was overcome principally by the concept of covenant.[22]

Eichrodt's footnote to this paragraph cites *the Moabites* as exemplars of this "natural religion," to which Israel's "religion of election" is "the exact opposite."[23] Eichrodt elsewhere

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[19] Walther Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, trans. J. A. Baker, 2 vols., OTL (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1961), 1:44; hereafter, *TOT*.

[20] Ibid., 1:457.

[21] Ibid., 1:42.

[22] Ibid., 1:43.

[23] Ibid., 1:43n1. Cf. also ibid., 1:67. Eichrodt's treatment of inscriptions was limited in part because of the data then available. At the time he wrote his Old Testament theology in 1933, several memorial inscriptions from the nations nearby to ancient Israel and Judah were already published: the Mesha inscription (KAI 181, first published 1870), the Hadad inscription (KAI 214, in 1893), the Kilamuwa inscription (KAI 24, in 1902), the Zakkur inscription (KAI 202, in 1907), as well as the royal inscriptions unearthed at Zinjirli (KAI 214-221). On the discovery of the Mesha inscription, see Siegfried Horn, "The Discovery of the Moabite Stone," in *The Word of the Lord Shall Go Forth: Essays in Honor of David Noel Freedman*, ed. Carol L. Myers and Michael O'Connor, American Schools of Oriental Research, Special Volume Series 1 (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1983), 497-505; M. Patrick Graham, "The Discovery and Reconstruction of the Mesha' Inscription," in *Studies in the Mesha Inscription and Moab*, ed. J. Andrew Dearman, ABS 2 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989), 41-92; and Neil A. Silberman, "Race for a Relic: The Affair of the Moabite Stone, 1868-1870," in *Digging for God and Country: Exploration, Archeology, and the Secret Struggle for the Holy Land, 1799-1917* (New York: Knopf, 1982), 100-112. On the discovery of the Hadad inscription, see Felix von Luschan, "Einleitung," in *Ausgrabungen in Sendschirli*: *Einleitung und Inschriften*, 4 vols. (Berlin: W. Spemann, 1893), 1:1-10; and Ralf-B. Wartke, *Sam'al: ein aramäischer Stadstaat des 10. bis 8. Jhs. v. Chr. und die Geschichte*

describes this national religion as a kind of "national egoism."[24] It endangers the gratuity of the deity's relation to the people by making their connection seem like "something simply 'given' and not as founded in the first place by a special act of condescending grace."[25] It construes God an unconditional "benefactor deity" of the country, and a "protector of the natural and national life."[26] Conceiving of God in such a way "abrogate[s] the doctrine of election in judgment"—which is to say, it limits the scope of the deity's aggression.[27]

Eichrodt positions the gods of the nations on one side as benefactor deities incapable of extreme aggression—and on the other side, the deity Yhwh of the Hebrew Bible, under whose threat of damnation Israel had lived from the beginning of their relationship, and not, as Wellhausen argued, only from the 8th c. onwards. But to the point: in spite of their differing chronology for Israelite religion, Eichrodt reproduces Wellhausen's same theological contrast. The distinguishing criterion for them both is the aggression of the patron god.

Only one difference is outstanding between these two influential biblical scholars: Wellhausen believed that the *entire* Hebrew Bible aligned with the theology of Amos. For him, the contrast between the characteristic theology of the Hebrew Bible and that of Israel's ancient neighbors was complete. For Eichrodt, a few pieces of the Hebrew Bible itself share in the theology

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*seiner Erforschun*g (Mainz am Rhein: von Zabern, 2005), 7-56. On the discovery of Zakkur by Henri Pognon, see René Dussaud, "La stèle araméenne de Zakir au Musée du Louvre," *Syria* 3 (1922): 175-76; Stefania Mazzoni, "TELL AFIS: History and Excavations," *Near Eastern Archaeology* 76 (2013): 204-212. Of these, by far the most discussed and important is the Mesha inscription, which is also the only one mentioned in Eichrodt's account (in a discussion of "seers"; it witnesses to "Oriental heathenism" [*TOT* 1:296]). Since the first edition of his Old Testament theology, several more royal inscriptions have been discovered, including (among others) Azatiwada (KAI 26, in 1946), the Amman citadel (KAI 306, in 1968), and Tel Dan (KAI 310, in 1994). On the discovery of Azatiwada, see Halet Çambel, "Karatepe: An Archeological Introduction to a Recently Discovered Hittite Site in Southern Anatolia," *Oriens* 1 (1948): 147-62; on the Amman Citadel Inscription: Siegfried H. Horn, "The Amman Citadel Inscription," *BASOR* 193 (1969): 2-13; on Tel Dan, see Hallvard Hagelia, *The Tel Dan Debate: The Tel Dan Inscription in Recent Research*, Recent Research in Biblical Studies 4 (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2009), 1-12.

[24] Eichrodt, *TOT* 1:371.
[25] Ibid., 1:48.
[26] Ibid., 1:46.
[27] Ibid., 1:373.

of the heathen nations. In the royal psalms—especially Psalms 2 and 110—Eichrodt thought that Israel "assimilate[ed] to Canaanite ways of thought."[28] This "perversion" of the covenant concept can be seen nowhere more clearly than in the king's arrogation to himself of the title "Son of God" (see also Psalm 2:7, "you are my son"). "By thus disguising his egoistic-dynastic or imperialistic aims he enlisted the support of the covenant God in the most emphatic way for the institution of the nation as such and caused Yahweh to appear as the natural ally of the national greatness and power."[29] Or again: these psalms "present features of the court-style and the king-mythology of the ancient East which could only have percolated into Israel from her heathen environment…this brought with it the temptation to use cultic apotheosis to enlarge the royal power and authority."[30] For Eichrodt, these royal psalms reflect a changed understanding, not only of deity and people, but especially of divine aggression. Speaking of the relation between Yhwh and Israel, Eichrodt writes, "The possibility of its dissolution was obscured by the confident conviction that, because God was using this means to achieve his purpose in history, namely the establishment of his kingdom, he would therefore *not allow this particular manifestation of his sovereignty to be vitiated*."[31]

1.2. The Research Question(s).

The present study interrogates the contrast that Wellhausen constructed—one that persists, in revised form, into current-day biblical scholarship.[32] It seeks to answer the question, "Is the

[28] Ibid., 1:48. See also Spriggs, *Two Old Testament Theologies*, 68.
[29] Ibid., 1:48.
[30] Ibid., 1:125. See also his remarks about the royal psalms in 1:324, 477.
[31] Ibid., 1:458. My emphasis.
[32] Perhaps the essay that most pointedly illustrates the endurance of Wellhausen's contrast is Reinhard G. Kratz, "Chemosh's Wrath and Yahweh's No: Ideas of Divine Wrath in Moab and Israel," in *Divine Wrath and Divine Mercy in the World of Antiquity*, ed. Reinhard G. Kratz and Hermann Spieckermann, FAT II/33 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 92-121. But see also and more generally, Christoph Levin, who writes: "[g]egenwärtig erleben wir eine Wellhausen-Renaissance" ("Die Entstehung der Bundestheologie im Alten Testament," in *Verheissung und Rechtfertigung: Gesammelte Studien zum Alten Testament II*, BZAW 431 [Berlin: de Gruyter, 2013]: 242-59, here 244). See also the overview of Erich Zenger, "Die Bundestheologie—ein derzeit vernachlässigtes Thema der Bibelwissenschaft und ein wichtiges Thema für das Verhältnis Israel—Kirche," in *Der Neue Bund im Alten: Studien zur Bundestheologie der Beiden Testamente*, ed. Erich Zenger, Quaestiones Disputatae 146 (Freiburg: Herder, 1993),

aggression of Yhwh really uniquely devastating relative to the patron gods of the nations?" Did the latter present only a civil theology of "God bless Moab," while the Bible alone lofts the paradoxical declaration, "God damn Israel"? Or is Eichrodt correct, that heathenism makes inroads into the Hebrew Bible, especially in several royal psalms?

To pursue these questions, the present study stages a comparison between relevant texts from ancient Syria-Palestine and the Hebrew Bible. Its inquiry faces in two directions: it first surveys texts from Israel's ancient neighbors to determine how they present the divine aggression of patron gods. It next surveys select texts from the Hebrew Bible in order to render a theological comparison. The project is thus

(1) theological: in the sense that its focus is on deity profile or characterization, and particularly on the aggression of deities towards enemies, king, and country;
(2) comparative: it seeks to *compare* biblical texts about the deity Yhwh with texts from Israel's ancient neighbors in order to assess the contrast and/or commonality of conceptions of deity;[33]
(3) textual: it focuses on comparing biblical *texts* about Yhwh with ancient Levantine texts that depict other patron deities. The textuality of the present investigation means that, although disciplined by philology and text-criticism, the argument of the present work is primarily
(4) rhetorical-literary: as seen already, the project traffics in terminology drawn from rhetorical or literary criticism, e.g., profile or characterization.[34] Even the concept of *aggression* is

13-49, but esp. 13-26; Konrad Schmid, "Zurück zu Wellhausen?" *ThR* 69 (2004): 314-28; Uwe Becker, "Julius Wellhausens Sicht des Judentums," 279-309, here 299-302; also Reinhard G. Kratz, "Eyes and Spectacles: Wellhausen's Method of Higher Criticism," *JTS* 60 (2009): 381-401, here 400-402.

[33] For more on the comparative enterprise, see Brent A. Strawn, "Comparative Approaches: History, Theory, and the Image of God," in *Method Matters: Essays on the Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in Honor of David L. Peterson*, ed. Joel M. LeMon and Kent Harold Richards, SBLRBS 56 (Atlanta: SBL, 2009), 117-42; also Shemaryahu Talmon, "The 'Comparative' Method in Biblical Interpretation—Principles and Problems," in idem, *Essential Papers on Israel and the Ancient Near East*, ed. Frederick E. Greenspahn (New York: New York University Press, 1991), 381-419.

[34] In focusing on deity *characterization*, the present project has affinities with literary-critical works like Dale Patrick, *The Rendering of God in the Old Testament*, OBT 10 (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981); as well as Jack Miles, *God: A Biography* (New York: Knopf, 1995); Richard Elliott Friedman, *The Disappearance of God: A Divine Mystery* (Boston: Little, Brown & Company, 1995); Mark H. McEntire, *Portraits of a Mature God: Choices in Old Testament Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013); idem, *An Apocryphal God: Beyond Divine Maturity* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2015); idem, "The God at the End of the Story: are Biblical Theology and Narrative Character Development Compatible?" *HBT* 33 (2011): 171-189; idem, "Portraits of a Mature God: What Would a Theology of the Hebrew Scriptures Look Like if Ezra-Nehemiah Was at the Center of the Discussion?" *PRS* 39 (2012): 113-124. All of these draw a theological portrait on the basis of literary observations.

Attending to the role of deity characterization within the *rhetoric* of each given text means, however, that the present project considers biblical and ancient texts as acts of *persuasion*, on which see Chaïm Perelman and Lucie

> meant as a conceptual redescription of various concrete, textual means of characterizing deity. Also: "Divine aggression" intends as a topic to encompass more than "divine anger"; the latter is affective only, whereas the former includes the deity's destructive *actions*.[35]

The present study addresses several fields of inquiry within the larger area of Hebrew Bible scholarship. Like the work of Deena Grant or even more so of Stefan Wälchli, it limns depictions of God in biblical texts, especially depictions of divine aggression, and so it addresses the field of *Hebrew Bible theology*.[36] Like Scott Starbuck or Reettakaisa Sofia Salo, it presents fresh results for the study of the *royal psalms* of the Hebrew Bible in comparative context.[37] So, too, like Douglas Green or Matthew Suriano, it yields new insights for the study of *Syro-Palestinian inscriptions*, and like these authors, it takes a literary and rhetorical approach.[38] It also adds to that

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Olbrechts-Tyteca, *The New Rhetoric: A Treatise on Argumentation*, trans. John Wilkinson and Purcell Weaver (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1969). As will be seen, other works, particularly on the rhetoric of psalms, have informed the approach of the present study: e.g., Johan H. Coetzee, "Politeness Strategies in the So-Called 'Enemy Psalms': an Inquiry into Israelite Prayer Rhetoric," in *Rhetorical Criticism and the Bible*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and Dennis L. Stamps, JSNTSup 195 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2002), 209-236; Davida H. Charney, *Persuading God: Rhetorical Studies of First-Person Psalms*, HBM 73 (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2015).

It should be noted that "deity characterization" is by no means exclusively the province of rhetorical or literary scholarship; see, for example, these recent and entirely historical deity profiles: Mark S. Smith, "'Athtart in Late Bronze Age Syrian Texts," in *Transformation of a Goddess: Ishtar—Astarte—Aphrodite*, ed. David T. Sugimoto, OBO 263 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht; Fribourg: Academic Press, 2014), 33-86; Maciej Münnich, *The God Resheph in the Ancient Near East*, ORA 11 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2013); and Aren M. Wilson-Wright, *Athtart: The Transmission and Transformation of a Goddess in the Late Bronze Age*, FAT II/90 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016).

[35] Cf. the "prototypical gestalt" of divine beneficence, destructiveness, and exaltation in Collin Cornell, "A Moratorium on God Mergers? The Case of El and Milkom in the Ammonite Onomasticon," *UF* 46 (2015): 49-99, here 62-69.

[36] Patrick Considine, "The Theme of Divine Wrath in Ancient East Mediterranean Literature," *SMEA* 8 (1969): 85-159; Ulrich Berges, "Der Zorn Gottes in der Prophetie und Poesie Israels auf dem Hintergrund altorientalischer Vorstellungen," *Bib* 85 (2004): 305-330; Deena E. Grant, *Divine Anger in the Hebrew Bible*, CBQMS 52 (Washington, DC: The Catholic Biblical Association of America, 2014); Stefan H. Wälchli, *Gottes Zorn in den Psalmen: Eine Studie zur Rede vom Zorn Gottes in den Psalmen im Kontext des Alten Testaments*, OBO 244 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht; Fribourg: Academic Press, 2012); also Bruce Edward Baloian, *Anger in the Old Testament*, AUS 99 (New York: Peter Lang, 1992); also Craig C. Broyles, *The Conflict of Faith and Experience in the Psalms: A Form-Critical and Theological Study*, JSOTSup 42 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1989), 61-76.

[37] Scott R.A. Starbuck, *Court Oracles in the Psalms: The So-Called Royal Psalms in their Ancient Near Eastern Context*, SBLDS 172 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 1999); Reettakaisa Sofia Salo, *Die judäische Königsideologie im Kontext der Nachbarkulturen: Untersuchungen zu den Königspsalmen 2, 18, 20, 21, 45 und 72*, ORA 25 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017). Cf. also Markus Saur, *Die Königspsalmen: Studien zur Entstehung und Theologie*, BZAW 340 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004) and Randy G. Haney, *Text and Concept Analysis in Royal Psalms*, SBL 30 (New York: Peter Lang, 2002), although Saur and Haney do not focus (much) on comparison with ancient Near Eastern materials.

[38] Douglas J. Green, *"I Undertook Great Works": The Ideology of Domestic Achievements in West Semitic Royal Inscriptions*, FAT II/41 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010); Matthew J. Suriano, "The Apology of Hazael: A

slender body of scholarship that compares psalms and inscriptions, specifically.[39] These, then, are the fields to which the present study contributes: Hebrew Bible theology, royal psalms, and Syro-Palestinian inscriptions. Its closing chapter (chapter 5) offers remarks on the history of Israelite religion—and also theology and the doctrine of God more generally. The essay that most directly anticipates the concerns of the present project—and to which it represents a sustained response—is Reinhard G. Kratz's chapter entitled "Chemosh's Wrath and Yahweh's No: Ideas of Divine Wrath in Moab and Israel."[40]

1.3.1. Textual Corpora: Royal Memorial Inscriptions

To discern whether (and in what ways) Yhwh was uniquely aggressive relative to other patron gods of the ancient world, measure must first be taken of their profile. Wellhausen and Eichrodt concur that the gods of the nations round about Israel exemplified a kind of "natural bond" relationship with their client people: the gods' role was to be the national "helper," and divine aggression against king and country could only then be limited, occasional, or

Literary and Historical Analysis of the Tel Dan Inscription," *JNES* 66 (2007): 163–176; idem, "The Historicality of the King: An Exercise in Reading Royal Inscriptions from the Ancient Levant," *JANEH* 1 (2014): 1-24. Cf. also Aaron Schade, *A Syntactic and Literary Analysis of Ancient Northwest Semitic Inscriptions* (Lampeter: Mellen, 2006).

[39] Important prior works includes H.L. Ginsberg, "Psalms and Inscriptions of Petition and Acknowledgement," in *Louis Ginzberg Jubilee Volume: English Section* (New York: American Academy for Jewish Research, 1945), 159-71; Delbert Hillers, "Ritual Procession of the Ark and Ps 132," *CBQ* 30 (1968): 48-55; Patrick D. Miller, Jr., "Psalms and Inscriptions," in *Congress Volume Vienna 1980*, ed. J.A. Emerton, VTSup 32 (Leiden: Brill, 1980), 311-32; Yitsḥaḳ Avishur, "Studies of Stylistic Features Common to the Phoenician Inscriptions and the Bible," *UF* 8 (1976): 1-22; idem, *Phoenician Inscriptions and the Bible* (Tel-Aviv-Jaffa: Archaeological Center, 2000); Roger Tomes, *'I Have Written to the King, My Lord': Secular Analogies for the Psalms* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2005); Victor Sasson, "The Language of Rebellion in Psalm 2 and the Plaster Texts from Deir 'Alla," *AUSS* 24 (1986): 147-54; Eckhart Otto, "The Judean Legitimation of Royal Rulers in Its Ancient Near Eastern Contexts," in *Psalms and Liturgy*, ed. Dirk J. Human and C.J.A. Vos, LBOTS 410 (London: Continuum, 2004), 131-39; Mark W. Hamilton, *The Body Politic: The Social Poetics of Kingship in Ancient Israel*, BIS 78 (Leiden: Brill, 2005); idem, "Prosperity and Kingship in Psalms and Inscriptions," in *Literature as Politics, Politics as Literature: Essays on the Ancient Near East in Honor of Peter Machinist,* ed. David S. Vanderhooft and Abraham Winitzer (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2013), 185-205. Other important comparative works on the royal psalms focus more on Akkadian parallels, e.g., Starbuck, *Court Oracles in the Psalms;* and John Hilber, *Cultic Prophecy in the Psalms*, BZAW 353 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2005).

[40] Kratz, "Chemosh's Wrath and Yahweh's No." I thank Jacob L. Wright for bringing this essay to my attention.

recuperative—"God bless" and never "God damn Moab" (or Edom, or Aram). But this view of national religion in the Iron Age kingdoms of the Levant deserves scrutiny. The present study provides it.

The materials that could be consulted to determine the profile of patron deities are, obviously, abundant—too abundant. Deities, including patron deities, feature prominently in all manner of texts expropriated from the ancient Near East, and indeed also in its ancient artwork. Even if the "petty kingdoms of Syria-Palestine" alone are investigated, as seems fitting, and not the great empires of Egypt or Mesopotamia, epigraphic remains and extant art alike testify in various ways to the patron gods of each state. Perforce a selection must be made. The argument of the present section is that, over against the abundance of possible resources, the most suitable data-set for determining the uniqueness of Yhwh's biblically-attested aggression is *royal memorial inscriptions*.

Memorial inscriptions refers to a literary genre, and one that is *etic* to the cultural system of the Iron Age Levant. That is to say, the term *memorial inscription* does not translate a concept from within the related dialects of the Northwest Semitic realm.[41] The concept is a modern scholarly one for classifying a number of royal inscriptions that share certain common literary features. Such literary features differentiate memorial inscriptions from other royal inscriptions of the same languages and eras, e.g., *dedicatory inscriptions*. The literary characteristics that distinguish memorial inscriptions include:

1. They are spoken in a 1st person voice ("I…")
2. They begin with the self-introduction of a named king ("I, Mesha, king of Moab…")
3. The king then provides a retrospective of his reign
    a. contrasting his success with the lesser success of his predecessors
    b. describing his success episodically in terms of either
        i. military campaigns that defeat the kingdom's external or internal foes

[41] On the other hand, *zkr* can refer to the memorial stele upon which the memorial text is inscribed; see *DNWSI* 1:329 as well as *KAI* 18:6, 43:3, 53:1, 123:4, 160:1, 161:5, 165:7, 215:22. Cf. also *DCH* 3:111-112.

ii. domestic achievements that bring blessing to the kingdom's citizens

4. They conclude with a curse or series of curses on anyone who "removes the inscription or damages it in any way."[42]

The present study contends that these inscriptions present the best available comparand for assessing the uniqueness of Yhwh's aggression—for several reasons. First, more than other types of royal inscription from Egypt or Mesopotamia, these inscriptions from the Iron Age Levant reflect the theology of the kingdoms that were nearest to ancient Israel and Judah—nearest geographically and culturally.[43] Their relative *propinquity* means that the comparative enterprise can take advantage of a subtler range of similarities.[44] If in the end the study bears out Yhwh's uniqueness, such a result will be that much more sophisticated, and finely calibrated against its closest congeners.

Second, for the purpose of developing a deity profile, memorial inscriptions are preferable to other extant Levantine texts such as dedicatory or stamp seal inscriptions because of the former's greater *length*.[45] Memorial inscriptions simply give more to work with, textually. Also, because memorial inscriptions summarize the reign of a given king and evoke episodes of his royal success, they are relatively richer than dedicatory or seal inscriptions with reference to the king's patron

[42] J. Maxwell Miller, "The Moabite Stone as a Memorial Stele," *PEQ* 106 (1974): 9-18, here 10. The above list of the literary characteristics of memorial inscriptions is a pastiche from several sources, including: John D. Davis, "The Moabite Stone and the Hebrew Records," *AJSL* 7 (1891): 178-82; A.R. Millard, "The Practice of Writing in Ancient Israel," *BA* 35 (1972): 98-111; and Joel Drinkard, "The Literary Genre of the Mesha' Inscription," in *Studies in the Mesha Inscription and Moab*, 131-54. Cf. also John van Seters, "Texts and Inscriptions of the Levant," in idem, *In Search of History: Historiography in the Ancient World and the Origins of Biblical History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), 188-208; and Thomas L. Thompson, "A Testimony of the Good King: Reading the Mesha Stele," in *Ahab Agonistes: The Rise and Fall of the Omri Dynasty*, ed. Lester L. Grabbe, LHBOTS 421/ESHM 6 (London: T&T Clark, 2007), 236-92.

[43] There are, of course, numerous royal inscriptions from Mesopotamia, e.g., *RINAP*, *RIMA*, *RIMB*, *RIME*. On the propinquity of the Levantine materials to the Bible, see Salo: "Aufgrund der geographischen, sprachlichen und zeitlichen Nähe zu Israel und Juda sind diese Texte jedoch außerordentlich wichtig als Vergleichsmaterial" (*Die judäische Königsideologie*, 8).

[44] On the relative merit of propinquity for comparison, see Shemaryahu Talmon, "The 'Comparative' Method."

[45] Drinkard: "[the] memorial inscription is considerably longer than the typical dedicatory inscription" ("The Literary Genre of the Mesha' Inscription," 142).

deity. They yield more verbs with a divine subject and more divine titles, even though in royal inscriptions the main character is oftentimes the king himself such that the king and the deity serve together as the "dual personal center" of an inscription.[46]

Lastly, memorial inscriptions are preferable for the present project's emphasis on divine *aggression*. Memorial inscriptions differ from dedicatory inscriptions in that the former conclude with a curse section, where the latter often conclude with an invocation of blessing on the proprietor (though sometimes they, too, can conclude with a curse).[47] For comparing the aggression of Yhwh with other patron deities, memorial inscriptions thus promise a more prolific data-pool of aggression.

1.3.1.1. Nonnarrativity: The Speaking Subject

Two further considerations are of special note concerning the literary quality of royal memorial inscriptions. In due course the presence of these qualities will help to justify the selection of biblical text corpus for comparison with memorial inscriptions. Because of this programmatic significance, the following sections are lengthier than the abbreviated and general account of memorial inscriptions given above.

The first literary quality of memorial inscriptions that is of interest to the present study is their *nonnarrativity*. In the study of memorial inscriptions, some uncertainty obtains about their place on the continuum of prose-poetry. Perhaps the majority of scholars accept that memorial inscriptions are instances of prose narrative. Simon Parker in his study on "stories in scripture and

[46] Green, *"I Undertook Great Works,"* 19, 111. Cf. also Bob Becking, "A Voice from Across the Jordan—Royal Ideology as Implied in the Moabite Stela," in *Herrschaftslegitimation in vorderorientalischen Reichen der Eisenzeit*, ed. Christoph Levin and Reinhard Müller, ORA 21 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017), 125-45, here 138-39.

[47] Miller, "The Moabite Stone as a Memorial Stele," 11; cf. Drinkard, "The Literary Genre of the Mesha' Inscription."

inscriptions" does not argue the classificatory point—that inscriptions constitute stories rather than poems.[48] Douglas Green's monograph undertakes a self-consciously literary (and rhetorical) approach to memorial inscriptions—but he, too, assumes rather than argues that the texts belong to the genre of "historical narrative."[49] A minority of scholars, on the other hand, identify several memorial inscriptions as poetic, perhaps as "narrative poetry."[50] Still others admit that memorial inscriptions have a "poetic flavor."[51]

Those who locate memorial inscriptions much more on the prose side of the continuum count several points in their favor. Memorial inscriptions always hang on a narrative backbone, so to speak: the king who speaks through them contrasts the past time of lesser success with the present and more successful era of his own reign. This before-and-after schema is basically narratival in that it tells a story of an initial challenge which the king then overcame with the favor of his patron deity. So also, the individual episodes illustrating the king's success each follow a discrete story arc. For example, after relating one generic story of royal triumph in its lines 4-7, the Mesha Inscription (henceforward, MI) then relates four brief, parallel tales of military success

[48] Simon B. Parker, *Stories in Scripture and Inscriptions: Comparative Studies in Northwest Semitic Inscriptions and the Hebrew Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 7-9.

[49] Green, *"I Undertook Great Works,"* 1-32.

[50] For arguments in favor of the poetic genre of MI, see J.C. de Moor, "Narrative Poetry in Canaan," *UF* 20 (1990): 149-71; Baruch Margalit, "Studies in NWSemitic Inscriptions," *UF* 26 (1994): 271-315 and *UF* 27 (1995):177-214. Cf. also Terence Collins, "The Kilamuwa Inscription—a Phoenician Poem," *WO* 6 (1971): 183-88. Neither the Amman Citadel inscription nor the bronze bottle inscription are memorial inscriptions, properly speaking, but I include reference to their poetic genre here suggestively: Victor Sasson, "The 'Amman Citadel Inscription as an Oracle Promising Divine Protection: Philological and Literary Comments," *PEQ* 111 (1979): 117-25 and Charles Krahmalkov, "An Ammonite Lyric Poem," *BASOR* 223 (1976): 55-57. For arguments in favor of narrative as the genre of MI, see Parker, *Stories in Scripture and Inscriptions,* 43-60; also Michael O'Connor, "The Rhetoric of the Kilamuwa Inscription," *BASOR* 226 (1977): 5-11. For a subtle negotiation of MI's genre, see Josey B. Snyder and Brent A. Strawn, "Reading (in) Moabite Patterns: 'Parallelism' in the Mesha Inscription and Its Implications for Understanding Three Cruxes (*ʿštr kmš*, line 17; *h/ryt*, line 12; and *ʾrʾl dwdh*, line 12)" (forthcoming).

[51] Gibson, *TSSI* 3:33.

in its lines 7b-21. Each tale has its own modest integrity as a story with a problem that is resolved through the king's prowess and divine patronage. Graphically:[52]

Before: The enemy king, Omri, oppressed Israel (lines 4b, 5)

After: But I looked upon him [*w'r'.bh*] (line 7) *Individual episodes of oppression + gloating*:

In Medeba (lines 7b-10a)
In Atarot (lines 10b-14a)
In Nebo (lines 14b-18a)
In Yahaz (lines 18b-21a)

In spite of these narratival features, memorial inscriptions are not straightforwardly *prose*, because they also evidence characteristics of *poetry*—even if it would be too much to claim that they are poems *per se*. These inscriptions do not show the giveaway properties of poetry such as dense imagery, compressed language, or metaphor. Instead, memorial inscriptions reflect what some theorists argue is the lead quality of lyric poetry: *utterability* or *uttered-ness*.[53] As Jonathon Culler writes, lyric "seems to be an utterance…the utterance of a voice."[54]

[52] On the structure of MI, see Stanislav Segert, "Die Sprache der moabitischen Königsinschrift," *ArOr* 29 (1961): 197-267; Alviero Niccacci, "The Stele of Mesha and the Bible: Verbal System and Narrativity," *Or* 63 (1994): 226-48; Francis I. Andersen, "Moabite Syntax," *Or* 35 (1966): 81-120; Pierre Auffret, "Essai sur la structure littéraire de la stele de Mésha," *UF* 12 (1980): 109-24; Anson F. Rainey, "Mesha' and Syntax," in *The Land that I Will Show You: Essays on the History and Archaeology of the Ancient Near East in Honour of J. Maxwell Miller*, ed. J. Andrew Dearman and M. Patrick Graham, JSOTSup 343 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2001), 287-307; Hubert Irsigler, "Großsatzformen in Althebräischen und die syntaktische Struktur des Königs Mescha von Moab," in *Syntax und Text: Beiträge zur 22. Internationalen Ökumenischen Hebräisch-Dozenten-Konferenz 1993 in Bamberg*, ed. Hubert Irsigler, ATSAT 40 (St. Ottilien: EOS Verlag, 1993), 81-121; Andreas Schule, *Die Syntax der althebräischen Inschriften: ein Beitrag zur historischen Grammatik des Hebräischen*, AOAT 270 (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2000), 164-72; also Parker, *Stories in Scripture*, 44-58.

[53] On this see especially, F.W. Dobbs-Allsopp, "The Psalms and Lyric Verse," in *The Evolution of Rationality: Interdisciplinary Essays in Honor of J. Wentzel van Huyssteen*, ed. F. LeRon Shults (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 346-79, here 367-70. See also idem, "The Idea of Lyric Poetry in the Bible," in *On Biblical Poetry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 178-232, and especially 195-98; also Jonathon Culler, "Lyric Address," in *Theory of the Lyric* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015), 186-243.

[54] Jonathon Culler, *Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 71.

The uttered quality of lyric includes several dimensions. The first is *subjectivity*. Lyric characteristically mediates a speaking voice—the text gives access to the experience of a (fictional) persona, allowing the hearer or reader of lyric "to shed his or her all-too-specific person, and to take on the speaking self of the poem."[55] This is not to say that the speaking self receives overt characterization or description in a lyric poem; it does not. Rather, the speaker's subjectivity is opened up from the inside, as it were, to the reader. The second and related quality of lyric that relates to its uttered-ness is its *eventful-ness*. Lyric, that is, is *address*—it is itself an event of speech, an utterance, rather than the rehearsal of an event or a description of a character. As Culler writes, "narrative poems recount an event; lyrics…strive to be an event."[56] As such, lyric presents a *speaking self*. Dobbs-Allsopp suggests that "the prototypical pattern [of lyric] is the I-You form."[57]

The latter dimension of lyric, its presentation of a speaking self—a nonnarrative quality—appears strongly in memorial inscriptions. Previous scholarship on these texts went some way towards observing their uttered-ness, but subordinated this lyric subjectivity and eventful-ness to the inscriptions' narrative frame. Parker thus emphasizes the first-person voice of the inscriptions as an indication of their *oral* character; "the stories in the memorial inscriptions, in which the first-person narrator recounts his and his god's successful expulsion of foreign forces occupying land he claims as his own, will be distillations of stories told in the courts of the kings."[58] But he does not press the point that this orality or spoken-ness of the inscriptions persists. Green likewise notes

[55] Roland Greene, *Post-Petrarchism: Origins and Innovations of the Western Lyric Sequence* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 6.
[56] Culler, *Literary Theory*, 73; idem, "Lyric Address."
[57] Dobbs-Allsopp, "The Psalms and Lyric Verse," 369. Cf. also Culler, "Lyric Address."
[58] Parker, *Stories in Scripture and Inscriptions*, 74. Cf. ibid., 135.

the lack of real characterization in the inscriptions, but he stops short of making the king's speaking voice his point of departure for assessing the inscriptions' genre.[59]

In fact what distinguishes memorial inscriptions is exactly that in them, the king *speaks*—in a present-tense word of address. "I am Mesha," begins MI, and nearly all the inscriptions examined in the following chapter 2 do similarly. The subjectivity of the king is that which the memorial inscription seeks to make accessible to the reader.[60] In this regard it must be remembered that the foremost concern of these inscriptions is to render the kingly personage both *present* and *durable*; memorial inscriptions are "immortality projects."[61] The king's own individual human body was, of course, subject to decay—but he sought by inscribing his life achievements onto a monumental object to guarantee their endurance past his death. His *symbolic self* would persist.[62] Compare in this regard Absalom's construction of a monument in 2 Sam 18:18: "he set up a pillar for himself" (note the beneficiary *lô*, "for himself," and see also 1 Sam 15:12), because he had no son "to keep my name in remembrance." By erecting such a pillar, Absalom sought to preserve himself. So, too, with other royal monuments: like the pious memories of a living and speaking son, they function to maintain the king's name *into the present*.

The king's narration of his own past deeds in memorial inscriptions does not detract from the texts' subjectivity or the eventful-ness. On the contrary, the incidents that the royal speaking voice communicates serve entirely to evoke the king's own experience and identity. In just this sense, Thomas Thompson rightly identifies the function of memorial inscriptions as "Testimony

[59] Green, *"I Undertook Great Works,"* 18-21.

[60] Seth L. Sanders writes: "The inscription [MI] presents royal power by making the king present in language, ventriloquizing Mesha as if he were standing in front of us; he speaks directly to the reader without acknowledging that reader's presence" (*The Invention of Hebrew* [Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009], 114).

[61] Ernest Becker, *The Denial of Death* (New York: Free Press, 1975).

[62] See Robert Williamson, Jr., "Death and Symbolic Immortality in Second Temple Wisdom Instructions," (Ph.D. diss., Emory University, 2011).

of the Good King."[63] Recent scholarship has made much of the way that in ancient Near Eastern thinking, royal objects actually instantiate the presence of the king. As objects of royal commission, the gates or stelae or walls upon which the king's inscriptions are written may then be understood as genuinely "presencing" the royal self. [64] But even without detouring into ancient Near Eastern metaphysics, at the literary level of voice and address, the king's first-person speech in royal inscriptions means that the events of his reign that he narrates are aspects of his *self-presentation*: parts of the royal self whose livingness he seeks to ensure.

Observations by other scholars about the "non-historiographic" character of memorial inscriptions fall into place when the texts' subjectivity and eventful-ness are prioritized. Memorial inscriptions do not relate events in their chronological sequence; their order of presentation "seems rather to be determined by elements in the stories."[65] They "telescop[e]" the events they narrate.[66] The memorial inscriptions read not as one storyline, told consecutively across a series of episodes, but more like a string of thematically related and theologically-charged vignettes. The vignettes do not follow one another consecutively, but illustrate a common message—in the case of MI, "[the] claim [that] Chemosh gave [Mesha] victory over all hostile kings," thereby exemplifying the speaking king's piety.[67] All these allegedly "nonhistoriographic" features are to be expected if all the narrated events are understood as components of the king's name, and so present all at once in the royal persona, whose permanence the inscription pursues.

In a similar fashion, several other rhetorical strategies contribute to rendering the king's persona both present and durable. These strategies might be called mythic, or, per Matthew

[63] Thompson, "A Testimony of the Good King," 243.

[64] E.g., Zainab Bahrani, *The Graven Image Representation in Babylonia and Assyria* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), esp. ch 5.

[65] Parker, *Stories in Scripture*, 56; cf. Green, *"I Undertook Great Works,"* 98.

[66] Miller, "The Moabite Stone as a Memorial Stele," 16; cf. Green, *"I Undertook Great Works,"* 98.

[67] Parker, *Stories in Scripture*, 55.

Suriano, "metahistor[ical]."[68] That is, they do not belong to the linear course of history but are cyclical: kingship is eternal, and each new ruler participates in the permanent, transhistorical institution in fixed and identifiable ways. Suriano sums these mythical or metahistorical aspects of kingship up in a way that will prove important for selecting a biblical text corpus; they include:

1. validation through 'divine election';[69]
2. defeating enemy kings;
3. and sacred rebuilding.[70]

Naturally each of these three motifs have a prosaic, historical complement: to take MI as an example again, king Mesha rose to the throne, won victories against his regional competitor(s), and commissioned various repairs throughout his jurisdiction. But MI frames each of these achievements in terms of the patron deity Kemosh's agency, and within the heightened language of myth. Mesha did not merely become king—but was the special recipient of Kemosh's favor.[71] Mesha did not merely battle his regional rival, but claims in line 4 that Kemosh "saved me from *all* kings / and showed me the downfall of my enemies"—a grand and indeed mythic claim of total victory.[72] To note: the problem that the enemy kings presented to Mesha was territorial—a theme that holds true of all memorial inscriptions. Land is lost to the speaking king's dynasty, and the

[68] The use of the adjective(s) "mythic/al" follows Mario Liverani, "Memorandum on the Approach to Historiographic Texts," *Or* 42 (1973): 178-94, here 78-82. See also Suriano, "Historicality of the King": "Within the memorial inscription's narrative, historical time is collapsed into the metahistory of kingship, as the king places himself within the reoccurring cycle of kingship" (11).

[69] This phrase is Suriano's ("The Apology of Hazael," 172).

[70] On the theme of sacred rebuilding, see Thompson, "A Testimony of the Good King," 271-71; Suriano, "The Apology of Hazael," 172; Philip D. Stern, *The Biblical* Ḥerem*: A Window on Israel's Religious Experience*, BJS 211 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991), 41-42; and especially Green, *"I Undertook Great Works,"* 307-319.

[71] Thompson, "A Testimony of the Good King," 258. Although MI is not so overt as other royal inscriptions, Thompson writes of MI that "the thematic element of divine patronage in the Mesha stele is the central dramatic element of Mesha's life story."

[72] Despite this quite exhaustive deliverance (*mkl* / *bkl*), in its present condition, MI only mentions *two* kings—Omri and his nameless son—who, in lines 4-21, are also referred to, one or another of them, as "the king of Israel" (*mlk. yšr'l* in lines 10, 18). Line 31 potentially switches to a different enemy, the much-debated "house of David" (*btdwd*). But in any case, Kemosh's deliverance of Mesha from "all kings" seems hyperbolic: or better, *mythic*, because, as it turns out, deliverance from "all kings"—or the numeric equivalent in Semitic idiom, "70 kings"—was a stock claim of royal inscriptions and a fixed feature of eternal kingship (on which, see Suriano, "Apology of Hazael," 167-68 and 172 ["elimination of all claimants to power"]).

solution is territorial (re)seizure under the favor and blessing of the patron god.[73] So, too, with Mesha's actions of rebuilding: these were not merely quotidian infrastructure improvements. They, too, bear a mythic significance. Stern writes of MI that its emphasis on verbs of building "may therefore be due to the cosmogonic overtones which the root conveyed as Mesha worked hard to recreate the Moabite world order."[74] Green also makes much of the inscriptions' building campaigns: "not only does the king eliminate disorder, he also creates a new order, a 'heightened order.' These ideal conditions are often described using hyperbolic language, such as impossibly utopian descriptions…narration of domestic achievements creates the impression that the king has created an ideal world."[75]

For our purpose, what is critical is the *nonnarrativity* of royal inscriptions in these two ways: they literarily effect the king's own self-presentation and are thus generically (more) akin to lyric, and they feature *metahistorical* motifs of kingship. Although memorial inscriptions employ several narrative devices, at least in these above-specified ways, they are nonnarrative.

1.3.1.2. Nonnarrativity: The (Dual) Addressee

[73] In MI, for example, the episode narrating the military campaign in Medeba (lines 7b-10a) opens with a statement of Omri's occupation: "Omri occupied all the land of Medeba." It then tells of how "Kemosh restored it" (*wyšbh. kmš*). Kemosh reversed the reality of an enemy takeover of Moabite territory (cf. also the episode about Yahaz in lines 18b-20). The Zakkur inscription narrates how the deity Baalšamen successfully foils a siege against Zakkur's capital city. In the Tel Dan inscription, the deity Hadad leads king Hazael in battle to undo Israelite occupation of lands that belonged to his "father." Loss of territory in each of these cases constitutes the main problem of the inscription—and its recovery by the king-narrator is integral to each, and also, mythical, in that the deity prosecutes this recapture of their king's land.

[74] Stern, *The Biblical* Ḥerem, 41. Stern recognizes the dis-analogy between the cosmogonic *Chaoskampf* myth and MI in that Mesha, who is explicitly doing the building, is the human king and not the deity. Stern overcomes this dis-analogy by proposing the intriguing idea that by making sacred war and pursuing sacred rebuilding, Mesha in effect imitates the deity (*imitatio dei*; ibid.). Others who detect *Chaoskampf* themes in MI include Nicolas 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: Festschrift für Oswald Loretz zur Vollendung seines 70. Lebensjahres mit Beiträgen von Freunden, Schülern und Kollegen*, ed. Manfred Dietrich and Ingo Kottsieper, AOAT 250 [Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1998], 833–882, here 867) and Mark S. Smith (*The Origins of Biblical Monotheism: Israel's Polytheistic Background and the Ugaritic Texts* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001], 162).

[75] Green, *"I Undertook Great Works,"* 316.

A second literary quality of memorial inscriptions is also important to observe *en route* to selecting a biblical text corpus for comparison. As noted above, memorial inscriptions are nonnarrative in that they mediate a word of address: they preserve and make present the royal self. This is the "I" of Dobbs-Allsopp's prototypical lyric pattern.[76] But the "You" whom the inscriptions address also deserves consideration. As attempts to perpetuate the royal name, the speaking voice of the memorial inscriptions faces in two directions: towards the patron deity and towards the human subjects of the speaking king. To take once more the example of MI, Smelik writes: "[p]robably the Mesha stele itself stood on the 'high place' to preserve the name of this king forever in the mind of the god Kemosh and of the Moabite people."[77] Note the dual focus, human and divine.[78]

Scholars have recently emphasized the second of these addressees, namely, the *human* audience of the royal inscriptions. Bruce Routledge and Seth Sanders have mounted arguments for the political purpose of MI as well as other memorial inscriptions: the objective of these objects is "securing power and mobilizing bodies" (i.e., human ones!).[79] One of MI's intended audiences is Moabites—or would-be Moabites; Routledge claims that MI records but also, more importantly, *constructs* a political turning-point: "the MI is not about the narration or falsification of an event-based history, rather the MI is about *history-making*; bringing into being a certain understanding

[76] Dobbs-Allsopp, "The Psalms and Lyric Verse," 369.

[77] Klaas A.D. Smelik, "Kemosh was Angry with His Land: The Mesha Stele," in *Writings from Ancient Israel: A Handbook of Historical and Religious Documents*, trans. G.I. Davies (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1991), 29-50, here 37, emphasis mine. Nadav Na'aman also pays relatively more attention than other scholars to the "divinely-facing" aspect of memorial inscriptions, e.g, idem, "Three Notes on the Aramaic Inscription from Tel Dan," *IEJ* 50 (2000): 92-104, here 98. Cf. also Scott Starbuck, *Court Oracles in the Psalms*, 72n20; Hamilton, "Prosperity and Kingship in Psalms and Inscriptions," 192: "the implied audience and aim of the inscription [KAI 24] need attention. As its iconography makes clear, the gods form part of the audience."

[78] Bob Becking even refers to the inscription as a "letter to the deity": "In my view the Mesha stela is a text that vouches for the deeds and doings of the Moabite king. In a way, he is reporting to Chemosh what he has made out of his appointment as a king. In the form of a self-presentation, a letter to the deity was written" ("A Voice from Across the Jordan," 127).

[79] Bruce Routledge, *Moab in the Iron Age: Hegemony, Polity, Archaeology*, Archeology, Culture, and Society (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 152.

of the world by the context and manner in which it recounts events."[80] Seth Sanders has made a parallel argument to Routledge's, only with more attention to the vernacular character of MI, and its persuasive goal: "the Mesha inscription does not reflect the existence of a unified state, people, and written language, so much as make an argument for one."[81]

MI wishes, then, according to these authors, to convince humans (Moabites) that they belong to the emergent political unit of Moab—and to its king, Mesha. This thesis faces the difficulty of low literacy rates in the ancient world. As a workaround for this reality, Sanders suggests there may have been a ceremony of public recitation for this and other royal inscriptions,[82] and Routledge suggests that the monument itself would have been recognizable as a "kingly thing" even apart from the ability of passers-by to read its inscription.[83] But in view of this weakness in their argumentation (depending overmuch on literacy and speculation), the strongest datum suggesting that the royal inscriptions targeted a human audience is *text-internal,* i.e., their concluding curse section.[84]

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[80] Idem, "The Politics of Mesha: Segmented Identities and State Formation in Iron Age Moab," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 43 (2000): 221-256, here 227.

[81] Sanders, *The Invention of Hebrew*, 114; also idem, "When the Personal Became Political: An Onomastic Perspective on the Rise of Yahwism," *HeBAI* 4 (2015): 78-105, here 91.

[82] Idem, *The Invention of Hebrew*, 117. On the (possible but uncertain) public recitation of inscriptions on Neo-Assyrian stelae, see Hayim Tadmor, "Propaganda, Literature, and Historiography," in *Assyria 1995*: *Proceedings of the 10th Anniversary Symposium of the Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, Helsinki, September 7-11, 1995*, ed. Simo Parpola and R.M. Whiting (Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1997), 325-38, here 331-32; also Barbara N. Porter, "Intimidation and Friendly Persuasion: Re-evaluating the Propaganda of Ashurnasirpal III," *ErIs* 27 (2003): 180-191.

[83] Routledge thus writes that "one need not be literate to comprehend the specifically royal reference of an inscribed stele (Routledge, *Moab in the Iron Age,* 155). See also Andrew Knapp, *Royal Apologetic in the Ancient Near East,* WAWSup 4 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2015), 22-24.

[84] On curses in Northwest Semitic royal inscriptions, see Stanley Gevirtz, "West-Semitic Curses and the Problem of the Origins of Hebrew Law," *VT* 2 (1961): 137-58; Timothy G. Crawford, *Blessing and Curse in Syro-Palestinian Inscriptions of the Iron Age*, AUS 120 (New York: Peter Lang, 1992), esp. ch 4; Menahem Kister, "Some Blessings and Curse Formulae in the Bible, Northwest Semitic Inscriptions, Post-Biblical Literature and Late Antiquity," in *Hamlet on a Hill: Semitic and Greek Studies Presented to Professor T. Muraoka on the Occasion of his Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, ed. Martin F.J. Baasten and W. Th. van Peursen, OLA 118 (Leuven: Peeters, 2003), 313-332; Krzysztof J. Baranowski, "The Old Aramaic and Biblical Curses," *Liber Annuus Studii Biblici Franciscani* 62 (2012):173-201; and now also Melissa Ramos, "A Northwest Semitic Curse Formula: The Sefire Treaty and Deuteronomy 28," *ZAW* 128 (2016): 205-220.

In their closing curse section, memorial inscriptions register a request of their human readers, albeit indirectly and by way of threat. These curse sections are not mere afterthoughts or appendices to the body of the text. Rather, the curse is the climax of the whole inscription and the place where its rhetorical goal(s) can be most clearly seen. Here the inscription bears witness most baldly to its anxiety about preserving the king's name and legacy as it issues in what amounts a negative command (*don't destroy the monument*), expressed conditionally in the form of a curse. Here the mood of the text alternates from indicative to jussive, from describing the king's *past* achievements to setting forth the protasis and apodosis of an open and conditional *future*.

Not to be missed, though, is that the grammatical subject of the apodosis is consistently *divine* (and the action: aggressive!) and not human. For as much as the inscription exalts the king's power, in the very end, the king's name lies vulnerable to vandalism—and the inscription devolves to trust in the patron deity to protect it. However, the subject of the preceding protasis is *human*. The action—or rather, abstention from action—which the curse section urges, rhetorically, lies within the human realm to perform. In this way, the royal inscriptions indicate their human audience. The king's self-presentation in the rest of the inscription serves to impress the human audience: to demonstrate the king's worthiness of preservation and to enlist virtual subjects in the cause of his immortality project. Here are a few relevant examples of curses from royal inscriptions—and examples of future conditional divine aggression:

> **Yeḥawmilk (KAI 10)**: *tsrḥ*[w][85] *hrbt b'lt gbl 'yt h'dm h' wzr'w 't pn kl 'ln gbl.*
>
> [If someone harms the monument,] may the lady, Mistress of Byblos, destroy both that man and his seed in the presence of all the gods of Byblos![86]
>
> **Azatiwada (KAI 26)**: *z wmḥ*[87] *b'lšmm w'l qn 'rṣ wšmš 'lm wkl dr bn 'lm 'yt hmmlkt h' w'yt hmlk h' w'yt 'dm h' šm 'dm šm*

[85] √*srḥ* jussive.
[86] Gibson, *TSSI* 3:95.
[87] √*mḥy* jussive, following Gibson, *TSSI* 3:16.

> [If a king or prince or man of renown harms the monument,] then let Baalshamem and el-Creator-of-Earth and the eternal Son and the whole generation of the sons of the gods efface that kingdom and that king and that man who is a man of renown!
>
> **Kilamuwa (KAI 24):** *z yšḥt r'š b'l ṣmd*[88] *'š lgbr*
>
> [If anyone smashes this inscription,] may Baal-ṣemed who belongs to Gabar smash his head!
>
> **Tel Fekheriye (KAI 309):** *mr'y hdd lḥmh wmwh 'l ylqh mn ydh*
>
> [Whoever removes my name from the furnishings of the temple of Hadad my lord,] may my Lord Hadad not accept his bread and his water from his hand.[89]

If the inscriptions target a human audience in these ways—persuading their human readers of a political ideal and, much more obviously, exhorting the readers not to damage the text—it is equally clear that they also target a *divine audience*. As an immortality project, the royal inscriptions portray the king as pious and devoted to his patron deity in part to show his goodness to his human subjects and to persuade them to leave his name unharmed. But the rehearsal of the king's fealty to the god also looks in another direction: not towards humans and to impress *them*, but towards the deity.[90] In the case of MI, king Mesha rehearses his deeds, undertaken in obedience to Kemosh, to remind Kemosh of his past piety, and in hopes that Kemosh would consequently act to protect that legacy. The inscription works to persuade *Kemosh*: Kemosh delivered Mesha, and so Mesha built a *bamâ(t)* to thank him—therefore Kemosh ought to guard his name.[91] Kemosh commanded Mesha, and so Mesha obeyed him—therefore Kemosh ought to guard his name. The blessings and curses at the end of memorial inscriptions (and probably also at the end of MI) are

[88] KAI 24 is not dedicated to any deity. Its only reference to a deity occurs, unusually, here in its concluding curse.

[89] Following Crawford, *Blessing and Curse in Syro-Palestinian Inscriptions*, 171.

[90] So Becking: "he is reporting to Chemosh what he has made out of his appointment as a king" ("A Voice from Across the Jordan," 127).

[91] See W. Boyd Barrick, "The Bamoth of Moab," *Maarav* 7 (1991 [1993]): 67-89.

not so much a convention but the crescendo of an argument and a statement of request incumbent on the past acts of devotion rendered by the king towards the deity.

The physical size and location of the royal inscriptions are important to remember in connection with their divine audience. The inscriptions were placed in public places and written on monumental objects no doubt to impress or terrorize their human audience. But their largeness and their placement also seek to ensure that they will always have the deity for an audience, too. This is most patent with regard to MI, which was erected in a cult place for the deity Kemosh: "I built this sanctuary for Kemosh" (line 3). Emplacing the monument there guaranteed that, whatever Moabite audience it may have had, MI would certainly always have Kemosh for a reader. Moabites come and go, but Kemosh lived in his temples (see l. 13: "Kemosh who is in Qiryat") and was sure to see the monument. Perhaps, too, the relatively large size of the monument would have drawn Kemosh's eye.[92] The same applies, *mutatis mutandis*, to other texts inscribed on sizable public monuments.

But where the divine audience of the inscriptions is clearest is, as with their human audience, in their concluding curse sections. Regardless of their dimensions and location, the texts of the inscriptions themselves indicate that their final goal is to make a request of the patron deity/ies. Through jussive verbs of wish, the apodoses of the curse formulae call on the deity to act aggressively against potential vandals of the monument. These imprecatory clauses of course intend to scare would-be human vandals. But they also constitute genuine prayers for the deity to punish those who would destroy the speaking king's name. In this way, the whole memorial inscription up until the curse section is but prelude to it: the king's self-presentation endeavors to

[92] Early scholars disagreed on the exact height of the Mesha stele, but most agree it was c. 113 cm tall = 3.7 feet (see Graham, "The Discovery and Reconstruction of the Mesha Inscription," 50-51).

impress his human readers but also to establish the king's value to the deity and so to justify the deity's intervention on his behalf.

In sum, memorial inscriptions render the self-presentation of the king and do so to persuade two audiences. They ask of their *human audience* a negative action: to refrain from destroying the inscription. They ask of their *divine audience* a positive action: to protect the monument, especially by answering human vandalism with corresponding divine aggression.

1.4.1 Textual Corpora: Royal Psalms

The preceding section argued that memorial inscriptions from the territorial kingdoms of the Levant offer the best comparand for evaluating the uniqueness of Yhwh's aggression, especially because of their relative propinquity, length, and abundance of data relevant to divine aggression. The question follows: what biblical texts would be most opportune for comparison with them?

For the most part, scholarship on memorial inscriptions has compared them to long and literary biblical texts, especially those belonging to the so-called "Deuteronomistic History," more traditionally known as the Former Prophets. The trend started early. Already in 1894, Christian D. Ginsburg remarked of MI that "if the name of Jehovah were substituted for Chemosh, it would read like a chapter from the book of Kings."[93] This perception—of the similarity between memorial inscriptions and biblical prose narrative—has continued since that time to determine the selection of deuteronomistic materials. John van Seters's study of historiography in the ancient world juxtaposes Levantine memorial inscriptions with the biblical books running from Joshua-

[93] Ginsburg is quoted in Archibald H. Sayce, *The Higher Criticism and the Verdict of the Monuments* (New York: E. & J.B. Young & Co., 1894), 374.

Kings.[94] Reinhard G. Kratz subjects MI to detailed comparison with 1 Kgs 3.[95] Many other examples could be listed to illustrate how often commentators have placed these two kinds of texts alongside each other.[96]

The proposed symmetry between these biblical materials and the royal memorial inscriptions manifests in several ways. First and as noted, memorial inscriptions feature a narratival dimension—and of course, the Former Prophets are very much (and straightforwardly) narrative in genre. Second, the two species of text share a similar theme: they are centered on kings and kingship, and they name specific kings and their accomplishments. The royal achievements they enumerate all consist in military success or domestic building campaigns—even building projects of a cultic-religious orientation. It has even been argued—with cogency—that a few biblical accounts of a king's reign may depend literarily on a Judean memorial inscription.[97] Furthermore, the theologies of both texts are broadly consistent with one another: Yhwh in the Former Prophets is, as the patron deities of the royal inscriptions, a relatively modest character (some have even spoken of Yhwh's "absence"[98]); the main drama is human and kingly.

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[94] Van Seters, "Texts and Inscriptions of the Levant."

[95] Kratz, "Chemosh's Wrath and Yahweh's No."

[96] E.g., Klaas A.D. Smelik, *Converting the Past: Studies in Ancient Israelite and Moabite Historiography*, OTS 28 (Leiden: Brill, 1992); Christian Molke, *Der Text der Mescha-Stele und die biblische Geschichtsschreibung*, Beiträge zur Erforschung der antiken Moabitis (Arḍ el-Kerak) 5 (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 2006), 29–47; Omer Sergi, "State Formation, Religion, and 'Collective Identity' in the Southern Levant," *HeBAI* 4 (2015): 56-77; also, from the opposite direction, Paul-Eugène Dion and P.M. Michèle Daviau, "The Moabites," in *The Books of Kings: Sources, Composition, Historiography and Reception*, ed. Baruch Halpern and André Lemaire, VTSup 129 (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 205-224.

[97] See, first, James A. Montgomery, "Archival Data in the Book of Kings," *JBL* 53 (1934): 46-53; van Seters, *In Search of History*, 301; Donald B. Redford, *Egypt, Canaan, and Israel in Ancient Times* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 323; Nadav Na'aman, "Royal Inscriptions and the Histories of Joash and Ahaz, Kings of Judah," *VT* 48 (1998): 333-349; although cf. the negative conclusions of Simon B. Parker, "Did the Authors of the Book of Kings Make Use of Royal Inscriptions?" *VT* 50 (2000): 357-78.

[98] Amelia D. Freedman, *God as an Absent Character in Biblical Hebrew Narrative: A Literary-theoretical Study*, SBL 32 (New York: Peter Lang, 2005). Cf. also Mark McEntire, "A Punishing and Destroying God," in *Portraits of a Mature God*, 135-73.

In spite of these factors supporting the comparison between biblical prose narrative and memorial inscriptions, a few powerful considerations weigh against it. The foremost of these is the *uttered-ness* of the inscriptions. The entire point of memorial inscriptions is that the king speaks through them: his persona controls the message of the inscription—*is* the message of the inscription. By contrast, as Robert Kawashima and others have argued, biblical prose narrative is fundamentally anonymous: it signals no speaking persona at all, but is irreducibly *written*: "no one speaks; the events seem to narrate themselves."[99] So, too, if memorial inscriptions themselves constitute an event of speech, an *address*, Kawashima writes that biblical narrative is "objective," in the sense that it simply tells of events without marking where its narrator stands relative to them, temporally.[100] In a word, the Former Prophets are unutterable. This can also be seen in their relative length: they are long and literary works where memorial inscriptions are short and condensed.

The Former Prophets also, of course, seek to *persuade*—but it seems almost certain that the intended recipient for their rhetoric is entirely human. They make no sidelong appeal to Yhwh—no apostrophe or anything approximating it. Meir Sternberg writes of biblical narrative that

> God [i.e., Yhwh] operates within and the narrator without the represented world; so do their respective addressees, the characters, and the reader. As record of fact, to be sure, the Bible maintains a spatiotemporal (as well as thematic) continuity between the textual and the extratextual world denied to fiction writing. The heroes are the ancestors of the teller and his readers, God their God, the stories their history, and the stage their land…For all their manifest and secret bonds, however, the two pairs have no direct dealings with each other across the existential dividing line. The narrator would not dream of apostrophizing characters…nor do they show the least awareness of his [i.e., the narrator's] existence.[101]

[99] Robert S. Kawashima, *Biblical Narrative and the Death of the Rhapsode*, Indiana Studies in Biblical Literature (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), 38.

[100] Ibid.

[101] Meir Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative*, Indiana Literary Biblical Series (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), 159.

Once more by way of contrast, the memorial inscriptions do not observe these strictures; they address themselves to the patron deity, especially in their closing curse section. Their rhetoric faces towards a dual audience, human and divine.

These general considerations caution against comparing memorial inscriptions with biblical prose narrative. But another argument makes the Former Prophets even less attractive for the specific goal of the present project, i.e., assessing the uniqueness of Yhwh's *aggression*. The Former Prophets present, as indicated above, a modest profile of Yhwh.[102] Even so, Yhwh's aggression is, in these writings, radical: the books of Samuel and Kings narrate the downfall of both the northern and the southern kingdom, at Yhwh's behest and as punishment for the sins of Yhwh's client king(s) and country(/ies). That is to say: the Former Prophets as deuteronomistic writings fall unmistakably on one side of the contrast that Wellhausen drew between the heathen world and the Hebrew Bible; they do not pronounce "God damn Israel"—but they do narrate divine damnation as a past occurrence. To use deuteronomistic materials as the comparand for the present study would thus weight its conclusions towards *difference*: of course Yhwh is different from, say, Kemosh in such texts, since they reflect an experience of national defeat that bears no resemblance to the national self-confidence of MI. Comparing inscriptions and Former Prophets would reinforce the contrast of Yhwh and other gods—and amplify Yhwh's uniqueness.

Testing the thesis of Yhwh's uniqueness would be better served by selecting biblical texts that more closely resemble the memorial inscriptions. If in the final judgment Yhwh's depictions in more similar biblical texts should still show significant idiosyncrasy relative to royal inscriptions, such a claim would of necessity be that much thicker and more nuanced. Instead of biblical prose narrative, the present study compares the depiction of divine aggression in royal

[102] McEntire, "A Punishing and Destroying God."

memorial inscriptions with that of the royal (biblical) psalms. The fact that Eichrodt, though reproducing Wellhausen's contrast between the heathen and biblical deity profiles, situates several royal psalms on the *opposite* side from the Hebrew Bible—as outposts of *heathenism*—suggests already that they may make for a more interesting and productive comparison.

For deliberating about the uniqueness of Yhwh's aggression, a number of factors argue for the royal psalms as a useful data-set to compare against materials from the ancient Levant. Most basically, like the memorial inscriptions, royal psalms are concerned with the identity of the king. In fact it is this pervasive royal concern that gives royal psalms their identity as a psalm category. Chapter 2 on royal psalms will detail more exactly what the distinctive characteristics of royal psalms are, but here let it suffice to say that the royal psalms of the Bible are diverse in form. Their categorization, unlike memorial inscriptions, does not depend on shared certain literary features. Instead, royal psalms are classed together in view of their common focus on the king. This focus holds across a variety of genres; the psalms that the present project reads include so-called "coronation psalms" (Psalms 2, 21, 110) as well as a wish for the king (Psalm 20) and the mixed-genre Psalms 89 and 132.

This intensive interest in the king makes royal psalms quite like the memorial inscriptions. But several more particular features make them even more suitable for comparison with the inscriptions: their brevity, for one, but also their nonnarrative character and their dual address, described in brief below.

1.4.1.1 Nonnarrativity: The Speaking Subject

The royal psalms of the Hebrew Bible are poetic texts. Numerous features mark them as such, including their linguistic density and their use of imagery and metaphor. Besides these poetic

devices, royal psalms also show the key quality of lyric: *uttered-ness*. These are texts designed, that is, for recitation. F.W. Dobbs-Allsopp writes that "lyric is quintessentially that medium of discourse which is intended to be re-uttered"—and that psalms amply display this openness to reuse.[103]

The reusability of royal biblical psalms can be seen in their particular form of *subjectivity*. Unlike the memorial inscriptions, they do not consist solely of an individual king's self-presentation. True, a kingly persona sometimes speaks in his own first-person voice in royal psalms. In Psalm 2:7b, the king says, *yhwh 'āmar 'ēlay,* "Yhwh said to me"; compare *wy'mr. ly. kmš*, "Kemosh said to me," MI lines 14b, 32. The same psalm, Psalm 2, also contains oracles from Yhwh's voice, as in its vv. 6-7a and vv. 8-9—as do MI and the royal inscriptions. But the speaking voice of Psalm 2 and other royal psalms belongs to an unnamed third party who is neither the deity Yhwh nor the human client king—but who supports Yhwh and his king. Samuel Terrien calls this unnamed third party group "the chorus."[104]

It might seem that the anonymity of the choral voice in the royal psalms approximates the anonymity and placelessness of the narrator in biblical prose writings. But this is not so: the choral voice of the royal psalms, though lacking characterization, oftentimes opens up its own experience to the reader in a way that the prose narrator does not.[105] The use of first-person voice exemplifies this invitation to the reader to "re-experience" what the choral persona perceives, e.g., Psalm 2:5: "*My* lord at your right hand smashed kings," or Psalm 20:7, "Now *I* know that Yhwh has saved!" The second dimension of lyric uttered-ness also applies to the royal psalms: they are acts of *address*—they do not recount an event but "strive to *be* an event," as the section below describes.

[103] Dobbs-Allsopp, "The Psalms and Lyric Verse," 368.

[104] Samuel Terrien, *The Psalms: Strophic Structure and Theological Commentary*, Eerdmans Critical Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 77, 78.

[105] Culler dedicates a section to "Address to Listeners or Readers" in his *Theory of the Lyric*, 191-201.

The rhetoric of royal psalms also evidences the same "metahistorical motifs of kingship" as do the memorial inscriptions. Though put to distinct uses, rhetorically, the same themes appear: validation through divine election and defeating enemy kings, including land loss and acquisition.[106] The only motif missing from royal psalms is sacred rebuilding, whose absence has to do with the psalms' medium—unlike the royal inscriptions, they are not concerned for a specific monument or royal building campaign. The psalm is divested from such edifices, and its only durable place is Zion, "the mountain of my sanctuary"[107]—a real place, to be sure, but also one which, as de Bruyn observes, acts as a sort of outpost of the divine realm, "an extension of Yahweh's god-space."[108] Though silent in regards to building campaigns, several royal psalms (Psalms 20, 21) are deeply committed to a grand (even mythic) vision of the king's domestic achievements.[109]

1.4.1.2 Nonnarrativity: The (Dual) Addressee

Royal psalms seek to persuade, and their rhetoric targets multiple addressees—both human and divine. As with memorial inscriptions, royal psalms *address* and do not only describe. Some royal psalms call on Yhwh more directly: Psalm 20, for example, begins, "May Yhwh answer you in the day of trouble" (v. 2); compare Psalm 21. Others like Psalm 2 never address Yhwh in second person—but even their third person recitations of Yhwh's deeds remain open to the presence and

[106] Excepting land loss and acquisition—on which, as a theme, see Green, *"I Undertook Great Works,"* 305-15 and Thompson, "The Testimony of the Good King," 260-61—these titles for the themes of memorial inscriptions are Suriano's ("Apology of Hazael," 172).

[107] The *nomen rectum* of the compound phrase in question (*har-qodšî*) is often translated adjectivally, e.g., "my holy mountain." This adjectival use of the root √*qdš* also appears in Northwest Semitic inscriptions (though mostly Phoenician and Punic; see Walter Kornfeld, *qdš* in *TDOT* 12:526). For reasons that will be discussed in chapter 3, the substantive is here preferred.

[108] Joseph de Bruyn, "A Clash of Space: Reaccessing Spaces and Speech, a Cognitive-Linguistic Approach to Psalm 2," *JSem* 22 (2013): 193-209, here 205.

[109] See Hamilton, "Prosperity and Kingship in Psalms and Inscriptions."

listening ear of Yhwh. This intentional "overhearing" of the deity is perceptible in that the royal psalms register a request of the deity, which is, as with memorial inscriptions, clearest at the psalms' conclusion. Although Psalm 2 does not conclude with a curse section, it does present a demand and a future conditional threat of divine aggression. The final stanza of this psalm addresses the enemy kings. Its "choral" voice admonishes these kings to "serve Yhwh with fear," and then its v. 12 spells out the negative consequence of disregarding this injunction: Yhwh's destroying anger. In an interesting fashion, royal psalms and inscriptions are alike in that they both transfer in closing to the *deity's* action. Both kinds of text exalt the human king: the inscription moreso, seeking explicitly to protect the king's name and legacy from vandals, but the psalms also, aggrandizing their nameless king through divine adoption and promises. And yet for all that exalting, the conclusions of both texts lifts up divine aggression as the consequence of not heeding their rhetoric. The texts climax by looking to the deity. In so doing, they admit the limits of the human king's power, and indicate their faith in the deity's relatively greater strength and durability. The same tactic is observable throughout other royal psalms: excepting Psalm 110, both the other royal psalms examined in chapter 3 include, in one form or another, a future conditional threat of divine aggression if the psalms' hearers reject their appeal.

Psalm	Future conditional divine aggression
Psalm 2	V. 12: "lest he be angry and you perish from the path, for his anger burns in a moment."
Psalm 110	N/A[110]
Psalm 20	V. 9: "They—they collapse and fall down…"
Psalm 21	Vv. 9-13: "Your hand finds out all your enemies…"

If, then, the royal psalms target Yhwh as their divine audience, whether by direct invocation or by threat of divine aggression, their *human* audience is even more foregrounded. As with

[110] See chapter 3 for further comments on Psalm 110 relative to the other, listed royal psalms.

memorial inscriptions, the human target of the psalms' rhetoric is most pointed in their concluding request. Psalm 2, for example, addresses the enemy kings, enjoining them to fear Yhwh—and thereby it obliquely addresses its own community that recites it, the enemy kings proxying for all those opposed to Yhwh's will. Other royal psalms also lodge a rhetorical request of their human readership—even and also when their explicit addressee is Yhwh. The choral voice of Psalm 20 exhorts itself to the praise of Yhwh (v. 6: "May we shout for joy at your deliverance…"). Psalm 21 likewise features cohortatives in its v. 13b: "let us sing and chant of your might." Psalm 110 is not so overt, but it, too, more subtly shows its human audience in its reference to "your people" of MT v. 3a (*ammĕkā*).[111]

1.5 Interrogating the Contrast: Plan of the Work

"'God damn America'—that's in the Bible." So the Reverend Wright controversially declared, and he was not wrong. Indeed, Julius Wellhausen had argued influentially that Amos and his prophetic colleagues trailblazed exactly that "paradoxical thought": that the national deity Yhwh could turn against his own king and country. The entire Hebrew Bible, Wellhausen believed, emerged in the wake of Amos's theological innovation, which formed a strong contrast to the religion of Israel's neighbors—and to ancient Israel's own religion which it shared in common with them. Another great scholar of the Hebrew Bible, Walther Eichrodt, basically agreed with the contrast that Wellhausen drew, although his chronology differed from Wellhausen's. Both authors—and countless others after them in the study of the Hebrew Bible—have repeated the same stark dividing line: on the one hand, the gods of the nations, which as patron deities only

[111] OG in this instance departs from MT, reading μετὰ σοῦ ἡ ἀρχὴ ἐν ἡμέρᾳ τῆς δυνάμεώς σου, "with you is rule on a day of your power" (NETS). For reasons that chapter 3 indicates, my translation follows OG here—but either way the point stands, that Ps 110, too, addresses its reader(s), though more obliquely than the other royal psalms listed above.

blessed and protected the national interest; and on the other, Yhwh, the God of the Bible, who uniquely as a patron deity showed himself capable of aggressing against his human partners.

The present work asks whether this account is really true—a question of significance to the theology of the Hebrew Bible. Its guiding question is thus, "Is the aggression of Yhwh really uniquely devastating relative to the patron gods of the nations?" This chapter (1) argued that the supposed contrast is best interrogated through a comparison of royal memorial inscriptions and royal psalms. Although most scholarship on memorial inscriptions has compared them to the Former Prophets, the preceding sections indicate several reasons why royal psalms make for a preferable comparison. The rest of the study will test Wellhausen's contrast in two directions: first by examining the royal theology of Israel's neighbors, especially by reading select memorial inscriptions, in its chapter 2. The objective of this chapter will be to determine whether divine aggression in these inscriptions is really (as Wellhausen and Eichrodt alike contend) limited in scope and recuperative only.

Next, the project reads select royal psalms of the Hebrew Bible in its chapter 3. Besides their literary similarities to the memorial inscriptions, royal psalms make a good test case because the role of divine aggression in them is controverted: Walther Eichrodt treats Psalms 2, 110 as examples of unreformed Canaanite theology in which Yhwh's aggression is limited and outwardly directed only, unlike the dominant deuteronomistic theology of the Hebrew Bible. Wellhausen—and others after him—interpret Yhwh's aggression in these psalms as (incipiently) radical and conditional, since he views these psalms as conformed and conforming to deuteronomistic theology.[112] The objective of chapter 3 is to determine the character of Yhwh's aggressiveness, especially relative to his client king and country.

[112] Wellhausen, *The Book of Psalms*. But see also Saur, *Die Königspsalmen*, *passim*, as well as Reinhard G. Kratz, "Reste hebräischen Heidentums am Beispiel der Psalmen," *NAWG.PH* (2004/2), 25-65 and Reinhard Müller,

The following chapter 4 introduces a new data-set for comparison: royal psalms that communicate Yhwh's aggression against his client king and country—in and because of a past historical event of defeat. In these royal psalms, much remains the same as with other royal psalms and inscriptions: besides their focus on the king, they, too, show the distinctive qualities of lyric poetry and employ metahistorical motifs of kingship. But they also overtly evoke the paradoxical thought that Yhwh damns (and damned) his own king, very *unlike* the royal psalms of the preceding chapter. These psalms more clearly instantiate, then, the contrast that Wellhausen proposed: between Yhwh and other ancient deities.

Chapter 5 pivots from royal psalms altogether, and briefly addresses a different textual corpus: the "eighth century" prophets that formed the basis for Wellhausen's entire account of Israelite religious history.[113] This chapter takes a yet further step—away from the royal theology characteristic of both inscriptions (chapter 2) and some biblical psalms (chapter 3). Chapter 5 samples from biblical texts that witness to a divine aggression more similar to the royal psalms of chapter 4: where Yhwh explicitly aggresses against his king and country. The point of introducing these materials, even suggestively, is to posit a *tertium comparationis*—a "third term" against which to compare especially the royal psalms evoking a past event of divine aggression.

The closing chapter 6 offers summary reflections on the conclusions and contributions of the present work, including its findings for the study of the royal palms, the study of Syro-Palestinian Inscriptions, Hebrew Bible theology, and the history of Israelite religion.

"Die frühe Jahweverehrung im Spiegel der ältesten Psalmen," in *Anfänge und Ursprünge der Jahwe-Verehrung*, ed. Cilliers Breytenbach, BThZ 30 (Leipzig: EVT, 2013), 89-119.

[113] Adam Mackerle's prefatory comment applies, *mutatis mutandis*, to my own use of the phrase in quotation marks: "By using the term 'preexilic' [or: "8th century"], I am referring here to the explicit statement at the very beginning of the book[s] of Hosea, Amos, Micah, and Zephaniah…I do not want to assert that these books were (or were not) written in the monarchical times…[Rather,] according to the superscripts, the four books are to be read in the context of the (Israelite and Judahite) monarchy with this 'stage' constantly in mind" (Monarchy in the Preexilic Minor Prophets," in *A King Like All the Nations? Kingdoms of Israel and Judah in the Bible and History*, ed. Manfred Oeming and Petr Sláma, Beiträge zum Verstehen der Bibel 28 (Zürich: LIT, 2015), 229-41, here 229 and 229n1.

CHAPTER 2: DIVINE AGGRESSION IN ROYAL INSCRIPTIONS

2.1 Defining the Body of Textual Evidence

The previous chapter argued briefly that memorial inscriptions from the Levant constitute the most interesting and productive comparand available for assessing the uniqueness of Yhwh's aggression, and this for several reasons:

1. their relative cultural and linguistic *propinquity* to ancient Israel/Judah as products of ancient Iron Age Levantine kingdoms, as over against other royal inscriptions from Assyria or Egypt;[114]
2. their relative *length* as texts, as over against other royal inscriptions like dedicatory inscriptions;
3. the relative richness of their deity profile, and esp. their closing curse sections that provide examples of divine *aggression*.

It still remains to the present study to make a selection from within the total corpus of memorial inscriptions of the Iron Age Levant—a selection that is representative and not reductive. The criteria enumerated above also serve to eliminate not just other kinds of texts from the ancient world but also several examples of memorial inscription, too.

With regard to the first criterion listed above, of cultural and linguistic *propinquity*, the present study brackets Luwian royal inscriptions from a full and detailed consideration.[115] The Syro-Hittite or Syro-Anatolian states lasted from c. 1200-700 BCE; based in southern and eastern Anatolia and northern Syria, they wrote in hieroglyphs and spoke an Indo-European language. Most Luwian inscriptions were royally commissioned, and "[w]ithout doubt, the majority of the surviving Hieroglyphic Luwian texts belong to the category of building inscriptions, often

[114] Or—it should be said—*non-royal* inscriptions from the Levant, e.g., the Deir 'Alla inscription, which apparently depicts divine aggression, but not that of a patron deity. On the inscription at large, see still Jo Ann Hackett, *The Balaam text from Deir 'Allā*, HSM 31 (Chico: Scholars Press, 1984); Jacob Hoftijzer and Gerrit van der Kooij, ed., *The Balaam Text from Deir 'Alla Re-Evaluated: Proceedings of the Symposium held at Leiden, 21-24 August 1989* (Leiden: Brill, 1991). In relation to divine aggression, see now especially Erhard Blum, "Israels Prophetie im altorientalischen Kontext"; and Matthijs de Jong, "Biblical Prophecy—a Scribal Enterprise," here 64-65.

[115] For such inscriptions, see Annick Payne and H. Craig Melchert, *Iron Age Hieroglyphic Luwian Inscriptions*, WAW 29 (Atlanta: SBL, 2012); also John David Hawkins, ed., *Corpus of Hieroglyphic Luwian Inscriptions, Vol 1*, Untersuchungen zur indogermanischen Sprach- und Kulturwissenschaft, NF 8/1 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2012).

including historical narratives of varying length."[116] In fact the characteristics of these building inscriptions that Payne lists mirror those of memorial inscriptions: self-introduction, retrospective of reign including contrast with predecessors, military and building achievements, and protective, concluding curse.[117] The decision to omit these objects from the present study is thus solely linguistic and so somewhat artificial.[118] In fact footnotes will keep the Luwian artefacts in view throughout, and the end of the present chapter explicitly raises one theological contribution peculiar to the Luwian inscriptions, which bears on the topic of divine aggression.

Concerning the second criterion listed above (*viz*., length), several royal inscriptions, apparently of a memorial character, are so fragmentary or short that their inclusion in the present work cannot be justified. This applies, for example, to the three lines of the Kerak fragment, mentioned above. Although it is very proximate linguistically to the royal psalms and apparently belongs to the memorial inscription genre, only 31 complete consonants remain on its surface, with five more partially discernible.[119]

Relevant to the third criterion (deity profile and divine aggression), several memorial inscriptions from kingdoms of the Iron Age Levant are relatively non-theological; or at least they do not yield a very rich deity profile, nor offer much to a study of divine aggression. These remarks

[116] Payne and Melchert, *Iron Age Hieroglyphic*, 59; also Alfonso Archi, "Luwian Monumental Inscriptions and Luwians in North Syria," in *Audias Fabulas Veteres: Anatolian Studies in Honor of Jana Součková-Siegelová.,* ed. Šárka Velhartická, CHANE 79 (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 16-47.

[117] Payne and Melchert, *Iron Age Hieroglyphic*, 59.

[118] This artificiality can also be seen in that the present study several of the memorial inscriptions that this study *includes* originate in Iron Age Syro-Anatolean kingdoms: the Azatiwada inscription (KAI 26), for example, comes from Karatepe in modern-day Turkey, then the kingdom of 'Adana; it is written bilingually, with one version written in Phoenician and the other in Luwian. So, too, the Hadad inscription (KAI 214), written in Sam'alian Aramaic, was erected in the Syro-Anatolean kingdom of Ya'diya.

[119] William L. Reed and Fred V. Winnett, "A Fragment of an Early Moabite Inscription from Kerak," *BASOR* 172 (1963): 1-9; also Stefan Timm, *Moab zwischen den Mächten: Studien zu historischen Denkmälern und Texten*, ÄAT 17 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1989), 269-70; Erasmus Gaß, *Die Moabiter—Geschichte und Kultur eines ostjordanischen Volkes im 1. Jahrtausend v. Chr*, ADPV 38 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2009), 66-69. In the words of Baruch Margalit, "the possibility of reconstructing even a single line, much less all three, would appear to be illusory (some would say hallucinatory)" ("The Kerak Fragment," *UF* 26 [1994]: 278-280, here 278).

apply to KAI 24, the so-called Kilamuwa inscription from the kingdom of Sam'al.[120] This text makes no initial, programmatic mention of any divine sponsor(s), except for in the closing curse section when the speaking king prays that for several gods to smash the vandal's head.[121] On the other hand, the speaking king of KAI 216 *does* claim divine election—in tandem with the support of his (human) Assyrian overlord: "my lord Rakkab-el and my lord Tiglath-pileser seated me upon my father's throne" (lines 5-6).[122] But this inscription does not threaten divine aggression in its conclusion or anywhere else. Because, then, of their relative paucity of theological interest, these and other such inscriptions will be set aside for the present project.[123]

The present chapter examines five memorial inscriptions: Mesha inscription (KAI 181), Tel Dan inscription (KAI 310), Zakkur inscription (KAI 202), Hadad inscription (KAI 214), and Azatiwada inscription (KAI 26). In addition to these five, it also inspects the Zakkur inscription, whose genre is mixed, as well as the Amman citadel inscription (KAI 307). The latter fits securely within two of the criteria listed above: it is written in Ammonite, a language that is very closely

[120] In this text, dating to around 825 BCE and written in Standard Phoenician on an orthostat situated at the entrance to the royal palace, the king named Kilamuwa boasts in first person of his royal successes ("a bleak and boring catechism," in the words of Michael O'Connor ["The Rhetoric of the Kilamuwa Inscription," 24]), especially relative to the failures of his predecessors.

[121] Frederick Fales notes that Kilamuwa was not "protected by the local divinity in his 'success story' as are [kings] Zakur and Meša" ("Kilamuwa and the Foreign Kings: Propaganda vs. Power," *WO* 10 [1979]: 6-22, here 22). Note also that Thompson's table of "thematic functions in royal inscriptions" indicates that Kilamuwa and Bar-Rakib omit the element Di = "recognition of divine participation as the primary cause for change" ("Testimony of the Good King," 255).

[122] Thompson thus goes too far to say of KAI 216 that "the gods are not mentioned at all in the Bar-Rakib inscription" (ibid., 262).

[123] The 9th c. bilingual (Akkadian and Aramaic) inscription from Tel Fekheriye (KAI 309) is (also) one of the inscriptions omitted from consideration in the body of the present chapter. In terms of genre, it is a dedicatory inscription, and it features a concluding curse section. As with the Luwian materials, notes will refer to this text where relevant, since it *does* present a profile of divine aggression, i.e., that of the patron deity Hadad.

related to ancient Israelite/Judahite,[124] and it is brief, at eight lines[125] It also presents an interesting and unparalleled view of divine aggression, lodging an unconditional divine pledge to destroy illicit entrants to the Amman citadel. It also does not belong to the literary category of the other inscriptions to be examined here: it is a dedicatory inscription, and an anomalous one, since it does not mediate the voice of a speaking human king but instead directly represents the voice of a speaking *deity*.[126]

2.2 Rhetoric and Deity Profile

As noted in chapter 1, the present project is theological and rhetorical-literary. More specifically, the goal of the present chapter is to determine the character of divine aggression in royal inscriptions. Its conclusion will assess whether Wellhausen and Eichrodt's view of divine aggression in the theology of Israel/Judah's neighbors holds up: that is, to test whether divine aggression in these royal inscriptions was occasional, not definitive, recuperative, or mediated an "abrogated doctrine of judgment"—and also, most particularly, whether the patron deities of Israel/Judah's neighbors could (or did) aggress against their own client king and country.

Procedurally, these coordinates mean that the present chapter pursues a course of investigation oriented towards the *activity* of the patron deities in question. Its objective is not, then, to produce a fully-orbed deity profile or characterization of each deity, but to focus on the quality, temporal location, and especially the recipients of divine aggression. To this end, the

[124] Ammonite may even have been mutually intelligible with Iron Age Hebrew; see Simon Parker, "Ammonite, Edomite, and Moabite," in *Beyond Babel: A Handbook for Biblical Hebrew and Related Languages*, ed. John Kaltner and Steven L. McKenzie, RBS 42 (Atlanta: SBL, 2002), 43-60; W. Randall Garr, *Dialect Geography of Syria-Palestine, 1000-586 B.C.E.* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2004), 231; Kent. P. Jackson, *The Ammonite Language of the Iron Age*, HSM 27 (Chico: Scholars Press, 1983), 108-109; also idem, "The Language of the Mesha' Inscription," in *Studies in the Mesha Inscription and Moab*, 96-130, here 130.

[125] Horn, "The Amman Citadel Inscription." Though relatively brief at 8 (very broken) lines, it is still the third-longest Levantine inscription ever recovered (after MI and the Siloam tunnel inscription).

[126] See Sasson, "The 'Amman Citadel Inscription as an Oracle Promising Divine Protection."

present chapter tabulates and comments on the *verbs* that each inscription ascribes to its patron deity, since verbs are that part of speech which communicates activity. As a work of research on divine aggression, the present chapter also corresponds to several other recent works on divine wrath in their emphasis on verbs.[127] Walter Brueggemann, too, in his rhetorically-driven *Theology of the Old Testament*, argues that "Israel's characteristic speech about God" consists in sentences, and that the most important ingredient of such sentences is *verbs*. "The full sentence of testimony…is organized around an active verb that bespeaks an action that is transformative, intrusive, or inverting."[128] In support of the priority of verbs, Brueggemann cites two other scholars: Michel Foucault and Terence Fretheim.[129] Brueggemann quotes Foucault's statement:

> The verb is the indispensable condition for all discourse; and wherever it does not exist at least by implication, it is not possible to say that there is a language. All normal presuppositions conceal the invisible presence of the verb.[130]

Tabulating and commenting on verbs *eo ipso* satisfies the present study's interest in the quality and temporal location of divine aggression. But this chapter also must take into account the recipients of divine aggression, and so it also tracks the direct or indirect objects of the verbs for which a patron deity acts as grammatical subject.

Of course, verbs do not subsist in isolation and apart from their context. In addition to tabulating and commenting on verbs of divine activity and their recipients, the present chapter also (and first) situates these verbal actions of the deity within the rhetorical gambit of each inscription. This is not just a matter of due diligence or appropriate preliminaries: the persuasive purpose of

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[127] See, e.g., Wälchli, *Gottes Zorn*, 114-45; Baloian, *Anger in the Old Testament*, 189; Grant, *Divine Anger in the Hebrew Bible*, 11-13, 21-39; cf. also the verbal focus of Crawford in his treatment of inscriptional curses (*Blessing and Curse in Syro-Palestinian Inscriptions*, 97-155).

[128] Walter Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997), 123.

[129] Terence E. Fretheim, "The Repentance of God: A Key to Evaluating Old Testament God-Talk," *HBT* 10 (1988): 47-70.

[130] Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, trans. A. M. S. Smith (New York: Vintage Books, 1973), 92-96.

each inscription matters very much for interpreting the manner in which it includes or exempts the human, client king from the divine aggression that it specifies. *Whose* the speaking voice of the inscription is and *whom* it tries to convince to act will prove interpretively crucial. Once more procedurally, this entails that each section treating an inscription briefly remarks on its persuasive character: who is speaking and whom it addresses as its audience. As a part of this prefatory section, the structure or layout of each inscription will also receive brief introduction.

2.2.1 Structure and Rhetoric of the Mesha Inscription (KAI 181)

MI is a memorial inscription.[131] As such (see chapter 1), the speaking king (Mesha) makes a self-presentation for posterity so that his symbolic self might live on. The rhetorical "targets" of Mesha's self-presentation are obscure in the present form of the inscription; the king addresses neither humans nor gods directly. But the inscription's dual audience is readily inferred: the king's recitation of his deeds would have rendered an impressive and kingly testimony to would-be Moabites, even if they were illiterate or semi-literate.[132] So, too, the king's recitation could not have failed to impress the deity Kemosh, whose centrality to the entire inscription should be

[131] Because in its line 3 Mesha says "I made this high place" (*w'ʿš hbmt z't*; note the deictic), some scholars have classified it as a "votive" or "dedicatory" inscription, i.e., that its primary function was to dedicate a newly constructed cult place (e.g., Hans-Peter Müller, "Moabitische historische Inschriften," in *Rechts- und Wirtschaftsurkunden Historisch-chronologische Texte*, ed. Otto Kaiser, TUAT 1 [Gütersloh: Mohn, 1982-85], 646-650; and idem, "König Mêša' von Moab und der Gott der Geschichte," *UF* 26 [1994]: 373-95, here 373-75). Others have emphasized that its occasion—and the occasion for the construction of the *bamâ(t)* for Kemosh—was Mesha's military success: and so MI is a *Kriegsinschrift* to commemorate victories on the field of battle (e.g., Smelik, "Kemosh was Angry with His Land," 37). But the genre of MI is neither of these—and both of these. Its occasion was indeed the dedication of a cult place, and it does commemorate military successes (as well as successful building projects). The inscription's intention is more comprehensive, though: it is a retrospective of Mesha's entire reign. In the words of J. Maxwell Miller, "the primary purpose of these texts [i.e., memorial inscriptions] was to memorialize the royal builders and only secondarily to commemorate the buildings themselves" ("The Moabite Stone as a Memorial Stele," 9). For further bibliography on the genre of MI, see Gaß, *Die Moabiter*, 52 and Green, *"I Undertook Great Works,"* 97.

[132] Routledge, *Moab in the Iron Age*, 155; Knapp, *Royal Apologetic in the Ancient Near East*, 22-24.

noted.[133] Niccacci suggests that the "introduction" of MI in lines 3-4 prefigures both the subsequent topics of building and warring, and indicates the roles of Kemosh and Mesha therein: Mesha's building is *for Kemosh*, just as in lines 21b-31a, Mesha builds. In line 4, Kemosh is the actor, saving Mesha from all his enemies—and lines 5-21a fill in the details of his divine deliverance. Mesha's building is thus responsive to Kemosh's prior salvation ("because he saved me") in the introduction—and throughout the text.[134] These details suggest Kemosh as a recipient of the inscription's rhetoric.

The dual orientation of MI is also implicit in its web of references to "gloating": the speaking king gloats over (lit: "causes to look upon") his enemies in line 4, thanks to Kemosh.[135] In line 13 narrating the success of Mesha's military campaign against Atarot, he says that he "dragged" the *'r'l. dwdh* before Kemosh (*lpny. Kmš*).[136] Similarly and less enigmatically in line 18, Mesha drags the "vessels of Yhwh" seized from Nebo before Kemosh. In just this way, Kemosh, too, was also able to gloat over or "look upon" his defeated divine foe. The inscription itself correspondingly makes a (literary) "public spectacle" of both the defeated Omrides and their god: the readers of the text, like the king and deity, can thereby "look upon" the enemies "in Qarho"

[133] Cf. Becking's remarks on the inscription as a "letter to the deity" ("A Voice from Across the Jordan," 127). Also see, e.g., the Luwian inscription Hama 4 §§ 5-7: "this seat I built for Ba'alat" (Payne and Melchert, *Iron Age Hieroglyphic*, 65).

[134] Niccacci, "The Stele of Mesha and the Bible," 241-44. Invocations of Kemosh occur with noticeably different frequency in these two sections: whereas "Chemosh looms large in all six of the campaign narratives" in lines 5-21 and 31b-34, "the list of building activities [in lines 21b-31a]…makes no reference to Chemosh, or any other god, but simply records Mesha's completed projects" (Parker, *Stories in Scripture and Inscriptions*, 55-56). Parker's explanation for this is "the different role of the deity" in making war and making buildings; "[w]ar is always a life-and-death matter in which the deity's support and direction cannot be taken for granted," whereas for construction projects, the deity's support is apparently more low-key (ibid.). This may be true but is somewhat psychologizing. Müller claims merely that for the ancients, building is "ein eher weltliches Geschäft" in comparison to war ("König Mêša' von Moab," 390). Niccacci's suggestion is more robust, exegetically.

[135] J. A. Emerton, "Looking on One's Enemies," *VT* 51 (2001): 186-96.

[136] For an overview of the immense history of translating this phrase, see Jonathon Stökl, "Kings, Heroes, Gods: The History of the Translation of the Term *'r'l dwdh* in Line 12 of the Meša-Stele," *KUSATU* 8 (2008): 135-62; also Gaß, *Die Moabiter*, 27-31.

(line 3). Kemosh in the Qarho sanctuary can literarily participate in the gloating of his manifestation "in Keriot" over captured cultic objects (line 13).[137]

In spite of this dual audience, the request that MI makes of either of its audiences, human or divine—or both—remains tacit because its concluding curse section is now missing. The absent conclusion of MI is a matter of importance to its interpretation, especially for assessing the character of Kemosh's aggression. Most commentators on MI opine that it once featured such an ending: Gibson estimates that there are 28-30 letters missing,[138] and Miller writes that "we may be fairly certain that [MI] concluded in the usual fashion—i.e., with a curse upon anyone who removed the stela or damaged the inscription."[139] This kind of curse section would have effected a request of its human and divine readers (or hearers): to humans that they would refrain from damaging the inscription, and to Kemosh that he would destroy vandals—most likely in the form of a future conditional if-then sentence. But the fact remains: the premier example of divine aggression—to which the present study compares the aggression of Yhwh—is no longer extant.[140]

Understandably, in scholarship on MI, and particularly scholarship of a literary or rhetorical interest, the absent curse section has played virtually no role.[141] The present study, however, insists that even if the precise content of this curse section remains unknowable, the *probability* that MI concluded with a curse section matters, and that analogy should govern our

[137] Perhaps a similar visual display of captured enemy cult objects occurs in the Luwian inscription Karkamiš A11 §14, in which the ruler Katuwas boasts that "I brought the trophies inside" (Payne and Melchert, *Iron Age Hieroglyphic*, 72).

[138] Gibson, *TSSI* 1:75.

[139] Miller, "The Moabite Stone as A Memorial Stele," 14; also idem, "Early Monarchy in Moab," in *Early Edom and Moab: The Beginning of the Iron Age in Southern Jordan*, ed. Peter Bienkowski, Sheffield Archaeological Monographs 7 (Sheffield: J.R. Collis, 1992), 77-92, here 87. Cf. also Smelik, "Kemosh was Angry with His Land," 40; Green, *"I Undertook Great Works,"* 110n60.

[140] Smelik writes that "[h]istory does not recount whether the inhabitants of Dhiban who caused the Mesha stele to shatter into fragments fell victim to the ancient curse of the king" ("Kemosh was Angry with His Land," 40).

[141] See especially, for example, Parker, *Stories in Scripture and Inscriptions*, 44-58; Green, *"I Undertook Great Works"*, 95-135; Thompson, "Testimony of the Good King," 276-77. For a very partial exception, see Becking, "A Voice from Across the Jordan," 136, where he briefly discusses a third, utopian temporal stage in the inscription, which succeeds the time before Mesha and the time of Mesha's kingly tenure.

approach: other memorial inscriptions climax with a curse prosecuted by the patron deity/ies on vandals of the monument.[142] To these concerns the present chapter adds another: the uniqueness of MI's extant rendition of divine aggression. Alone among memorial inscriptions, MI features divine *wrath* in its initial setting of the problem for which the speaking king Mesha's reign presents the solution.

En route to its presumptive but now-missing, closing request of both would-be Moabites and of the deity Kemosh, MI employs a variety of rhetorical strategies. As chapter 1 indicated, MI taps into metahistorical motifs of kingship like validation through divine election, defeating enemy kings, including territorial re-seizure, and sacred rebuilding. Invoking these fixed institutions of eternal kingship proves to humans and to Kemosh that the king Mesha is a good king, worthy of immortality. All of these rhetorical devices are organized into a before-and-after schema: the time before king Mesha issued in a problem which Mesha's resolves. Green writes: "Time before Mesha's reign is by definition disordered time: a time of enemy occupation and defilement of the land by foreign gods, a time of humiliation (lines 5 and 6), a time when Chemosh was angry with his own land (lines 5 and 6). Mesha's reign is the time when order and honor are re-instituted."[143]

Kemosh's wrath belongs to this time *before* Mesha's reign: line 5 and the first two letters of line 6 read, "Omri [was] king of Israel, and he oppressed Moab many days, because *Kemosh was angry* with his land." The section below engages this line at greater length, but suffice it to say here in the section on the structure and rhetoric of MI that an assessment of divine aggression in MI would be incomplete if it did not contextualize Kemosh's *past* wrath within the arc of the whole inscription: namely, that the "after" time of Mesha's military and domestic success is not the end of the story. Rather, divine aggression probably appeared at the inscriptions furthest

[142] See Thompson's summary ("Testimony of the Good King," 276-77).
[143] Green, *"I Undertook Great Works",* 121.

temporal horizon—in the conditional future. Routledge is, then, only partly right to observe that "[i]n addition to contrasting past and present, the temporal element of these inscriptions is also carried forward. From a bad past through an improved present, these inscriptions look to an unchanged future."[144] The inscription most likely did look to the future, but the security of that future was not *eo ipso* guaranteed. Memorial inscriptions seek rhetorically to insure the future from possible regression by cursing those who would efface the king's name. In MI, divine aggression probably bookended the memorialization of Mesha: preceding his rise—and then protecting his legacy. A judicious evaluation of divine aggression must keep both ends of this temporal schema in view.

2.2.1.2. Divine Aggression in the Mesha Inscription

There are twenty-three verbal roots in MI, in variously flexed forms. In addition to five imperative verbs (√*hlk* and √*'ḥz* in line 14b; √ *'šh* in line 24; √*yrd* and √*lḥm* in line 32),[145] three infinitives (√*'bd* in line 7b; √*lḥm* in line 19a; √*spt* in line 21),[146] and one cohortative (√*'nw* in line 6), the inscription counts fifty-eight extant verb forms.[147] The deity Kemosh is grammatical subject of eight verbs, presented in the table below.

Verb	Line	Object(s)

[144] Routledge, *Moab in the Iron Age*, 157.

[145] Cf. also Klaus Beyer, "Die Sprache der moabitischen Inschriften," *KUSATU* 11 (2010): 5-41, here 35; also Jackson, "The Language of the Mesha' Inscription," 122-23.

[146] Beyer (ibid.) also counts *mbq'. hšḥrt* in line 15 as an infinitive (√*bq'*), but this is probably a somewhat frozen phrase; note that Jackson does not consider it as such ("The Language of the Mesha' Inscription," 122-23). Francis I. Andersen argues that *b'sry. yšr'l* in lines 25-26 is an infinitive construction, over against the "'prevailing translation' that understands *'sr* as a noun, "prisoners" ("Moabite Syntax," here 106-7). But see now the "new Moabite inscription" (*editio princeps*: Shmuel Aḥituv, "A New Moabite Inscription," *Israel Museum Studies in Archaeology* 2 [2003]: 3-10) and its reading of *'sr* in its lines 2 and 3*;* see André Lemaire, "Éssai d'interprétation historique d'une nouvelle inscription monumentale Moabite," *CRAIBL* 149 (2005): 95-108; Bob Becking, "Exile and Forced Labour in Bêt Harosh: Remarks on a Recently Discovered Moabite Inscription," in *Homeland and Exile: Biblical and Ancient Near Eastern Studies in Honour of Bustenay Oded*, ed. Gershon Galil & Mark J. Geller, VTSup 130 [Leiden: Brill, 2009], 3-12).

[147] For a comprehensive tabulation of syntactic features in MI, see Andersen, "Moabite Syntax."

hš'ny, "he saved me"	4	Mesha; all the kings
hr'ny, "he caused me to see"	4	Mesha; enemies
y'np, "he was angry"	5	his land
wyšbh, "he restored it"	8/9	the land of Medeba
wy'mr, "he said"	14	Mesha
wygršh, "he drove him"	19	the king of Israel
'mr, "he said"	32	Mesha
[yš]bh, "he restored it"	33	Horonaim

The deity Kemosh is also the *indirect object* of five verbs.

Verb	Line	Subject	Object	Preposition
w'š, "I made"	3	Mesha	*hbmt*, "the sanctuary"	*-l*
hyt, "it became"	12	the city (Atarot)		*-l*
w'[s]*ḥbh,* "I dragged it"	12/13	Mesha	*'r'l. dwdh*	*lpny*
hḥrmth, "I devoted it"	17	Mesha	it (Nebo)	*-l*
w'sḥb, "I dragged it"	18	Mesha	*'[r]ly yhwh*	*lpny*

Not all of these verbs in the inscription are pertinent to the topic of divine aggression. The present section concentrates on Kemosh's anger (*y'np*) in lines 5/6 and on Kemosh's receipt of ritual slaughter in lines 12/13 (*hḥrmth*).

Kemosh's anger (*y'np*) belongs to a cluster of deity references at the start of MI. Lines 3, 4 introduce the "problem" of MI by way of negation: clearly, if Kemosh has worked salvation from enemy kings, they must have posed a dire threat to Mesha and his realm. But line 5 states the problem more positively and specifically: Omri, king of Israel, oppressed Moab for many days. This is the central difficulty whose overcoming by Mesha and Kemosh MI celebrates; the episodes that follow in lines 5-21a are examples of this more encompassing challenge from the Omri dynasty/ However, no sooner is this problem stated in MI than its true source is also identified: the anger of Kemosh against his own land. The era of Omride domination is thus cast in terms of the

Moabite deity's disposition; in Parker's words, "while Moab may have lost its sovereignty, Chemosh had not lost his."[148] In this way, MI transforms national subjugation into an event of success for Moab—or at least for Moab's divine mascot Kemosh—on a higher plane: Kemosh successfully expressed his anger against "his land." Although Kemosh's anger is only mentioned here at the outset of MI, because the subsequent episodes in the military campaign section each instantiate the larger Omride problem, one may safely infer that these, too—the occupation of Medeba (line 7), the rebuilding of Atarot (line 11), and perhaps also the Israelite habitation of Nebo (lines 14-17)—represent the outworking of Kemosh's anger. Kemosh's wrath is, then, only once narrated, but it plays a key role for the rhetoric of the entire text.

Kemosh's anger is also firmly anchored in the narrative *past* of the inscription. The king exalts himself in part by telling how dreadful the country's circumstances were before he arrived: he is himself the event that catalyzed a turning of eras. Kratz notes the similar temporal location and rhetorical function of wrath in some biblical psalms of thanksgiving where divine wrath is introduced *only so as to celebrate its supercession*.[149] The placement of Kemosh's anger in the inscription so shortly after the parallel lines extolling his deliverance also has the effect of reassuring against that anger, like so: KEMOSH SAVED MESHA! (Kemosh was once angry). What MI wishes above all to communicate is the *deity's favor* towards king Mesha; Kemosh's aggression is contrapuntal but ultimately serves the same goal.[150]

MI specifies no provocation for Kemosh's anger.[151] Stern conjectures: "One can only assume from the MI that the Moabites had in some way not given the god his just due as incumbent

[148] Parker, *Stories in Scripture and Inscriptions*, 47.

[149] Kratz, "Chemosh's Wrath and Yahweh's No," 98n15.

[150] In Kratz's words, "the mention of the divine wrath in the Mesha inscription indirectly confirms the prevailing political situation" (ibid., 100).

[151] Stern: "an important void" (*The Biblical* Ḥerem, 42). Cf. also Considine, who discusses MI under the heading "irrational" ("The Theme of Divine Wrath in Ancient East Mediterranean Literature," 114-115).

on the people Kemosh had chosen…there is no knowing whether the infraction was in the moral realm or in the more strictly ritual realm."[152] But Stern's assumption misses the rhetorical import of MI's omission. Acknowledging that a sin or ritual oversight caused Kemosh's anger would be to blame Mesha's father Kemoshyat for Omri's occupation—an explanation employed centrally in the Hebrew Bible (and by the deuteronomistic materials, not least) but which would have been counterproductive to the rhetoric of MI.[153] MI is wholly lacking in self-blame; there are no "internal enemies" of Moab. There are external enemies that Mesha slaughters (lines 11-12, 16-17) and enslaves (lines 25, *'sry. yšr'l*), and there are loyal Moabites who fight for Mesha (line 20) and obey his orders (line 24). In the words of line 28, "All Dibon was loyal."

The object of Kemosh's anger is also interesting, and little remarked upon. Kemosh was not angry with Mesha or with Mesha's father Kemoshyat.[154] Most scholars take "land" as more or less synonymous with "people." Stern thus writes that Kemosh's anger is at "his people, expressed here by ארץ; cp. Deut 11:17, Josh 23:16."[155] But why was Kemosh angry at "his land" (*'rṣh*) rather than "his people" (**'mh*[156])? Lines 11 and 24 attest that this word (*'am*) was available in Moabite, used in MI both times in construct with *kl*, "all." Specifying the land rather than the people of Moab as the object of Kemosh's anger seems once more to be a way of sidestepping an unwanted complication. In the rhetoric of MI, "there is no ambiguity [of] characterization…Mesha and Chemosh are uniformly virtuous"—and so, also, one might add, are the Moabites as described in

[152] Ibid., 42, 43.

[153] See, for example, Terry Lemos, "The Apotheosis of Rage: Divine Anger and the Psychology of Israelite Trauma," *BI* 23 (2015): 101-21.

[154] Stern: "Mesha never described himself as the object of Kemosh's anger" (*The Biblical* Ḥerem, 43).

[155] Ibid., 42.

[156] This form is unattested (hence: *), but the 3rd singular nominal suffix is consistent (Beyer, "Die Sprache der moabitischen Inschriften," 26).

MI.[157] Directing Kemosh's anger to the less anthropomorphic "land" protects against a rhetorical glitch in this otherwise "black and white" vision.[158]

There may also be an idea at play that the land of Moab in some special way belongs to Kemosh (see lines 5/6, *'rṣh*, "his land").[159] The Moabites would then be, as it were, Kemosh's tenants (see further below).[160] Jan Joosten's words summarizing the "ideational framework" of the Holiness Code in Leviticus are comparable: "YHWH is here represented as the great landlord with the Israelites as his tenants."[161] But the direction of dispossession works differently in MI than in Leviticus. There, the people pollute the land, and so Yhwh dispossesses them (or rather: the land vomits them out!).[162] In MI, Kemosh is angry at *the land*, and so the Moabite people are dispossessed. Israel's occupation of Moabite territory would then be the fallout of Kemosh's anger at the land itself.[163] The point remains that MI does not make Moabites the recipients of Kemosh's anger—when it could have.

What this all-round lack of specification means for Kemosh's past anger is that MI brooks no possibility of it becoming present, leastwise against the good king and his people: neither Mesha nor the Moabites were recipients of divine aggression in the past, and so the inscription exempts them from becoming its recipients in the future. Only the land bore the brunt of Kemosh's wrath—and the land is not addressed by the inscription. So, too, the next five verbs for which Kemosh is

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[157] Green, *"I Undertook Great Works",* 111.

[158] Ibid.

[159] Intriguingly, *'ereṣ* never receives a 3ms suffix in biblical Hebrew.

[160] Cf. the anthropologist Marcel Mauss, who situates the gods as always already occupying the position of gift-givers vis-à-vis humans. They are the default initiators of the divine-human exchange, such that humans stand in a relation of primordial obligation to the gods. Gods are "the true owners of the things and possessions in the world." Because wood and soil and other property belong to the gods, humans needs must "purchase" the rights to use them (*The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*, trans. W.D. Halls [New York: W.W. Norton, 1990; orig. French, *Essai sur le Don*, Presses Universitaires de France, 1950], 16).

[161] Jan Joosten, *People and Land in the Holiness Code: An Exegetical Study of the Ideational Framework of the Law in Leviticus 17-26*, VTSup 67 (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 172.

[162] Brent A. Strawn, "On Vomiting: Leviticus, Jonah, Ea(a)rth," *CBQ* 74 (2012): 445–464.

[163] Curiously, *'ereṣ* in biblical Hebrew is never the object of Yhwh's anger. The earth can be "consumed in the fire of his jealousy" (Zeph 1:18).

the subject spell out his aggression against external enemies: all these verbs belong to the military campaigns, specifically, the restoration of Medeba to Moabite control (lines 7b-10a), the conquest of Nebo (lines 14b-18), the annexation of Yahaz (lines 18b-20), and the conquest of Horonaim (lines 29b-33). In the case of Nebo and Horonaim, Kemosh's commanding speech to Mesha catalyzes Mesha's successful military actions against these towns, and with Medeba and Yahaz, the whole campaign is attributed to Kemosh's agency: he returned Medeba and drove the king of Israel out of Yahaz. Kemosh's aggression is directed outwards towards foes.

The other verbs for which Kemosh acts as *indirect object* also cluster in the military campaign section, in the accounts of the seizure of the Israelite towns Atarot and Nebo. These two episodes closely parallel one another: in both, though using different vocabulary, Mesha slaughters the population of an Israelite town wholesale and captures their cultic paraphernalia to present before Kemosh (*lpny*). What does this contribute to the characterization of Kemosh's aggression, that he is the recipient (somehow) of slaughter and the intended audience for captured cultic objects? First, the two verbs of dedication—*hyt*, "it became," and *hḥrmth*, "I dedicated it"—make Kemosh (*lkmš*) the recipient of the killing of Moab's enemies. Brekelmans has suggested that this lends Kemosh a certain bloodthirsty aspect.[164]

This would certainly pertain to the subject of divine aggression, but it is not what MI emphasizes. As Routledge discerns, *ḥerem* seems more concerned with *proprietorship*. It was perfectly possible for Mesha to seize a city and then to enslave its male inhabitants (see line 25 with its reference to prisoners of Israel, as well as the "new Moabite royal inscription"). But by killing the men of Atarot, Mesha in effect removes them from the realm of public exchange and gives them over to Kemosh's sole propriety: "the deity holds booty and captives as inalienable

[164] C.H.W. Brekelmans, *De Herem in het Oude Testament* (Nijmegen: Centrale Drukkerij, N.V.), 1959; quoted in translation by Stern, *The Biblical* Ḥerem, 40.

(nonexchangeable) possessions."[165] This appears to be the force of line 12: *hqr. hyt. kmš. wlm'b*, "the city (Atarot) became Kemosh's and Moab's," which sentence explains why Mesha killed all the men there. If (the land of) Moab is somehow already the special possession of Kemosh, then perhaps giving the city over to Kemosh and Moab entails that the city is, re-zoned (so to speak) as the deity's personal property.[166] Unlike Yahaz, Atarot was not annexed to Mesha's home city of Dibon (line 21). Mesha had no dealings with the former citizens of Atarot; they belong, in death, to Kemosh's personal jurisdiction. Mesha then resettled the town (line 13). So also with line 16 describing how Mesha killed the entire population of Nebo: these men and boys and women and girls were not to be enslaved or married off, because (*ky*)—again explaining why *not*—Mesha dedicated them to (Ashtar-)Kemosh.

If this interpretation holds, *ḥerem* does not indicate Kemosh's bloodlust so much as his entitlement to unique, divine prerogatives. What the deity personally owns is untouchable to Moabites and even to their king, Mesha. The primeval way of enacting this absolute proprietorship was to kill the persons "enslaved" to Kemosh; only in this way were these defeated persons made utterly unusable to normal human commerce and civil responsibility. For the purpose of deity characterization, what *ḥerem* gives to Kemosh is a (grim) sense of singular or absolute lordship. Like the retainer sacrifices practiced by the Norse or Egyptians, the slaves and holdings of Kemosh were so totally his own that only death could effectively perpetuate his sole proprietorship.[167]

2.2.1.3. Conclusion.

[165] Routledge, *Moab in the Iron Age*, 150.
[166] But cf. line 29, "I annexed it to the land…"
[167] Ellen F. Morris, "(Un)Dying Loyalty: Meditations on Retainer Sacrifice in Ancient Egypt and Elsewhere," in *Violence and Civilization: Studies of Social Violence in History and Prehistory*, ed. Rod Campbell, Joukowsky Institute Publication 4 (Providence: Joukowsky Institute Publications, 2013), 61-93.

Could Kemosh aggress against his own client king and country? Paragraphs above argue that MI strategically omits exactly these people from Kemosh's past aggression. Kemosh was angry with his *land*, and so the Moabites suffered dispossession. But king and country are exempted from divine anger. To take up the Reverend Wright's malediction once again, it does not appear that the paradoxical thought, "God damn Moab," emerged, at least insofar as MI is an index; Kemosh "damns" only the foes of his king and country, whom he dispossesses and drives out from Moabite territory.

Wellhausen's "natural bond" language fits the relation of Kemosh to Moab. Line 12 of MI narrates that the city of Atarot *hyt lkmš wlm'b*, "became Kemosh's and Moab's." Several commentators have made note of this expression. "The juxtaposition of deity and country," writes Parker, "indicates the extent to which the interests of Chemosh are now identified with those of the people (in contrast with his past anger with his land, lines 5-6)."[168] This may overplay the contrast of Kemosh's past anger and present favor, and also to miss that it is not exactly the people with whom Kemosh was angry. Nonetheless the present identity of interests still stands, between deity and land—and perhaps also, by extension, with the people resident on that land. Müller is evocative:

> Daß der Gott und sein Volk, das sich im Herrscher korporativ vergegenständlicht, gemeinsame Genugtuung erfahren, betont die Wendung in Z. 11, wonach der Bann 'ein Schauspiel für Kemosch und für Moab' darstellt; auch der Gott erscheint so wie *die Inkarnation der ihn verehrenden Gesellschaft*.[169]

The deity is the incarnation of the community that worships him—or perhaps vice versa, the community is the incarnation of the deity, and he is their soul: their ego. In the vocabulary of Walther Eichrodt, this juxtaposition of Kemosh and the people of Moab meets his description of

[168] Parker, *Stories in Scripture and Inscriptions*, 50.
[169] Müller, "König Mêša' von Moab," 380; my emphasis.

"national egoism."[170] Kemosh is identified with Moab. Moab is distinguishable from him, since it may be occupied by a foreign power while Kemosh remains sovereign. And Kemosh could turn in anger from Moab. Yet "though he may occasionally turn against them in anger, yet it is in his own interests to preserve his people from annihilation and in all circumstances to protect them from their enemies."[171]

The only complication for this view—which seems otherwise to confirm both Eichrodt and Wellhausen's thesis about the typical theology of Israel/Judah's neighbors—is the now-missing curse section of MI. If MI is careful to omit Mesha and Moabites from its past narration of Kemosh's anger, its curse section would have addressed Moabites just insofar as the language of the inscription itself is Moabite. That is: even knowing nothing about the content of the missing curse section, it would have spoken to Moabites. What this means is that the future conditional aggression of Kemosh could have implicitly been more inclusive (in potentiality at least) than Kemosh's past wrath which was only against the land and *not* against the people of Moab.

The (probably) more inclusive future conditional aggression of Kemosh would have served a specific rhetorical purpose: in the interest of safeguarding king Mesha's name and legacy on the monument, it would have warned off all comers—or at least those that spoke and read Moabite, the language of the inscription.[172] However, by imagining the would-be vandal of the inscription in effect as a Moabite everyman, MI would also have somewhat undercut its otherwise consistent vision of Kemosh and Moab in a "natural bond." Kemosh is for Moab an unconditional "benefactor

[170] Eichrodt, *TOT* I:371, and see his n1.
[171] Ibid., 1:67.
[172] For a comprehensive curse upon all comers from the Luwian realm, see Karkamiš A3 §§ 10-15: "But who(ever) erases my name, for him may this Storm God of Karkamiš trample on the ruins! May he not even WASALALI his place(?)! In future, who(ever) shall block up these temples, whether he (be) a king, or he (be) a Country-Lord, or he (be) a priest, may the Storm God of Karkamiš trample the house of his father in(to the ground) with (his) hooves!" (Payne and Melchert, *Iron Age Hieroglyphic*, 75).

deity" in MI—except in the event that a Moabite jeopardizes the memorial to king Mesha, in which case, Kemosh was capable of aggressing against that Moabite.

To be sure, this would have been a very limited example of aggression. In no way is it tantamount to the "possibility of [national] annulment" that Eichrodt describes vis-à-vis Yhwh and Israel in Deuteronomy.[173] Nonetheless, it is a scenario in which, for the sake of upholding a true relationship of unconditional divine favor on Kemosh's client king Mesha, an element of conditionality was introduced into Kemosh's relationship with other individual Moabite readers tempted to damage Mesha's stele. The chapter conclusion reflects further on the meaning of this conditionality. But for now it must be reiterated and underscored that this potential exception is not, in fact, found in the extant text of MI. While it was likely there, we will likely never know for sure if was. Kemosh's for-Moab-ism may, therefore, have been uniformly presented and untouched by conditionality of any sort.

2.2.2.1. Structure and Rhetoric of the Zakkur Inscription (KAI 202)

ZI is of mixed genre.[174] On the one hand, its opening line refers to the stele on which the text was inscribed: [n]*ṣby'. zy. šm. zkr. mlk.* [ḥ]*mt, wl'š. l'lwr*, "the [st]ele which Zakkur the king of [Ha]math and Lu'aš set up for Iluwer." This is the characteristic opening for dedicatory inscriptions, as is the 3rd person voice. But then the second line of ZI changes to 1st person and introduces the king, in a way familiar from MI and other memorial inscriptions*: 'nh. zkr. mlk. ḥmt, wl'š*, "I am Zakkur, king of Hamath and Lu'aš." And as with a memorial inscription, ZI enumerates

[173] Eichrodt, *TOT* 1:457.

[174] Miller, "The Moabite Stone as a Memorial Stele," 11-12; Drinkard, "The Literary Genre of the Mesha' Inscription," 149-152; Parker, *Stories in Scripture and Inscriptions*, 106-112; also idem, "The Composition and Sources of Some Northwest Semitic Inscriptions," *SEL* 16 (1999): 49-62, here 53-55; Green, *"I Undertook Great Works",* 158.

the military successes and domestic achievements of the speaking king.[175] This recital of Zakkur's resume culminates in curses on would-be vandals of the monument—and also perhaps blessings on Zakkur and his dynasty, although these are now missing.[176]

Parker has argued that the mixed genre of ZI reflects its compositional disunity. In addition to featuring formal properties of both inscriptional genres, Parker also highlights the corresponding double-ness of its deities.[177] Line A.1 of ZI dedicates the stele to the deity Iluwer, and line B.13 reiterates this dedicatory formula. But then the "inner unit" of the inscription with all the features of a memorial text speaks of the sponsorship of the "Lord of the heavens," the deity Baalšamen, who delivered Zakkur from a siege. It is possible that these titles both indicate manifestations of the same deity (Hadad).[178] But the titular distinction remains. Parker also points out the geographical differences in ZI. The stele itself, dedicated to Iluwer, apparently stood in the town of Aphis.[179] But the account of siege and miraculous deliverance by Baalšamen occurred in the town of Hadrach. So Parker:

> the best explanation for these features is that our inscription contains a copy of an earlier memorial inscription, erected to commemorate the events in Hadrach… Later, after Zakkur had completed his rebuilding of Apish and the temple to Iluwer in that town, he had a dedicatory inscription prepared for this god, to be erected in his temple….But the persistent importance to the court of Zakkur's earlier deliverance and his dependence on the Lord of the Heavens compels the inclusion in this new inscription of that story.[180]

The decision of Zakkur to include reference to Baalšamen on his monument in Aphis testifies to the dual audience of the inscription. ZI accommodates the sensibilities of the human leaders of the local religious cult: having rebuilt their town and refurbished their temple, the king

[175] Ibid.
[176] On this, see Miller, "The Moabite Stone as a Memorial Stele," 12; Drinkard, "The Literary Genre of the Mesha' Inscription," 151.
[177] Parker, *Stories in Scripture and Inscriptions*, 108.
[178] Green, *"I Undertook Great Works",* 165n33, and bibliography there.
[179] Ibid., 165.
[180] Parker, "The Composition and Sources of Some Northwest Semitic Inscriptions," 54.

dedicates his achievement to their deity Iluwer. But even while honoring this deity, Zakkur's own devotion to *his* patron god showed through; he could not bypass the opportunity to praise Baalšamen for his earlier deliverance. Of course other motives could have contributed to Zakkur's incorporation of an earlier memorial inscription onto the monument in Aphis: it was more efficient to reuse an older text rather than to write a new one from scratch—and perhaps Zakkur also saw the two deities as in some sense identified, or overlapping, such that Baalšamen's past solicitude might also galvanize Iluwer to act favorably. But the name of Baalšamen was not swapped out, because it was this deity, under this name, who had saved Hadrach, and whom Zakkur besought for further protection. Only if the deity Baalšamen is a rhetorical target of the inscription, alongside of ZI's human readers, does this choice make sense.

ZI also features a historical schema, a "before-and-after" like MI and other memorial inscriptions. If Green's argument is correct, the disputed line A.2 of ZI plays a similar role as lines 5-6 of MI: it indicates the "beforetime" preceding Zakkur's subsequent exaltation and success.[181] And as with other memorial inscriptions, the signal event that catalyzes the change of epochs is the deity's installation of Zakkur as king. So Green: "time 'changes' when Baalšamen makes Zakkur king (A, 3)."[182] After this heading—much like the preface of MI which introduces the metahistorical motif of divine election in its lines 3-4[183]—ZI proceeds to narrate a lengthy episode illustrating Baalšamen's remarkable power and favor towards Zakkur. In addition to military success and defeating enemy kings ("all these kings" in line 9), ZI lines B.3-15 also evoke Zakkur's domestic achievement—"sacred rebuilding."[184] There the king boasts of building the town of Hadrach and "temples for the gods through[out] my [land]" (*bty. 'lhn. bk*[l 'rq]*y*, line 9). The final

[181] Green, *"I Undertook Great Works"*, 167.
[182] Ibid., 169.
[183] Suriano, "Apology of Hazael," 172.
[184] Ibid.; Green, *"I Undertook Great Works,"* 307-319.

section of ZI concludes with curses against those who would cast down the stele, and invokes both deities, Baalšamen and Iluwer, to undertake vengeance in such an event.

2.2.2.2. Divine Aggression in the Zakkur Inscription

Including reconstructed verbs, ZI contains seven verbs for which Baalšamen is subject, three verbs for which Baalšamen is the 1st person speaker (in lines A.12-14), and one reconstructed verb for which both Baalšamen and Iluwer are both subject, along with several other deities.

Verb	Line	Subject(s)	Object(s)
[*ḥṣlny* ?], "he saved me"	A.2	Baalšamen	Zakkur
wqm ʿmy, "he stood with me"	A.3	Baalšamen	Zakkur
whmlkny, "he made me king"	A.3	Baalšamen	Zakkur
wyʿnny, "he answered me"	A. 11	Baalšamen	Zakkur
[*wyml*] *ʾly*, "he spoke to me"	A.11	Baalšamen	Zakkur
[*wyʾmr ly*], "he said to me"	A.12	Baalšamen	Zakkur
hml[*ktk*], "I made you king"	A.13	Baalšamen	Zakkur
[*ʾ*]*qm ʿmk*, "I will stand with you"	A.14	Baalšamen	Zakkur
ʾḥṣlk, "I will save you"	A.14	Baalšamen	Zakkur
wyʾmr l[y], "he said to me"	A.15	Baalšamen	Zakkur
[*yhgʿw / yhnsw*],[185] "may they cast down / remove"	B.27	Baalšamen, Iluwer, Shamash, Shaḥar, the gods of heaven, and the gods of earth	the destroyer of the stele

[185] These are the verbs reconstructed by Gevirtz, "West-Semitic Curses," 144-45; cf. also Crawford, *Blessing and Curse in Syro-Palestinian Inscriptions*, 177.

ZI also contains several verbs for which Iluwer and Baalšamen are the indirect objects. In line 1, king Zakkur says that the stele was "set up for Iluwer" (*šm… l'lwer*), and similarly, in line B.14, "I set up this stele before [Iluwer] ([*w*]*šmt qdm* [*'lwr*] *nṣb' znh*). In line 11, king Zakkur recalls that he "lifted up my hands to Baalšamen" (*w'š' ydy 'l b'lš*[*my*]*n*). Additionally, Zakkur says in line 9 that he built temples "of the gods" (*bty 'lhn*). The curse at the end of the inscription threatens "whoever removes this stele from before Iluwer" (*mn* [*qd*]*m 'lwr*, line B.19).

Only a few of these verbs are relevant to the topic of divine aggression. The first set of verbs pertaining to divine aggression collect in "the siege narrative" in lines 11-15.[186] Here the deity Baalšamen speaks in two oracles, rendered through prophets, to the king Zakkur. The first oracle declares salvation: "Fear not, for I made you king and I am standing by you and I will save you from all these kings." The second oracle precisely undoes the threefold threat of the enemy kings against Hadrach: where they laid siege and raised a wall and dug a ditch in lines 9-10, now Baalšamen answers to each challenge and promises to reverse them. The key, opening verb of the oracle is missing, but from context probably denoted destruction—i.e., aggression in exact proportion to the aggression of the attacking league of kings.[187]

The second verb of importance to the inscription's profile of divine aggression appears in its line 27. Here the speaking king looks to the future and pronounces a curse on whoever "effaces (√*hg'* [?]) the story [of the achievements] of Zakkur."[188] Zakkur calls on several deities to avenge the destroyers of his inscription: first of all Baalšamen and Iluwer, but also Shamash and Shaḥar, and then the gods of heaven and the gods of earth, and the Ba'al of a particular site. All of these

[186] Parker, *Stories in Scripture and Inscriptions*, 109.
[187] Ibid., 110.
[188] The verbal root underlying this conjugated form is disputed: see, e.g., Mark Lidzbarski, *Ephemeris für Semitische Epigraphik*, 3 vols. (Giessen: Töpelmann, 1915), 3:10; Charles C. Torrey, "The Zakar and Kalamu Inscriptions," *JAOS* 35 (1915): 353-69, here 63; Gibson, *TSSI* 2:16 for various suggestions.

deities share a single verb, now missing but reconstructed as a form of √*hg'* in exact counterpoint to the vandal's action against the monument in lines 16 and 19, or perhaps as a form of √*'ns*, "to drag," in counterpoint to line 20.[189] The curse prays against "the man" as well as all his descendants.

2.2.2.3. Conclusion.

Could either Baalšamen or Illuwer aggress against their own client king and country? ZI looks back on a past example of Baalšamen aggression against the league of enemy kings that once threatened his client king and city. There is no question of the deities' solidarity with king Zakkur and also with his kingdom and land (*ml*[kty]… *'r*[qy], lines B:6, 7).

So, thus far, the answer to the leading question must be answered in the negative; Reverend Wright's pronouncement, "'God damn America'—that's in the Bible," seems true, perhaps exclusively so, since it appears Baalšamen or Illuwer would not damn Hamath and Lu'aš. But as with MI, the question can be raised what effect it has on the rhetoric of ZI that its closing curse section makes an imprecation against anyone who would harm the inscription. The king is, once more, absolutely exempted from the patron deities' aggression. But exactly for the sake of protecting Zakkur's memory, ZI opens the possibility that some persons who were formerly included in the patron gods' favor—residents of Hadrach, for instance, or citizens of Aphis—might now face the same gods' destructiveness because of their assault on the king's legacy. Friends of Baalšamen or Illuwer could become enemies should they seek to harm Zakkur.

2.2.3.1. Structure and Rhetoric of the Tel Dan Inscription (KAI 310)

[189] Gevirtz's argument that the apodosis of the curse probably duplicates on of the verbs from the protasis seems persuasive ("West-Semitic Curses," 144-45); Crawford, *Blessing and Curse in Syro-Palestinian Inscriptions*, 180.

The Tel Dan inscription (TDI) is a memorial inscription, very similar in form to MI and to ZI.[190] As such, it commemorates the reign of Aram's king Hazael.[191] Like these other inscriptions, it taps into metahistorical motifs of kingship: divine election, defeating enemy kings, and territorial re-seizure. Missing from the inscription is the motif of sacred rebuilding—although this may once have been included and is now absent because of damage. So, too, as with other memorial inscriptions, a before-and-after schema structures the rhetoric of TDI: this can be seen in the three references to Hazael's father in lines 2, 3, and 4. "The fathers of both Mesha and Hazael are depicted as being of lesser stature, and Mesha and Hazael as outdoing their fathers by defeating their enemies and expanding the boundaries of their kingdom."[192] Although very broken, these lines narrate the problem of the time before to which Hazael's reign in the present constitutes the solution.

However, very different from these other memorial inscriptions, TDI once sat in a town that may not have belonged to Hazael's territory. That is: MI and ZI were located in "home territory." The location of TDI on the other hand was (perhaps) in what had been thereunto "enemy territory." This possibility has important ramifications for understanding its rhetorical function.

Scholars have often alleged that TDI celebrates a specific military victory, or rather, a set of victories, over the kings of Israel and Judah. On this line of thinking, TDI is more a "victory inscription" than a "memorial inscription" proper.[193] Hazael imitates the Assyrian practice of erecting a memorial on the site of a military victory. Nadav Na'aman compares TDI to Assyrian

[190] So similar, indeed, that several early commentators suggested forgery, on which, see Hallvard Hagelia, *The Tel Dan Debate,* 14-21. On the genre of TDI as a memorial inscription, see also André Lemaire, "The Tel Dan Stela as a Piece of Royal Historiography," *JSOT* 81 (1998): 3-13; also George Athas, *The Tel Dan Inscription: A Reappraisal and a New Interpretation*, JSOTSup 360/Copenhagen International Seminar 12 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2003), 189.

[191] On the identification of the king, see Hagelia, *The Tel Dan Debate,* 32-43.

[192] Na'man, "Three Notes on the Aramaic Inscription from Tel Dan," 99.

[193] See Suriano, "Literary," 171n60 for bibliography on this question.

"victory stelae which they [Assyrian kings] had erected in the places they reached on their campaigns, in order to relate their triumphs to the gods of Assyria and to commemorate their achievements before the local inhabitants."[194] The stele embodies the presence of the king whose voice it mediates in a place where he secured control from a rival power, in this case Dan, an Israelite town.[195] The monument is then a kind of visual placeholder *to the conquered people* of their new ruler, and an outpost of the conquering deity's power. Andrew Knapp writes that the location of TDI in Dan "all but demands this interpretation."[196] The other possibility, that TDI is a memorial inscription, seems odd, given this placement in enemy territory: "Why Hazael would erect a memorial stele near the end of his reign in an annexed city raises several questions."[197]

At the same time, Knapp acknowledges that line 4 of TDI plays an *apologetic* role. In it, Hazael claims that the deity "Hadad made me king" ([wy]*hmlk. hdd*). The C stem of √*mlk* is apparently "a special term reserved for crowning someone in unexpected circumstances."[198] King Hazael seeks by emphasizing Hadad's choice of him to compensate for his lack of qualification on a more prosaic, human scale. Assyrian and biblical evidence corroborates that Hazael was not the legitimate successor.[199] But if this is a rhetorical purpose of TDI—persuading its human readers of Hazael's otherwise dubitable legitimacy—its location in Dan seems inconsonant. Knapp admits as much: "Working from a definition of royal apologetic as propaganda produced as defense against specific attacks upon a person's character or conduct, specifically in regard to a monarch's

[194] Na'aman, "Three Notes on the Aramaic Inscription," 94.

[195] Thus Lemaire, who reads the dual "two kings" in line 6 ("The Tel Dan Stela as a Piece of Royal Historiography," 4).

[196] Knapp, *Royal Apologetic in the Ancient Near East*, 297.

[197] Ibid. Knapp also raises the possibility that the self-identification of the Danites as Aramaean or Samarian was "open to debate," and that TDI served to "assimilate the people with as little coercion as possible" (ibid., 297).

[198] Ibid, 289. He cites Suriano, "Apology," 289.

[199] See, e.g., Wayne T. Pitard, *Ancient Damascus: A Historical Study of the Syrian City-State from Earliest Times until its Fall to the Assyrians in 732 B.C.E.* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1987), 132–38.

legitimacy, one struggles to see why a victory inscription [i.e., erected in annexed territory] would be composed in such a manner."[200]

Knapp suggests two reasons why a stele commemorating specific military victories might have featured an apologetic emphasis on divine election that uses the C-stem of √*mlk*. The first is that doubts about Hazael's legitimacy may have circulated in annexed territory as well as back in the Aramaean homeland. The second is that the rhetoric of TDI is, in some sense, "recycled."[201] Not all of TDI's characteristics address its particular context in Dan, and perhaps many come from an earlier, "official version" of Hazael's tenure.[202] Perhaps TDI is only a copy of a memorial inscription first erected in the Aramaean capital.

The latter possibility would explain the odd fit of TDI's apology for Hazael and its location in a conquered city. But it would also suggest that other reasons besides seeking to persuade Danites guide the inscription's rhetoric. One of these reasons may have been pragmatic only; recycling inscriptions is energy efficient.[203] But another reason concerns TDI's "divinely-facing" mandate, to which Na'aman, among others, is attentive.[204] As in ZI, it may be that king Hazael's personal devotion to his patron deity motivated his ascription of election and victory to Hadad—even in annexed territory. This explanation counts another factor in its favor: the fact that Danites may not have even worshipped Hadad. In such a case, a foreign king would seek to legitimize himself by a foreign deity. Kurt Noll has written most explicitly about this disjunction—an

[200] Knapp, *Royal Apologetic in the Ancient Near East*, 299.
[201] Ibid.
[202] Ibid.
[203] For other examples of "recycling" Northwest Semitic inscriptions, see Parker, "The Composition and Sources of Some Northwest Semitic Inscriptions."
[204] Na'aman: "Such writing [in MI and ZI alike] is intended to persuade both the addressee (the deity) and the inhabitants of the kingdom that these actions were a just response to the other party's aggression" ("Three Notes on the Aramaic Inscription," 99).

inscription appealing to an Aramaean god in Samarian and thus probably Yahwistic territory.[205] What this mismatch of royal deity and popular deity underscores is that TDI is not meant to persuade Danites only; rather, its intended addressees included Hadad himself.

Considering the deity as a target (among others) for TDI's rhetoric casts its two references to Hadad in a different light. Hadad's making Hazael king (√*mlk*, line 4) and going before Hazael in battle (√*yhk*, line 5) would become reminders to the deity Hadad of his past favor rendered towards his client king, raised in hopes of motivating the deity to continue his guardianship—and not only boasts of Hazael to his human readership of special divine favor. This future-oriented rhetorical purpose makes even more sense if the before-and-after schema of TDI, like other memorial inscriptions, once climaxed with a curse section which is now missing. So Na'aman: "it is possible that the descriptions of the conquest and of the erection of the stele were followed by a list of curses, threatening whoever damaged the stele or erased the inscription."[206] Again, we cannot be certain, but the formulaic nature of the inscription examined here makes such a curse section plausible, if not likely.

2.2.3.2. Conclusion.

TDI features only two verbs for which the deity Hadad is subject, in its lines 4 and 5: "Hadad made me king" (*yhmlk. hdd*) and "Hadad went in front of me" (*wyhk. hdd. qdmy*). Of these two verbs, only the second relates to divine aggression—and so the inscription presents an extremely limited sample for assessing the deity's aggression. There is no question, however, that

[205] Kurt L. Noll, "The God Who Is among the Danites," *JSOT* 80 (1998): 3-23, here 23. See also Jonathon S. Greer, "The Cult at Tel Dan: Aramean or Israelite?" in *Wandering Arameans: Arameans Outside Syria, Textual and Archaeological Perspectives*, ed. Angelika Berlejung, Aren M. Maeir, and Andreas Schüle, LAS 5 (Wiesbaden: Harassowitz, 2017), 3-18.

[206] Na'aman, "Three Notes on the Aramaic Inscription," 99.

the second verb belongs to this register: Müller compares it to "holy war" texts of the Hebrew Bible.[207] Also, the effect of Hadad's leadership ahead of Hazael can be seen in the following lines: *w'qtl*, "I slew" is visible in line 6, and so is *mṣr* "siege" in line 13. It would seem the deity Hadad marched into battle at the head of his client king's troops. He aggressed against his favored king's enemies.

As with MI, so, too, a complete assessment of divine aggression in TDI must keep in mind that the inscription probably once concluded with a future conditional curse on vandals of the monument. This is now missing and so remains speculative. Nonetheless, TDI, too, likely once presented a more complicated picture of the deity Hadad's aggression: although oriented in the past outwards and towards the enemies of his king, its closing curse would have targeted Danites or other readers who by their vandalism made themselves into "internal enemies" of Hazael. A human reader could opt out (as it were) of the deity's solidarity and into the deity's aggression.

2.2.4.1. Structure and Rhetoric of the Hadad Inscription (KAI 214)

The Hadad inscription (HI) is a memorial inscription. Like the Kilamuwa inscription (KAI 24), it is, however, distinctive in featuring a double introduction: if Tropper's reading of line 8b is correct, the speaking king Pannamuwa declares himself twice, first in line 1 and again in line 8.[208] Indeed, not only do the kings of Kilamuwa and HI announce themselves twice, but the material following each self-introduction varies thematically. The lines immediately preceding king Pannamuwa's second introduction in HI are quite broken, but it appears the first 8 lines of the

[207] Hans-Peter Müller, "Die aramäische Inschrift von Tel Dan," *ZAH* 8 (1995): 121-39, here 137-39.

[208] Josef Tropper, *Die Inschriften von Zincirli: neue Edition und vergleichende Grammatik des phönizischen, sam'alischen und aramäischen Textkorpus*, Abhandlungen zur Literature Alt-Syrien-Palästinas 6 (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1993), 66. On the double introduction of Kilamuwa, see ibid., 55; also Green, *"I Undertook Great Works"*, 137; and of Hadad, ibid., 176. Green sees the "paired memorial inscription" as "a distinctive of the Sam'alian inscriptional tradition" (ibid., 137).

inscription highlight Pannamuwa's domestic and agricultural achievements, whereas 9-15 celebrate construction projects. Douglas Green refers to this literary phenomenon as "paired memorial inscriptions."[209] As such, HI plies several metahistorical motifs of kingship typical of memorial inscriptions: validation by divine election and sacred (re)building are prominent—far more prominent than the inscription of Pannamuwa's father, king Kilamuwa in KAI 24. What is missing from HI (and, as will be seen, from Azatiwada as well), is the motif of defeating enemy kings. Only line 9 of the "second inscription" alludes to Pannamuwa's act of "removing the sword from the house of my father." Green sees in this phrase a possible allusion to foreign military threat, but it more likely refers to the kind of *internecine* and even intrafamilial unrest that the inscription's third major section describes at some length.[210] In comparison, then, with the warlike memorial inscriptions examined in this chapter up until now, HI is a "peacetime memorial." The pliability of the memorial genre is shown thereby; the variation is also of interest to the inscription's profile of divine aggression, since unlike the preceding inscriptions, HI does *not* look back on past events of divine aggression towards foes. Hadad and the other gods are only favorable in HI—except in the conditional future.[211]

The *human* target of HI's rhetoric is pronounced. Practically the entirety of the inscription after line 15a consists in a sustained slideshow of "possible futures," all of them dependent upon one of the speaking king Pannamuwa's sons to activate. Line 15b begins an apodosis whose subject is one of these sons; line 20b begins another apodosis featuring such a son, and line 24b, though damaged, another. This means that in total, excepting lines 19-20a, all of the 20 lines after 15b are

[209] Ibid.

[210] Gibson characterizes this section as "querulous" (*TSSI* 2:61). Line 9b directly anticipates the language of line 25 (*ḫrb. wlšn. mn. byt. 'by* // *bḫrb. bbyt. 'by*). Cf. the Luwian inscription Karkamiš A11 §§5-6, which declares that the speaking king's "relatives revolted against me" (Payne and Melchert, *Iron Age Hieroglyphic*, 68).

[211] For a Luwian "peacetime" memorial inscriptions, see that of Sarwatiwaras the vassal of Wasusarmas found near Sultanhan (Payne and Melchert, *Iron Age Hieroglyphic*, 98-101).

occupied with the conditional future in which the male heir is primary actor. Only the first 15 lines memorialize Pannamuwa's own past achievements. HI is, then, charged with anxiety about the future, specifically about whether Pannamuwa's heir will properly execute the veneration of his dead father (lines 15b-24), but also about whether his children will feud after their father's death.[212] The primary request that the inscription lodges is directed to the (human) heir. Intriguingly, it also seems that the main prosecutors of vengeance in the event that the heir should misbehave and kill his rivals are also human. The closing, broken lines of the inscription in and after line 34 perhaps once contained curses in which the gods acted, but these are now lost.

The deity Hadad also receives a request from the inscription, though this remains extant only in lines 22-24, where he is called upon to aggress against the heir of Pannamuwa who fails to venerate his father. As Crawford observes, five curses occur in these lines, and they are inexact but definite "counterparts" to the blessings of the preceding sections, whether of Pannamuwa's own experience or of his son's possible future blessings.[213] This can be seem diagrammatically:

Blessings	Curses
May he (Hadad) look favorably on it (line 4, 18)	may he *not* look favorably upon it (line 22)
whatever I asked from the gods, they gave to me (lines 4, 12)	whatever he asks, let Hadad *not* give it to him (line 23)
In my days Ya'diya ate and drank (line 9)	may he *not* give to him to eat because of rage (line 23)
I appointed a resting place (for them) (line 19)	sleep may he withhold from him at night (line 24)
I remove]d sword and slander from the house of my father (line 9)	terror may he give to h[im] (line 24)

In this way, the "peacetime memorial" character of HI, leastwise in its first section, serves an integral role in the inscription's overall argument. As Crawford observes, "the not so subtle implication [of the curses in lines 22-24] is that the prosperous state that the pious Pannamuwa

[212] Tropper: "Sie erfüllt den Zweck, den Totenkult des Königs sicherzustellen" (*Inschriften*, 55).
[213] Crawford, *Blessing and Curse in Syro-Palestinian Inscriptions*, 202.

revels in will pass on to his son should he show due filial honor."[214] To the human audience, Pannamuwa's past entices: this, too, can be yours (it says), if you as royal heir discharge your filial responsibilities. But the peaceful and prosperous past also serves to jumpstart the divine memory: the gods looked favorably on Pannamuwa before, indeed they gave him "seed" as a reward for his piety towards them (line 20a)—and so the gods should persist in generosity towards Pannamuwa, the inscription suggests, by protecting his legacy. More than that, Pannamuwa also strategically reviews his own past construction projects that benefited the gods: he raised a statue for Hadad (this one), and he gave the gods a place to rest (line 19b). The implication—subtle or not—is that the gods ought to reciprocate Pannamuwa's benefaction.

2.2.4.2. Divine Aggression in the Hadad Inscription

HI features eight verbs for which the deity Hadad alone is the subject (*wntn* in line 8b; *ntn* line 13a; *w'l. yrqy* in line 22; *ytn* x2 in line 23a and 23c; *lbtkh* in line 23b; *ntn* in line 24b; cf. the singular verb used of the deity Resheph in line 3b). Verbs for which several deities are subject number fourteen, including several verbs that are singular in form but correspond to plural subjects, e.g., *wntn. bydy* (line 2), *wytr* (line 11a).[215] A final instance of a verb of which the gods are subject has sometimes been proposed for line 34, e.g., Gibson: "may (the gods) slay" (*lhrgh*), but Tawil has argued convincingly that it refers to the destruction of the monument itself, and so its subject is human.[216]

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[214] Ibid.

[215] Gibson compares this usage to Daniel; "sing[ular] verb with a list of subjects as often in Daniel [3:29, 5:14], etc" (*TSSI* 2:70); also Tropper, *Inschriften*, 253. See also the examples from other Aramaic inscriptions in Rainer Degen, *Altaramäische Grammatik der Inschriften des 10.-8. Jh v. Chr*, Abhandlungen für die Kunde des Morgenlandes 38 (Wiesbaden: DMG, 1969), 123.

[216] Gibson, *TSSI* 2:68-69, agreeing with KAI, Cooke, and Koopmans. Gibson writes that lines 31b-34 invoke "the vengeance of the gods…on his successor" (Ibid., 2:61). But see Hayim Tawil, "The End of the Hadad Inscription in the Light of Akkadian," *JNES* 32 (1973): 477-82. Tropper, too, sees no reference to the gods in this section of the inscription (*Inschriften*, 97).

Verb	Line	Subject	Object(s)
qmw ʻmy, "they stood with me"[217]	2	Hadad, El, Resheph, Rakkabel, Shemesh	Pannamuwa
wntn. bydy, "he (they) gave into my hands"	2	Hadad, El, Resheph, Rakkabel, Shemesh	Pannamuwa
wqm. ʻmy, "he stood by me"	3	Resheph	Pannamuwa
ytnw, "they gave me"	4	the gods (*ʾlhy*)	Pannamuwa
wntn. bydy, "he gave into my hands"	8b	Hadad	Pannamuwa
wytr, "he gave abundantly"	11a	Hadad along with El, Resheph, Rakkabel, Shemesh	Pannamuwa
yqḥw, "they accepted"	12	the gods (*ʾlhy*)	n/a—construction is passive: "gifts were given" (*yhb.*)[218]
ytnw, "they gave"	12	the gods (*ʾlhy*)	Pannamuwa
wʾrqw, "they were pleased"	13a	the gods (*ʾlhy*)	Pannamuwa and/or his gifts
ntn, "he gave"	13a	Hadad	Pannamuwa
qrny, "he chose me"	13b	Hadad	Pannamuwa
ntn, "he gave"	14	Hadad	Pannamuwa
wy]*rqy.,* "he looked favorably"	18	Hadad	the sacrifice of Pannamuwa'sson
ntnw, "they gave"	20	the gods (*ʾlhy*)	Pannamuwa
wʾl. yrqy, "let him not look favorably"	22	Hadad	the sacrifice of Pannamuwa's son
ʾl. ytn, "let him not give"	23a	Hadad	the son of Pannamuwa
ḥrʾ. lbtkh, "(in) wrath may he confound him"[219]	23b	Hadad	the son of Pannamuwa
[ʾ]*l. ytn*, "let him not give"	23c	Hadad	the son of Pannamuwa
lmnʿ "may he withhold"	24a	Hadad	the son of Pannamuwa
wdlḥ. ntn. l[h], "may he give him terror"	24b	Hadad	the son of Pannamuwa
mwmt[220]	24c		uncertain

[217] Cf. the treatment of this and the next several verbs in Hayim Tawil, "Some Literary Elements in the Opening Sections of Hadad, Zākir, and the Nērab II Inscriptions in the Light of East and West Semitic Royal Inscriptions," *Or* 43 (1974): 40-65, here 41-50.

[218] Josef Tropper, "Sam'alisch *mt* 'wahrlich' und das Phänomen der Aphärese im Semitischen," *Or* 61 (1992): 448-53. Cf. idem, *Inschriften*, 72.

[219] *DNSI* 1:205; also Tropper, *Inschriften*, 84.

[220] J. Koopmans understands this as a *hophal* participle from √*mwt*, to kill, and translates "getötet": "man erwartet [*mwmty*]" (*Aramäische Chrestomathie: ausgewählte Texte (Inschriften, Ostraka und Papyri) bis zum 3. Jahrhundert n. Chr* [Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten, 1962], 38); cf. also Lidzbarski, Cooke, Friedrich and Donner.

Gods function as indirect objects numerous times in the inscription: *hdd* (lines 16 [x2], 21), *ʿm hdd* (lines 17, 22 [x2]), *lhdd* (line 1, 14, 18); *mn.] ʾlhy* (lines 4, 12), *l'lhy* (line 12). Gods act as a direct object in line 19, when Pannamuwa causes his god to dwell (*whwšbt*) in some edifice whose description is now lost at the beginning of the line.

Of all these verbs, only six in lines 22-24 pertain to divine aggression. Intriguingly, in an otherwise polytheistic inscription, Hadad alone is the executor of vengeance here. Three of the verbs in the curse section are not aggressive per se but describe a nonetheless deleterious *withholding* or negation: "let [Hadad] *not* look favorably," "let [Hadad] *not* give" (x2), "may [Hadad] withhold." Only two times then do verbs enumerate acts of destruction, in lines 23b and 24b: *ḫrʾ. lbtkh*, "in wrath may Hadad confound him" and *wdlḫ. ntn. l[h]*, "may he give terror to him" at night. Several commentators also take *mwmt* in line 24c as a verb from √*mwt*, to kill.[221] Gibson, for example, translates it as "put to death."[222] Because, however, the status of this verb is so uncertain, and its subject is equally unclear, the present discussion cannot use it as a firm datum for profiling divine aggression in HI.

Two points are especially noteworthy in HI's presentation of divine aggression: first, its recipient is one of Pannamuwa's own sons. Unlike in previous memorial inscriptions, the imprecation does not fall upon an Aramean "everyman"—but upon a much more specific individual: the god(s)-given seed of Pannamuwa (line 20), one from among his sons. So, too, the infraction that the inscription entertains is less a matter of wiping out Pannamuwa's name and legacy than of failing to uphold it in in the mortuary cult. This is striking: Pannamuwa himself remains absolutely bracketed from the deities' destructiveness—but his own son could incur

[221] The first to posit √*mwt*, to kill, is Mark Lidzbarski, who also understands the form in line 24 as a *hophal* (*Handbuch der Nordsemitischen Epigraphik*, 2 vols. [Weimar: Emil Felber, 1898], 1:306). Cf. also George A. Cooke, *A Text-Book of North-Semitic Inscriptions* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1903), 162.

[222] Gibson, *TSSI* 2:69.

damage from Hadad. This is a yet-more radical qualification than the chapter has yet seen on the patron deity's solidarity with his client country and its dynasty: not even the king's son is safe from potential divine aggression![223]

Second and relatedly, the aggression of Hadad for which the curse section calls is perhaps not so annihilating as, for example, in ZI, which prays for the vandal to be effaced (√*hgʿ*)—or in the Amman citadel inscription (see below), in which the deity promises to annihilate (√*kḥd*) enemies who enter the citadel. By contrast, Pannamuwa does not wish for the life of his own son to be *extinguished*—or so it seems. Instead, the situation that ensues from his heir's dereliction sounds chaotic and anxious: but not deadly.[224] Though vexing and destabilizing, this is a survivable vengeance—as shown, perhaps, by the closing section of the inscription, which play out several scenarios in which Pannamuwa's heir is alive. Given the heir's continuing viability, Gibson writes of the (uncertain!) word *mwmt* in line 24c that at most it must refer to "intention to kill rather than an actual execution of relatives, otherwise the following lines are contradictory."[225] Though Gibson's interpretation of this latter word is disputable,[226] the larger point remains, that the human-oriented counsel of the inscription's final section is not deadly towards Pannamuwa's heir, and so neither is the curse of the preceding section.

[223] Luwian inscriptions also direct divine aggression even towards the descendants of the speaking king, e.g,, Karkamiš A11a §§ 21-27 (Payne and Melchert, *Iron Age Hieroglyphic*, 68). For an interesting variation on this idea, see the inscription Aleppo 2, in which Arpas prays for his brother Hamiyatas: "What I always give to my brother in goodness, whosoever shall take it away from him, whether he (be) a father to him, or whether he (be) a *274, may the gods prosecute him, may they destroy his name!" (eadem, 96).

[224] Crawford interprets the curse largely as a reversal of the "civil order" characteristic of Pannamuwa's reign; but also that "the threat of disinheritance may underlie all of the more obvious curses" (*Blessing and Curse in Syro-Palestinian Inscriptions*, 203). Cf. Emil G. Kraeling, *Aram and Israel*, Columbia University Oriental Studies 8 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1918), 124.

[225] Gibson, *TSSI* 2:74.

[226] Tropper understands it as *wm*w*ddy**, and translates it "Freunde," a *maqtāl* nominal form from √*ydd*, to love (*Inschriften*, 85-86). Cf. Donner, *KAI* 2:221. *COS* follows, translating the word in question as "relatives" (2:157).

2.2.4.3. Conclusion

In a "peacetime inscription" like HI, the deities are comparatively less aggressive in general than in the other memorial inscriptions examined heretofore. They show no ferocity towards the enemies of their client country and king. Indeed, of the gods listed, only Hadad, on whose statue the inscription sat and to whom it is dedicated (see line 1), shows any signs of aggression at all.[227] Remarkably, too, Hadad's aggression is only directed towards one person: the speaking king Pannamuwa's heir. It seems that where other kings feared any passer-by could deface their monument, Pannamuwa's anxiety lay much closer to home.

The consequence for the inscription's divine aggression is manifold: Hadad is an avenging but *not* a killing god here. In an even more intensive way than other inscriptions, HI focuses on possible futures. In one of these scenarios, Hadad aggresses against the son of his favored king—out of loyalty to his favored king, Pannamuwa. Once more, the inscription imagines such total devotion from Hadad towards Pannamuwa that even Pannamuwa's own offspring is endangered.

2.2.5.1. Structure and Rhetoric of the Azatiwada Inscription (KAI 26)

The Azatiwada Inscription (AI) is a memorial inscription.[228] The "speaking subject" of the text—Azatiwada—is in this case *not* a king, technically speaking; indeed, in the first line of the inscription, Azatiwada acknowledges that *another* king exalted him: "Awariku, king of the

[227] Except and unless line 34 includes a plural verb. Tropper among others judges the line too broken to reconstruct (*Inschriften*, 97).

[228] Drinkard, "The Literary Genre of the Mesha' Inscription," 142-46; also, K. Lawson Younger, "The Phoenician Inscription of Azatiwada: An Integrated Reading," *JSS* 43 (1998): 11-47, here 22. Note also that AI alone among the inscriptions examined hereunto is bilingual: written in both hieroglyphic Luwian and Phoenician on the gates of the fortified city named after its speaking persona, Azatiwada. The Phoenician version exists in three exemplars, the longest and best-preserved of which is designated A; the three columns of its text were distributed over four orthostats (A1, A2, and A3) and then its final four lines were carved on the body of a stone lion (A4; see Gibson, *TSSI* 3:41-43). See also Çambel, "Karatepe: An Archeological Introduction to a Recently Discovered Hittite Site in Southern Anatolia."

Danunians, exalted [me]" (line A1.2). [229] However, as Green notes, "Azatiwada functioned as a *de facto* king, or as a 'quasi-king,'"[230] and the inscription otherwise conforms to the memorial inscription genre—with some notable idiosyncrasies. In terms of the metahistorical motifs of kingship, Azatiwada's declaration of divine support is relatively conventional: the deity Ba'al made him "as a father and as a mother to the Danunians" (line A1.3). This expression of divine election is complicated by Azatiwada's recognition of another, human source of his prestige, namely, Awariku.[231] AI also does not refer to enemy kings and their defeat; instead, the forces of resistance to Azatiwada's reign are *internal*: he boasts in line A1.8 of shattering (√*šbr*) "the rebels" (*mlṣm*, translated to parallel the Luwian; cf. Gibson, "dissenters") and generically "crushing all evil which was in the land."[232] In line A1.15 he describes his project of constructing fortresses to suppress marauders (*'ggdm*)—again, in the border areas of his own territory.[233] Azatiwada alone accomplishes these actions, without reference to his divine patron. These two factors—the internal character of dissent and suppression as well as Azatiwada's sole credit—together reduce the inscription's profile of divine aggression, at least in its retrospective of the ruler's own

[229] See Green's discussion on the estimative rather than factitive translation of the verb √*'dr ("I Undertook Great Works",* 238-39n31). Comparable translations include Johannes Pedersen's ("The Phoenician Inscription of Karatepe," *AcOr* 21 [1950]: 33-56, here 39); Brian Peckham's (*The Development of Late Phoenician Scripts,* HSM 20 [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968], 116n8); and P. Swiggers's (Review of F. Bron, *Recherches sur les inscriptions phéniciennes de Karatepe, BO* 37 [1980], 336-43, here 337). See also lines A1.12 for further references by Azatiwada to *other* kings.

[230] Green, *"I Undertook Great Works"*, 234. John David Hawkins calls Azatiwada a "subking" ("Karkamish and Karatepe: Neo-Hittite Cities in North Syria," in *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East, Volume 3*, ed. Jack M. Sasson et al. [New York: Scribner, 1995], 1304).

[231] For more on Awariku, see now Wolfgang Röllig, "'Und ich baute starke Festungen an allen Enden auf den Grenzen ...' Zur Bedeutung der Inschriften und Reliefs vom Karatepe-Aslantaş," in *Lag Troja in Kilikien? Der aktuelle Streit um Homers Ilias*, ed. Christoph Ulf and Robert Rollinger (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2011), 115-133, here 119-20. On the general subject of "sub-alternity and accommodation" in Sam'alian inscriptions relative to Assyrian authority, see Mark W. Hamilton, "The Past as Destiny: Historical Visions of Sam'al and Judah under Assyrian Hegemony," *HTR* 91 (1998): 215-250.

[232] This translation follows Younger, "The Phoenician Inscription of Azatiwada," 15; Gibson, *TSSI* 3:47.

[233] So Green: "Under Azatiwada, these peripheral areas came under the *de facto* rather than merely *de jure* control of 'the house of Mopsos' and so became fit for Danunian habitation" *("I Undertook Great Works"*, 257).

achievements.[234] By contrast, the theme of sacred (re)building is richly developed in AI, and Azatiwada is more forthcoming to name his divine sponsor(s) in regard to his construction projects in lines A2.9-A3.2, a section that begins: "I built this city and I set on it the name Azatiwada, because Ba'al and Resheph of the stags sent me to build it." In these ways, with its reduced martial profile and its exaggerated building campaign, AI counts as a "peacetime inscription" like HI. Ba'al and the other gods are responsible—like Azatiwada himself—for blessing the Danunians with peace and plenty and not for aggressing against them or their foes.[235] As with HI, this means that the only datum relevant to the inscription's portrait of divine aggression occurs in its closing curse section.

Azatiwada articulates the past peace and plenty of his land with a clear rhetorical purpose: to obligate Ba'al and the gods to protect his name and his legacy.[236] This is especially clear in the so-called "blessing section" of the inscription's Phoenician version, identified as such because of the *wbrk* in line A3.2.[237] This section—running from A2.19b through A3.11—has often been translated as *volitive,* in keeping with the Luwian version.[238] Scholars have understood the Phoenician sentences of this section as expressing a wish: "Now *let* people bring a sacrifice! […] *May* Ba'al bless Azatiwada!"[239] But Baranowski argues persuasively that this section belongs to the larger unit that begins in A2.9, the whole of which articulates Azatiwada's *past*

[234] Although note the end of line A2.6, which closes out the section by repeating the refrain, "by the grace of Ba'al and the gods."

[235] On the rendition of peace or security and abundance of life in AI, see especially Green, *"I Undertook Great Works"*, 256-65; also Michael L. Barré, "An Analysis of the Royal Blessing in the Karatepe Inscription," *Maarav* 3 (1982): 177-94.

[236] On the "Götterwelt" of AI, see Manfred Weippert, "Elemente phönikischer und kilikischer Religion in den Inschriften des Karatepe," in *Jahwe und die anderen Götter,* FAT 18 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997), 109-129.

[237] This is how, for example, Younger titles it ("The Phoenician Inscription of Azatiwada," 19), as well as Aaron Schade, "A Text Linguistic Approach to the Syntax and Style of the Phoenician Inscription of Azatiwada," *JSS* 50 (2005): 35-58, here 50; also Barré, "An Analysis of the Royal Blessing in the Karatepe Inscription."

[238] For an exhaustive treatment of past translations, see Krzysztof J. Baranowski, "A Blessing in the Phoenician Karatepe Inscription?" *JSS* 60 (2015): 317-30.

[239] Gibson, *TSSI* 3:51, translating lines A2.19b and A3.2b; my emphasis.

accomplishments as a city builder.[240] The references to Ba'al and the gods are far denser in this section than in the preceding unit (A1.13-A2.9) that describes Azatiwada's accomplishments in the frontier zones of his country[241]: in the "blessing section," Azatiwada recollects how he installed Baal *krntryš* in his city, presumably as a cult statue; how the whole country brought sacrifice to Ba'al; and how Ba'al then reciprocated with abundant blessing on Azatiwada and on the city of his name.[242] All of this past human action for Ba'al's sake prepares for a request that Ba'al and the gods would act for Azatiwada's sake—and the remembrance of past divine favor encourages the deity to continue. The curse section enumerates a complex apodosis in which a king or ruler or "man of renown" (*'dm šm*) erases (√*mḥy*) the name of Azatiwada—in response to which Azatiwada prays that "Ba'al Shamem and El, creator of the earth, and everlasting Shamash and the whole generation of the divine sons" would erase (√*mḥy*) that vandal. If the curse section reveals the divine audience of AI, it also suggests its human audience. Like other memorial inscriptions, the curse of AI directly prays for the gods to punish—even as that prayer also serves indirectly to warn off any passers-by or successors who might be tempted to swap out Azatiwada's name for their own.

2.2.5.2. Divine Aggression in the Azatiwada Inscription

[240] Baranowski, "A Blessing in the Phoenician Karatepe Inscription?" Cf. also Green, who concurs: "It is better to treat [lines A2.19b and following] as part of the narration of Azatiwada's achievements and therefore as a subsidiary clause to the main clause ["I caused Baal *krntryš* to dwell in it]" *("I Undertook Great Works"*, 247n65).

[241] In this way, HI shows proportions inverse to MI, in which "Chemosh looms large in all six of the campaign narratives" but "the list of building activities [in lines 21b-31a] makes no reference to Chemosh, or any other god, but simply records Mesha's completed projects" (Parker, *Stories in Scripture and Inscriptions*, 55-56).

[242] Cf. numerous Luwian inscriptions, e.g., Tel Ahmar 6 §§ 22–28: "And one belonging to the god spoke to me: Cause the Storm God of the Army to dwell (here)! And in that year I went … with the help of the Storm God with 500 carriages, with … and with the … army. When I came out (returned?), in that year I settled the Storm God of the Army" (Payne and Melchert, *Iron Age Hieroglyphic*, 94).

The deity name Ba‘al occurs eleven times in the inscription, the same number of times that the king’s own name (Azatiwada) occurs. Twice Ba‘al is the *nomen rectum* of a construct phrase (*hbrk b‘l* and *‘br b‘l* in A1 lines 1b and 2a), and four times the object of the preposition *b‘br b‘l*, “by the grace of Ba‘al,” each time in collocation with other deities (*’lm*, the gods in lines A1, 8a; A2, 6b; A3, 11b; *ršp ṣprm*, Resheph of the stags, in A2, 12). Ba‘al is also the *nomen regens* in a construct phrase four times, as Ba‘al *krntryš* (in lines A2.19, A3.2, and A3.4) and as Ba‘al Shamem (A3.19). Ba‘al acts as grammatical subject four times in the inscription.

Verb	Line	Object(s)
p‘ln, “he made me”	A1.2a	Azatiwada
šlḥn, “he sent me”	A2.11	Azatiwada
wbrk, “may he bless”	A3.2	Azatiwada
ltty, “that he might give”	A3.4	Azatiwada
wmḥ, “may he erase”	A3.18	the vandal

In addition to acting as the subject, Ba‘al serves once as direct object; the speaking king, Azatiwada, is the subject of C stem √*yšb* in A2.18: “I settled Ba‘al *krntryš*” (cf. √*yšb* with human objects in lines A1.11; A1.20; A2.1).

Of the four verbs for which Ba‘al (and other gods) are subject, only one of them denotes aggression: namely, *wmḥ* in A3.18, which corresponds to the action of the would-be human vandal in A3.13. “The same verb is used both for the forbidden activity against the gate and the punishment asked of the gods against the enemy.”[243] Ba‘al and “all the gods” (*wkl’ln*, line A3.5) aggress, that is, only against the person that defaces Azatiwada’s name and monument—in a conditional future. This person also does not appear to be a Danunian, but rather, a foreign sovereign. Azatiwada describes him like so: “a king among kings or a ruler among rulers…a man who is a man of renown” (lines A3.12-13). Nor is there any hint that this prestigious aggressor

[243] Crawford, *Blessing and Curse in Syro-Palestinian Inscriptions*, 163. Younger characterizes the curse as “retributive” (“The Phoenician Inscription of Azatiwada,” 27).

might be one of Azatiwada's own progeny; indeed, the apodosis of the curse rules this out, since Azatiwada prays destruction on "that kingdom" (*hmmlkt h'*, line A3.19), which he would hardly do if it were his successor's. Azatiwada does not speak of his own children in his retrospective of the gods' favor, but he is quite un-anxious to recount his generosity towards the offspring of Awariku (*lšrš 'dny*, literally "root of my lord" in line A1.10), and also to recount childbearing in his city:

> This city was a lady of abundance and wine. This people that dwell in her, they were lords of oxen and lords of sheep and lords of abundance and wine. They bore children immeasurably [*wbrbm*]; they became immeasurably [*wbrbm*] powerful [√*'dr*] (lines A3.7-10).[244]

2.2.5.3. Conclusion

As a "peacetime monument," AI thus yields a quite limited profile of divine aggression. The text envisions but one recipient of divine wrath—and the easiest interpretation of this person is that he is an outsider to Azatiwada's dynasty and country alike. AI thereby bears out Wellhausen and Eichrodt's characterization of the theology of Israel's ancient neighbors: Ba'al and the other gods seem to live in a "natural bond" relationship with their client nation, and their wrath, when it arises, is directed solely outwards towards national enemies.

If there is any complication in this relationship of patron deity and client country, it is this: the inscription does imagine an enemy that is at least somewhat *internecine*. Azatiwada boasts of humbling the "lord of marauders" (*b'l 'gddm*) at his frontiers (*qṣyt*) in line A1.15. These men had never before been subject to Azatiwada's dynasty, the house of Mopsos, but this was apparently a matter of efficacy rather than entitlement. Green describes the peripheral area as belonging to Mopsos—*de jure*.[245] It is at least possible that a lord (*b'l*) among marauders could coincide with a

[244] Cf. also line A1.6: "I filled the barren with fertility" (following Schade, "A Text Linguistic Approach to the Syntax and Style," 40-41).

[245] Green, *"I Undertook Great Works"*, 257.

"ruler among rulers" (*wrzn brznm*) or a "man of renown" (*'dm šm*), in which case, Azatiwada would imprecate a member of the Danunian commonwealth. But this scenario lies in the background of the inscription, if it does at all.

2.2.6.1. Structure and Rhetoric of the Amman Citadel Inscription (KAI 307)

The Amman Citadel inscription is not a memorial inscription, but a dedicatory inscription—though as will be seen, an anomalous one. Like most dedicatory inscriptions, it apparently dedicates an object, namely, the citadel: this can be seen in its cluster of building vocabulary—the verb √*bnh* and the word *mb't* in line 1, and perhaps an architectural term *s[d]yt* in line 4. Like most dedicatory inscriptions, its conclusion—or at any rate, its last extant line—seems to wish blessing on the king who commissioned it; thus its benedictory phrase *šlm lk* in line 8.[246] In several regards, however, the Amman Citadel inscription departs from form: unless Cross's reconstruction is correct, it is missing the customary identification of the dedicated object as well as the name of the official making the dedication.[247]Also, ACI is not cast in 3rd person: instead, its threefold use of the suffixed preposition *lk* (lines 1, 2, 8) and its 2nd person PK *–t[x]* (line 6) indicate that it is 2nd person direct address. Following Albright, the Ammonite Citadel inscription is, after the incomplete deity name in line 1, "a direct quotation of Milcom's command to the Ammonite king."[248] In this it can be compared to the oracles inset in MI and ZI.[249] Different from these inscriptions, though, ACI lacks a first-person frame, meaning that the action which the deity

[246] Cf. the benediction in KAI 26 and also KAI 309 line 8.

[247] Frank M. Cross, "Epigraphic Notes on the Ammān Citadel Inscription," *BASOR* 193 (1969): 13-19, here 17-18. But see William J. Fulco, "The ʿAmmān Citadel Inscription: A New Collation," *BASOR* 230 (1978): 39-43, and bibliography there.

[248] William F. Albright, "Some Comments on the 'Ammân Citadel Inscription," *BASOR* 198 (1970): 38-40, here 39.

[249] Ibid. Albright notes furthermore that, like ZI (and presumably also MI), ACI "was conveyed by oracles or diviners"; ibid.) Cf. also Routledge, *Moab in the Iron Age*, 241n2.

commands (of building) is not recorded as having been already fulfilled (as in MI), and the deity's promise of protection is not staged as already effectual within a past episode (as in ZI).[250] The only context for the oracle of Milkom is, in fact, the building on whose surface it once sat: the building itself testifies to the king's fulfillment of Milkom's command to build, and the building itself also *focuses* Milkom's promise of protection, especially if, as seems likely, terms in lines 3b and 4 specify the more general protection pledged in lines 2, 3a.[251] As such, Sasson's interpretation still holds value: he writes of the Amman inscription as "an oracle of divine protection and assurance."[252]

The human audience of such an oracle is patent: the deity Milkom addresses a human in 2nd person, most likely the Ammonite king. However, as a text on public display, ACI intends to include other humans as readers, too. Indeed, the citadel itself seemingly blends into the king, and vice versa, in this brief inscription: the *lk* of line 1 clearly pertains to the king, but in line 2, the *lk* of "all who surround you" could refer either to the king or to the citadel—or perhaps both. Line 3 intensifies the ambiguity of reference: the *kl* of "all who enter" parallels the *kl* of "all who surround" in line 2, but obviously entering applies only to the citadel and not to the king. Rhetorically, the king's identity is "built into" the dedicated object: harm to the object and harm to the king's own person and legacy are blurred, and porous to one another. The point remains, however, that the inscription addresses humans, if not also the building they constructed.

But does ACI also address the deity Milkom in some way? This is less apparent. But again, the fulfilment of the deity's command is important: the text seems to reflect an *implicit* if-then structure, with Milkom ordering the construction of something and then tendering a promise of

[250] Cf. also the command to build in KAI 26—they sent him to build.

[251] See now Andrew Burlingame, "Line Five of the Amman Citadel Inscription: History of Interpretation and a New Proposal," *BASOR* 376 (2016): 63-82.

[252] Victor Sasson, "The 'Ammān Citadel Inscription as an Oracle Promising Divine Protection."

aggression on behalf of that edifice once constructed. That is: the first part of the if-then for which humans are responsible has been executed, as the citadel shows, meaning that only the second part for which the deity is responsible remains. ACI is an oracle from Milkom to the king and his community—but it also faces back towards Milkom as an incipient request that he honor the human obedience to his command. In this way, ACI also faces towards a divine audience.

Milkom's promissory oracle is unparalleled among other royal inscriptions—an interesting fact for the comparative exercise to follow. Of course Milkom's promised aggression against those who would enter the citadel is *similar* to the future conditional curse sections of memorial inscriptions insofar as it evokes future divine aggression. But unlike these, its mood is indicative and not jussive: Milkom makes a definite future promise, where in other inscriptions surveyed so far, the deity is called upon in the (possible) event that someone vandalizes the royal monument. In other inscriptions that feature promissory divine speech, it is always *past* and *effectual*. ZI provides one example in which the deity Baalšamen make a pledge which only he (the deity) and not the king has power to execute: a promise to save king Zakkur, and which, at the time of its issue, Zakkur's besieging enemies might falsify. But in its present setting in ZI, Baalšamen's oracle is no longer at risk of falling empty: ZI only rehearses Baalšamen's words to celebrate that the deity effected his pledge and favored Zakkur. Baalšamen did in fact already deliver Zakkur from his enemies. Never do the inscriptions loft a divine promise which stands still stands at risk. ACI comes closest, but even here, the deity Milkom's divine promise to annihilate the king's enemies is bound up with the surface upon which the promise rests, and so the risk of the deity's promise is somewhat qualified. Milkom's oath does stand at some risk—but it is also insured by the monument upon which it sits. So long as the citadel stands, then the divine promise stands with it

and on it. It is not only promise as text or as speech, radically uninsured, but is built, as it were, upon a rock.

2.2.6.2. Conclusion

ACI features one verb in an emphatic infinitive construction for which the deity Milkom is the speaking, 1st person subject: *kḥd. 'kḥd* in line 3, "I will surely annihilate."[253] It runs closely parallel with the passive expression of the preceding line 2: *mt. ymtn.* "they will surely die." Though grammatically subject-less, Milkom may also be assumed to prosecute this promise since it is placed upon his lips. As Shea notes, "Milkom appears to have promised to fight against [the Ammonites'] enemies personally."[254] Shea rightly points out that while Milkom promises to fight on behalf of his king, his is a *defensive* rather than an offensive militancy—unlike Kemosh of MI.[255]

Could Milkom aggress against his own king and country? ACI gives the impression that Milkom wishes only peace for the king, and probably for his family also, e.g.: *šlm. lk. wš*[lm] of line 8, "peace to you and pe[ace upon your seed]." But it is worth noting that the two examples of *kl*, "all" in lines 2 and 3 are not earmarked in any way for outsiders or non-Ammonites: Milkom pledges to destroy *anyone* and *whoever* assaults the Amman citadel. Could this have included Ammonites who were not *ṣdq*, "just" (line 4)? This seems entirely possible if not quite probable.

2.3. Chapter Conclusion: Divine Aggression in Royal Inscriptions

[253] Although see also Burlingame's suggestion that this verb can also indicate rejection ("Line Five of the Amman Citadel Inscription," 67-68n18).

[254] William H. Shea, "Milkom as the Architect of Rabbath-Amon's Natural Defenses in the Amman Citadel Inscription," *PEQ* 111 (1979): 17-25, here 24.

[255] Ibid.

The object of the present chapter was to test whether divine aggression in royal inscriptions is occasional, not definitive, recuperative, or mediated an "abrogated doctrine of judgment." Could the patron deities of Israel/Judah's Iron Age neighbors damn their own countries? Did the deity's destructiveness ever include his own client king or country?

The inscriptions examined appear mostly in line with the views expressed so well by Wellhausen and Eichrodt: the deities of the royal inscriptions aggress most obviously against enemies of their client king and country. The speaking king of royal inscriptions frequently boasts of the deity's *past* favor towards himself—often in the form of, among other things, acting to aid the king's military adventures. It seems, moreover, that the king recites these past deeds not only to impress his human hearers but to convince the patron god to act in accordance with his past and to continue upholding the king's name into the future.

And yet, an important and very notable exception to Wellhausen and Eichrodt's shared perspective on the theology of Israel's Levantine neighbors occurs in the curse sections of the memorial inscriptions. To be sure, none of these come close to the "possibility of [national] annulment" that certain deuteronomistic biblical texts entertain.[256] The client nation does not stand in comprehensive danger from its own deity in these curse sections. However, even if the deity remains unconditionally supportive of the whole country—perhaps constituting "die Inkarnation der ihn verehrenden Gesellschaft"[257]—the curse section nevertheless introduces an element of conditionality to the relation between the deity and any given member of that country. In order absolutely to guarantee the ongoing favor of the deity for the king, the rhetoric of the inscription effectively endangers everyone else—at least *in potentia*—should they tamper with the text of the inscription and thereby threaten the king's posterity. In one case—the Hadad Inscription—the

[256] Eichrodt, *TOT* 1:457.
[257] Müller, "König Mêša' von Moab," 380.

danger of reprisal from the patron deity applies even to the king's own children. As will be seen, this future conditional exception to the default solidarity of deity and country—in the name of the king—shows important affinities with the presentation of deity in several royal psalms.

2.4. A Postscript on the Love of Gods for Kings in Luwian Inscriptions

It is at this point that a more direct reference to the Luwian inscriptions offers some conceptual clarification. With the possible but improbable exception of the Kerak fragment (KAI 306), no Northwest Semitic inscriptions attribute a verb meaning "to love" (Semitic: √*'hb*) to a patron deity with the client king as its object.[258] By contrast, the first-person kingly voice of several royal inscriptions in hieroglyphic Luwian directly narrate the love of the god(s) for the king, usually in the introductory section and before listing out the king's achievements. For example, the 10th or 9th c. building inscription of king Katuwas, found at Karkemish:

> §7: "My Lord the Storm God, Karhuhas and Kubaba, *loved me* because of my justice, and therefore made my father's and grandfather's lands MITASARI [favorable?] for me."[259]

Or again, on a stele commissioned by Hamiyatas, King of Masuwari:

> §1-3: "I am the ruler Hamiyatas, king of Masuwari, servant of the Storm God. And they *loved me*, the firstborn child: the heavenly storm God, Ea, the Grain God, [and other deities]. And they granted me my paternal succession.[260]

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[258] Reed and Winnett in the *editio princeps* read the final, partially visible letter of line 2 as an *h.* They point out that verbs starting with *'h* in Semitic are rare, and posit √*'hb*, "to love," as the most likely root in context (Reed and Winnett, "A Fragment of an Early Moabite Inscription from Kerak," 9). Their translation reflects a parsing of the form as an SK 3ms ("because he…"). Baruch Margalit follows this reading even more expansively, reading "For he l[oves Moab and its king]," thinking of 2 Sam 12:24 ("Studies in NWSemitic Inscriptions," 278). Shmuel Aḥituv cites context as well in his interpretation, "he lov[ed me more than all (the other) kings" (*Echoes from the Past: Hebrew and Cognate Inscriptions from the Biblical Period* [Jerusalem: Carta, 2008], 389). Udo Worschech reads the same √*'hb*, but translates it as a 1cs: "I loved," and thus in PK (*Das Land Jenseits des Jordan: biblische Archäologie in Jordanien*, Studien zur biblischen Archäologie und Zeitgeschichte 1 [Wuppertal: Brockhaus, 1991], 153). But see the counterarguments of Timm and Gaß (*Moab zwischen den Mächten*, 272; *Die Moabiter*, 67-68). For another possible example of a NWSemitic inscription featuring the verb √*'hb*, see André Dupont-Sommer, "Une inscription phénicienne archaïque récemment trouvée à Kition (Chypre)," *MAI* 44/2 (Paris: Impr. nationale; C. Klincksieck, 1970): 15.5.

[259] Payne and Melchert, *Iron Age Hieroglyphic*, 68.

[260] Eadem, 93. Cf. also Tel Ahmar, eadem, 104.

In addition to characterizing the deity's love towards the client king, these inscriptions also thematize the relationship of deity to client king as one of *sonship*. Here, too, the Northwest Semitic inscriptions lack this explicit way of framing the relation of deity and king.

However, the Luwian inscriptions in both these examples may aid our understanding of their Northwest Semitic counterparts. In none of the Semitic memorial inscriptions examined in this chapter does the patron god love his client king—nor does he call him a son.[261] But the same *kind* of logic seems to be operative in the Semitic inscriptions: this is evident *negatively* in the utter and entire exemption of the speaking kings from divine aggression. The king himself is never the recipient of his patron's destructiveness. It is also evident *positively* in the possibility which nearly all these inscriptions raise, that virtually any other human can become an object of divine wrath, even if that human belongs to the god's own country. The case of the Hadad Inscription is the most extreme example of this jeopardy: there, even the king's own offspring can endanger themselves by failing to perform filial piety. The point is, treatment of the speaking king's name is the deciding factor in the fate of the inscriptions' ancient human readers—and the theological complement of this truth is to say, the patron deities are *invested uniquely in the king's person and name*. It would seem that, in effect if not in overt terminology, patron gods *loved* their one, individual king—perhaps even behaving as though the king were their son.

The advantage that this concept offers to the present work will become clear in the following chapters. Here let it suffice to say that the *freedom* of the gods of Israel's ancient neighbors may have exceeded that which Wellhausen and Eichrodt alike ascribed to them; the

[261] On the (absence of) divine sonship in Northwest Semitic inscriptions, see Salo, *Die judäische Königsideologie*, 321; also Klaus Koch, "Der König als Sohn Gottes in Ägypten und Israel," in *"Mein Sohn bist du (Ps 2,7)': Studien zu den Königspsalmen*, ed. Eckart Otto and Erich Zenger, SBS 192 (Stuttgart: Katholisches Verlag, 2002), 1-32.

parameters of that divine freedom may have been limited less by state sponsorship per se[262] than by loyalty to the individual, named client king.

[262] Cf. Kratz, "Chemosh's Wrath and Yahweh's No."

CHAPTER 3: DIVINE AGGRESSION IN SELECT ROYAL PSALMS

3.1. Defining the Body of Textual Evidence

Chapter 1 of the present study argued that royal psalms from the Bible offer a productive and interesting point of comparison with the memorial inscriptions of the Levant, especially for the sake of assessing the uniqueness of Yhwh's aggression. This argument featured several parts. Its first and perhaps largest claim is that comparing memorial inscriptions with biblical texts that are relatively more similar to them will result in a more sophisticated account of the contrast alleged between the aggression of Yhwh and other patron deities. On the merits of this one point, the introduction suggested a biblical text corpus that seems to bear significant similarities to memorial inscriptions. These shared literary features are:

1. intensive, thematic interest in the king
2. nonnarrativity at several levels, including metahistorical motifs of kingship
3. dual audience, human and divine

From within the total number of biblical royal psalms—itself a debated and ambiguous category, upon which, see below—the selection for the present comparative project must still be determined. A few factors govern the present chapter's choice of royal psalms to examine for their profile of deity. First and foremost, the royal psalms treated in the present chapter are those that most closely resemble memorial inscriptions. Once more, the purpose in selecting psalms that are similar is to render a more nuanced relationship between the aggression of Yhwh and other gods. Methodologically, it is to start oppositely from comparing a biblical text of a dramatically different theology (like, say, Deuteronomy) with the memorial inscriptions.

Second and relatedly, the history of research on the psalms selected for the present chapter suggest that they offer special opportunity for meaningful comparative work. Their apparent similitude to memorial inscriptions needs testing and comment. As noted in chapter 1, Eichrodt and Wellhausen part ways when it comes to situating the theology of these psalms alongside that

of the rest of the Hebrew Bible. Two of the psalms in particular that the present chapter investigates earned Eichrodt's ire. About Psalms 2 and 110—the premier "coronation psalms"—he writes that they "present features of the court-style and the king-mythology of the ancient East which could only have percolated into Israel from her heathen environment."[263] In these psalms as nowhere else does the representative theology of Israel's neighbors intrude; for Eichrodt these psalms and their heathenism constitute a kind of antibody within the larger texture of the (mostly deuteronomistic) Hebrew Bible. Yhwh appears there as the "natural benefactor" of his nation.

Wellhausen (and others) find in these psalms a very different theological datum relative to the rest of the Hebrew Bible. Instead of an outpost of *heathenism* and a theological profile of unconditional favor, Wellhausen in effect likens these royal psalms to something like Chronicles: monarchic in theology, yes, but also clearly presupposing the past actuality of Yhwh's aggression towards his own client people, if not the future possibility of aggression as well. Wellhausen and other early 20th c. scholarship late-dated these psalms, even to the Maccabean period. Recent scholarship has taken something of a mediating view: kernels within psalms like Psalms 2 and 110 date to the monarchic period and voice standard (Eichrodt's "heathen") royal theology. But these psalms also show signs of expansion and theological integration with other parts of the Bible, especially deuteronomistic.[264] In view of these differences in opinion, these psalms and the profile of deity they present—which may perhaps be highly similar to Iron Age royal theology—deserve careful reconsideration.[265]

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[263] Eichrodt, *TOT* 1:125. See also his remarks about the royal psalms in ibid., 1:324, 477.

[264] David M. Carr, "Royal Psalms: Locating Judah and Israel's Early Pro-Royal Literature," in *The Formation of the Hebrew Bible: A New Reconstruction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 386-402.

[265] Note that, excepting Psalm 101, Reettakaisa Sofia Salo includes all the same psalms as this chapter—2, 20, 21—in her study on Judean royal ideology in the context of its neighboring cultures (*Die judäische Königsideologie*).

Preliminary observation as well as the history of research suggest that Psalms 2 and 110 are the clearest candidates for more sustained comparison with memorial inscriptions. In addition to these two psalms, the present chapter also examines Psalms 20 and 21. Psalm 21 is oftentimes also classified as a coronation psalm, and it bears many similarities to Psalms 2 and 110, not least in its use of the same metahistorical motifs of kingship: validation by divine election and defeating enemies—in its case, not enemy *kings* but more general enemies involved, as in Psalm 2, in a conspiracy. Psalm 20 on the other hand is missing these themes almost entirely, preserving only few indications of a scenario of military jeopardy. But what Psalms 20 and 21 share in common is an emphasis on the prosperity of the king's reign—the king's "domestic achievements," in Douglas Green's phrase. The deity YHWH's favor on the human king is shown through formulae of requesting and receiving, and the nature of the royal prayers parallels that of several memorial inscriptions, as will be seen. These psalms bear witness, then, to "peacetime" royal theology, and so offer an illuminating comparand to inscriptions like Hadad and Azatiwada.

The present chapter does *not* consider every royal psalm: Psalms 18, 45, 72, 101, and 144, specifically, are excluded. The reasons for their exclusion can be set forth under two headings: they are generic and so only tangentially royal; or they do not offer much by way of theological profile. Psalm 18 (//2 Samuel 22) is lengthy and densely theological. However, although Psalm 18 does speak of the king in its final verse (v. 50) and the speaker's references to obeisance (vv. 43-45) sound like royal rhetoric, its content is also rather generic. Psalm 101 is even less kingly. Psalm 144 mentions David in its v. 10 but is otherwise wholly adapted for use as a communal prayer. About all of these psalms, David Carr expresses the scholarly consensus when he writes of them that it is "difficult to establish pre-Deuteronomistic origins" for them.[266] Psalm 45 is, per its title,

[266] Carr, "Royal Psalms," 398.

"a wedding song" for a royal marriage, while Psalm 72 is an extended prayer of blessing for the king. Both these psalms are definitely royal, unlike the above. But Psalm 45 is also relatively non-theological: except for the declaration of its vv. 6-7 that God loves righteousness and therefore has anointed the king, it presents virtually no deity profile.[267] Psalm 72 likewise, a beautiful prayer that extols the human king, does not thematize Yhwh much at all beyond its closing "blessed be" in vv. 18-19.[268]

3.2. Rhetoric and Deity Profile

The goal of the present chapter is same as in chapter 2: in keeping with the theological and rhetorical-literary methods of the present project, it seeks to determine the character of divine aggression in royal psalms. Its conclusion renders judgment on the competing interpretations of these psalms' deity profile. As with the memorial inscriptions, the present chapter focuses on answering the question: in these texts, could the patron deity Yhwh aggress against his own client king and country? This chapter follows the same procedure as the preceding: after commenting on the structure and rhetoric of each psalm, it tabulates the verbs for which the deity acts as grammatical subject. On this basis it then sketches the profile of divine aggression that each psalm presents.

3.3. Excursus on Text-Criticism

[267] See also Ps 45:2 which speaks of God's blessing (√*brk*) the king.

[268] Other texts that could be considered include the so-called "Last Words of David" in 2 Sam 23:1-7 as well as the apocryphal Psalm 151. Both of these texts are short and nonnarrative. 2 Sam 23:1-7 even appears intensively interested in kingship, though described with the root √*mšl*, i.e., "one who rules" (v. 3). What it does not offer is any profile of divine aggression: it evokes the downfall of enemies (vv. 6-7), but, as in biblical wisdom literature, makes this the consequence of their misconduct rather than a more direct product of divine aggression. The apocryphal Psalm 151 on the other hand, though interested in the biography of king David, does not thematize kingship—nor does it yield much at all in relation to divine aggression.

The psalms under consideration in the present chapter (as in the following chapters) exist in several ancient iterations: besides the Masoretic Text (MT) and the mss from Qumran, the Old Greek (OG) and various Greek translations, there are also the Latin Vulgate, the Syriac Peshitta, Aramaic Targums, and Old Latin versions, among others.[269] This is not the case, of course, for the memorial inscriptions. Chapter 2 paid some attention to the possible compositional history of royal inscriptions, especially when they show signs of incorporating a previously existing text with its own literary integrity.[270] But this is a different problem than that which the ancient biblical versions present. The latter require some decision-making, interpretively: which textual version, if any, singly considered, deserves selection as the primary comparand with the inscriptions? More broadly, how should the comparative task relate to the fact that royal psalms now inhere within a *book*, i.e., the Psalms?

These two questions face in different directions but bear on the same larger difficulty: namely, that the act of comparing royal psalms to memorial inscriptions abstracts the psalms from their canonical contexts and resituates them within an intrinsically speculative horizon. Besides their shared (though gradient) focus on the king, recent psalms scholarship has observed the strategic placement of royal psalms at key junctions throughout the biblical Psalter.[271] To treat the royal psalms separately is, then, to operate without regard for their intentional placement within a book of the Bible—which is where they exist at present, even if they once existed individually or

[269] Emanuel Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, 2nd revised ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress; Assen: Gorcum, 2001), 121-54.

[270] See especially Parker, "The Composition and Sources of Some Northwest Semitic Inscriptions."

[271] See Brevard S. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Christian Scripture* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 515-17; Gerald H. Wilson, "The Use of Royal Psalms at the 'Seams' of the Hebrew Psalter," *JSOT* 35 (1986): 85-94; idem, "King, Messiah, and the Reign of God: Revisiting the Royal Psalms and the Shape of the Psalter," in *The Book of Psalms: Composition and Reception*, ed. Peter W. Flint and Patrick D. Miller, Jr., VTSup 99 (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 391-406; Christoph Rösel, *Die messianische Redaktion des Psalters: Studien zur Entstehung und Theologie der Sammlung Psalm 2-89*, Calwer Theologische Monographien 19 (Stuttgart: Calwer, 1999). Cf. also J.P. Brennan, "Psalms 1-8: Some Hidden Harmonies," *BTB* 10 (1980): 25-29.

orally. Such disregard for the texts' canonical location and preference for a reconstructed context is exactly what "canonical approaches" criticize as uncontrolled and tendentious.[272] So, too, do canonical approaches oftentimes criticize the use of one or another ancient versions besides MT as a point of departure for biblical interpretation, and for related reasons.[273] Even if a given OG reading is probably more original or authentic, the MT is the textual form that church and synagogue have received as normative. Of course the OG and Vulgate were read in the Christian West for many centuries, perhaps for most of its duration—but Christians nonetheless (it is argued) maintained an awareness of these versions as *translations* of a prior *Hebraica veritas*.

The present study recognizes the interpretive perils of isolating royal psalms, even if only heuristically, from their canonical contexts. In pursuing a comparison with memorial inscriptions, it acknowledges the speculative nature of this juxtaposition, and it seeks to keep in view the possible role(s) of the psalm texts within the larger book of Psalms.[274] The previous chapter already offers an instructive parallel: the actual, larger historical context of royal Levantine inscriptions included Luwian texts and other monumental inscriptions; these are omitted from full treatment in the present study for various reasons, though they were nonetheless kept in view. In the same way, the role of the royal psalms within the Psalter will be noted throughout what follows—though their presentation in the "final form" of the Psalter is at considerable remove from the main discussion. As chapter 1 argued, short, nonnarrative texts like royal psalms constitute the most similar

[272] On so-called "canonical approaches," see Christopher R. Seitz, "The Canonical Approach and Theological Interpretation," in *Canon and Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Craig Bartholomew et al., Scripture and Hermeneutics Series 7 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 58-110.

[273] See Childs, *Introduction*, 84-106; Christopher R. Seitz, "Hebrew and Greek Canons: What is at Stake Here?" in *The Character of Christian Scripture: The Significance of a Two-Testament Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 70-76; Mark S. Gignilliat, "God Speaks Hebrew: the Hebrew Text and Septuagint in the Search for the Christian Bible," *ProEccl* 25 (2016): 154-172.

[274] On comparison as "a disciplined exaggeration in service to the truth," see Jonathon Z. Smith, *Drudgery Divine: On the Comparison of Early Christianities and the Religions of Late Antiquity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 34, 52, quoted in Strawn, "Comparative Approaches," 126.

comparand to memorial inscriptions and so will produce a more nuanced contrast between the aggression of Yhwh and other deities—a contrast that would be of markedly different character if the entire Psalter as a whole were compared to memorial inscriptions.[275]

As it turns out, these royal psalms must often be reconstructed in a form that does not coincide exactly with MT. This is especially so in psalms whose text is as vexed as, say, with Psalms 2 and 110. In fact the text-critical method of the present study is *eclectic*. If in some cases the present study seems to prefer OG in particular (or the Hebrew text retroverted from OG), this trend represents an accumulation of *ad hoc* decisions and is not programmatic. Given the focus on divine aggression, text-critical decisions are largely limited to those that impact the psalm's rendition of Yhwh's aggression.

Lastly, the posture of the present study towards "higher criticism" requires comment.[276] The overall goal of the study is to test the hypothesis of Yhwh's unique aggression, especially by examining relatively more similar presentations of deity. Chapter 1 stated that the study's ambit is rhetorical-literary—and as such it defers matters of historical reconstruction. The latter deferral, however, appears to work at cross-purposes with the above-stated eclectic approach to textual criticism: if one can reconstruct the form of a text at one level, why not at others? After all, "higher" and "lower" criticisms are interdependent and mutually implicating enterprises. It seems arbitrary to select one whole as a basis for comparison (individual psalms) while rejecting another, larger whole (the Psalter)—let alone to also ignore other, integral wholes within a given psalm text, e.g.,

[275] If the whole Psalter were compared with memorial inscriptions, its overall theological profile would no doubt approximate the deuteronomists'. On the theology of the whole Psalter, see George S. Gunn, *God in the Psalms* (Edinburgh: Saint Andrew Press, 1956); Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Theology of the Psalms*, trans. Keith R. Crim (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1986); Hermann Spieckermann, *Heilsgegenwart: eine Theologie der Psalmen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1989); Terrien, *Psalms*, 44-62; Gerald T. Sheppard, "Theology and the Book of Psalms," *Int* 46 (1992): 143-155. For preliminary comparisons of Psalms theology with Deuteronomy, see also Patrick D. Miller, Jr., "Deuteronomy and Psalms: Evoking a Biblical Conversation," *JBL* 118 (1999): 3-18.

[276] Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, 16-20.

the divine oracles of Psalm 2, which most scholars suppose existed independently before receiving integration into the psalm.

The present study accepts that each royal psalm under consideration has a depth dimension, and that earlier forms of the text or later additions can at times be isolated; issues of textual history and redaction are noted when pertinent. Because the present study seeks to assess the psalms' profile of divine aggression, these diachronic matters will receive attention only inasmuch as they bear upon these more "characterological" considerations—which they will, as, for example, with Psalm 2 in the section immediately following. Yhwh's aggression in Psalm 2 is outwardly directed against the enemies of his king—except in the final stanza, which directs divine aggression outwards but intimates that others besides enemy kings can, as it were, opt into the deity's enmity by refusing to "serve Yhwh with fear" (v. 11a). As will be seen, the closing stanza to which this line belongs is almost unanimously judged to be a late insertion.

3.3.1. Psalm 2

Translation

1. Why do the nations gather[277] / and the peoples scheme[278] vanity?

[277] English translations reflect confusion about whether to take this verb as referring to boisterous physical congregation (ESV footnotes: "noisily assemble"), physical hubbub (ESV: "rage"; NASB: "in an uproar"), or seditious cooperation (NRSV: "conspire"). So, too, the ancient versions: OG translates by φρυάσσομαι, "to grow insolent," Aquila by θορυβέω, "to make a noise or disturbance," Symmachus by κυκάω, "to throw into confusion," and Vul by *turbo*, "to throw into disorder." Perhaps the parallelism with √*hgh* in the second half of the line suggests an audible quality for √*rgš*, and it certainly prepares well for the speech of v. 3, but the highly verbal rendering of it Loretz ("tuscheln…flüstern"), Kraus ("murmur") or the CEB ("rant") does not seem possible. In fact, because √*hgh* and √*ysd* runs so parallel, it may also be that √*rgš* here anticipates √*yṣb* more closely than √*hgh*. The translation above emphasizes this shared and confrontative *physical* action—gathering and making a stand—between the first verbs of both vv. 1-2.

[278] √*hgh* can denote both a verbal activity and a non- (or pre-)verbal one; e.g., its uses with "tongue," "lips," or "mouth" as subject (Ps 35:28, 37:30, 71:24, Job 27:4, Prov 8:7) versus those with "heart" (Isa 33:18). In parallel with √*swd yāḥad* of the next verse, this translation has favored the non- or pre-verbal meaning ("scheme").

2. The kings of the earth[279] make a stand / and the leaders take counsel together
   against Yhwh and against his anointed.[280]
3. (Saying:) "Let us tear off their shackles / and throw away their cords!"

4. The one who dwells in the heavens laughs / Yhwh scorns them.
5. Then he spoke to them in his anger / and in his wrath he disinherited them.[281]
6. "Now I myself published my king on Zion / (on) the mountain of my sanctuary,[282]
   7a. "Let me announce the decree of God."[283]

7. b. Yhwh said to me,[284] "You are my son / today I have begotten you.
8. "Ask of me, and I will give the nations as your inheritance / and as your possession,
   the ends of the earth.

[279] It is possible to translate, "kings of the land," and so to envision a far more local challenge. But in most occurrences of the phrase in the Hebrew Bible, it has a more comprehensive, cosmic reference, and this seems more likely here, especially given *'aspê-'āreṣ* of v. 8.

[280] Several commentators take v. 2 as an extension of the question introduced by *lāmmâh.* But this makes the pivot to the direct speech in v. 3 somewhat awkward, when it seems *nôsĕdû-yāḥad* prepares for it.

[281] See now Joseph Lam, "Psalm 2 and the Disinheritance of Earthly Rulers: New Light from the Ugaritic Legal Text RS 94.2168," *VT* 64 (2014): 34-46. For an earlier hypothesis that also registers dissatisfaction with the majority translation of √*bhl* as "terrorize," "terrify," see James VanderKam, "*B h l* in Ps 2:5 and its Etymology," *CBQ* 39 (1977): 245-250.

[282] At the same time as Yhwh dwells in the heavens, two other place-words, both in v 6, locate his presence on earth. In this verse, Yhwh says that he will [publish] his king on Zion (*'al-ṣiyyôn*), which is then further specified as the *har-qodšî*. The *nomen rectum* of this construct phrase is usually rendered adjectivally: "the mountain of my holiness" or "my holy mountain." This adjectival use of the root √*qdš* also appears in Northwest Semitic inscriptions (though mostly Phoenician and Punic; see especially *TDOT* 12:541). But it is also possible to translate *qodšî* in a more substantival way: "the mountain of my sanctuary." At very least, the abstract noun *qōdeš*, used variously throughout the psalter, shades into a more concrete and territorial meaning: God's holiness only and ever manifests on Zion, and the phrase is peculiar to the ever-so-located theological tradition of Zion. Yhwh in the psalm has a "base of operations," and it is Zion, his mountain and the place of his sanctuary. See especially *TDOT* 12:541.

[283] The Greek versions and Vul translate the verb of v. 7 as a *participle* rather than a finite verb, indicating that they interpret v. 7a as subordinate to 6b and not as in parallel with 7b (NETS: "I was established king…by proclaiming"). Lineating in this way also maintains a chiastic pattern: "gather the nations / "and the peoples scheme," (v. 1), "he will speak in his anger" / "and in his wrath he will disinherit" (v. 5), "published my king on Zion" / "on my holy mountain I announced the decree" (vv. 6, 7); cf. also "the nations as your inheritance" / "and as your possession, the ends of the earth" (v. 8) and the two halves of vv. 9, 10. Also note that the second line of each doublet, though usually featuring the *waw*-conjunction, does not always (e.g., vv. 4, 7b, 9, 10 are all asyndetic). Goldingay also observes that the psalm's couplets often move from a more common noun to a less common (*gôyîm* to *lĕ'ummîm, malkê* to *rôznîm*; so also here, *ṣiyyôn* to *har-qodšî*). Another reason to understand 7a as belonging to Yhwh's direct speech is the symmetry of making Yhwh's a cohortative reply to the cohortatives of the enemy kings in v. 3. Another place in the HB where Yhwh speaks in 1cs cohortative is Mic 4:6. On the word *ḥôq*, see G. H. Jones, "The Decree of Yahweh," *VT* 15 (1965): 336-44.

[284] The versions unanimously take *Yhwh* as the subject of *'āmar* rather than as the complement of *'ēl* or *ḥôq*. Goldingay (*Psalms,* Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms, 3 vols. [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006], 1:93) says "a reader would more likely take *ḥôq* as const. than take *yhwh* as subject placed before the verb," but cf. *yhwh* in initial position in v. 4b.

9. "You may break[285] them with a rod of iron / like vessels of a potter you may shatter them."[286]

10. And now, o kings, be wise / Take counsel, o judges of the earth."[287]
11. Serve Yhwh with fear / And rejoice with trembling.
12. Submit sincerely,[288] lest he be angry and you perish from the path, for his anger burns in a moment.

Blessed are all who take refuge in him.[289]

3.3.1.1. Small Print Text-Critical Issues:

Psalm 2:6. V. 6 is very troubled text-critically. OG reads passive: Εγὼ δὲ κατεστάθην βασιλεὺς ὑπ᾽ αὐτοῦ, "But I was established king by him" (NETS), as do Vul and other Old Latin translations. Symmachus has ἔχρισα τόν βασιλέᾶ μου, "I anointed my king" (// χριστοῦ in v. 2?). Aquila and Quinta have ἐδιασάμην, meaning "I have woven" (my king), and Jerome agrees with them: *orditus sum*.

The problem with the passive translation of OG and Vul is the 1cs suffix of MT *malkî*, "my king"; the speaker of this line in MT can only be Yhwh and not the king himself. Perhaps the OG translator misread the similar-looking *mater* of the suffix, *ô* for *î*. OG and Vul run into the further problem that √*nsk* does not mean "establish" or "install," though some resources like *BDB* conjecture a verb related to the noun *nāsîk*, "prince," and perhaps (!) also attested in Prov 8:23.[290] Despite the midrashic and medieval pedigree of this hypothesized verb, Gese argues that the Davidic king was never called a *nāsîk*, and the related verb is hence unlikely here.[291] √*nsk* usually means "to pour out" as a libation, which simply does not fit well with *malkî* as its object. So Tigay: "'pour [my] king' would be an extremely elliptical way of saying 'pour a libation to make king."[292] Granerød maintains this normal meaning of pouring out, but uses Egyptian evidences to suggest that the verb refers here to the emission ("pouring out") of Yhwh's semen, and so translates: "I have poured out my king," meaning, "I have created or begotten my king" [293] This is ingenious and would make a fitting prelude to the ostensibly reproductive v. 7, but is perhaps too contrived. Tigay follows a suggestion in

[285] Gerhard Wilhelmi argues from the versions and other evidences for the repointing of MT *tĕrō'ēm (*as √*r'*, Aramaic for "to smash") as *tir'ēm* (from √*r',* "to shepherd"; Wilhelmi, "Der Hirt mit dem Eisernen Szepter: Überlegungen zu Psalm II,9," *VT* 27 [1977]: 196-204). I have maintained MT in view of the consistent parallelism throughout the poem.

[286] On the modal translation ("may"), see J.A. Emerton, "The Translation of the Verbs in the Imperfect in Psalm II.9," *JTS* 29 (1978): 503-503. On the meaning of this shattering, see Albert Kleber, "Ps 2:9 in Light of an Ancient Oriental Ceremony," *CBQ* 5 (1943): 63-67 as well as Bob Becking, "Wie Töpfe sollst du sie zerschmeissen," *ZAW* 102 (1990): 59-79 and idem, "Noch einmal Ps 2,9b," *ZAW* 105 (1993): 269-70.

[287] Although a different verb is used in v. 2 (√*swd yāḥad*) than here in v. 10 (√*ysr* in *niphal*), I have translated by the same English term ("take counsel") to emphasize the symmetry of the poem.

[288] Concurring with John Goldingay's translation (*Psalms*, 1: 92).

[289] On this root (√*ḥs'*), see Jerome F.D. Creach, *Yahweh as Refuge and the Editing of the Hebrew Psalter*, JSOTSup 217 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1996).

[290] Cf. *DCH* 5:699. But see the objections to this by Jeffrey H. Tigay, "Divine Creation in Psalms 2:6," *ErIs* 27 (2003): 246-51.

[291] Hartmut Gese, "Natus ex virgine," in *Probleme Biblischer Theologie: Gerhard von Rad von 70. Geburtstag*, ed. Hans Walter Wolff (München: Chr. Kaiser, 1971), 73-89, here 82. See also Tigay, "Divine Creation in Psalms 2:6," 246.

[292] Ibid.

[293] Gard Granerød, "A Forgotten Reference to Divine Procreation? Psalm 2:6 in Light of Egyptian Royal Ideology," *VT* 60 (2010): 323-36, here 336.

Midrash Tehillim and interprets √*nsk* as meaning, "to pour"—but in the sense of Akkadian *šapāku*, i.e., casting molten metal, and here, the king's body. He translates: "I created my king."[294]

Symmachus's translation is mislaid, since √*nsk* does not mean "to anoint as king."[295] √*swk* on the other hand can convey this meaning "anoint," but its use in the HB is only ever for "hygienic" anointing and not the consecration of kings. Despite some modern scholars' attempts to reconstruct √*swk* here, the passive *niphal* of this root does not fit, contextually; v. 5 introduces divine and not royal human speech, and the parallel clause in v. 7a actively announces and does not describe a passive action. As for Aquila and Quinta, their translation has been followed in modern times by Gese, who reads the *niphal* of √*śkk*, a root posited on the basis of Psalm 139:13, "you wove me in my mother's womb."[296] Tigay rejects this reconstruction because it depends on a single parallel.

If the lineation suggested in this translation is correct and v. 7a completes the line begun in 6b, parallelism would suggest that the meaning of √*nsk* has here to do with "announcing" (//√*spr ḥôq*). This is, of course, not at all the expected meaning of √*nsk* in Hebrew or Aramaic—although (late) Mandaean Aramaic attests two nouns formed from √*nsk* and meaning, respectively, "copy" and "copyist."[297]

Psalm 2:7. MT reads *'l* as the preposition *'el*; the collocation *spr* + *'el* is attested elsewhere only in Gen 37:10 and perhaps in Psalm 69:27 (although the substantive from √*spr*, "letter," is used oftentimes with the preposition). Sexta apparently agrees with MT and reads καταγγελλων εἰς θεον διαθήκην, "proclaiming *to God* a commandment."

The other ancient versions read *'l* as the divine name, *'ēl*. Thus OG, τό πρόσταγμα κυρίου, "the decree of (the) Lord," and Vul *Dei praeceptum* (though note this word order).[298] OG thus has two occurrences of κύριος in a row, at the end of 7a and beginning of 7b. Aquila has ἰσχυροῦ ακριβοσμον, "the commandment of God" and Theodotion has ἰσχυροῦ πρόσταγμα, "the decree of God" (ἰσχυρός is lit: "strong," but often renders *'ēl* in Greek translations of the Hebrew Bible). Perhaps the principle of *lectio difficilior* favors the odd phrase *spr* + *'el*. On the other hand, perhaps *'l* referred initially to God—but the earlier concatenation of *'ēl* and *yhwh* caused confusion and a scribe compensatorily moved *'l* before *ḥôq*, resulting in the MT's difficult text. The translation above accepts the latter reconstruction.

Psalm 2:12. The problem of *našš̆equ-bar* is vexed and longstanding.[299] All the versions except Syriac do not translate *bar* as "son." Aquila, Symmachus, and Jerome interpret *našš̆equ* metaphorically: though literally meaning "kiss," they translate "love," "bow down," "adore," and render *bar* as an adverb, "purely." OG and Targ on the other hand reflect a different understanding; OG has δράξασθε παιδείας and Targ *qblw 'wlpn'*, both meaning, "take discipline," apparently reading *bar* as a noun.

Most emendations proposed by modern scholars are very invasive: Bertholet famously thought that *bar* was initially of a piece with the preceding word, and so emended to *wĕnašš̆equ bĕraglâw,* "he kissed his feet."[300] Morgenstern inserts *bô* after *wĕgîlû* and instead of *našš̆equ-bar* reads *tĕnû lišmô kābōd,* "give glory to his name."[301] Sonne detects as the genuine text *wĕlô bir'ādâ tištaḥăweh*, "to him with trembling bow down."[302] Driver suggests

[294] Tigay, "Divine Creation in Psalms 2:6," 246.

[295] Ibid.

[296] Gese, "Natus ex virgine," 82.

[297] Carl Brockelmann, *Lexicon Syriacum* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark; Berlin: Reuther and Reichard, 1895), 434; Ethel S. Drower and Rudolph Macuch, *A Mandaic Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1963), 284.

[298] See Alfons Schulz, "Bemerkungen zum 2. Psalm," *TGl* 23 (1931): 487-97, here 491-92.

[299] G.E. Closen, "Gedanken zur Textkritik von Ps 2,11b + 12a," *Bib* 21 (1940): 288-309; R. Kölbert, "Zur ursprünglichen Textform von Ps 2, 11.12a," *Bib* 21 (1940): 426-28; A.M. Dubarle, "*Draxasthe paideias*," *RB* 62 (1955): 511-12.

[300] Alfred Bertholet, "Eine crux interpretum," *ZAW* 28 (1908): 59-59; idem, "Nochmals zu Ps 2 11f," *ZAW* 28 (1908): 193.

[301] Julian Morgenstern, "*Nšqw bar*," *JQR* 32 (1941-42): 371-85.

[302] Isaac Sonne, "The Second Psalm," *HUCA* 19 (1945-46): 43-55; Henri Cazelles, "*nšqw br* (Ps 2:12)," *OrAnt* 3 (1964): 43-45.

naššěqû laggibbôr, "kiss the mighty one."[303] Robinson reconstructs: *wěgallû bir'ādâ nešeq barzel,* "remove with trembling weapons of iron."[304] For *naššěqû-bar*, Holladay proposes *nōšê qeber*, "the one who forgets the grave."[305] Against these interventions, a more conservative approach such as MacIntosh's is preferable, whose learned philological work results essentially in support for Aquila, Symmachus, and Jerome.[306]

3.3.1.2. Structure and Rhetoric of Psalm 2

Most scholars concur that Psalm 2 falls into four stanzas of roughly equal size, and the transliteration and translation above reflect this division.[307] The first stanza, vv. 1-3, presents the *malkê-ereṣ*, the kings of the earth, uniting and plotting to throw off the overlordship of Yhwh and "his anointed." This stanza crescendoes with the direct speech of these enemy kings: "Let us tear off their shackles / and throw away their cords!" The second stanza, vv. 4-7a, depicts the furious response of Yhwh to this conspiracy—a response, notably, that takes the form of performative speech: speech that will establish Yhwh's client king and *disinherit* these enemy kings. Like the first stanza, the second also climaxes with direct speech, this time of Yhwh; just as the enemy kings received two balanced lines, so also does Yhwh (on my lineation). Where the enemy kings addressed one another in v. 3, now Yhwh addresses them (*'ēlêmô*). The third stanza, vv. 7b-9, changes perspective. Whereas the voice of the first two stanzas is apparently that of a "third party" identified with Yhwh and his *māšîᵃḥ*, the third stanza shifts to the perspective of Yhwh's king himself. After a brief introduction ("Yhwh said to me"), the entire third stanza publishes more direct speech from Yhwh, but this time addressed to *his* king and not the enemies. The fourth and

[303] G. R. Driver, "Difficult Words in the Hebrew Prophets," in *Studies in Old Testament Prophecy: Presented to Theodore H. Robinson on his Sixty-Fifth Birthday, August 9th, 1946*, ed. H. H. Rowley (New York: Scribner, 1950), 52-72, here 55.

[304] Alan Robinson, "Deliberate but Misguided Haplography Explains Psalm 2:11-12," *ZAW* 89 (1977): 421-22.

[305] William L. Holladay, "A New Proposal for the Crux in Psalm ii 12," *VT* 28 (1978): 110-12.

[306] Andrew A. MacIntosh, "A Consideration of the Problems Presented by Psalm II 11 and 12," *JTS* 27 (1976): 1-14.

[307] On the structure of the psalm, see H.H. Rowley, "The Text and Structure of Ps ii," *JTS* 62 (1941): 143-54; Pierre Auffret, "Essai sur la structure littéraire du Psaume 2," in *La sagesse a bâti sa maison: études de structures littéraires dans l'Ancien Testament et spécialement dans les psaumes*, OBO 49 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht; Fribourg: Academic Press, 1982), 141-81; idem, *Literary Structure of Psalm 2*, trans. David J.A. Clines, JSOTSup 3 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1977). See also Haney, *Text and Concept Analysis*, 80-85.

final stanza, vv. 10-12, returns to the topic of the enemy kings. Unlike the first stanza, though, the fourth stanza of Psalm 2 does not report the actions of these kings, but instead admonishes them directly to fear Yhwh. The psalm moves in an arc from before to after—and looks in closing to the time that lies ahead.

The human audience of Psalm 2 is patent. In its canonical form, v. 12b of Psalm 2 indicates the poem's intended addressee(s): all who take refuge in him; in Yhwh. That is: the drama of the enemy kings and Yhwh's reply to them serves to encourage a generalized trust in Yhwh among a community that already esteems him.[308] Most commentators agree that v. 12b comes from a later contributor than much of the rest of the poem.[309] But even accepting this judgment, it must be said that this later editor did not find an inhospitable host for his inserted macarism: already, apparently, the psalm's first stanza stages an "inner-Israelite" conversation for which the enemy kings are an object lesson.[310]

The enemy kings themselves are not addressed by the opening *lāmmâ*; they are evoked in third person (*rāgĕšû* and not *rĕgāšĕtem*), as if in an incredulous discussion among Israelites. The counsel (√*swd* + *yāḥad*) of the kings with one another in v. 3 is a kind of analogy or inner

[308] On the collective interpretation of Ps 2, see Notker Füglister, "Die Verwendung des Psalters zur Zeit Jesu: der Psalter als Lehr- und Lebensbuch," *BiKi* 47 (1992): 201-208, here 208; also, idem, "Die Verwendung und das Verstandnis der Psalmen und des Psalters um die Zeitenwende," in *Beiträge zur Psalmenforschung: Psalm 2 und 22*, ed. Josef Schreiner, FzB 60 (Würzburg: Echter Verlag, 1988), 319-84, here 377-80; cf. Marko Marttila, *Collective Reinterpretation in the Psalms*, FAT II/13 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 178-187.

[309] In Markus Saur's judgment, vv. 10-12 are a postexilic *Fortschreibung* of a preexilic tradition in vv. 1-9 (*Die Königspsalmen*, 27-29); cf., very similarly, Salo, *Die judäische Königsideologie*, 282-91, and Eckart Otto, "Politische Theologie in den Königspalmen zwischen Ägypten und Assyrien: Die Herrschaftslegitimation in den Psalmen 2 und 18 in ihren altorientalischen Kontexten," in *"Mein Sohn bist du"*, 33-65, here 34. But note that Otto finds Neo-Assyrian resonances in the revolt of all the peoples in vv. 1-3 (ibid., 48-51), and Bob Becking finds Neo-Assyrian resonances in the shattering of enemies like pots in v. 9b ("Wie Töpfe sollst du sie zerschmeissen," 269-70). But on vv. 1-3, see the similarities that Scott Starbuck finds to rhetoric found in the Amarna Letters (*Court Oracles in the Psalms*, 162-63); on v. 9, see André Lemaire, "'Avec un Sceptre de Fer': Ps II,9 et l'archéologie," *BN* (1986): 25-30; and, for Egyptian parallels to this shattering motif, Kleber, "Ps 2:9 in Light of an Ancient Oriental Ceremony"; and Bernard van Rinsveld, "Deux Allusions littéraires au rituel de la Destruction des Pots (P. Beatty III pl. 8, R°, 10, 9 et Psaume 2:9," in *Archéologie et philologie dans l'étude des civilisations orientales*, ed. Aristide Théodoridès, Paul Naster and Julien Ries, Acta Orientalia Belgica 4 (Leuven: Peeters, 1986), 207-212.

[310] On the macarism and its connection to wisdom literature, see Saur, *Königspsalmen*, 37-39.

doppelgänger of the implicit inner-Israelite counsel that contains it; *they* are talking about *us* even as *we* are talking about *them*. Also: just as these kings stand in relation to their nations and tribes (*gôyyîm ûlĕ'ummîm)*, so, too, one must assume that the king that Yhwh established has a people and a tribe. The psalm addresses them, the tacit *gôy* belonging to Yhwh's king. Even in the fourth stanza when the enemy kings *are* directly addressed by the narrator, the vocative ("o kings") is an artifice: the real addressee is still the same as in the first stanza, the anonymous community that identifies with Yhwh and his *māšîʿaḥ*.[311] Terrien in his translation calls this unnamed third party group "the chorus."[312]

At the same time that Psalm 2 seems to reflect the internal conversation of an anonymous, unstated people subject to Yhwh's king, its v. 7 speaks in 1st person. The king himself says that Yhwh spoke to *me* (*'ēlay*). How does this voice of the king relate to the 3rd person voice of the other stanzas? Or to the second person voice of the third stanza? Some commentators take this *'ēlay* in v. 7 as indication that the king is speaker throughout.[313] But there are various obstacles to this: first, it means the king would speak of himself (in third person) as *mĕšîḥô* in v. 2b.[314] If the whole poem is to be taken as the king's speech, one would expect acknowledgment of it in such a place. It would also mean that the inset direct speeches by the enemy kings and by Yhwh are, in fact, indirect speeches once removed: the king speaking as third person narrator speaking as

[311] See also Goldingay: "A question asking why nations are threatening Israel could naturally be addressed to God, but it becomes clear that this is a rhetorical question. Only in the last section does the psalm directly address anyone—namely, the world's kings and rulers. But the fact that they are the subject of vv. 1-3 suggests the psalm has another audience. When the prophets address the nations (e.g., Isa. 13-23), generally the implicit real-life audience is Israel itself. When the psalm likewise addresses the nations, the audience overhears the psalmist indirectly encouraging it not to panic when nations threaten, and instead to join Yhwh in laughing" (*Psalms,* 1:96).

[312] Terrien, *Psalms*, 77, 78.

[313] Goldingay, *Psalms*, 1:96; Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 1-59: A Continental Commentary*, trans. Hilton C. Oswald (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 125: "But who is the speaker? The answer can only be: the king enthroned on Zion."

[314] Thus Saur, *Königspsalmen*, 26, although note that he elsewhere rules out the king as a speaker because of 3rd person reference (ibid., 81).

Yhwh—a thesis that makes the "narrative world" or fabula of the poem precarious. A more obvious read of the poem is to see the king's own 1st person voice in the third stanza as a genuine juxtaposition—a new voice brought alongside others or another. The third stanza also seems to recapitulate and to fill out the content of Yhwh's direct speech in the previous stanza. Yhwh says, "I published my king." And then the king interjects to tell what that event sounded like from his vantage point. Considerations of symmetry suggest that the fourth stanza represents a return to the same speaker as in the first seven and a half verses.[315]

The king's voice is thus inset within the voice of "the chorus," i.e., that of the *gôy* subservient to Yhwh and his anointed. It is one thing to say that the two voices are closely identified in purpose. The community when it speaks seems wholly on the side of Yhwh and his king (e.g., v. 2b); they report Yhwh's own words of reply to the enemy kings in vv. 6-7a, and they admonish the king's enemies on his (and Yhwh's) behalf in the closing stanza. Conversely, when the king speaks in the third stanza, even a very personal word from Yhwh, directed with singular, 2nd person verbs to him and him alone (not even to his dynasty), it is literally surrounded by and embedded within the nation's own internal dialogue and self-address. But even more than this unity of purpose and outlook—a king appointed by Yhwh and a people who urge the fear of him—the mere presence of the community's voice alongside the king's is worth pausing to consider.

The presence of this "choral" voice demonstrates how radically different the psalm is from the memorial inscriptions of the previous chapter. In these, the voice of the king spoke *immediately* and *solitarily*; the memorial inscriptions are formally comparable to the third stanza of Psalm 2, embodying the king's own first-person voice, and also recording the patron deity's words to

[315] On this symmetry, see Becking, "Wie Töpfe sollst du sie zerschmeissen"; also Salo, *Die judäische Königsideologie*, 280.

him.[316] But that is *all* the inscriptions record—and there most certainly is no communal voice within which the king's election and achievements are contextualized. In a fundamental way, this *royal* psalm is also more than just royal. That is, it represents a hope and a project that is larger than the individual legacy and name of a particular king. In fact, the name of the individual king has dropped completely out of it (if it was ever present).[317] This alone is an important fact for interpretation. Where the memorial inscriptions are "immortality projects" seeking to persuade the patron deity to act on the king's behalf to guard the monument and protect his name, this royal psalm does not seek to persuade Yhwh at all. It belongs to a community in that it mediates its voice, and the king's voice within that. And it also seeks to persuade that same community, even if by proxy, in its imperatives addressed to the enemy kings in vv. 10-12.[318]

If the human "target" of Psalm 2 is clear and its request, delineated, the psalm's divine audience and the request it makes of Yhwh remain to be elucidated. The voice of Psalm 2 is in third person throughout; it does not address Yhwh directly. Nonetheless, as chapter 1 tabulated, Psalm 2 does in its closing v. 12 make a declaration about Yhwh's aggression—which is framed as a future possibility to be avoided, and which Yhwh alone is responsible to prosecute. The psalm appeals to an ongoing aspect of Yhwh's character, namely, that his anger burns in a moment—which could suggest that Yhwh will do what the psalm threatens regardless of the psalm itself and its rhetoric. But one can also assume that Yhwh is intended as an overhearer of the psalm's closing threat. The psalm's own presentation suggests as much: in the psalm's second stanza Yhwh responded to the susurration of the *gôyyîm* that eventuated in a verbal plot in the first stanza. So

[316] Cf. *yhwh 'āmar 'ēlay,* "Yahweh said to me" with *wy'mr. ly. kmš*, "Kemosh said to me," MI lines 14b, 32.

[317] Starbuck, *Court Oracles*, 67-102; idem, "Theological Anthropology at a Fulcrum: Isaiah 55:1-5, Psalm 89, and Second Stage *Traditio* in the Royal Psalms," in *David and Zion: Biblical Studies in Honor of J.J.M. Roberts*, ed. Bernard F. Batto and Kathryn L. Roberts (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2004), 247-65, here 253-261.

[318] Cf. Deena Grant: "In Psalm 2, the threat of divine anger serves to persuade the psalm's audience to submit to the authority of the idealized king of Israel" (*Divine Anger*, 86).

also at the end of the psalm, the *gôy* of Yhwh speaks, challenging the enemy kings. If their prior action catalyzed Yhwh's reaction, the unspoken sequel to the action urged on them at the conclusion of the psalm would be, one would expect, Yhwh's reaction once more.

3.3.1.3. Divine Aggression in Psalm 2

Yhwh functions as the subject of six verbs in Psalm 2. He is also the speaker for four 1st person verb forms in the oracle of vv. 6-8, also tabulated below.

Verb	Verse	Object(s)
yiśḥāq, "he laughs"	4a	the kings of the earth
yil'ag, "he scorns"	4b	*lāmô,* "them" (the kings)
yědabbēr, "he speaks"	5a	*'ēlêmô,* "to them" (the kings)
yěbahălēmô, "he disinherits them"	5b	the kings
nskty, "I published" (?)	6a	*malkî*, "my king"
'ăsappĕrâ, "let me announce"	7a	*ḥôq 'ēl*, "the decree of God," (to the kings)
'āmar, "he said"	7b	*'ēlay*, "to me" (the king)
yĕlidtîkā, "I begat you"	7b	the king
wĕ'ettĕnâ, "I will give"	8a	nations; to the king
ye'ĕnap, "he will be angry"	12a	the kings

Yhwh is, additionally, the direct object of one verb, in v. 11: '*ibĕdû*, "serve," addressed to the enemy kings. Yhwh is furthermore the indirect object of one other verb, *nôsĕdû-yāḥad* in v. 2, and also as the first person speaker, the indirect object of *šĕ'al mimmenî*, "ask of me," in v. 8a.

The name of Yhwh is mentioned once in each of the four stanzas of Psalm 2; if the above textual reconstruction is correct, then the divine name *'ēl* also occurs in 7a as part of a construct phrase. However, the distribution of verbs for which Yhwh is subject is not equal throughout the poem. The second stanza features the densest collection of verbs with Yhwh as subject, and which are of special interest for evaluating his aggression: the first four lines, of two couplets each,

describe Yhwh's response to the conspiracy of enemy kings (vv. 4-5). The final stanza addressed to the enemy kings includes only one verb with Yhwh as subject, which specifies the consequence of not heeding the psalm's instruction: *ye'ĕnap*, "he will be angry" (v. 12a).

In response to the enemy kings' conspiracy of the first stanza, the second stanza begins with two couplets evoking Yhwh's past *mockery*. The parallelism of "laughing" (√*ṣḥq*) and "scorn" (√*l'g*) is well attested in the Hebrew Bible.[319] Yhwh is not "amused" as some commentators have it.[320] Situationally and rhetorically, perhaps the closest parallel to this usage occurs in the scene of Neh 2:18-20. Here Nehemiah speaks at night—conspiratorially—to the city officials of Jerusalem, lying in ruin, and exhorts them, "Let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem!" (2:17). They reply, also in cohortative, "Let us rise up and rebuild!" (2:18; cf. Psalm 2:3). However, when the governors of the province west of the Euphrates hear of the conspiracy, they "scorned and despised us" (*wayyal'igû lānû wayyibzû 'ālênû*, 2:19; cf. Psalm 2:4). Their ridicule eventuates in direct speech in which they ask, "are you rebelling (√*mrr*) against the king?" To note: √*l'g*, "scorn" (here in *hiphil*) describes the mocking, belittling response of a militarily and politically superior party towards the planned opposition of an inferior. One thinks as well of the giant Goliath's response to David the shepherd boy: he despised him (*wayyibzēhû*, 1 Sam 17:42). David's offensive was puny in the giant warrior's eyes. In the same way, the psalm uses verbs from this same semantic domain with Yhwh to evoke Yhwh's sense of his own superior might.

The anger of Yhwh in the two couplets of the following line (v. 5) is of a piece with Yhwh's mockery in the preceding verse. The words for anger in v. 5 (*bĕ'appô ûbaḥărônô*) are not verbs, but they lend a critical inflection to the verbs of speech. They make Yhwh's action of speaking,

[319] Cf. 2 Chr 30:10; Ps 59:9[8]; Prov 1:26; Jer 20:7; 1QpHab 4:1. See Christoph Barth, *TDOT* 3:10-14.

[320] Goldingay, *Psalms,* 1:99: "Here, Yhwh has both the capacity to be amused and the capacity to become angry. The first enables a person to keep things in perspective and not to take bluster seriously. The second gives a person the energy to act toughly."

which will occupy four verses, a continuation of his mockery and a reply to the conspiracy of enemy kings—rather than an independent, freestanding episode.[321] Verse 4 indicates Yhwh's sense of his superiority over the enemy kings. The words for anger in v. 5 show Yhwh's sense of violated authority—the insult to his superiority. Deena Grant's words fit well here: "Biblical wrath typically arises within the context of struggles for authority and is expressed by figures in positions of authority…[most] individuals to whom wrath is ascribed in the OT are kings, leaders, masters, or higher-ranking family members."[322] Yhwh's anger in v. 5 is thus a kingly anger.

Yhwh spoke "in his anger / and in his wrath he disinherited them." If Lam's case for a legal meaning of √*bhl* holds up, then the verbs of v. 5 are both *declarative*: they denote speech that effects what it says.[323] The verbs introduce the direct speech of the following verse, which performs Yhwh's rejoinder to the conspiracy of enemy kings. In an interesting fashion, Psalm 2 thus parallels a few of the memorial inscriptions from the previous chapter. The deity Kemosh in MI does not himself fight against the enemies of his king, Mesha. Nor, from what we can tell, does Baalšamen himself fight against Zakkur's besiegers in ZI. The crucial action of the patron deities in these cases is *to speak*: to command Mesha to go up against specific cities, and to promise Zakkur deliverance. This speech of the deity to the king in effect makes of the king's own military actions an extension of the deity's will. And so it is with Psalm 2: Yhwh does not smash the enemy kings like potter's vessels himself but authorizes his king to do so. The verbs of speech in v. 5 continue the poem's triangulation of Yhwh, his king, and the enemy kings, and they fill out the content of the 3ms suffix on suffix on *měšîḥô* in v. 2. Yhwh volleys back speech in reply to the

[321] Cf. Baloian's identification of the "motivation for wrath" in Ps 2:5 and 2:12: rebellion (*Anger in the Old Testament*, 199).

[322] *NIDB* 5:932-937, here 933.

[323] Lam, "Psalm 2 and the Disinheritance of Earthly Rulers."

conspiratorial speech of the kings against him and his anointed. The verbs of speech reinforce and deepen Yhwh's angry, kingly characterization.

The final verse of the psalm features a single verb of anger (*ye'ĕnap*). In v. 12, Yhwh's anger is, as in v. 5 of the psalm, directed outwards towards the enemy kings. Except that whereas in v. 5 Yhwh's anger is actual—a real past event in reaction to the enemy kings' conspiracy—in v. 12, it is conditional: a result to be feared but that may be avoided.[324] The final stanza of Psalm 2, as noted, directly addresses the enemy kings. The "choral" voice of the community admonishes them (but really and by proxy, themselves) to "serve Yhwh with fear / And rejoice with trembling." Verse 12 then spells out the negative consequence of disregarding this injunction: stirring up Yhwh's anger, which can totally destroy (causing one to "perish from the path") and which can flare up instantly (it "burns in a moment"). Routledge's words about MI apply well here: "In addition to contrasting past and present, the temporal element of the inscription is also carried forward. From a bad past through an improved present, these inscriptions look to an unchanged future."[325] Like MI, Psalm 2 moves from a bad past problem (enemy kings) to an improved present (the king Yhwh favors *hayyôm*, "today"). But it also keeps an eye on the future, which is, as with the inscriptions, left in the hands of the listener. Like in the curse section of the memorial inscriptions, the psalm in its concluding stanza indicates the action it wishes of its auditors: to fear Yhwh. And to amplify their projects of persuasion, both the inscriptions and the psalm stipulate a conditional future of divine wrath. Should their exhortations go unheeded, divine fury will ensue.

3.3.1.4. Conclusion

[324] *GKC* §152w.
[325] Routledge, *Moab in the Iron Age*, 157.

Could Yhwh aggress against his own client king and country? To the first part of the question, the answer is emphatically *no*: Psalm 2 brooks no thought of Yhwh aggressing against his client king—who is, after all, his son whom he begot. The king—nameless though he is—is exempted absolutely from divine aggression.

On the other hand, the answer to the second part of the question is more complex: to be sure, the only explicit recipient of Yhwh's aggression in the psalm are enemy kings—in the psalm's "narrative" past but also in its conditional future. At its most direct level, then, the psalm seems to bear out Eichrodt's judgment: that its character is "egoistic-dynastic" and that it "enlist[s] the support of the covenant God in the most emphatic way for the institution of the nation as such and cause[s] Yahweh to appear as the natural ally of the national greatness and power."[326] Yhwh's enemies are the enemies of his client king and country; he is an unconditional "benefactor deity," and a "protector of the natural and national life."[327]

However, the rhetoric of the psalm complicates this verdict. If it is true that the psalm's closing address to the enemy kings is virtual and in fact it challenges the speaking, choral community itself, then this has important implications for the psalm's depiction of Yhwh's aggression. The closing pronouncement of blessing on "all who take refuge in [Yhwh]" is open to any person: all who hear the psalm's offer can opt into Yhwh's favor in this way, the way of *√ḥs'/h*.[328] It would seem then that the preceding threat, the future conditional anger of Yhwh, is likewise open to any who would opt into it. Though stated to the kings, the warning is to *all* who

[326] Eichrodt, *TOT* 1:48.
[327] Ibid., 1:46.
[328] Cf. Wälchli's comments: "Dies Wenige [referring to the *mĕʿaṭ* of v. 12b] ist, gerade auch im Zusammenhang zu Ps. 1, aber wohl eher im individuellen ethisch-religiösen Fehlverhalten des nachexilischen Gläubigen zu suchen als im militärischen-politischen Kontext der Völkerwelt…So bezieht sich der durch dies Wenige erregte Zorn auf das Schicksal des einzelnen Individuums, dem in der Folge die strafende Wirkung ebendieses Zorns droht" (*Gottes Zorn in den Psalmen*, 39).

refuse to "submit sincerely." And the fate of the enemy kings—the prospect of their breaking and shattering from v. 9—could become that of others who follow a similarly recalcitrant course.

Such a possibility is not exactly the threat of "national annulment" that Eichrodt posited at the heart of the Hebrew Bible. Psalm 2 does not overtly envision an entire nation refusing to submit sincerely to Yhwh and thus incurring on itself his anger that burns in a moment, leastwise not the *gôy* belonging to him and to his king. The divine aggression that the psalm posits is smaller-scale, more local—but nonetheless, a wrath into which persons may step, and not one determined solely by their membership to the people of Yhwh and his adopted son.

3.3.1.5. Excursus on the Redaction of Psalm 2

The complication in this psalm's otherwise wholly nationalistic rendition of divine aggression is also, in the judgment of most scholars, a latecomer relative to psalm's older, "core verses." Many or most scholars deem vv. 6-9 as the oldest unit within Psalm 2.[329] In these core verses, Yhwh authorizes his king to dash the nations like a potter's vessel. The deity's aggression, that is, is *delegated*, whereas in vv. 10-12, Yhwh's aggression is *direct*.[330] Some have, moreover, detected echoes of deuteronomistic rhetoric in the reference of the closing verses to Yhwh's "burning anger" that results in destruction (cf. Deut 6:13-18).[331] Psalm 2 also bears signs of redactional arrangement to fit its present juxtaposition with Psalm 1: its use of the verb "to perish" (√*'bd*) in v. 11 echoes the same verb in Psalm 1: "the way of the wicked will perish (√*'bd*); *derek*,

[329] E.g., Erich Zenger, "'Wozu tosen die Völker. . . ?' Beobachtungen zur Enstehung und Theologie des 2. Psalms," in *Freude an der Weisung des Herrn: Beiträge zur Theologie der Psalmen: Festgabe zum 70. Geburtstag von Heinrich Gross*, ed. Ernst Haag and Frank-Lothar Hossfeld, SBS 13 (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1986), 495-511.

[330] Ibid., 501-502.

[331] Eichrodt, *TOT* 1:509.

"way," also occurs in both psalms.[332] Psalm 2:11 ends with a macarism where Psalm 1 begins with one (1:1). The final stanza of Psalm 2 lofting the future conditional wrath of Yhwh thus looks like it belongs to the presumably late knitting of Psalms 1 and 2 together.[333] In fact both bookending stanzas of Psalm 2 that picture Yhwh's confrontation with the nations (or: *Völkerkampfmotiv*) have been ascribed to a later time.[334]

What these considerations mean is that in the psalm's core verses (vv. 6-9), Yhwh's wrath more closely corresponds to Eichrodt's judgment about the theological character of royal psalms: namely, that they are wholly nationalistic and "abrogate the doctrine of judgment."[335] Here, it would seem, Yhwh "displays only the higher aspect of the national self-consciousness," and as such, directs aggression only outwards against the enemies of his king. [336]

However, the difficulty of isolating vv. 6-9 as a prior unit in this way is that the rhetorical purpose of this reconstructed oracle (or oracles) is unclear—especially in that it was preserved and recited beyond its first usage. In their supposed primordial form, vv. 6-9 address a divine oracle to an individual king and promise him triumph over enemy nations. The question arises: why would a psalm have been kept and sung if it permitted no "point of entry" for the community that curated it? How would a psalm whose king was wholly individual and whose enemies, the nations, were wholly historical, have significance for a religious community—a seeming third term? This is the

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[332] On other words shared between the first two psalms, see Auffret, *Literary Structure*, 34; Starbuck, *Court Oracles*, 167; also, Patrick D. Miller, Jr., "The Beginning of the Psalter," in *Israelite Religion and Biblical Theology*: *Collected Essays*, JSOTSup 267 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2000), 269-78.

[333] William H. Brownlee, "Psalm 1-2 as a Coronation Liturgy," *Bib* 52 (1971): 321-336; Pierre Auffret, "Essai sur la structure littéraire du Psaume 2." But see also Benjamin Sommer's argument for the separateness and integrity of Psalms 1 and 2 ("Psalm 1 and the Canonical Shaping of Jewish Scripture," in *Jewish Bible Theology: Perspectives and Case Studies*, ed. Isaac Kalimi [Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2012], 199-221, here 212n34).

[334] Cf. Zech 14 and Joel 4; Saur, *Die Königspsalmen*, 215-218; also Gunther Wanke, *Die Zionstheologie der Korachiten in ihrem Traditionsgeschichtlichen Zusammenhang*, BZAW 97 (Berlin: Töpelmann, 1966), 70-99. Although see also Starbuck, *Court Oracles*, 162-65, for earlier examples of this motif from the Amarna Letters and Ugarit.

[335] Eichrodt, *TOT* 1:373.

[336] Ibid., 1:43.

weakness of Scott Starbuck's account of the royal psalms' transmission: he proposes that they were first composed for use in "a court-sponsored event," at which point they were "anchored to a specific king."[337] At a second stage, the royal psalms were scrubbed of their individual, royal references and "reappropriated by the general populace for worship."[338] But the mechanics of this reappropriation remain vague—unless, of course, even from their first contexts of usage, the royal psalms allowed for others besides just the king and his enemies to participate somehow in their rhetoric.[339] Even if only by support and loyalty for the king and not yet by formal "collectivization," the first reciters of the psalm were able to join their voices to Yhwh's own in declaring the unique prerogatives of the deity's favored king. Perhaps, too, as with the oracle from Milkom to the king in the Amman Citadel Inscription, even the oracle from Yhwh to his king in the core verses of Psalm 2 faces towards the deity as well, summoning him to uphold his promise.

If this is accurate, then the later additions to the psalm would be in some way *consonant* with its earlier usage: the first tradents of the psalm supported the king's status by repeating Yhwh's oracle and called for Yhwh to fulfill his promise of aggressing against the king's enemies. Later tradents built on this orientation by articulating the enemy kings' conspiracy and by warning these kings in closing—and by extension, warning the reciting community itself. The idea that Yhwh's aggression could turn against someone who sang the psalm appears peculiar to this subsequent stage of transmission and redaction, though it nonetheless grows from the psalm's earlier openness to a community's participation in its rhetoric. If in this way the status and safety of the reciting community changed over time, the king's absolute exemption from Yhwh's

[337] Starbuck, "Theological Anthropology at a Fulcrum," 254.
[338] Ibid.
[339] Starbuck later writes, "several of the Royal Psalms, though full of strident metaphor, could easily have been appropriated by commoners in acts of devotion mirroring the leadership of a devout king (Psalms 20, 21, 101, and 144)" (ibid., 260-61).

aggression is the psalm's fundament, constant through all its levels. The fact that the "core" verses of the psalm imagine no possibility of Yhwh's aggression against the psalm's own reciters is then at least somewhat a result of the psalm imagining no possibility of the psalm's reciters turning against the king: they—we; all subsequent readers—are positioned in vv. 6-9 only as royal supporters. As such, the psalm gives the deity Yhwh no occasion to effect a reprisal on behalf of his king against the community that recites the psalm.

3.3.2. Psalm 110

Translation

1. A psalm of David The oracle of Yhwh to my lord: "Sit at my right hand "Until I make your enemies a stool for your feet. 2. Yhwh will send out[340] the staff of your power from Zion Rule in the midst of your enemies! 3. Lordliness is with you in the day of battle; in the splendors of holiness.[341] From the womb, namely from the dawn,[342] I gave you birth."
4. Yhwh swore and would not relent: "You are a priest forever on account[343] of Melchizedek."

[340] It is also possible to read *yišlaḥ* as jussive ("may Yhwh send out") since its form is the same (*GKC* §48g). But see below for reasons to interpret this verse as a continuation of Yhwh's own speech, in which case, exhortation is improbable.

[341] Cf. Adrian Schenker: "Bei dir ist nichts als Großmut am Tag deiner Macht in strahlendster Heiligkeit" ("Textkritik und Textgeschichte von Ps 110(109):3: Initiative der Septuaginta und der protomasoretischen Edition," in *La Septante en Allemagne et en France: textes de la Septante à traduction double ou à traduction très littérale = Septuaginta Deutsch und Bible d'Alexandrie*, ed. Wolfgang Kraus, OBO 238 [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht; Fribourg: Academic Press, 2009], 172-90, here 178); also Starbuck, *Court Oracles*, 149.

[342] MT reads *mišḥār*, a *miqtal* form from one of three potential Hebrew roots, perhaps most likely √*šḥr*, "to become black" (cf. Job 30:30), and so meaning "the darkness." But the OG, Theodotion, the Peshitta, and apparently also Origen's Hebrew transliteration (i.e., Secunda, which reads μεσσαάρ) support an original *mišša*ḥ*ar*, in which case the *min*-preposition is either enclitic or, more probably, repeating and specifying the *min* prefixed to *reḥem* (Miriam von Nordheim, *Geboren von der Morgenröte: Psalm 110 in Tradition, Redaktion, und Rezeption*, WMANT 118 [Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2008], 28; Schenker, "Textkritik," 177).

[343] The most obvious understanding of *dibrātî* is "my word" (Stefan Schreiner, "Psalm CX und die Investitur des Hohenpriesters," *VT* 27 [1977]: 216-222, here 221n6). It is also possible for it to be a so-called *Ḥireq compaginis* (*GKC* §90l), i.e., a vestigial construct suffix. But Vinzenz Hamp has argued through comparison with other examples of the phrase *'al dĕbar/dibrat* that it does not mean "in the order of" but something more causal: "wegen," "auf Veranlassung," "in Nachahmung" ("Ps 110,4b und die Septuaginta," in *Neues Testament und Kirche: für Rudolf Schnackenburg*, ed. Joachim Gnilka [Freiburg: Herder, 1974], 519-529). Cf. Thijs Booij, "Psalm CX: 'Rule in the Midst of Your Foes!'" *VT* 41 (1991): 396-407, here 402.

5. My Lord[344] at your right hand smashed kings in the day of his anger.
6. He governs among the nations, filling them with bodies[345]
   He smashed heads over the wide land.[346]
7. Along the way, he drinks more than from a brook;[347] therefore he lifts up his head.

3.3.2.1. Small Print Text-Critical Issues

Psalm 110:3a: MT reads *'ammĕkā nĕdābōt*, "your people are [in] full readiness."[348] OG has μετὰ σοῦ ἡ ἀρχὴ ἐν ἡμέρᾳ τῆς δυνάμεώς σου, "with you is rule on a day of your power" (NETS), apparently interpreting the *–ōt* suffix (or likely reading *–ût* from an unpointed text) on √*ndb* as an abstracting suffix (cf. *GKC* §86k) from *nĕdîbâ*, nobility; Schenker supports this reconstruction ("Textkritik," 175). Aquila and Quinta parallel OG in understanding *'immĕkā*, the *'im* preposition + pronominal suffix, but translate *nĕdābōt* literally as ἑκουσιασμός, "free-will offering," and so render the clause, "with you [are] free-will offerings." Vul and Symmachus on the other hand understand *ammĕkā* as "your people" (*populi tui* and ὁ λαός σου, respectively) and then interpret *nĕdābōt* as a predicate adjective of sorts, or perhaps as an abstract noun derived not from *nĕdîbâ* but *nĕdābâ*, and so suggesting voluntariness (your people "are ready," *spontanei erunt* and ἡγεμονικοί; as in MT).

Psalm 110:3b: MT features *bĕhadrê-qōdeš*. Vul, OG, Aquila, and Theodotion all render the *nomen regens* of this construct phrase as a word indicating splendor, brilliance, or good appearance (in ornamentis // λαμπρότησιν // διαπρέπειαις // εὐπρεπείᾳ). Quinta similarly has δόξῃ, "glory." By contrast, Codex Cairensis has *bĕharĕrê-qōdeš*, "in the *mountains* of holiness," and Jerome and some mss of Symmachus also reflect this *Vorlage*. But MT is preferable as the *lectio difficilior*. Brown also points out that *bĕharĕrê-qōdeš* represents a conformation to Psalm 87:1.[349]

The versions translate *mišša*ḥ*ar* variously. OG has ἐκ γαστρὸς πρὸ ἑωσφόρου ἐξεγέννησά σε, "from the womb, before the Morning-star, I birthed you." Heosphoros is a proper name, which also translates *ša*ḥ*ar* in Jer 14:12 and in Job 3:9, 38:12, and 41:9, and πρὸ renders the preposition *min*.[350] What seems missing from OG is the middle phrase: *lĕkā ṭal*.[351] All the other Greek versions reflect it, translating σοι and δρόσος. Sexta sees √*šḥr* not as a noun meaning "daybreak" but a finite verb meaning "to seek": ἐκ γαστρός ζητήσουσι σε, "from the womb they seek you." This translation could suggest that the *Vorlage* lacked the *m*-prefix on √*šḥr*. Adrian Schenker argues that OG reflects

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[344] Some mss of MT have the name Yhwh here instead of *'ădōnāy*. TgPss features "The Shekinah of the Lord." A major interpretive decision concerns the identity of this "Lord," and, correlatively, the subject of the verbs that follow in vv. 5-7. Yhwh is commonly accepted as the primary agent in these verses (though many exegetes hesitate to ascribe v. 7 to Yhwh), but for an argument that *'ădōnāy* in v. 5 should be taken in the same sense as *'ādōnî* in v. 1, see Hans Möller, "Der Textzusammenhang in Ps 110," *ZAW* 92 (1980): 287-89; also, Raymond Tournay, "Le Psaume 110," *RB* 67 (1960): 5-41.

[345] The translations of Aquila, Symmachus, and Jerome all reflect Hebrew *gē'āyôt,* "valleys." As (*inter alia*) Leo Krinetzki points out, this text makes sense ("Psalm 110 [109]: Eine Untersuchung seines dichterischen Stils," *TGl* 51 [1961]: 110–21). But the parallelism with smashing heads in the next verse favors the MT, and so also do other ancient versions.

[346] Following von Nordheim's adverbial translation of *rabbâh*: "Er zerschlägt *reichlich* die Köpfe anderer Könige" (*Geboren*, 33).

[347] On this translation with *min* of comparison, see Joachim Becker, "Zur Deutung von Ps 110,7," in *Freude an der Weisung des Herrn,* 17-31. TgPss translates (very periphrastically!), "From the mouth of a prophet, he will receive instruction in the way." This rendering shows how ancient readers also balked to attribute v. 7 to Yhwh.

[348] Cf. the translation of MT by Lucas von Kunz: "Dein Volk ist voll Ergebenheit" ("Psalm 110 in masoretischer Darbietung," *TGl* 72 [1982]: 331-35, here 333); also, that of von Nordheim: "Dein Volk ist Freiwilligkeit" (*Geboren*, 130).

[349] William P. Brown, "A Royal Performance: Critical Notes on Psalm 110:3aγ-b,"*JBL* 117 (1998) 93-96, here 96n21.

[350] Schenker, "Textkritik," 176.

[351] Although von Nordheim argues that *lĕkā ṭal* is not missing from the *Vorlage* of OG, but "ist in der Übersetzung als 'Heosphorus' impliziert" (*Geboren*, 87; see also ibid., 183-185), the sequence of words makes this interpretation difficult.

in this instance a more authentic Hebrew text (lacking *lĕkā ṭal*) and that proto-MT introduced the phrase into the text out of a "Midrasch charakteristischen Assoziation" with the story of Gideon in Judg 6:36-40. He documents numerous other words and themes shared between Psalm 110 and Judg 6:36-40 to justify this text-critical judgment.[352] Vul and numerous Old Latin mss follow OG and are missing *lĕkā ṭal*.[353]

The versions present a convincing departure from MT at the end of v. 3. MT reads *lĕkā ṭal yaldūtêkā,* "yours is the dew of youth." But numerous MT mss as well as OG, Secunda, and Peshitta all support *yĕlidtîkā.*[354] Epiphanius also provides a transliteration of the Hebrew that departs from MT: λακταλ instead of *lĕkā ṭal* and ιελεδεθεχ for *yaldūtêkā.* Some have found in this notion of "giving birth" a harmonization with Psalm 2.[355] But as Brown notes, this abstract noun for youth is only attested elsewhere in a late Hebrew text (Eccl 11:9-10).[356]

3.3.2.2. Structure and Rhetoric of Psalm 110

Psalm 110 is often identified as a "coronation psalm."[357] There is some contention among scholars about the structure of the psalm.[358] What is clearest is that there are at least two divine direct speeches or oracles, the first introduced by *nĕ'ūm yhwh la'ădōnî* in v. 1 and the second introduced by *nišba' yhwh wĕlō' yinnāḥēm* in v. 4.[359] The translation above reflects this basic twofold division. Where interpreters differ is in their estimation of the length of each direct divine speech: is v. 2 with its third person reference to Yhwh a continuation of the speech in v. 2? Is the order given to the king in v. 2b to be imagined on Yhwh's lips or that of the anonymous third party responsible for the oracular introduction, "the oracle of Yhwh to my lord"? Or again: is v. 3 part of the preceding speech?

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[352] Schenker, "Textkritik," 184-186.

[353] Von Nordheim treats of the Latin witnesses, but does not note this omission (*Geboren*, 214).

[354] Brown, "A Royal Performance," 95.

[355] For the similarities between the two psalms in OG, see Eberhard Bons, "Die Septuaginta-Version von Psalm 110 (Ps 109 LXX): Textgestalt, Aussagen, Auswirkungen," in *Heiligkeit und Herrschaft: Intertextuelle Studien zu Heiligkeitsvorstellungen und zu Psalm 110*, ed. Dieter Sänger, BTS 55 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 2003), 122-45.

[356] Brown, "A Royal Performance," 95; also, von Nordheim, *Geboren*, 26.

[357] E.g., influentially, Lorenz Dürr, *Psalm 110 im lichte der neueren altorientalischen Forschung* (Münster: Vorlesung der Akademie Braunsberger), 5; also Hermann Gunkel, *The Psalms: A Form-Critical Introduction*, trans. Thomas M. Horner (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1967), 24. On the role of Psalm 110 within the "trilogy" of Psalms 108, 109, and 110, see especially Lodewyk Sutton, "A Trilogy of War and Renewed Honour? Psalms 108, 109 and 110 as a Literary Composition," (Ph.D. diss., University of Pretoria, 2015); on Psalm 110 within the whole Psalter, see John C. Crutchfield, "Psalms 107-118 in Their Canonical Context," in *Psalms in Their Context: An Interpretation of Psalms 107-118,* Paternoster Biblical Monographs (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2011), 98-130.

[358] Cf. Pierre Auffret, "Note sur la structure littéraire du Psaume CX," *Semitica* 32 (1982): 83-88; von Kunz, "Psalm 110." See also Haney, *Text and Concept Analysis*, 115-18.

[359] Cf. Gard Granerød, *Abraham and Melchizedek: Scribal Activity of Second Temple Times in Genesis 14 and Psalm 110*, BZAW 406 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2010), 174.

In the translation above, the imperatives of vv. 1 and 2 suggest that v. 2 is an extension of the direct divine speech in v. 1: *šēb*, "sit," is spoken by God and addressed to the king, and so also may be *rĕdēh*, "rule." Goldingay writes that "perhaps this [v. 2] is the speaker's expansion of the oracle [in v. 1], though Yhwh is quite capable of self-referring in an oracle."[360] The second person address is consistent throughout vv. 1-3: each verse features 2ms pronominal suffixes. In favor of the idea that v. 3 is also an extension of the divine speech in vv. 1-2: provided the OG version is authentic, v. 3 concludes with a 1cs verb whose subject is Yhwh (*yĕlidtîkā*), just as v. 1 opens with a 1cs suffix (*lîmînî*) and 1cs verb (*'āšît*) whose referent is Yhwh.

The profile of the second stanza of Psalm 110 is more difficult to discern, but crucial for assessing the psalm's presentation of divine aggression. Verse 4 clearly contains one line of direct address from Yhwh to the king. Verse 5 then switches like v. 2 to a third person sentence. However, where v. 2 can still be considered a self-reference of Yhwh, this seems much less likely in the case of v. 5. The perfect tense of the verb (*māḥaṣ*) underlines that this is somehow a distinct description or explication from the imperfective nominal sentence of v. 2. So, too, except for the 2ms pronominal suffix on *yĕmînĕkā* in v. 5, vv. 5-7 contain only third person sentences. They are not direct address like the oracle of v. 2—or if they are, in an extended sense: only by its single, introductory identifier *'ădōnāy 'al-yĕmînĕkā* are the following sentences integrated into the preceding. The topic of vv. 5-7 also varies from v. 2: there is nothing *priestly* about these sentences.[361] Instead, they speak of rule (*yādîn*) and, even moreso, of *making war*.[362]

[360] Goldingay, *Psalms*, 3:294. Cf. also Hossfeld and Zenger, who imagine vv. 2-3 as an explanation—by the prophetic speaker—of v. 1 (*Psalmen 101-150*, 206).

[361] Unless, of course, the guess of Becker is correct and the drinking from the brook in v. 7 refers to some priestly ritual ("Zur Deutung von Ps 110,7").

[362] Diachronically, some have alleged that the second stanza in vv. 4-7 is a *Fortschreibung* of the earlier, preexilic royal oracle in vv. 1-3, e.g., Saur, *Königspsalmen*, 210-215, who thinks that the priestly elements of vv. 4-7 suggest their lateness. But see Klaus Koch on the first millennium Egyptian resonance of the psalm's priest-king elements ("Der König als Sohn Gottes in Ägypten und Israel," in *"Mein Sohn bist du"*, 1-32, here 20-23).

The subject of these third person verbs in the second stanza is obscure. The difficulty in discerning whether Yhwh or his king is described points up their close coordination in the psalm, and their similarity of profile. Several of the verbs occur in the Hebrew Bible with both divine and human subjects: √*mḥṣ*, used twice in Psalm 110, is a relatively rare word (12x in the Hebrew Bible) and appears only in poetic texts. The majority of these instances feature Yhwh as subject, but in Psalm 18:39[38] the king himself in 1st person describes crushing his enemies.[363] So, too, the verb √*dyn* can take Yhwh or a human king as subject.[364] The phrase *bĕyôm-'appô* would seem to fit a divine referent: the exact phrase occurs elsewhere only in Job 20:28 and Lam 2:1, 21. Zeph 2:2 speaks of the *yôm-'ap-yhwh;* the construct phrase *'ap-yhwh* appears frequently.[365] But it is also possible for *'ap* to take a human complement, though this seems improbable for the psalm. Von Nordheim demonstrates that the psalms in general depict Yhwh as the subject of wrath and anger.[366] Comparison with other instances would suggest on the other hand that the verb √*šth* is likelier to have a human subject. Numerous kings and leaders in the Hebrew Bible drink, but the deity does so almost never.[367]

However, the text signals no shift of referent, from deity to king; and despite the evidence from other more numerous attestations of human and not divine drinking, the recurrence of *rō'š* in vv. 6b-7 perhaps supports the divine reference of all of v. 7. That is: if Yhwh (*'ădōnāy*) at the king's right hand in v. 5 smashed (*māḥaṣ*) kings in the day of his anger, v. 6 expands on that by saying that he smashed (*māḥaṣ*) their collective head (*rō'š*) throughout the wide land. When another head appears in v. 7, the force of association would suggest that it, too, belongs to another

[363] Alonso-Schökel, *māḥaṣ,* in Botterweck et al., ed., *TDOT* 8:235-37.
[364] *DCH* 2:434.
[365] *DCH* I:353.
[366] Von Nordheim, *Geboren,* 73.
[367] Becker, "Zur Deutung von Ps 110,7," 23.

king. Yhwh smashed the head of enemy kings, but this time relates by a positive, supportive verb (√*rwm* in *hiphil*) to another head (*rō'š*), likely that of *his* king. It is *possible* that the head could be Yhwh's own, or that the king lifts up his own head: but the idiom in Psalm 3:4 and Psalm 27:6 configures the deity as the lifter of the human speaker's head.[368] If for these reasons it is more likely that the subject of *yārîm rō'š* in v. 7b is Yhwh, it is hard not to think he is also the subject of *yišteh* preceding it in 7a, remaining obscurities notwithstanding.

The two stanzas of the psalm thus center on direct speeches from Yhwh to the king, although the oracle of the first stanza is far longer, comprising vv. 1-3 *in toto* versus just v. 4b in the second stanza. Both stanzas also deal with parallel subjects: in both, Yhwh calls the king to assume a position of favor, and Yhwh fights the king's enemies. In the first stanza, the king's favored position is invoked with several images: sitting at Yhwh's right hand (v. 1), royal lordliness and military power (vv. 2, 3a), and, lastly, Yhwh's giving birth to the king (v. 3b, provided the OG's interpretation is more authentic). In the second stanza, the king's favored position is rendered briefly and with a quite different term: as an eternal priesthood (v. 4b). Relatively more space is given over in the second stanza than in the first to Yhwh's fighting on behalf of the king (vv. 5-7).

If this is the *how* of the psalm's rhetoric, its imagined audience(s) and the actions it requests of them remain to be determined. In a peculiarly intensive way, Psalm 110 depicts the relationship of the deity and his client king.[369] Excepting vv. 5-7, most of the psalm consists of Yhwh's direct speech to the king. The other main character in the psalm is the king's enemies (vv. 1-2), also spoken of as *mĕlākîm*, "kings," in v. 5 and apparently as *rō'š* in v. 6. As in Psalm 2, the deity and

[368] Cf. Haney, *Text and Concept Analysis*, 212n6.

[369] Cf. Granerød: "Psalm 110 seems to involve at least three different persons: Yahweh…the prophetic psalms speaker, and the addressee of the oracles in vv. 1, 4" (*Abraham and Melchizedek*, 176).

king are a team arranged in opposition to enemy kings. But unlike Psalm 2, the speaker and the intended audience are rendered very minimally. The speaker of v. 1 refers to the king as *'ădōnî,* "my lord"—but this is all that is knowable of him: he self-identifies as the servant of the king and also as the mediator of Yhwh's message to the king. As such, it can be inferred that the speaker supports and welcomes the commands and promises he tenders to the king. This is especially true of MT Psalm 2, in which one can infer that the speaker belongs to the *'am,* "people," of the king (*'ammĕkā*) in v. 3. But if the OG of v. 3 represents a more authentic text, even this single reference to a people of Yhwh's king is absent. Yhwh also sends out the staff of the king's power from *Zion*; the speaker and the audience are also likely to be located there, or at least invested in its interests as a city. The scepter of the king goes out from Zion, a good place—even as the *'ereṣ rabbâ*, the wide land, becomes a place of contest and destruction of enemy kings. This is all that is discernible from the psalm about its speaker and its imagined readership.

No action is urged *overtly* on the human reader or hearer of the psalm. Where Psalm 2 explicitly commands the enemy kings (but really its own community) to "serve Yhwh with fear / and rejoice with trembling," Psalm 110 issues no such imperative to the people of Yhwh or of his king. MT v. 3 pictures the people of the king offering themselves willingly[370]—which may not amount to a command *per se* but is certainly a commendation by way of example: as the king's people offer themselves to the king's service, presumably helping him to achieve rule amid his enemies (v. 2b), so also the *'am* addressed now by the psalm ought to offer themselves to the king of Yhwh's choosing. But again, the versional evidence, though mixed, indicates that MT here mispoints the authentic Hebrew consonants; and that the psalm's more original version makes no reference to the *'am* of Yhwh's king. Be that as it may, the MT in its pointing of v. 3 picks up on

[370] Von Kunz, "Psalm 110 in masoretischer Darbietung," 333.

a real dimension of the text: even if v. 3 initially only praised the king (‘*immĕkā nĕdābōt*, “with you is nobility”), the rhetorical objective of extolling the king was to commend the psalm’s hearers to his service.

The psalm ostensibly portrays a transaction between the deity and his client king. The overhearing audience is not mentioned or thematized. And yet: by listening in on Yhwh’s grand promises and commands to his patron (vv. 1-3), and then by seeing Yhwh’s combat on his behalf (vv. 4-7), the psalm in effect conscripts its audience. The psalm’s imagined hearers are made into partisan spectators and perhaps even participants in the conflict between Yhwh’s king and his enemies. It is clear enough from the psalm that Yhwh’s king faces enemies and threats to his power. But his victory is assured: Yhwh commands the king’s sovereignty and battles for him. The audience is clearly to root for this victory. Indeed, the closing verb of the psalm (√*rwm*) refers many times and in many forms to *praise*:[371] to the action of *verbally* exalting, whether a divine or human object. Thus for example, Psalm 30:1 prays to Yhwh: *’ărômmĕkā*, “I will exalt you” (*polel*). On the most direct level, in Psalm 2:7 Yhwh is the one who lifts up the head of his king. But on an *indirect* level, the psalm itself—and the community that reads it—accomplishes this lifting and exaltation: the psalm’s audience reprises the deity’s action. Yhwh speaks words of promise to his king—but so also do the people who recite the psalm. And if Yhwh fights on behalf of his king, the psalm’s readers virtually do battle for him by their rehearsal of its verses.

In this way, although the psalm’s imagined speaker and audience are given only the most minimal characterization, they are crucial to the psalm’s rhetoric: they—and all its readers—are fashioned as the psalm’s invisible carriers and agents. The psalm’s readership is neither the king nor the deity, but is on their side and subject to them, and echoes their words and actions through

[371] *DCH* 7:441-450.

the act of reading. On the other hand, roughly half of the psalm is Yhwh's own direct speech; it is consequently difficult to imagine how the psalm would also address the deity.

Nonetheless, as with the Amman Citadel inscription, it is possible for even oracles *from* the deity *to* humans (or rather, to one human, the king) to serve a second and less direct rhetorical function: reminding the deity of his oath. In Psalm 2, Yhwh is an oath-taking god. So, too, Psalm 2:4a raises a possibility even as it preemptively forecloses it: that Yhwh might relent (√*nḥm*) from that which he promised.[372] Both these notions—of an ongoing divine promise and also of a divine reneging—are wholly absent from the memorial inscriptions. In them, divine speech is past and effectual. Even as the partial exception to this, the promise of the deity Milkom to his king in ACI is somewhat qualified: the deity's oath stands at risk but is also insured by the monument into whose surface it is written. This kind of physical guarantor or index for the effectiveness of the deity's promise is missing with Psalm 110. There, the speech of the deity—its verbal form and its content—stands alone, radically unguaranteed and with only itself as referent. To a certain extent, Psalm 2's articulation of divine promise serves to reassure the psalm's human readership.[373] But in a different way, the rhetoric of the psalm also *faces towards Yhwh himself*: its readers participate by their declaration in what Yhwh does, lifting up the head of his king—indeed, perhaps praying for this action from Yhwh.

3.3.2.3. Divine Aggression in Psalm 110

[372] √*nḥm* doesn't even occur in NWS inscriptions.

[373] Hossfeld and Zenger write that this possibility that Yhwh's oath might fail was only an issue for anxiety in Judah in the era after the fall of the Davidic dynasty in 587 BCE (*Psalmen 101-150*, 209). Von Nordheim and Saur (among others) share this opinion (von Nordheim, *Geboren*, 67-73; Saur, *Königpsalmen*, 209).

If the above translation is correction, Yhwh acts as the grammatical subject of nine verbs in Psalm 110, including participles in v. 6. He is also the speaker of two 1st-person verbs, both in the first stanza (*'āšît,* "I place/make" and *yĕlidtîkā*, "I gave birth to you").

Verb	Verse	Object(s)
'āšît, "I place/make"	1b	*'ōybêkā*, "your enemies"
yišlaḥ, "he will send forth"	2a	*maṭṭēh-'ūzzĕkā*, "the scepter of your power"
yĕlidtîkā, "I gave birth to you"	3b	the king
nišba', "he swore"	4a	n/a
wĕlō' yinnāḥēm, "he would not relent"	4a	n/a
māḥaṣ, "he smashed"	5	*mĕlākîm,* "kings"
yādîn, "he will govern"	6a	*baggôyim*, "among the nations"
mālē', "filling"	6a	*gĕwiyyôt*, "bodies"
māḥaṣ, "he smashed"	6b	*rō'š*, "head"
yišteh, "he drank"	7a	n/a
yārîm, "he will raise"	7b	*rō'š*, "head"

The deity name Yhwh occurs three times in the MT text of the psalm. Most likely the *'ădōnāy* of v. 4a also refers to him. Two of these four references to the deity by name or title appear in a prominent place at the opening of each stanza and in connection to a word denoting Yhwh's direct speech.

Yhwh's first direct speech beginning in v. 1 communicates his aggression towards the king's enemies. Yhwh orders his king to sit at his right hand. Goldingay has written that the closest biblical parallel to this verbal phrase "to sit at the right hand" (*√yšb + lîmîn*) is 1 Kgs 2:19, when king Solomon sits down on his throne and his mother Bathsheba sits at his right hand. Throughout this narrative text, Solomon is clearly the greater power, and honors his mother with a prestigious place nearby to him: this honored position at the right hand is, in turn, only a "launchpad," as it

were, for the queen mother to make a request of the king. In Psalm 110, by contrast, Yhwh urges the king to sit down so that *he* and not the seated inferior may act. Yhwh commands the king to sit down until Yhwh has made his foes into a footstool. The image of making enemies into a footstool is unattested elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, though images from the ancient Near East witness to its conventional nature in connection with a deity and his patron king.[374] Yhwh is thus figured as the one who fights on behalf of his king. Yhwh's action of sending forth the king's scepter similarly shows his aggression on behalf of the king, though this time in a more delegated, indirect fashion. Yhwh sends forth the scepter: centripetally expanding the king's reign over surrounding, resistant territories. Verse 2a thus parallels and reinforces the preceding verse (1a about making enemies a footstool) and prepares for the verse that follows (2b with its imperative to rule in the midst of enemies). Yhwh's oracle in vv. 1-2 thus declares a single, united message: the deity will prosecute the expansion of his king's royal power.

The final verse of the first stanza (v. 3) appears to depart abruptly from this otherwise coherent oracle, and for that reason some commentators interpret the verse as its own, separate divine speech.[375] In OG this departure seems even more exaggerated: the theme of the king's birth (and not only the glory of his youth as in MT) sounds a disparate note from the theme of expanding rule in vv. 1-2. The apparent contrast between vv. 1-2 and v. 3 is still present in MT as well, which introduces a new character, namely, the *'am* of the king (whereas the Hebrew underlying OG continues to address the king: '*imměkā nědābōt*, "with you is lordliness"). There, too, the focus shifts: from Yhwh's gift of expanded power to his king—to the group deputized to his service in that cause.

[374] See von Nordheim for a treatment of the other occurrences of "footstool" in the Hebrew Bible (*Geboren*, 57-60), as well as the iconographic examples of this motif.

[375] E.g., Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 60-150: A Commentary*, trans. Hilton C. Oswald (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), 350.

However, in several regards, even the birth theme in v. 3 is thematically consistent with the preceding verses' profile of divine aggression. In both MT and OG versions, v. 3a recalls back to the previous verses through its evocation of the *yôm ḥêlekā,* the "day of your battle." The king's day of battle is the upshot of Yhwh's command to him to rule in the midst of his enemies and the result of Yhwh's sending forth his scepter into hostile territories. These initiatives will be achieved through *conflict*. So, too, what is consistent between vv. 1-2 and v. 3—even in OG with its motif of the king's birth—is *ascendancy*. The seizure of control that Yhwh effects for his king is *dynamic* and *incomplete*: v. 1 declares a two-step action, whose second half is yet future, rhetorically. The conjunction *'ad* between the imperative "to sit" (*šēb*) and Yhwh's action of subordinating enemies (in imperfect verbal aspect, *'āšît*) indicates the latter's futurity and contingency.[376] Verse 2 likewise registers an imperative from Yhwh to his king, exhorting the king to undertake a yet-incomplete project of establishing dominion. Verse 3 then continues this dynamism and incompletion, especially through the theme of *birth* in OG v. 3b. In among the other, mysterious, even numinous imagery of celestial bodies, the event of birth describes movement: the emergence of a new status. Yhwh's parturition draws from a different domain than the ruling and martial images of the verses before it. But *yôm ḥêlekā* in v. 3a coordinates this event with battle: somehow the king's birth "from the dawn" coincides with the day of conflict against his foes.

The verbs of the psalm's second stanza characterize Yhwh yet more fiercely: the first stanza uses the images of making enemies into a footstool and sending forth the king's scepter, as well as evoking the general action of ruling over (√*rdh*) these enemies. But the second stanza fills out the content of these images and generalities in far more graphic manner: Yhwh "smashed kings in

[376] *GKC* §164.

the day of his anger."[377] After this smashing in v. 5, three more verbs of destruction follow in quick succession: √*dyn*, √*ml'*, and √*mḥṣ* again. The first two of these do not necessarily indicate aggression or destruction, but in context, they likely do. The verb √*dyn* can take a broad range of meanings, but in Psalm 110, sandwiched as it is between "smashing kings" and "filling with bodies," it most likely denotes retributive military action. So, too, "filling with bodies" is somewhat elliptical in MT. Aquila, Symmachus, and Jerome read the direct object of participle √*ml'* somewhat discrepantly from MT, interpreting "valleys" instead of "bodies." However, in parallel with judging among the nations and in preparation for v. 6a with its "smashing the head," it is easier to understand v. 5b as referring to bodies, the corpses of the kings whom Yhwh slays.

The closing verse of the second stanza presents several interpretive problems.[378] But suffice it so say it introduces a new thematic note to the stanza: where the previous two verses (vv. 5-6) show Yhwh as a ferocious warrior doing battle against the royal enemies of his favored king, v. 7 changes direction: this is clearest in v. 7b with its "lifting up the head." The sense of this line is unmistakably positive, and so represents a shift from the aggression of the previous verses. So, too, drinking is usually an action of refreshing and peace (only extraordinarily can it occur in a time of war, e.g., 2 Sam 23:15-17). On Becker's suggestion, however, it refers to Yhwh's drinking of blood ("blood" being the elliptical object of "he drinks"), and so extends the destructive force of the preceding verses. So Becker: "In welchem Sinn kann der Krieger Jahwe, der am Tag seines Zornes Könige zerchmettert, Gericht unter den Völkern hält, Leichen aufhäuft and Häupter zerschmettert, aus einem nahal trinken, um dann das Haupt zu erheben? Man erwartet in diesem Panorama *den Strom von Blut*, der sich denn auch elliptisch in v. 7a ausgedrückt findet."[379]

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[377] Cf. Baloian's identification of the "motivation for wrath" in Ps 110:5: oppression (*Anger in the Old Testament*, 200).

[378] Von Nordheim, *Geboren*, 102.

[379] Becker, "Zur Deutung von Ps 110,7," 26; my emphasis.

Becker's argument would offer a wholly unparalleled characterization of Yhwh: as a literally bloodthirsty warrior. But this is also the challenge of accepting his reading, as von Nordheim observes: its uniqueness.[380] Becker succeeds in demonstrating that the Hebrew Bible uses the image of "streams of blood." But he offers no comparable passage in which Yhwh drinks blood, and his proposed examples for when "blood" is present by ellipsis fail to convince. Instead of seeing v. 7a as an extension of the aggression in vv. 5, 6, the drinking from the stream in v. 7 should be seen alongside "lifting up the head" as a closing *positive* image; an instance of favor and so a contrast with psalm's depiction of Yhwh the aggressive warrior. Where v. 6 speaks of "filling with bodies"—√*ml'* also a verb that can be associated with eating[381]—v. 7a indicates filling with water: that which sustains life. In just the same way, lifting up the head in 7b contrasts with smashing the head in 6b. So also, if the "head" of 7b belongs to Yhwh's favored king (and not to Yhwh himself), the emendation of MT *qal yišteh* to *hiphil yašteh* is tempting.[382] On that reading, Yhwh would cause his *king* to drink, and therefore (or thereby) lift up his (the king's) head. But no ancient versions support the causative reading. In any case, the end of the second stanza returns to a positive, protective characterization of Yhwh: the one who lifts up the head, presumably of his king. As a fierce warrior Yhwh smashes the heads of enemy kings who rise up against his king. As a beneficent patron, Yhwh vindicates—and crowns—the head of his royal son, the Davidic monarch. What Yhwh does, those who recite the psalm also perform, even if only virtually and verbally.

3.3.2.4. Conclusion

[380] Von Nordheim, *Geboren*, 102.
[381] *DCH* 5:282-83.
[382] Among others, see Saur, *Königspsalmen*, 220-21.

Does Psalm 110 envision the possibility of Yhwh's aggression against his own king or country? In fact, it does neither. The deity's aggression is aimed only outwards, and the psalm provides no hint that Yhwh could or would damn his own country. In this psalm as nowhere else in the Hebrew Bible does "das Problem der altorientalischen Königsideologie" intrude.[383] At no point are the enemies in Psalm 110 *collectivized* or *theologized*: they remain the enemies of Yhwh's king, and the psalm gives no suggestion that any person can enter into that relationship of enmity with Yhwh through refusing the psalm's rhetorical request of them.[384] In other words, the enemies are *not* future conditional proxies for the reciting community.

Psalm 110 poses a similar interpretive question as did the supposedly primordial core verses of Psalm 2: why would a song that provides no point of identification for its readership, whether with the king *or* with the enemies, have been preserved and sung? The answer is much the same for Psalm 110 as for the earlier core of Psalm 2: it would seem likely that from its first form(s), Psalm 110 lay open in some way to a community's participation in its rhetoric. As with Psalm 2, so here: the choral voice rehearses Yhwh's oracle to the king and reprises the deity's action of lifting up the king's head. The reciters are positioned as the king's supporters—and if the psalm entertains no scenario of Yhwh's aggression against the chorus, this is partly because it does not allow any space to the chorus for disloyalty to Yhwh's king. The king is exempted absolutely from Yhwh's aggression.[385]

3.3.3. Psalm 20

Translation:

[383] The title of Karl-Heinz Bernhardt's book: *Das Problem der altorientalischen Königsideologie im Alten Testament: unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Geschichte der Psalmenexegese dargestellt und kritisch gewürdigt,* VTSup 8 (Leiden: Brill, 1961). See its section on Ps 2 (ibid., 191-96).

[384] Saur, *Königpsalmen*, 215-218.

[385] Cf. Wälchli's treatment of Psalm 110 in *Gottes Zorn in den Psalmen*, 82.

1. For the choirmaster, a song of David.
2. May Yhwh answer you in the day of trouble / may the name of the God of Jacob protect you.
3. May he send you help from the sanctuary / and from Zion may he sustain you.
4. May he remember all your gift offerings / and your burnt offerings may he accept.[386] *Selah*.
5. May he give to you according to your heart / and your every counsel may he fulfill.
6. May we shout for joy at your deliverance / and in the name of our God may we raise a banner.[387]
   May Yhwh fulfill your every request.
7. Now I know that Yhwh has saved[388] his anointed.
   He will answer him from his heavenly sanctuary / with mighty acts of deliverance with his right hand.
8. These in chariots and these in horses / but we—we will boast in the name of Yhwh our God.
9. They—they collapse and fall down / but we—we rise and lift ourselves up.[389]
10. Yhwh! Save the king / and may he answer us in the day we call!

3.3.3.1. Small Print Text-Critical Issues

The MT of Psalm 20 presents no special text-critical issues. What makes Psalm 20 a special case is Amherst Papyrus no. 63, a document discovered in an earthen jar in Thebes: an Aramaic prayer to the deity Horus, written in demotic script and clearly bearing some relation to the biblical psalm.[390] I will quote Charles Nims's and Richard Steiner's translation completely below, introducing Aramaic transliteration in parentheses to show significant parallel verbs or verbal phrases. The only other emendations to their translation is to render Aramaic *mar* as "Lord" rather

[386] Goldingay: "enthuse over." OG translates with πιανάτω > πιαίνω, "to add to or increase." Some mss of Symmachus feature φαιδρυνω, "to make bright" or "to cleanse," others have causative form of ἵστημι, "to stand." Φαιδρυνω is intriguing in view of pap Amh's use of the Aramaic √*zhr* "to shine forth" in an approximately corresponding line (on which, see below).

[387] MT points the verb here as a *qal* 1cs PK—or perhaps a rare 1cs jussive—from √*dgl*, a denominative verb from substantive *degel*, banner, and so: "may we set up a banner" (see Song 6:4 for its only other attestation as a verb, there in *niphal*). Jerome translates with *vexilla*, "banners," Tg with *nyṭqs*, "we will be equipped for war," and Symmachus similarly, τάγματα διαστελουμεν, thereby confirming MT. OG μεγαλυνθησόμεθα suggests the more common Hebrew verb √*gdl*.

[388] Most English translations feature a present or future tense verb: "will save" or "saves." But the Hebrew is unmistakably SK.

[389] On the translation of *hitpolel* as reflexive rather than reciprocal or passive, see Goldingay, *Psalm*, 1:301nb.

[390] Charles F. Nims and Richard C. Steiner, "A Paganized Version of Psalm 20:2-6 from the Aramaic Text in Demotic Script," *JAOS* 103 (1983): 261-274; also Sven P. Vleeming and Jan W. Wesselius, "An Aramaic Hymn from the Fourth Century B.C." *BO* 39 (1982): 501–9; eidem, *Studies in Papyrus Amherst 63: Essays on the Aramaic Texts in Aramaic-demotic*, Vol 1 (Amsterdam: Juda Palache Instituut, 1985). See also now Karel van der Toorn, "Psalm 20 and Amherst Papyrus 63, XII, 11–19: A Case Study of a Text in Transit," in *Le-ma'an Ziony: Essays in Honor of Ziony Zevit*, ed. Frederick E. Greenspahn and Gary A. Rendsburg (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2017), 244-59.

than as the proper name Mar (as they do),[391] and to translate *zhr* not as a proper name ("Sahar") but a verb ("to shine forth").[392]

> May Horus answer us (*y'nn*) in our troubles
> May Adonay answer us (*y'nn*) in our troubles
> O Bow in Heaven, shine forth (*zhr*):
> Send (*šlḥ*) your emissary from the temple of Arash,
> and from Zephon may Horus sustain us (*ys'dn*).
> May Horus grant us our heart's desire
> May the Lord grant us our heart's desire (*yntn kblbn*)
> May Horus fulfill our every plan (*y'ṣtn…yhml'*)
> May Horus fulfill—may Adonay not withhold (even) in part—
> every request of our hearts (*yhml mš'l*)
> the request of hearts which you, O El, have tested.
> We (*'nḥn*)—O Lord, our God, Horus, YH, our god—are faint.
> May El Bethel answer us (*y'nn*) tomorrow.
> May Baal of Heaven, the Lord, bless.
> Upon your pious ones are your blessings.

A number of synoptic observations are pertinent.[393] First, the two texts show numerous parallels: they both make a request of the deity to "answer" (*'nn*) in a time of trouble; they ask the deity to send forth from a specific location (Aramaic *ṣyrk*, "emissary," bearing a certain phonetic resemblance—but no more—to MT *'ezrĕkā*);[394] they ask the deity to give (*ntn*) according to the heart (*lb*) and fulfil (*ml'*) every plan (*y'ṣt*). The two most glaring formal *differences* between pap Amh and Psalm 20 are 1) the difference in the deities addressed, Yhwh versus Horus (et al); 2) the royal focus of the psalm versus the communal focus of the Aramaic prayer, and, relatedly 3) the "wish" character of the psalm, since it mostly addresses the human king, versus the true *prayer* quality of pap Amh, since it addresses the gods (in Goldingay's words, "the prayer is indeed a prayer").[395] Psalm 20 also contains multiple "speaking voices": a singular "I" in v. 7 and perhaps elsewhere, and a communal voice ("the chorister")[396] in most of the rest of the psalm.[397] By contrast, the Aramaic prayer is consistently 1cp in its voice—although note that the two texts both feature the 1cp independent pronoun (*'nḥn*) in a prominent place towards each of their ends.

Even deferring for a moment the complex question of priority and/or the common descent of both texts from a shared ancestor, a critic must decide which of the features enumerated above is more likely to be primordial.[398] For our purposes, one of the more critical determinations is the relatively more likely authenticity of the royal focus in Psalm 20. Koch suggests that the movement from a royal focus to a communal as in pap Amh is more probable than the reverse.[399] The "democratization" of royal materials is a phenomenon attested by other psalms, where royalization

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[391] Thus following the translation decision of Martin Rösel, "Israels Psalmen in Ägypten," *VT* 50 (2000): 81-99; and of Ziony Zevit, "The Common Origin of the Aramaicized Prayer to Horus and of Psalm 20," *JAOS* 110 (1990): 213-28. See especially ibid., 223n62.

[392] Ibid., 218.

[393] See now Salo, *Die judäische Königsideologie*, 67-72.

[394] Nims and Steiner, "A Paganized Version," 265-66.

[395] Goldingay, *Psalms,* 1:303.

[396] Terrien, *Psalms*, 218.

[397] Zevit, "The Common Origin of the Aramaicized Prayer," 225.

[398] On the question of priority, see Salo, *Die judäische Königsideologie*, 70-71; Nims and Steiner argue that pap Amh is a paganized version of Ps 20; Ingo Kottsieper argues that the pagan prayer is original and the biblical psalm derives from it ("Papyrus Amherst 63—Einführung, Text, und Übersetzung von 12,11-19," in Oswald Loretz, *Die Königspsalmen: die altorientalisch-kanaanäische Königstradition in jüdischer Sicht*, UBL 6 [Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1988], 55-75); Rösel and Zevit, like Vleeming and Wesselius before them, propose that the two texts share a common ancestor. See Zevit's helpful table in his "Common Origin," 215.

[399] Klaus Koch, "Königspsalmen und ihr ritueller Hintergrund: Erwägungen zu Ps 89,20–38 und Ps 20 in Ihren Vorstufen," in *The Book of Psalms: Composition and Reception*, 9-52, here 36-45.

is not. Thus David Carr's judgment: "Pap Amherst may represent a de-royalized (and Aramaized) form of what was originally a Hebrew royal psalm."[400] There is also the closely related matter of the psalm's *militarism*: "deliverance" (√*yš'*) is a radical featuring multiply throughout the psalm (*bîšû'ātekā* in v. 6*, hôšî[a]'* and *yēša'* in v. 7, *hôšî'â* in v. 10) and absent from pap Amh. So, too, Psalm 20 indicates the raising of banners (√*dgl*) and pap Amh does not. These are vocabulary from the domain of war (as are, of course, the chariots and horses of v. 8, on which, see below).[401] In my view, these militaristic elements belong together with the royal focus of the psalm and are original to it. Pap Amh has given this theme a less confrontational turn, pleading instead for "blessing" rather than deliverance.

Other "pluses" of Psalm 20 relative to pap Amh are more easily identified as secondary. Thus, the specialized ritual terminology in Psalm 20:4 shows no parallel in the papyrus. Although Ziony Zevit posits the originality of this line in his hypothetical northern Israelite psalm reconstructed from MT Psalm 20 and pap Amh, Rösel's opinion that the sacrificial terminology is secondary is more compelling, especially because other royal psalms (e.g., Psalms 2, 110) do not feature this vocabulary.[402] While v. 4 can be read coherently within its present literary context (see below), it is also discernible as somewhat of a break in thought: Yhwh's protection in the day of trouble (v. 2) and sending of help (v. 3) are consistent with Yhwh's grant of (military) victory to the king in vv. 5 and 6, but less so with the king's sacrifices. So, too, the "name" theology that appears in the psalm's vv. 2b, 6b, and 8b is missing from pap Amh, and would seem to reflect the advent of deuteronomistic theology.[403] The psalm's critique of dependence on military strength in v. 8a may represents another distinctively deuteronomistic theme.[404]

3.3.3.2. Structure and Rhetoric of Psalm 20

The form of Psalm 20 is anomalous; it is, for the most part, a wish or series of wishes (*Wunschreihe*) for the king.[405] Psalm 72 prays for the king, but in it, the king himself is not directly addressed. But in Psalm 20, the voice of the speaker addresses the king directly in vv. 2-5. In vv. 6-10, the psalm's speaker(s) refers to the king in third person. It is unclear who the imagined addressee is in these verses, most likely the speaking community itself. Yhwh is, however, the intended "overhearer" of the psalm, and so perhaps, in Goldingay's words, he amounts to "the de

[400] Carr, *Formation of the Hebrew Bible*, 396.

[401] Saur identifies other potentially military resonances in the psalm (*Königspsalmen*, 89).

[402] Rösel, "Israels Psalmen in Ägypten," 100; also Salo, *Die judäische Königsideologie*, 74.

[403] Thus Oswald Loretz (*Die Königspsalmen,* 32; as well as Salo (*Die judäische Königsideologie,* 76); although Kraus (*Psalms 1-59*, 279) and Saur (*Königspsalmen*, 90) believe that the "name" theology could have obtained in Jerusalem before the 7th c.

[404] Hossfeld and Zenger, *Die Psalmen I: Psalm 1-50*, 135-36.

[405] Saur, *Königspsalmen*, 88. On the role of Psalms 20 and 21 within the whole Psalter, see Philip Sumpter, "The Coherence of Psalms 15–24," *Bib* 94 (2013): 186-209; also idem, *The Substance of Psalm 24: An Attempt to Read Scripture after Brevard S. Childs*, LHBOTS 600 (London: T&T Clark, 2015), 185-202; also Patrick D. Miller, Jr., "Kingship, Torah Obedience, and Prayer: The Theology of Psalms 15-24," in *Neue Wege der Psalmenforschung: Festschrift für Walter Beyerlin*, ed. Klaus Seybold and Erich Zenger, Herders biblische Studien 1 (Freiburg: Herder, 1994), 127-142; William P. Brown, "'Here Comes the Sun!': The Metaphorical Theology of Psalms 15–24," in *The Composition of the Book of Psalms*, ed. Erich Zenger, BETL 238 (Leuven: Peeters, 2010), 259–77.

facto addressee."[406] Only the final verse directly invokes the deity, and the psalm thus closes with an "actual prayer."[407]

In this way, Psalm 20 rehearses a series of wishes for the king—which only Yhwh can fulfill. Yhwh is the subject of most verbs in the psalm, and its lead actor. The closing direct invocation of Yhwh is not so much then a new rhetorical direction as a making explicit of the *prayer* that has been all the while the psalm's true intent. Psalm 20 corresponds to the memorial inscriptions as follows: though emplotting the deity in 3rd person (for the most part), in fact it seeks to persuade the *deity* to act; in the case of Psalm 20, the request is to "answer us" (*ya'ănēnû*). Still further: the psalm pleads for Yhwh to answer "in the day we call" (*bĕyôm-qor'ēnû*). But the psalm itself stages this "day," this occasion of calling. The act of √*qr'* is not future, but present, in the recital of the psalm—the verb itself also meaning, in biblical Hebrew, *reading* and not only invoking.[408]

The prayer quality of Psalm 20 is consistent with its variant form in pap Amh; the latter text, too, seeks to persuade a deity to act (there, to *bless* and not to *save* as in the psalm). But where the Aramaic prayer offers no rationale to the deity, Psalm 20 motivates Yhwh by its pledge to praise him.[409] Verse 6 thus turns from wishing Yhwh to act, and instead—for the first time in the psalm—introduces a verb with a human subject, the 1cp "we" of the speaking community: *nĕranněnâ*, "may we shout for joy," followed closely by *nidgōl*, "may we raise a banner." Though directly addressed to the king, the ultimate orientation of these wishes is indicated by the phrase in the middle of the verse: *ûbĕšēm-'elōhênû,* "in the name of our God." Yhwh's fulfillment of

[406] Goldingay, *Psalms,* 1:301.
[407] Ibid.
[408] *DCH* 7:287-304; cf. Hossfeld and Zenger: "andererseits aber meint 'das Rufen' auch einfach den Psalm 20 selbt" (*Die Psalmen I: Psalm 1-50*, 139).
[409] See Charney on "Praise as Divine Currency," in *Persuading God*, 17-25.

these wishes for his king will result in the erection of banners *in his name*. While these wishes may be future or conditional at the most obvious rhetorical level, pending Yhwh's responsiveness, at another level, the psalm itself proleptically answers *this* wish. It anticipatorily enacts a "shouting for joy," a strategy to "whet Yhwh's appetite," as it were, for the fuller installment of praise incumbent on his deliverance. This same theme of exalting Yhwh's name is evident in v. 7, in which the speaking community contrasts those who boast in chariots and horses with themselves—the ones who √*zkr* the *šēm-yhwh.* Interestingly, the verb here (√*zkr*) recurs earlier in the psalm in v. 4a; there in *qal* and here in *hiphil*. Nonetheless, in v. 4 the human king tenders a gift to Yhwh which (the psalm hopes) Yhwh will √*zkr*; towards the end of the psalm in v. 7, the community itself claims that it will √*zkr* Yhwh's name. The dynamic of reciprocity between human gift *to* Yhwh and the hope for Yhwh's answering action is unmistakable. What Yhwh gets out of this relationship is the exaltation of his name.

The most overt human audience of the psalm is the king, addressed throughout its first stanza. But Psalm 20 also seems to have another human audience in mind throughout: the community itself. As with Psalm 110, this community is not explicitly thematized. No terms refer (like in Psalm 2) to the *gôy* belonging to the king. But that such a community is present is plain from the "we" language of v. 5: the verse presupposes a public somehow invested in the king's deliverance by the deity Yhwh, and also, given the military connotation of *degel*, armed for service to his royal cause. This public's dedication to Yhwh can also be inferred from v. 7b. This is the community—the "chorus"—that prays for Yhwh to deliver the king in v. 10, a deliverance that redounds to their benefit, as seen in the succeeding parallel line ("may he answer *us*"). The fortunes of the king and people are bound together such that they rejoice in his deliverance (v. 5) and pray for it (v. 10), and yet this people also promotes the name of the deity Yhwh (v. 7). Much the same

identity is then discernible here as in the previously examined royal psalms: a people loyal to God and king speaks to itself through the psalm.

If Psalm 20 at one level seeks to persuade Yhwh to "answer on the day we call," on another it also seeks to persuade itself. The speaking community addresses itself, if obliquely. This is especially notable in v. 6, when a lone "I" speaks up, to express a newfound knowledge: "now I know that Yhwh has delivered his anointed." Goldingay interprets this "I" as the king himself speaking, as if in reply to the well-wishes of the community articulated in the preceding verses.[410] This is possible but seems unlikely given the reference to Yhwh's *māšîʿaḥ*.[411] Other commentators take this "I" as a priest or prophet.[412] This, too, is possible, but a more satisfactory, if general, answer to the identity of the "I" is simply that he is a member of the speaking community; a single subset of it.[413] In the preceding verse, the collective "we" wishes to rejoice in Yhwh's deliverance (√*yšʿ*) of the king. Now in v. 7, a single person says that he knows Yhwh has delivered (√*yšʿ*) his king. The speaker belongs to the people of Yhwh. And something in the text that precedes has convinced this person of Yhwh's efficacy.[414] But what?

Apparently the *psalm's own evocation* of Yhwh's saving help in vv. 2-5 persuaded one member of the speaking community, as by ekphrasis or mesmerism.[415] That is: the litany of wishes for Yhwh to act in vv. 2-5, spoken (at one level) from the community to itself, has somehow

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[410] Goldingay, *Psalms*, 1:306; so also Hossfeld and Zenger, *Die Psalmen I: Psalm 1-50*, 138.

[411] Saur lodges a similar observation: "Es ist unwahrscheinlich, daß hier der Gesalbte auftritt, den er würde dann von sich selber in der 3. P. Sg. reden" (*Königspsalmen*, 81).

[412] E.g., Terrien, *Psalms*, 219.

[413] Similarly, Saur, *Königspsalmen*, 81.

[414] Of course it is possible—and popular among exegetes—to propose some extra-textual event or oracle that persuaded the speaking "I" (for example: Raymond Tournay, "Une liturgie d'intronisation," *RB* 66 [1959]: 161-90; J. Kenneth Kuntz, "King Triumphant: a Rhetorical Study of Psalms 20 and 21," *HAR* 10 [1986]: 157-76). But in its present form, the psalm's connection to any particular ritual has been reduced or removed.

[415] See Charney on "self-persuasion" in the rhetoric of psalms: "As public discourse, the psalms address multiple audiences. God, of course, is usually the direct addressee, but speakers often turn to address by-standers and opponents, an assembly that stands in for the community at large. Another key audience member is the speaker; composing or performing a psalm enables persuading one's self" (*Persuading God*, 127-42, here 127).

imparted certainty to one of its own. If so, the individual "I" in turn serves as a template for how the psalm may work (is supposed to work?) for the others who recite it, who can take their lead, as it were, from this anonymous speaker's experience of gaining a newfound knowledge of Yhwh; the "now I know" can become real and effectual for them, too. In this way, the psalm suggests its other rhetorical target: in addition to persuading Yhwh, it also works to persuade, even experientially somehow, the people who recite it. The psalm itself is proof that it has done just that (in v. 7).

Verses 7-8 underline this persuasive purpose: like the memorial inscriptions of the previous chapter (and like Psalm 2), Psalm 20 presents a negative consequence to those who would spurn its rhetorical appeal. That is, for those who are not convinced to "know that Yhwh delivered his anointed," the psalm depicts an undesirable fate. This occurs, as in the inscriptions, at the text's conclusion. Psalm 20 does not end with a list of conditional curses like the inscriptions; neither, as will be seen, does it invoke divine wrath overtly. Yet it does lay out a condition, under the guise of a rhetorical contrast between those who boast in chariots and horses and those who boast in the name of Yhwh. Verse 8 thus begins with an emphatic and fronted *'ēlleh*, "they"—juxtaposed with *wa'ănaḥnû* in v. 8b and again in v. 9b. The result of *their* boasting in human military powers is collapse (9a), whereas for the choral "we," their destiny is to rise. But if the psalm's rhetorical objective is in some fashion to persuade its own readership of Yhwh's salutary power, then this party of "they" is really "we," at least potentially: and *their* collapse would be ours if *we* do not buy into the psalm's theological claim. The same contrast may be more implicit in the prayer of pap Amh, which ends with "Upon your pious ones are your blessings"—the unsaid corollary being, perhaps, that those blessings are *not* upon the impious: those who do not take up the prayer. Verses

8 and 9 of Psalm 20 support that the psalm targets a human audience in addition to more explicitly addressing the deity Yhwh.

3.3.3.3. Divine Aggression in Psalm 20

Yhwh—or his "name"—function as the subject of 11 verbs in Psalm 20, and Yhwh the addressee of one imperative verb in v. 10a.

Verb	Verse	Object(s)
ya'ankā	2a	The king
yĕšaggebkā	2b	The king
yišlaḥ	3a	Help; the king
yis'ādekā	3b	The king
yizkōr	4a	The king's gifts
yĕdaššĕneh	4b	The king's burnt offerings
yitten	5a	The king's desires
yĕmallē'	5b	The king's plans
yĕmallē'	6b	The king's requests
hôšî[a]'	7a	*mĕšîḥô*
hôšî'â	10a	*hammelek*
ya'ănēnû	10b	us

The deity name Yhwh appears 5 times in Psalm 20: in v. 10b it is the second element in a phrase of three components, *bĕšēm-yhwh 'ĕlōhênû*, "the name of Yhwh our God." In v. 2, Yhwh occurs in parallel with another divine name, *šēm 'elōhê-ya'aqōb*, "the name of the God of Jacob." Verse 6b also displays this name theology, *ûbĕšēm-'elōhênû*.

Yhwh's aggression is understated in Psalm 20. [416] The psalm's first stanza suggests a scenario of military threat throughout: the situation facing the king is one of trouble (*ṣārâ*); he needs help (*'ezer*) and protection (√*šgb*). The hoped-for outcome of the psalm's wish is victory

[416] Neither Baloian nor Wälchli even include Psalm 20 in their treatment of divine anger or wrath.

(*bîšû'ātekā* in v. 6), and its choral voice "sets up banners" (√*dgl*). Yhwh's activity of superintending a *military* rescue of his anointed is assumed but not developed very explicitly.

The psalm's second stanza continues with the military motif. Its verse 7 invokes horses and chariots; this verse and its successor also in effect present a future conditional threat to those who would refuse its request of them (namely, boasting in Yhwh). Yhwh is the unseen guarantor of this threat: verse 8 says merely that *they*—the ones who boast in chariots and horses—will fall, but *we*—who boast in the name of Yhwh—will lift themselves up (v. 8b). It is not entirely clear that the persons that remember or boast in (√*zkr*) chariots in v. 7a are the same as those who created the "day of trouble" for the king in the first stanza. Nor is it clear that Yhwh's deliverance of his anointed in the first stanza coincides with his (implicit) action of ensuring that the devotees of his name rise (v. 8b). The objects of Yhwh's aggression and the character of his aggression are not exactly synonymous in the psalm's two stanzas. But in both cases, Yhwh is not overtly thematized as a warrior. His role, and his aggression, are more abstract and more mediated throughout.

Yhwh's aggression is also quite conditional: the first stanza establishes a positive reciprocity: verse 3 prays for Yhwh to remember (√*zkr*) the king's gifts and so to fulfill the royal plans and effect royal deliverance. The second stanza then introduces the inverse: a negative reciprocity between boasting (√*zkr*) in chariots and collapse. Anyone who reads or hears the psalm could experience this collapse if they do not know Yhwh's deliverance and boast in his name. The role of enemy stands open to any person and is not determined by whether one is a member in the people of Yhwh.

The only person exempted from this dynamic, it would seem, is the king, who is never positioned in the psalm's rhetoric as a potential recipient of divine aggression. Indeed, the king's rescue is in some way paradigmatic and prior: the prayer for Yhwh's aid *to the king* is the catalyst

for the speaking's voices newfound knowledge that Yhwh will help his anointed (v. 6), and the case from which the pronouncement of vv. 7-8 derives. In this way, the psalm conforms more to *Wellhausen's* description of the royal psalms and not to *Eichrodt's*: Psalm 20 assumes the possibility of divine aggression against Yhwh's own people—although, to be sure, it does not make a whole country the potential object of his destructiveness.

3.3.4. Psalm 21

Translation.

1. For the choirmaster, a song of David.

2. Yhwh, in your strength may the king rejoice / and in your salvation, how may he exult, so much![417]
3. The desire of his heart you gave to him / and the request[418] of his lips you did not refuse. Selah.
4. For you would[419] meet him with rich blessings[420] / you would place upon his head a crown of fine gold.
5. Life he asked from you, and you gave it to him / length of days forever and ever.

[417] Following Goldingay (*Psalms,* 1:310) as well as NIV, NASB, and other translations that reflect the odd Hebrew construction with *mâ*. The ancient versions, by contrast, do not show Hebrew *mâ*.

[418] *'ărešet* is a *hapax*, apparently related to Akkadian, and perhaps reflecting Akkadian interference. See Shawn Zelig Aster, "On the Place of Psalm 21 in Israelite Royal Ideology," in *Mishne Todah: Studies in Deuteronomy and Related Literature in Honor of Jeffrey Tigay*, ed. David Glatt-Gilad, Nili S. Fox, M. Williams (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2009), 307-320, here 315.

[419] The switch to PK in the subordinate *kî* clauses in vv. 4 and 7 suggests a more *modal* meaning. Diethelm Michel notes that vv. 4, 7 are more general and less concrete than the specific past facts enumerated in vv. 3, 5. "Da sie zudem die vorangehenden Handlungen begründen, drängt es sich geradezu auf, sie nicht als Schilderungen von Fakten, sondern als Bezeichnung des Willen Jahwes…die konkrete Erfüllung der Bitte hat ihren Grund in einer allgemeinen Zuwendung Jahwes zum König" (*Tempora und Satzstellungen in den Psalmen,* AET 1 [Bonn: Bouvier, 1960], 222). He translates these verses with "willst" ("you wish"). OG subordinates v. 4a not to v. 3 but anticipatorily to v. 4b (NETS: "Because you anticipated him with blessings of kindness, you set on his head a crown of precious stone"), and similarly with vv. 7a and 7b. But the parallelism of these lines militates against the OG reading.

[420] √*qdm* in *piel* occurs 24 times in the Hebrew Bible, oftentimes with two objects: one (in accusative) specifying the person whom the subject "meets" and the second with *bet*-preposition specifying an accessory, e.g., Mic 6:6, "with what shall I meet Yhwh?" Psalm 21 is the only occurrence when the second object of √*qdm* lacks *bet*, signaling poetic ellipsis; see *DCH* 7:185. That *ṭôb* is here a noun and not an adjective is shown by its disagreement in number with *birkôt*, and so, literally: "blessings of goodness," i.e., prosperity. Cf Prov 24:25 for another example of "good blessing." This usage is also uncommon—and so perhaps indicates heightened language. Goldingay notes that the plural of "blessing" is intensifying (*Psalms,* 1:310).

6. His honor will be great because of your salvation / splendor and éclat[421] you would lay upon him.[422]
7. For you would make him a blessing forever[423] / you would gladden him with joy through your presence.[424]

8. Surely,[425] the king trusts in Yhwh / and through the loyalty of the Most High he will not be shaken.

9. Your hand finds out[426] all your enemies / your right hand finds out those who hate you.
10. You make them like a furnace of fire at the time of your presence / Yhwh in wrath swallows them, and fire consumes them.
11. You destroy their offspring from the land / and their seed from among humans.
12. For they directed evil against you / they thought up a scheme, but they do not succeed
13. Surely you make them turn tail[427] / with your bowstrings you aim at their face.[428]

14. Be exalted, Yhwh, in your strength / let us sing and chant of your might.

[421] Thus Terrien's translation of *hādār* (*Psalms*, 220). Though idiosyncratic, it marks the poetic register of the Hebrew noun.

[422] Note here, too, the switch from SK in v. 5 to PK in v. 6b; 6b also expresses an ongoing "Zuwendung Jahwes" rather than a definite past event. As for the *piel* of √*šwh*, Aster proposes that it results from Aramaic influence. though also acknowledges its occurrence in the early text of Hosea 10:1 ("On the Place of Psalm 21," 312-13). Aster sees the placement of *hôd wĕhādār* upon the king as a close parallel to the gods' adornment of Mesopotamian kings with *melammu*.

[423] Verse 7 features only one of several uses of √*šyt* in Psalm 21 (vv. 4, 7, 10, 13). Both v. 7 and v. 13 use √*šyt* with double accusative, meaning that the first object is "made into" the second (king > blessings in v. 7, enemies > backside in v. 13). On this usage, see *DCH* 8:342-43. Verse 10 features the closely related use of √*šyt* with one accusative + another object with the *l*-preposition, which entails making the first object like the second. Almost all English translations interpret the king himself as the *recipient* of Yhwh's blessings rather than equating the king *with* those blessings as in Hebrew. But cf. TgPss, which maintains the sense of MT: "You make him (into) blessings for ever" (Stec, *TgPss* 56), as well as Vul: *pones enim eum benedictionem sempiternam*, "thou shalt give him *to be* a blessing for ever" (my emphasis).

[424] OG translates MT √*hdd* with εὐφραίνω and Symmachus with χαροποιέω, both meaning, "to gladden"; both also render MT *'et-pānêkā* instrumentally, OG with μετα του προσωπου σου and Symmachus with παρα.

[425] Verses 7 and 8 both being with the conjunction *kî*. This makes for difficult syntax—either a heaping up of explanation for v. 6b, or a kind of staggered series of explanations (see Goldingay, *Psalms,* 1:315)—unless the second *kî* is interjective or emphatic. Several translations interpret 8a in this fashion: thus Terrien, "Surely, the king will place" and Michel "Ja, der König vertraut." Much the same applies to the doubled *kî* in vv. 12, 13.

[426] Hermann Gunkel argues that the PK verbs in vv. 9-11 should be interpreted as optative, and the deity name Yhwh in v. 10b as vocative (*Die Psalmen*, HKAT II/2 [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1926], 85). Saur treats vv. 9-13 as a "Wunschenreihe," i.e., formally comparable to Ps 20 (*Königspsalmen*, 104). OG interprets only v. 8 as optative. Cf. also Salo, *Die judäische Königsideologie*, 101.

[427] This is an alternate translation in the NETS Bible; the primary translation reads "you make them a back." The benefit of the first translation is that it keeps the "making something into something" meaning of √*šyt* with double accusatives and the physical meaning of *šekem*, "backside." Goldingay observes of MT that it is literally, "'make them a shoulder'; the expression is odd, but it makes for a parallel with 'made him [into] a blessing,' and it almost parallels 'make them like a blazing furnace'" (*Psalms,* 1:311).

[428] Terrien translates MT *bĕmêtārêkā* "arbalest" (*Psalms*, 220), but his and other English translations' *singular* misrenders the Hebrew. Hebrew *mêtar*, meaning "cord" or "string," derives from √*ytr*, to "remain." Several versions thus interpret the noun as having to do with "remnants," i.e., descendants (Vul, OG). Aquila on the other hand correctly translates κάλοις, "cords," and so also TgPss, though more interpretively: "cords of your tabernacle."

3.3.4.1. Structure and Rhetoric of Psalm 21.

Scholars have often identified Psalm 21 as a coronation psalm (much like Psalms 2 and 110).[429] Regardless its generic classification, there is some consensus about its structure. Verses 2 and 14 frame the whole psalm: both verses address Yhwh directly and articulate a prayer or a wish, v. 2 with two jussive verbs and v. 14 with an imperative and a cohortative. The opening and closing verses also parallel one another in that they focus on Yhwh's "strength" (*ʿāz, ʿuz*) and they call for rejoicing, first on the part of the king and lastly on the part of the community reciting the psalm. In both cases, the rejoicing is noisy—rejoicing and exulting in v. 2 are not silent or internal, nor, obviously, are the singing and chanting in v. 14—and its occasion is Yhwh's salvation (*yĕšûʿātĕkā* // *gĕbûrātekā*).

The materials between the bookending prayers of vv. 2, 14 divide into two stanzas of approximately equal length: vv. 3-7 and vv. 9-13. Each stanza contains five verses of two half-lines each (excepting v. 10), although, as Goldingay observes, the lines of the first stanza are longer than in the second.[430] Scholars sometimes subdivide these stanzas, but thematically, each is relatively consistent, internally: the first stanza emphasizes Yhwh's "giving" to the king (√*ntn* in vv. 3a and 5b), especially in answer to the king's requesting (*ʾărešet* in 3b and √*šʾl* in 5a). What Yhwh bequeaths the king in the first stanza is prestige and longevity. There is no triangulation, as it were, in the first stanza: the text invokes Yhwh in 2nd person but celebrates Yhwh acting exclusively towards his king. By contrast, the second stanza, also addressing Yhwh,[431] pictures the

[429] Gunkel, *The Psalms*, 24. Once more on the role of Psalm 21 within the whole Psalter, see Sumpter, "The Coherence of Psalms 15–24; idem, *The Substance of Psalm 24,* 185-202.

[430] Goldingay, *Psalms,* 1:312.

[431] Many commentators interpret vv. 7-12 as addressing the king (e.g., Kraus, *Psalms 1-59*, 284). Goldingay observes that there is no indication that the addressee changes and that some of the language is more appropriate to Yhwh, e.g., *yĕmînĕkā* (*Psalms 1-41*, 316). In fact, as will be seen, the uncertainty of reference in this stanza is not without meaning for characterizing the deity.

deity acting against enemies—his own and the king's. Its character is promissory, expressing an ongoing and reliable activity of Yhwh relative to his foes. For both stanzas, Yhwh's "presence" (*pānêkā*) is the means of his effectiveness: redounding to joy for his king (v. 6b) but burning up his foes (v. 9b).

Verse 8 intervenes between the two stanzas and, as Terrien points out, each of its half-lines faces a different direction: v. 8a "sums up" and v. 8b "prepares for what follows."[432] The king's "trusting in Yhwh" paraphrases the matter of his fulfilled royal request in the first stanza; the king's preservation from stumbling through the loyalty of Yhwh anticipates the forestalled opportunities to stumble that the second stanza enumerates. Perhaps, too, these two concerns parallel the two halves of vv. 2 and 14, respectively adumbrating Yhwh's "strength" and his "salvation"—that is, deliverance from occasions of threat.

Whom does the psalm seek to persuade? At its most conspicuous level, Psalm 21 addresses the deity Yhwh: twice in vv. 2, 14 and perhaps once more in v. 10b. At the same time, the psalm reads mostly as celebratory and not petitionary. Unless one reads the prefixed-conjugation verbs of the second stanza as strongly optative, the only requests that the psalm makes of Yhwh are: that the king would rejoice (v. 2) and that Yhwh would be exalted (v. 14). The events that each of the two stanzas rehearse are given not so much to remind Yhwh to act in accordance with his own past behavior—but to give thanks. Kraus rightly identifies the *theme* of the psalm as thanksgiving, even if it is not formally a thanksgiving psalm.[433]

As a psalm about thanksgiving, the real audience of the psalm *is its own speakers*. This can be seen most clearly in the cohortatives v. 13b: "let us sing and chant of your might." Only at this point in the psalm does the 1cs form intrude. But—as with Psalm 20—the fact that the psalm

[432] Terrien, *Psalms*, 221.
[433] Kraus, *Psalms 1-59*, 284. But cf. Michel, *Tempora und Satzstellungen*, 222.

concludes with a communal exhortation inspires a retrospective rereading. If v. 14 urges the psalm's readers to "sing and chant"—an action that the psalm itself effects—and this verse closely parallels the opening verse (v. 2) that wishes for the *king* to perform a comparable action, it suggests that other actions of the king in the psalm may also lie open in some fashion to the reciting community. So, for example, in v. 8, the king trusts in Yhwh and so does not falter—but if the people sing and chant like the king in v. 14, perhaps here the psalm's rhetorical purpose is to engender trust in Yhwh, and to assure that as divine *ḥesed* protects the king, it protects them also. Markus Saur indeed suggests *ḥesed* in and of itself indicates more than just Yhwh's goodwill towards the king: *ḥesed* "verweist auf Gemeinschaft."[434] The king—in his words—represents the community *in nuce*. Very few of the requests that the king makes of Yhwh in the first stanza could not also apply to the community; perhaps only the bestowal of a crown (v. 4) and great honor (v. 5) mark the petitions as specifically royal. Like Psalm 20, Psalm 21, though royal in focus, is easily converted into a *communal* aide-memoire.

3.3.4.2. Divine Aggression in Psalm 21

Yhwh functions as the subject of one verb in Psalm 21: v. 10 (*yhwh bĕ'appô yĕballĕ'ēm*). This is the only clause in the psalm that narrates Yhwh in 3rd person. The psalm otherwise features twelve 2nd person verbs addressed *to* Yhwh and describing his past or projected actions—or, in the second stanza, his habitual approach to his foes. Additionally, the final v. 14 addresses Yhwh directly and commands him to "be on high" (*rûmâ*). The table below lays out these results. It does not include the first two verbs of the second stanza (√*mṣ'*) whose subject is Yhwh's "hand" and "right hand," respectively. These verbs will nonetheless be discussed below.

[434] Saur, *Königspsalmen*, 111.

Verb	Verse	Object(s)
nātattâ, "you gave"	3a	The king's desire
bal-māna'tā, "you did not refuse"	3b	the king's request
tĕqaddĕmennû, "you would meet him"	4a	the king
tāšît, "you would place"	4b	a crown (on the king)
natattâ, "you gave"	5b	longevity (to the king)
tĕšawweh, "you would place"	6b	splendor (on the king)
tĕšîtēhû, "you would make him"	7a	the king
tĕḥaddēhû, "you would gladden him"	7b	the king
tĕšîtēmô, "you make them"	10a	enemies
yĕballĕ'ēm, "he swallows them"	10c	enemies
tĕ'abbēd, "you destroy"	11a	enemies' offspring
tĕšîtēmô, "you make them"	13a	enemies
tĕkônēn, "you aim"	13b	enemies
rûmâ, "be exalted"	14a	n/a

Before treating of these verbs in more detail, a few general observations: first, as noted in the foregoing section, the king is the object—direct or indirect—for all the 2nd person verbs in the psalm's first stanza (vv. 3-7). Just as consistently, the second stanza features 2nd person verbs (except for the 3rd person *yĕballĕ'ēm* of v. 10c) for which Yhwh's enemies are the object. No reference to the king is made in this stanza at all.

The psalm's first stanza is entirely a "peacetime theology." Yhwh is wholly benevolent and shows no aggression in it. Instead, Yhwh moves toward his king (√*qdm* in v. 4), and indeed, gladdens him with his presence (*'et-pānêkā*), literally: with the divine face (v. 7). The second stanza of Psalm 21 pursues an altogether different deity characterization: of Yhwh as a *destroyer*. It begins in v. 9 with two parallel half-lines whose subject is Yhwh's hand and right hand: Yhwh's hand "finds out" (√*mṣ'*) his enemies. Most of the anatomical references of the first stanza belong to the king: his heart (3a), his lips (3b), his head (4a). Only Yhwh's "face" appears in v. 7b, as the instrument or medium of Yhwh's joy-giving. Here in v. 9 by contrast Yhwh's "hand" finds his

enemies, meaning that Yhwh's power catches up to them and controls their destiny.[435] But it is Yhwh's *face* that destroys them. Its effect in v. 10 is very different from that which it had on the king in v. 7b. As Yhwh made the king into a blessing (√*šyt*) in v. 7a, so now Yhwh makes (√*šyt*) his enemies "like a furnace of fire" (*kětannûr ʾēš*)—and he does it "at the time of [his] face," or better, at the occasion of his presence. Yhwh, it seems, moves towards his enemies, too, just as he moved towards his king: thus the dynamism of "finding" them and the punctiliar quality of his presence with them.

After introducing this fiery imagery, and perhaps by way of explaining it, v. 10c switches to 3rd person and makes the meaning of the enemies' transformation transparent: in wrath he (Yhwh) swallows them (the enemies); fire consumes them.[436] Yhwh's wrath (*ʾap*) in v. 10c anticipates the cause given later in v. 12: the scheming of enemies and their overstepping of bounds. Deena Grant's words about violated authority pertain, although the "story" of how the enemies transgressed Yhwh's authority is given little to no explication (unlike in Psalm 2).[437] Nonetheless, Yhwh's enemies are made like a furnace of fire in that they are engulfed and reduced to nothing. Yhwh's activity is closely coordinated with burning, although it probably goes too far to say of this verse that it envisions Yhwh himself as a fire.[438] In none of the other royal psalms examined has Yhwh's war-making received description of this kind. Kulamuwa boasts in his inscription that "I was in the hand of the kings like a fire consuming the beard and like a fire

[435] The idiom of the "hand finding" enemies occurs here and in 1 Sam 23:17, although the collocation of the *yad*, "hand" or "power" "findings" (√*mṣʾ*) appears in Judg 9:33, 1 Sam 10:7, Isa 10:14, and Eccl 9:10.

[436] The verb √*blʿ* thus does not occur in any of the memorial inscriptions; Yhwh alone, it seems, "swallows up" his foes, and does so elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible only in Lam 2:5 and Isa 25:8 (Israel and death being the enemies in those cases, respectively). The rarity of this expression perhaps lends credence to the idea that 10c is an explanatory gloss.

[437] *NIDB* 5:932-937, here 933; also idem, *Divine Anger in the Hebrew Bible*, 72, 169.

[438] On Yhwh and fire imagery, see now the excellent treatment by Deena A. Grant, "Fire and the Body of Yahweh," *JSOT* 40 (2015): 139-161.

consuming the hand" (line 6).[439] In tšmorial inscription, the human king, as part of boasting about overcoming enemies, says he was like a consuming fire to his enemies.

The use of this imagery in the Kulamuwa inscription cautions against too *superhuman* a reading of Yhwh as a destroyer in Psalm 21—which certain descriptors in the psalm might otherwise suggest. That Yhwh destroys through the coming of his *face* sounds superhuman: after all, no earthly kings can kill merely by their presence. Yhwh's capacity to destroy subsequent generations bespeaks his great power (v. 11). The fire imagery, too, conjures a wild, unstoppable, and *nonhuman* force. And yet the fact that the simile lay within discursive reach of a Sam'alian king means that it is not superhuman; it connotes fighting enemies militarily. Similarly, the two images of v. 13 both fit a battlefield context. The idiom "to make them a back" (√*šyt* + *šekem*) is unique, but it belongs to the vocabulary of military retreat and defeat, e.g., the English translation "turn tail" (CEB). The final line of the stanza, which speaks of "aiming bowstrings" (*mêtārêkā*), is another obviously military expression. Although √*kwn* and *mêtār* appear together solely in Psalm 21, √*kwn* and *qešet*, "bow," somewhat clarify the meaning of the phrase.[440] Yhwh's battle is human-like in these places. He is an anthropoid destroyer, a warrior.

Notably different from the coronation Psalms 2 and 20—and from the memorial inscriptions—is Psalm 21's second stanza, its tableau of defeating enemies, which does not specify the *kingly* nature of these opponents.[441] Like Psalm 20, the Hebrew word for "king" (√*mlk*) in Psalm 21 is seldom given; only in vv. 2, 8. The enemies of the second stanza are made generic (and perhaps even *theological*). They are not marked as kings at all—nor are they even described as the enemies of Yhwh's favored king. They are, instead, *Yhwh's* enemies: those that hate you

[439] On this reading, see Green, *"I Undertook Great Works,"* 139-41.
[440] Psalm 7:12, 11:2, 2 Chr 26:14.
[441] Although note that Baloian identifies the "motivation for wrath" in Psalm 21:10 the same as he does for Psalm 2, namely, rebellion (*Anger in the Old Testament*, 199).

(*śōn'êkā*), the "you" in question being Yhwh himself. The king in Psalm 21 does not fight; he does not, for instance, execute any shattering as in Psalm 2, or prevail in the midst of foes as in Psalm 110 (v. 3), or, as in MI and other memorial inscriptions, besiege enemy cities. Yhwh alone—and his anger against his enemies—dominates the second stanza.

The *unmarked* quality of the enemies in the second stanza of Psalm 21 also serves another rhetorical purpose: namely, to permit or even to invite the reading community to experience the possibility of Yhwh's enmity. In some other royal psalms, the enemies are distinctively kingly, and in the memorial inscriptions they are even more specifically *named* enemy kings. For the inscriptions, this means there is no room at all for the reader to see themselves in the role of the enemy kings; they are too concrete and specific. The purpose for their inclusion was to remind the patron deity of his past favor to the client king. The memorial inscriptions in their closing curses address would-be vandals of the monument quite directly to invoke a divine curse on them, and to threaten them with the anger of the god(s). In royal psalms, because the identity of the enemy kings has been removed,[442] readers are sometimes called to envision themselves as the enemy of Yhwh—as in Psalm 2, where Yhwh's conditional anger against the enemy kings in v. 12b in fact implicates the reader that refuses the psalm's exhortation to serve Yhwh. Psalm 21 pursues a similar tactic, except that its "bar of entry" for readers to see themselves as Yhwh's potential enemy is even lower: the enemies, like the person(s) reciting the psalm, are also non-royal. The enemies still "scheme" in Psalm 21, and there is a lingering sense of actual militarism, as in Yhwh's "bowstrings" in v. 13; the enemies have not been completely theologized so that they are mere proxies for disobedience to Yhwh. And yet Psalm 21 does move in this theologizing direction more than the other texts examined so far. Its contrast between vv. 8, 9 is intentional: the king is

[442] See again Starbuck, "Theological Anthropology at a Fulcrum."

trusting in Yhwh (*bōtēᵃḥ bayhwh*), and so will not stumble. The enemies of Yhwh—those who hate him—are they whom his right hand finds out. If, as argued above, the king is the community *in nuce*, the enemies are the community *in potentia*.[443]

Like the memorial inscriptions and other royal psalms, then, Psalm 21 makes divine aggression a future conditional threat. And as with them, this divine aggression is an important driver for the psalm's rhetorical strategy. If Psalm 21's exhortation—its wish for the king to rejoice and its call to its readers to sing and chant of Yhwh's saving might—is not met with compliance, then it obliquely threatens Yhwh's burning wrath.

The only person for whom Yhwh presents no threat is the king himself, insofar as he remains a distinct person in Psalm 21. That is to say: the king's own situation of blessing and divine favor lies open to the community's participation. But the fact that the enemies' situation of experiencing divine aggression also lies open to the community's participation does not mean that the king, too, faces the possibility of joining their company: as with Psalm 20, his relationship of favor is prior and paradigmatic.

3.4. Chapter Conclusion

The goal of the present chapter was to examine the biblical texts that most closely resemble the memorial inscriptions of the previous chapters, with an eye to evaluating their presentation of divine aggression. Also, the two major interpretive options the present study has kept in view—encapsulated by Eichrodt and Wellhausen—differ in their estimation of these psalms' theological profile, and so a subsidiary goal of the chapter was to adjudicate which interpretation hewed more

[443] Wälchli misses this dimension—that the enemies are the community *in potentia*—and so interprets the psalm in a more flatly nationalistic manner: "JHWHs Zorn erscheint so in Psalm 21 als ein vernichtender Zorn, der sich gegen die Feinde des Volkes wenden möge. In dieser Ausrichtung ist der Zorn für die betende Gemeinde hilfreich, für die bedrohten Feinde aber verheerend" (*Gottes Zorn in den Psalmen*, 48).

closely to the textual data. Eichrodt's position holds that royal psalms—especially Psalms 2 and 110—embody a wholly nationalistic theology in which Yhwh aggresses only against enemies of his client king and state. Wellhausen's position views the royal psalms as products of the Second Temple, and so he argues that the possibility of Yhwh's aggression against his own country was already woven into their fabric, since damnation had occurred already as a past event at that time.

In the end, the present chapter split the difference between Eichrodt and Wellhausen: it found that although Psalm 2 in its canonical form raises the possibility that its reciters can opt into enmity with Yhwh, its earliest form likely did not. Similarly, Psalm 110 positions its chorus solely as supporters of Yhwh's favored king, and it does not imagine that they can step into Yhwh's hostility that protects his king. Yhwh's worshippers in these psalms are entirely safe from his destructive power—thereby bearing out Eichrodt's claim about a wholly nationalistic theology. Psalms 20 and 21 on the other hand support Wellhausen better: they both make the boundary between friend and enemy of Yhwh more porous—*except for the king*, who remains, as in the previous two royal psalms, absolutely exempted from Yhwh's aggression. For everyone else in these two psalms, however, Yhwh's aggression hangs over them as a possibility that their disobedience could trigger.

3.5. Comparing Royal Psalms and Inscriptions

Several points can be made on the basis of comparison between the presentation of divine aggression in the royal memorial inscriptions of chapter 2 and the select royal psalms of the present chapter. First and most importantly, both sets of texts seem absolutely to guarantee the patron deity's favor towards his one, individual client king. The deity simply does not aggress against his king. Indeed, the unconditional relationship of patron deity to favored king is the nerve center for

both kinds of text: in the memorial inscriptions, the king himself seeks immortality by persuading his patron god to act in continuity with past divine favor. In the royal psalms, on the other hand, the "chorus" seeks to honor Yhwh so that they, too, may participate in the king's uniquely privileged relationship with the deity.[444]

Second, both sets of text in effect place everyone else whom they characterize *besides the king* in danger of divine aggression. Of course, the most obvious recipients of divine aggression are the enemies of the king and country. These the patron god opposes by default, in both psalms and inscriptions. But—for the most part—the memorial inscriptions and royal psalms examined heretofore *also* jeopardize their own readers and reciters: persons, that is, who belong to the client country. Such actors can occasion Yhwh's aggression against themselves if and when they resist the texts' rhetorical request of their human readership. For the inscriptions, this request usually has to do with supporting the king's name and legacy, or at any rate not damaging it. For the psalms, this request may still include support for the king, but has more often and obviously to do with honoring the deity, Yhwh. Also: if and when the community is subject to the deity's destructiveness in these psalms, it is never in their aspect as participants in the king's own collectivized persona.

Intriguingly, the exception to the above observations about Yhwh's potential aggression against the texts' own reciters is Psalms *2 and 110. These psalms do not place any condition in the relation of Yhwh to his client country. Psalm 2 in its canonical form does indeed imagine with Psalms 20 and 21 that Yhwh's own people can become enemies if they refuse to "submit sincerely." But in the reconstructed Psalm *2, especially its core verses, vv. 6-9, the psalm's reciters are only supporters of the king and hence also only recipients of Yhwh's favor. In this

[444] Cf. Füglister, "Die Verwendung des Psalters zur Zeit Jesu: der Psalter als Lehr- und Lebensbuch"; Marttila, *Collective Reinterpretation,* 193-94.

way, Psalms 2 and 110 live up to Eichrodt's characterization of *heathenism* more closely than do the memorial inscriptions of chapter 2. In these two psalms only and *not* in the royal texts from Israel's neighbors is Yhwh as a patron god truly an unconditional "benefactor deity."[445]

With regard to the thesis of Yhwh's unique aggression, the present comparison bears out Eichrodt's argument—in a more sophisticated form than he articulated it. The present chapter showed that although Yhwh's profile in other portions of the Hebrew Bible draw very far part from the gods of the nations, in these royal psalms Yhwh is very much like his counterparts in the Iron Age Levant, as Eichrodt argued: Yhwh's aggression is thus (and so far) *not unique*. But over against Eichrodt, the character of that divine aggression is not simplistically state-supportive; the deity does not only aggress against national enemies. Rather, the memorial inscriptions and select royal psalms alike bear witness to the possibility that individuals from the deity's own client country could activate the deity's aggression against themselves. The only person truly safe from the deity's aggression—in both inscriptions and psalms—is the king himself, as the deity's adopted son, and perhaps even the unique object of the deity's loyalty and love.

[445] Eichrodt, *TOT* 1:46.

CHAPTER 4: DIVINE AGGRESSION IN ROYAL PSALMS OF DEFEAT

4.1 Defining the Body of Textual Evidence

The overall goal of the present work is to test the claim that Yhwh's aggression was unique—that Rev. Jeremiah Wright was in fact righter than he intended when he attributed a biblical pedigree to the concept of a patron god damning his own country: "'God damn America'—that's in the Bible." To that purpose, chapter 2 surveyed the presentation of divine aggression in select memorial inscriptions, since these reflect the theology of Israel/Judah's nearest neighbors. Next, chapter 3 sought to determine the character of Yhwh's aggression in select royal psalms; it examined the royal psalms that are closest in form and content to the memorial inscriptions because such psalms promised to yield the most interesting and sophisticated range of contrasts with the inscriptions.

The present chapter assumes a different strategy: its textual corpus remains royal psalms (unlike, as will be seen, chapter 5 following). Much is also the same in these "new" royal psalms as in the selection of chapter 3: they maintain an intensive, thematic interest in the king; they feature nonnarrative rhetorical strategies, including metahistorical motifs of kingship; and they address a dual audience, human and divine. However, in the two royal psalms under consideration (Psalms 89 and 132), the profile of divine aggression is at a further remove from that of the memorial inscriptions in chapter 2.[446] The proposed contrast between Yhwh's aggression and that of other gods is *expanded* in this chapter—because these two closely related psalms, and particularly Psalm 89, evoke divine aggression against the patron deity's country—and yet more

[446] On the similarities of these two psalms to one another, see Timo Veijola, *Verheissung in der Krise: Studien zur Literatur und Theologie der Exilszeit anhand des 89. Psalm*, STt Sarja B 220 (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1982), 49; also Hans Ulrich Steymans, *Psalm 89 und der Davidbund*, Österreichische Biblische Studien (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2005), 298-302.

radically, *against its king*.[447] Furthermore, these two royal psalms (though once more especially Psalm 89) articulate this divine aggression not as a future conditional prospect but as a past event: an event, that is, of defeat.[448] This is the rationale for treating these two psalms separately from the others: they, too, envision Yhwh's aggression—as will be seen. But they direct this aggression against Yhwh's *own king* (David), and they situate this aggression as a *past* occurrence.

The history of research placed the royal psalms of chapter 3 very differently alongside the characteristic (deuteronomistic) theology of the Hebrew Bible. Wellhausen saw all royal psalms as products of the Second Temple, and hence thoroughly imbued with the conviction that Yhwh could aggress (and had aggressed) against his own king and nation. Eichrodt on the other hand thought that several of the royal psalms—2 and 110 in particular—were *heathen*: committed to an unconditional view of Yhwh's solidarity with his king and country. By contrast with their varying interpretations of these psalms, Eichrodt and Wellhausen are much more aligned in their understanding of Psalms 89 and 132. Both scholars date Psalm 89 to the Second Temple period—in Wellhausen's terminology, "the Theocracy."[449] For Wellhausen, this psalm bears witness to a definite past national experience of *Yhwh's aggression*. He writes of its opening confession ("firm as the heavens stands Thy [Yhwh's] faithfulness" [450] [v. 2]) that "present experience seems to

[447] David Noel Freedman: "In Psalm 89 there seems to be an unqualified commitment to David that a descendant of his would always sit upon the throne of Judah (vss. 4-5, 29-30, 35, and others). But the question of a possible ultimate rejection is also raised (in vss. 39-40, 50). Similarly, Psalm 132:11-12 seems ambiguous on this point. It is necessary to recognize both historical and theological aspects of this picture" ("Divine Commitment and Human Obligation: The Covenant Theme," *Int* 18 [1964]: 419-31, here 426).

[448] On the generativity of experience(s) of defeat for the literature of the Hebrew Bible, see especially Jacob L. Wright, "The Commemoration of Defeat and the Formation of a Nation in the Hebrew Bible," *Prooftexts* 29 (2009): 433-72; also Karl-Friedrich Pohlmann, "Religion in der Krise—Krise einer Religion: die Zerstörung des Jerusalemer Tempels 587 v. Chr," in *Zerstörungen des Jerusalemer Tempels: Geschehen—Wahrnehmung—Bewältigung*, ed. Johannes Hahn, WUNT 147 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), 40-60.

[449] Wellhausen points out the parallel between Ps 132 and 2 Chr 6, and dates the psalm after the Chronicler (*The Book of Psalms*, 213). Eichrodt on the other hand points to Ps 132 as evidence that the David covenant "must patently have been dear to [Israelite] faith long before the Chronicler" (*TOT* 1:65; see further his remarks on 1:127).

[450] Wellhausen, *The Book of Psalms*, 93.

prove the very opposite, *viz*., that graciousness came to an end long ago."[451] The psalm in effect says, "I hold fast in spite of all"[452]—in spite of this present experience of Yhwh's disfavor, and even of the deity's aggression. Eichrodt dates Psalm 89 to "later Judaism."[453] Both scholars align Psalm 89 with the deuteronomistic perspective of Yhwh's conditional loyalty to his country.[454] Wellhausen does not treat of Psalm 132—but his aftercomers such as Perlitt and Kutsch both understand it as distinctively postexilic because of its emphasis on the conditionality of Yhwh's oath to the Davidides.[455] Eichrodt on the other hand locates Psalm 132 to the preexilic period—but he does not criticize it in the same way as he does Psalms 2 and 110, as florescences of heathenism within the Hebrew Bible.[456] Though disagreeing with Wellhausen as to the psalm's date, he concurs with Wellhausen's judgment about its theology: that Psalm 132 complements and does not conflict with the viewpoint of Deuteronomy, according to which Yhwh's loyalty depends *conditionally* on obedience.[457]

4.2. Rhetoric and Deity Profile

The goal of the present chapter is same as in chapter 3: in keeping with the theological and rhetorical-literary methods of the project, it seeks to determine the character of divine aggression

[451] Ibid., 200.
[452] Ibid.
[453] Eichrodt, *TOT* 2:493.
[454] For further remarks on the relationship of Psalm 89 to deuteronomistic theology, see Veijola, *Verheissung in der Krise*, 143-50; Steymans, *Psalm 89*, 376-415. But see also Wälchli, who considers Psalm 89 "eine Auseinandersetzung mit deuteronomistischer Gerichtstheologie" (*Gottes Zorn in den Psalmen*, 70-74).
[455] Ernst Kutsch writes: "Im Unterschied zur sonstigen unbedingten Fassung zer Zusage ist in Ps 132:11ff […] in deuteronomistischem Sinn die weitere Erfüllung der Verheißung von dem Gehorsam der Davididen gegenüber Gottes Gesetz abhängig gemacht" (*Verheissung und Gesetz: Untersuchungen zum sogenannten Bund im Alten Testament*, BZAW 131 [Berlin: de Gruyter, 1973], 117). Cf. also Lothar Perlitt, *Bundestheologie im Alten Testament*, WMANT 36 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1969), 51n2.
[456] "It is permissible to conjecture, on the basis of certain reliable pieces of evidence from the monarchic period such as [2] Sam 23:5 and Ps 132, that the Davidic dynasty very early based its claims to suzerainty on a special covenant with Yahweh" (Eichrodt, *TOT* 1:65).
[457] See also Haney "On the Nature of the Possible Connection between Psalm 132 and the Deuteronomistic Ideology," in *Text and Concept*, 139-141.

in two royal psalms (89 and 132). As in previous chapters, the present chapter focuses on answering the question: in these texts, could the patron deity Yhwh aggress against his own client king and country? After commenting on the structure and rhetoric of each psalm, the chapter tabulates the verbs for which the deity acts as grammatical subject. On this basis it then briefly sketches the profile of divine aggression that each psalm presents.

4.2.1. Psalm 89

Translation

1. A *maśkîl*[458] of Ethan the Ezrahite.[459]

2. Let me sing of Yhwh's[460] solicitous acts[461] forever / for generation after generation I will make known your faithfulness with my mouth.

[458] On the meaning of the term *maśkîl*, see Gösta W. Ahlström *Psalm 89: eine Liturgie aus dem Ritual des leidenden Königs*, trans. Hans-Karl Hacker und Rudolf Zeitler (Lund: Gleerup, 1959), 21-26.

[459] My numeration corresponds to the Hebrew (BHK or BHS) and not to English translations, meaning that references to verses are offset by one (ET v. 1 = Hebrew v. 2).

[460] OG and Theodotion interpret *ḥesed* in v. 2a as if it had a 2ms suffix: Τὰ ἐλέη σου, κύριε (NETS: "Of your mercies, O Lord, I will sing"); cf. the vocative in v. 6a. Other versions correspond to MT (see Ahlström, *Psalm 89*, 45). Reconstructing *ḥesed* with a 2ms suffix makes the opening half-line into direct address, which seems more in keeping with the 2ms suffixes in vv. 2b, 3. But the principle of *lectio difficilior* and the evidence of the versions weighs against emendation. See also Steymans, *Psalm 89*, 28.

[461] The translation of *ḥesed* is crucial for understanding the whole psalm, since it occurs eight times throughout the text: as direct object and *nomen regens* in construct plural v. 2a, as the self-standing and unaffixed subject in vv. 3a and v. 15b (*ḥesed*), as indirect object in a passive, participial form in v. 20b (*ḥăsîdêkā*), as subject with a 1cs possessive suffix in v. 25a, as the direct object with a 1cs possessive suffix in vv. 29a and 34a, and as the plural predicate of an interrogative sentence with a 2ms suffix in v. 50a. In all but three of these eight instances, *ḥesed* occurs in parallel with *'ĕmûnâ*, usually with 2ms suffix; even in two instances when *ḥesed* does not appear together with *'ĕmûnâ*, it parallels other forms of the word-group √*'mn* (e.g., *'ĕmet* in v. 15b and *ne'ĕmenet* in v. 29b). Forms of √*'mn* also occur in vv. 6b, 9b, and 38b; see the tables in James M. Ward, "The Literary Form and Liturgical Background of Psalm LXXXIX," *VT* 11 (1961): 321-39, here 339 and in Veijola, *Verheissung in der Krise*, 37-42, here 39; as well as Nahum Sarna, "Psalm 89: A Study in Inner Biblical Exegesis," in *Biblical and Other Studies*, ed. Alexander Altmann, Brandeis Texts and Studies (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963), 29-46, here 31-32. The senses of *ḥesed* and √*'mn* in the psalm are not to be homogenized, and yet the translation should reflect the derivation of the flexed forms from a shared root; following Katherine Doob Sakenfeld's discussion of *ḥesed* in the psalms (*The Meaning of Hesed in the Hebrew Bible: A New Inquiry*, HSM 17 [Missoula: Scholars Press, 1978], 220-223), I have translated *ḥesed* with forms of "solicitude" and *'ĕmûnâ* with forms of "faithfulness." "Solicitude," though cumbersome in English, points up Yhwh's ongoing and active readiness to help the object(s) of his loyalty. Only in v. 20 does my translation break the pattern and translate *ḥăsîdêkā* as "devoted ones."

3. Because you said,[462] "forever—will solicitude be built up!"[463] / the heavens—you establish your faithfulness in them. [464]
4. "I made a covenant with my chosen one / I swore to David my servant
5. Forever I will establish your offspring / and I will build up your throne for generation after generation." *Selah.*

6. The heavens thank you for[465] your wonder,[466] Yhwh / your faithfulness in the congregation of the holy ones. [467]
7. For who in the sky compares to Yhwh? / who is like Yhwh among the divine beings?
8. A god greatly dreaded in the council of the holy ones / and feared above all who surround him?[468]

[462] MT reads *kî-'āmartî*, "for I said," but OG has ὅτι εἶπας, "because you said" (2ms), and Vul and Jerome follow suit (*quoniam/quia dixisti*). TgPss supports 1cs. Ahlström argues that MT *'āmartî* stands parallel to *'āšîrâh* in v. 2a (*Psalm 89*, 45), but Steymans points out its *lack* of parallelism with the 2ms form of √*kwn* in MT v. 3b (*Psalm 89*, 29; although note that Jerome, Syriac, and TgPss read *tkn* as *niphal*). The real problem for MT is the *kî* at the head of the half-line: if v. 3a continues the psalmist's speech from v. 2, then he would be justifying his opening praise on the basis of his own past statement (Steymans: "ja, hiermit sage ich"). It is more sensible that v. 3a introduces a divine speech that forms the basis of the psalmist's praise in v. 2. Also, as Steymans observes, it seems more probable that MT *reduced* the contrast between vv. 2 and 3 than that OG exaggerated it (*Psalm 89*, 30). Cf. the other forms of √*kwn* in vv. 5a, 22a, 38a: *hiphil* in v. 5a and *niphal* in the other instances. Only in in Psalm 89 does √*kwn* appear—whether in *hiphil* or *niphal*—with *'ĕmûnâ* as its direct object (*DCI* 4:375).

[463] Some commentators interpret *ôlām* as a deity name in vocative case (David Volgger, *Notizen zur Textanalyse von Ps 89*, Arbeiten zu Text und Sprache im Alten Testament [St.-Ottilien: EOS-Verlag, 1994], 101). A few translations like TgPss make *ḥesed* adverbial or instrumental, and *ôlām* the subject of the *niphal* verb ("by goodness the world shall be built"). But OG captures the sense of MT better: Εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα ἔλεος οἰκοδομηθήσεται ("forever mercy will be built"). The fronted *ôlām*, standing stentorian at the beginning of its half-line and indicating *duration*, parallels and prepares for the fronted *šamayim*, standing stentorian and indicating *place* in v. 3b.

[464] This is the first example of resumptive syntax in the psalm, when the object of a clause is introduced initially and disjunctively, and then the sentence "catches up," as it were, with a relative pronoun; see also vv. 11b, 12a, 12b, and perhaps v. 47. Following Goldingay, my translation indicates this phenomenon with em-dashes. Note that the psalmist's praise in v. 2 anticipates the divine declaration in v. 3a and the statement in v. 3b (*ḥasdê* '*ôlām // 'ôlām ḥesed, 'ĕmûnātĕkā//'ĕmûnātĕkā*). James M. Ward notes the parallel of the *bet*-preposition of *bĕpî* // *bāhem* ("A Literary and Exegetical Study of the Eighty-Ninth Psalm" [Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1958], 112).

[465] Goldingay objects to the interpretation of *šāmayim* as the subject of *wĕyôdû*, though acknowledging it is the most obvious understanding; "the personification" of the "heavenly beings" would be, on this reading, "very strong." He argues that nowhere else is *šāmayim* the subject of this verb; nor is it clear what it would mean for the heavens to confess in the assembly of the holy ones (*Psalms*, 2:660). The parallelism of v. 7a with *baššaḥaq*, "in the cloud," would further evidence the adverbial, locative sense of *šāmayim*—the same as in v. 3b. Note, however, Job 15:15, which also places *šāmayim* in a loose parallel with *qĕdōšîm* (Ward, "Literary and Exegetical Study," 148), as well as the evidence of all the versions (Volgger, *Textanalyse*, 110).

[466] MT has singular, *pil'ăkā,* "your wonder," but see Small-Print discussion for other textual variants. The singleness of the wonder reinforces Yhwh's act of establishing and building up the Davidic dynasty in the preceding v. 5, especially since "your faithfulness" in the parallel line harkens back to *'ĕmûnātĕkā* in vv. 2b and 3b. Cf. Ahlström *Psalm 89*, 59; Ward, "Literary and Exegetical Study," 167-68.

[467] Luc Dequeker enlists the Yehimilk inscription (KAI 4) and Arslan Tash (KAI 27) in support of reading *qĕdōšîm* with reference to the divine assembly ("Les Qᵉdôšim du Psaume 89 à la lumière des croyances sémitiques," *ETL* 39 [1963]: 469-84, here 471-72).

[468] Most versions and commentators understand *'al* as marking *comparison*, i.e., that Yhwh is more feared than all that surround him (and so *'al* functionally // *min*), on which see Volgger, *Textanalyse*, 112. But cf. OG: μέγας καὶ φοβερὸς ἐπὶ πάντας τοὺς περικύκλῳ αὐτοῦ, "great and awesome *to* all that are around him," i.e., those that

9. Yhwh, the god of heavenly armies, who is like you? / powerful Yah, your faithfulness is around you.[469]
10. You rule over the pride of the sea / when it lifts its waves, you still them.
11. You crushed Rahab[470] like one slain / you scattered your enemies with your strong arm.
12. The heavens are yours, yours also the earth / the world and what fills it—you established them.
13. North and south—you created them / Tabor and Hermon—in your name they rejoice.
14. Yours is an arm with strength / your hand is strong, your right hand stands high.[471]
15. Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne / Solicitude and faithfulness draw near to your face.

16. Blessed is the people who know the shout / Yhwh, in the light of your presence they walk.
17. In your name they shout for joy all day long / and in your righteousness they stand high.
18. For you are the glory of their strength / through your delight our horn stands high.
19. For our shield belongs to Yhwh / our king to the Holy One of Israel.

20. Then[472] you spoke in a vision to your devoted ones / and you said
    "I set help on a warrior / I stood a chosen up from the people."
21. "I found David my servant / with my holy oil I anointed him."
22. "My hand will be established with him / yes, my arm will strengthen him."
23. "No enemy will extort from him / no wicked person oppress him."
24. "I will crush his foes from before him / and those who hate him I will strike down."
25. "My faithfulness and my solicitude are with him / and by my name his horn will stand high."
26. I set his hand on the sea / and his right hand on the rivers."
27. "He will call on me: 'You are my father.' / 'My god and the rock of my salvation.'"

surround Yhwh are not the point of comparison but *his audience*. This interpretation is more consistent with vv. 6, 7, in which heavenly beings are Yhwh's choristers (so *'al* functionally // *bet*-preposition).

[469] On the syntax of this verse, including the interpretation of *ḥăsîn yah* as vocative, see Volgger, *Textanalyse*, 114-16. *ḥăsîn* is a *hapax legomenon*. Most commentators see it as an Aramaism meaning "powerful" —and the ancient versions understand it in this way. Many scholars reconstruct the verse, but I follow W. Emery Barnes ("A Note on Psalm 89," *JTS* 29 [1928]: 398-99) in thinking that the Aramaism is not reason enough in itself to emend MT here.

[470] The versions demur from transliterating the proper name: OG has ὑπερήφανον, Vul *superbum*, "the proud one." TgPss associates this figure with Pharaoh; cf. Isa 51:9f. But see Ahlström (*Psalm 89*, 71) for an explanation of why the exodus tradition is likely *not* in view in Ps 89.

[471] I have followed Goldingay's translation ("stand[ing] high") of √*rwm* in vv. 14b, 17b (following *qal* in Qere rather than *hiphil* in Ketib), and 18b. Cf. also the complementary translation of *hărîmôtî* in v. 20b "stood up").

[472] Some translations intend a spatial location ("there") while others indicate a temporal one ("then," "at that time," "once"). Especially in view of *hāri'šōnîm* in v. 50a, the temporal meaning is preferable. As Ward writes: "The Psalm taken as a whole produces an acute awareness of time on the part of the reader…the particle אז carries special emphasis" ("A Literary and Exegetical Study," 205).

28. "As for me, I will make him firstborn / most high among the kings of the earth."

29. "I will keep my solicitude towards him forever / and my covenant will be true to him."
30. "I will set his offspring forever / and his throne like the days of the heavens."
31. "If his sons forsake my teaching / and do not walk by my statutes
32. "If they profane my ordinances / and they do not keep by commandments
33. "I will visit their sin with a rod / and their iniquity, with blows."
34. "But my solicitude I will not annul from him / nor will I make lies out of my faithfulness."
35. "I will not profane my covenant / I will not change that which issues from my lips."
36. "Once I swore by my sanctuary[473] / if I were to lie to David…"
37. "His offspring will continue forever / and his throne like the sun before me."
38. "As the moon will be established forever / so a witness in the clouds will be faithful."[474] *Selah*.

39. But you—you have cast off and rejected / you have grown furious with your anointed.
40. You have voided the covenant of your servant / you profaned his diadem to the ground.
41. You breached all his walls / you made his fortresses ruins.
42. All who passed by plundered him / he became the scorn of his neighbors.
43. You lifted up the right hand of his foes / you caused all his enemies to rejoice.
44. You have turned back the edge of his sword / and you did not make him to stand in battle.
45. You have ended his radiance[475] / his throne you threw to the ground.
46. You shortened the days of his youth / you clothed him with shame. *Selah*.

47. How long, Yhwh—will you hide forever? / Will your fury burn like a fire?
48. Remember!—I. [476]—What short life / for what emptiness you created all humans.

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[473] More commonly translated with English "holiness," OG renders the Hebrew *bĕqodšî* in v. 36a with ἁγίῳ, "temple" (NETS footnotes the alternate translation "in my holy place"), and this understanding seems preferable given the psalm's focus on *place* (heavens, sky, walls) and its otherwise consistent characterization of Yhwh not with "holiness" vocabulary but "faithfulness" (√*'mn*).

[474] On the interpretation of *wĕ'ēd baššaḥaq* in terms of Yhwh as the witness, see Veijola, *Verheissung in der Krise*, 34; idem, "Davidverheissung und Staatsvertrag: Beobachtungen zum Einfluss altorientalischer Staatsverträge auf die biblische Sprache," *ZAW* 95 (1983): 9-31, here 17-22; idem, "The Witness in the Clouds: Ps 89:38," *JBL* 107 (1988): 413-17. For other interpretations, see E. Theodore Mullen, Jr., "The Divine Witness and the Davidic Royal Grant: Ps 89:37-38," *JBL* 102 (1983): 207-18 and Paul G. Mosca, "Once Again the Heavenly Witness of Ps 89:38," *JBL* 105 (1986): 27-37.

[475] Following Steymans, whose treatment of the text-critical problem is most comprehensive: "Du hast aufhören lassen seinen Glanz" (*Psalm 89*, 48); also Volgger, *Textanalyse*, 170-72.

[476] The opening phrase of v. 48 is often emended (Kraus: "the text is jolting and undoubtedly corrupt" [*Psalms* 2:200]). BHS reconstructs *'ădōnāy* in view of the parallel in v. 50a, although, as Steymans observes, no versions suggest this vocative in v. 48a. They unanimously support the presence of a 1cs pronoun (*Psalm 89*, 50). About the apparent disjunctiveness of the half-line in MT, Steymans writes helpfully: "Verzichtet man auf Änderungen in [MT], so scheint dem Sprecher vor Verzweiflung der Atem auszugehen, so daß er nur unvollständige Satzfetzen stammelt:

49. Who is the man who lives and does not see death? / who saves himself from the power of Sheol? *Selah*.

50. Where are your solicitous deeds from at first, my Lord? / You swore to David by your faithfulness![477]
51. Remember, my Lord, the scorning of your servants / I bear in my bosom all the many nations.
52. That which your enemies have scorned, Yhwh, that with which they have scorned the steps of your anointed.

53. Blessed be Yhwh forever, amen and amen.

4.2.1.1. Small Print Text-Critical Issues.

Excepting a few cruxes in vv. 2a, 45a, 48a, treated in the notes above, the most outstanding and interpretively important text-critical problem of Psalm 89 concerns the *singular* versus *plural* objects of several verbs for which Yhwh is the divine subject. These objects include:

- *libḥîrî* "to my chosen one" (MT) in v. 4a, but see τοῖς ἐκλεκτοῖς μου, "my chosen ones" (OG); also plural in Jerome and TgPss
- *zar'ekā*, "your seed" (MT) in v. 5a, but TgPss reads *sons*.
- *tā'ōz yādĕkā*, "your hand is strong" (MT) in v. 14b, but "your hand is strong *to redeem your people*" in TgPss
- *laḥăsîdêkā*, "your devoted ones" (MT) in v. 20a, but see *laḥăsîdkā*, "your devoted one" (some MT mss)[478]
- *zar'ô* "his seed" (MT) in vv. 30a and 37a, but his *sons* in TgPss
- *yĕmê 'ălûmâw*, "the days of his youth" (MT) in v. 46a, but see "the days of his young men" (TgPss)
- *'ăbādêkā*, "your servants" (MT) in v. 51a but some MT mss feature *'abdekā*, "your servant"; also LXX^{min} and Samaritan Pentateuch

The change of singular *pil'ăkā*, "your wonder" in v. 6a (MT) to *pil'êkā*, "your wonders" in two mss of OG, Vul, and TgPss could perhaps represent a "light" example of this kind of collectivization. To these examples in MT and the ancient versions can now be added lines 4 and 5 of 4QPs^{x} (=4QPs89). Mika Pajunen has recently drawn attention to one feature of these lines in this psalm fragment discovered at Qumran[479]:

- *'ăšer yādî tikkôn* '*immô*, "my hand will hold him fast" (MT) in v. 22a corresponds to [yhwh 'š]*r* {šmn} *ydw tknkm*, "[It is Yhwh who]se {oil} hand will establish you (pl) (line 4 of 4QPs^{x}).[480]

'Gedenke: (Was bin denn) ich! Was (für eine) Lebensdauer (habe ich denn)?'" (ibid.). Cf. also Volgger, *Textanalyse*, 180. Jerome F. D. Creech notes the very similar line in Ps 39:5b ("The Mortality of the King in Psalm 89," in *Constituting the Community: Studies on the Polity of Ancient Israel in Honor of S. Dean McBride, Jr.,* ed. John T. Strong and Steven S. Tuell [Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2005], 237-249, here 238n3).

[477] Ahlström takes v. 50b as an asyndetic relative sentence (*Psalm 89*, 154), no doubt because of the relative clause in v. 52b. Several MT mss and the ancient versions introduce a relative particle between the two half lines, e.g., NETS: "where are your mercies of long ago *which* you swore to David." Steymans prefers MT as the *lectio brevior* (*Psalm 89*, 52).

[478] Ahlström, *Psalm 89*, 98-99; Volgger, *Textanalyse*, 141.

[479] Mika S. Pajunen, "4QPs^{x}—A Collective Interpretation of Psalm 89:20-38," *JBL* 133 (2014): 479-495, but especially 489-94.

[480] Ibid., 485-86.

- *wĕśamtî bayyām yādô*, "I will set his hand on the sea" (MT) in v. 26a corresponds to w]*śmty bym yd*, "I will set the hand on the sea" (line 5 of 4QPs^{x}).[481]

The object of Yhwh's "establishing" (√*kwn*) in 4QPs^{x} is no longer 3ms *him* as in MT, i.e., David, but 2mp *you*, the collective addressees of the abbreviated Qumran psalm. So also, the king's individual hand with a 3ms suffix in MT has been denuded in 4QPs^{x} of its possessive marker, making it that much more available to the Qumran psalm's readership.

All the preceding variations may be considered "Kollektivierende Züge"—collectivizing traits.[482] In effect, moving singular referents to plural *expands* the persona of David so that, in the words of Wellhausen, "David wurde das Symbol der theokratischen Reichsherrlichkeit, und nicht sein Geschlecht, sondern Israel galt als deren Inhaber von Gottes und Rechts wegen."[483] The significance of these collectivizing traits is explored in the conclusion below.

4.2.1.2. Structure and Rhetoric of Psalm 89

Commentators frequently divide the psalm into three formal units: a hymn on the *ḥasdê-yhwh* in vv. 1-19, a divine oracle in vv. 20-38, and a lament in vv. 39-52.[484] Most exegetes also recognize that the first four verses (vv. 2-5) after the title (v. 1) comprise a sub-unit within the opening hymn, just as the final three verses (vv. 50-52) offer an *envoi* after the lament and before the closing doxological formula in v. 53.[485] These unit divisions correspond to occurrences of the word *selâ*, which is distributed four times throughout the psalm (vv. 5, 38, 46, 49). The materials for which *selâ* forms a boundary also reflect other formal features that differentiate each section: this is especially evident in the *introductory lines* of each unit, which often lead with verbs of speech.[486]

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[481] Ibid.

[482] Veijola, *Verheissung in der Krise*, 135-143; also Marttila, *Collective Reinterpretation of the Psalms*, 142-44.

[483] Julius Wellhausen, *Die Composition des Hexateuchs und der historischen Bücher des Alten Testaments* (Berlin: Reimer, 1899), 181. See also Michael Pietsch, who writes of the "Nationalisierung der Davidgestalt" in Psalm 89 (*'Dieser ist der Sproß Davids…': Studien zur Rezeptionsgeschichte der Nathanverheissung im alttestamentlichen, zwischentestamentlichen und neutestamentlichen Schrifttum*, WMANT 100 [Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 2003], 115).

[484] Kraus, *Psalms* 2:202. In Goldingay's words: "Ps 89 is a distinctive combination of praise, divine word, and protest" (*Psalms*, 2:664). On the psalm's structure, see Pierre Auffret, *Merveilles à nos yeux*, BZAW 235 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1995), 31-55; Steymans, *Psalm 89*, 55-115; Saur, *Königspsalmen*, 156-57.

[485] Terrien, *Psalms*, 635.

[486] So, for example: the initial vv. 2, 3 feature 1cs verbs expressing a verbal act, of celebration and then communication (*'āšîrâh, 'ôdî^{a}*) and 1cs suffix (*bĕpî*), an individual speaker. Verse 6 after the first *selâ* begins with a 3mp verb describing a verbal act (*wĕyôdû*); the 3rd person and plural references throughout this section (the phrases *biqhal qĕdōšîm* // *bibnê 'ēlîm* // *bĕsôd-qĕdōšîm* // *kol-sĕbîbâw*) up through v. 8 all designate Yhwh's heavenly council. These divine beings are the ones who here express awe towards Yhwh. The 3mp references and suffixes of the following vv. 10, 11 (*tĕšabbĕḥēm, 'ôybêkā*) indicate the beings that Yhwh successfully *overcame*, just as in vv. 12-15, the beings that Yhwh *established* (*yĕsadtām* // *bĕrā'tām*). The latter also praise him (*yĕrannēnû*). Verse 16 extends

Besides these considerations, Psalm 89 also shows several other organizing schemas: one is *temporal*. That is, v. 20a declares: *'āz dibbartā*, "*then* you spoke," and v. 50a asks: *'ayyeh ḥăsādêkā hāri'šōnîm*, "where are your solicitous deeds from at first?" The whole psalm works from a contrast between Yhwh's solicitous acts from of old and the present time of devastation. Yhwh's primordial, solicitous acts occupy vv. 2-37. As Richard Clifford argued in 1980, the stanzas of vv. 2-38 describe "a single cosmogonic event."[487] Although it appears in these stanzas that multiple foci are in view—Yhwh's establishment of the world, especially by defeating Rahab, the divine promises to David's dynasty, and then also the praise of beings in heaven and on earth—Clifford, following Dumortier, demonstrates that Yhwh's *Chaoskampf* and his oath-making to David *coincide*:

> The divine hand that defeated chaos and led the people in v. 14 is now with the chosen one in v. 22. Yahweh's defeat of his cosmic enemies in w 10-11 is reflected in the servant's defeat of his earthly foes in vv. 23-24. The *hesed* and *'emet* visible in the divine throne (v. 15b) are available to the chosen one (v. 25a). The horns of both chooser (v. 19b) and chosen (v. 25b) are exalted. Sea and River, the enemies now tamed (vv. 10-11), are put under the power of the Davidide (v. 26). The exaltation of David is demonstrated not only to his own people (vv. 20cd-21) but also to the kings of the world (v. 28). Just as Yahweh is

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the 3mp verbs from the previous section, but suggests a new subject: the people who know the festal shout (*hā'ām yôd'ê tĕrû'âh*). Like the north and south, they praise Yhwh (*yĕgîlûn*)—shouting and praising also comprising verbal acts, as in the preceding stanzas. Verse 19 changes form: now the subject of the verbal act is Yhwh himself, who continues to be addressed, is in the earlier stanzas, mostly in 2nd person (*dibbartā // watō'mer*). After the introductory lines, the remainder of this section mediates Yhwh's direct, 1st person speech. Verse 39 after the second *selâ* interrupts Yhwh's 1st person discourse. Uncharacteristically for the psalm to this point, no verbal act prefaces the lines that follow. Instead, the first 2nd person verb—evoking rejection—anticipates several more verbs of similar form and semantic profile (*zānaḥtā // wattim'ās // hit'abbartā // nē'artâh // ḥillaltā // pāraṣtā // śamtā // mĕḥittâh // hišbattā // miggartâ // hiqṣartā // he'ĕṭîtā*). The 2ms verbs which do not directly depict rejection in this section describe Yhwh's favor on the king's enemies (*hărîmôtā // hiśmaḥtā*) or Yhwh's refusal to assist his king (*tāšîb // wĕlō' hăqêmōtô*), concepts complementing and concretizing the verbs of rejection. Verse 47 after the third *selâ* changes form: it extends the chain of 2ms verbs from vv. 39-46, but now makes them interrogative; whereas the previous stanza refers to a past event, these verses look to an uncertain future. This unit also broadens the scope of Yhwh's action, from the singular *mĕšîḥekā // 'abdekā* to the universal *kol-bĕnê-'ādām // geber* in vv. 48b, 49. Verse 50 after the fourth and final *selâ* in vv. 49b-50 introduces the *envoi*: a kind of inclusio parallel to the opening vv. 2-5. Verse 50 continues the interrogative form of the previous unit before the *selâ*, but then a single verb of command addressed to Yhwh in v. 51—*zĕkōr*—anchors and distinguishes the section. It is not a verb of speech, but of action.

[487] Richard J. Clifford, "Psalm 89: A Lament Over the Davidic Ruler's Continued Failure," *HTR* 73 (1980): 35-47, here 36, following Jean-Bernard Dumortier, "Un rituel d'intronisation: Le Ps LXXXIX: 2-38," *VT* 22 (1972): 176-96. Cf. also Jacob Neusner: "God's faithfulness and love, at first the foundations of the cosmos, are now the foundations of the monarchy itself" ("The 89th Psalm: Paradigm of Israel's Faith," *Judaism* 8 [1959]: 226-33, here 230).

> acknowledged by the other members of the divine assembly as supremely powerful because of his victory, so his lieutenant will be seen as powerful (*elyon*) by earthly rulers (v. 28) through his military success.[488]

This, then, is the past time (*'āz*) characterized by Yhwh's solicitous deeds *hāri'šōnîm*. But in v. 39, the psalm abruptly switches: from the time from of old to the *present* time. That it is the present time (in the world of the psalm) is shown by the questions that can be asked of it: its duration is unknown, because the psalm can ask of Yhwh, "how long?" (v. 47), and indeed, "where are your solicitous deeds from at first?" (v. 50). This present time is one of catastrophe, when Yhwh has—in the psalm's accusation—apparently renounced his covenant (v. 40) and acted in direct counterpoint to his promises.[489]

To whom is Psalm 89 addressed, and whom does it seek to persuade? The first answer must be the deity, Yhwh. In this way, Psalm 89 is more truly a *prayer* than the royal psalms of the previous chapter: the latter oftentimes address Yhwh, but they also had in view to convince their human readership to act in some way.[490] Psalm 89 of course includes exhortations to its human readership: the psalm begins with a cohortative verb (*'āšîrâ*), and the praise of the heavenly beings and earthly host (vv. 6-8 and vv. 16-19, respectively) inspires emulation. Psalm 89 has a human community in view: a people who "acknowledge the festal shout" (v. 16a) and for whom Yhwh is "the glory of their strength" (*tip'eret 'uzzāmô*, v. 18a). If these first stanzas stood alone, then the psalm would call for and instantiate praise and thanksgiving to Yhwh. However, because the second half of the poem accuses Yhwh of abandonment using the terms from the first and praise-giving part, the purpose of the psalm's first half has *changed*: it has been *weaponized*, as it were,

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[488] Clifford, "Psalm 89," 45.
[489] Veijola, *Verheissung in der Krise*, 43-45.
[490] For perceptive remarks on the various addressees of the psalm, see Steymans, *Psalm 89*, 114-15.

and now functions not so much to persuade its human readers to praise Yhwh as to remind them—and the deity!—of his past solicitude.

As Hossfeld and Zenger put it, Psalm 89 "reminds God of the obligations God has undertaken—indeed, by [its] accusations puts God under pressure to act."[491] God—Yhwh—is the ultimate addressee, and persuading Yhwh to act is the psalm's rhetorical objective. More radically than the royal psalms of the last chapter, Psalm 89 devolves to the deity, and leaves its final requests at his doorstep: *zĕkār* in v. 48 and // *zĕkōr* in v. 51, commanding, imploring Yhwh to "remember," or in Goldingay's translation, to "be mindful" of the human condition (v. 48) and the scorn of Yhwh's *mĕšīʾaḥ* (v. 52).

Several persuasive strategies interweave in Psalm 89. On the one hand and perhaps most forcefully, the psalm appeals to Yhwh's own sense of truthfulness as a core characteristic. This is certainly how the psalm seeks to depict Yhwh. He is described right away in the psalm with words denoting solicitude—and also faithfulness or truthfulness (*ʾĕmûnātĕkā,* v. 2b). As many commentators have observed, this is perhaps Yhwh's lead quality in the psalm (on which more, see below).[492] What Yhwh says—and truthfulness (√*ʾmn*) applies to his *pronouncements* above all else, as in v. 3a—is trustworthy. So it is that the psalm's closing petition draws Yhwh back to his oath: "You swore to David by your truthfulness!" (v. 50b).[493] If Yhwh is a truthful deity, then he must stand obligated by his own promised actions towards his *mĕšīʾaḥ*.

But the psalm also "puts God under pressure" not from the force of Yhwh's own oath-taking but by seeking to create divine sympathy for the plight of the anointed one and his

[491] Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms* 2:405.
[492] E.g., Neusner, "The Eighty-Ninth Psalm," 227.
[493] Indeed, R.W.L. Moberly identifies Yhwh's oath in v. 36 as "the strongest affirmation conceivable" and "the single strongest commitment on God's lips anywhere in the Bible" (*Old Testament Theology: Reading the Hebrew Bible as Christian Scripture* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013], 227-28).

community. Thus vv. 51 and 52 pile up vocabulary of scorn—that is, of *shame*: *ḥerpat / ḥērĕpû / ḥērĕpû*. In the rhetoric of the whole psalm, Yhwh's solicitous deeds in the first half serve only now to silhouette their absence in the second half—and so to reinforce the community's sensation of "scorn" (*ḥerpâ*). Yhwh's apparent nullification of his oath is not only out of joint with his own character. The rejoicing of enemies is an affront to his truthfulness, yes; but it is also immensely painful—and the psalm hopes that drawing out this anguish will galvanize the deity to act. Even if Yhwh were capable of "changing that which issues from my lips" (v. 35b), then he would still presumably be capable of experiencing empathy with sufferers and working so as to comfort.[494]

Lastly, the psalm perhaps suggests in its first half a possible future *benefit* for Yhwh. Clearly the past time of Yhwh's solicitous deeds *hāri'šōnîm* was preferable to its human constituency: the celebrating people were "blessed" (*'ašrê,* v. 16a). Their life was free from extortion and oppression (v. 23). The elevated status of Yhwh's anointed mirrored Yhwh's own exalted place (v. 28). But this past must have been preferable to Yhwh, too: it was a time when he was hymned by heavenly beings and earthly subjects alike. If the psalm's human community wishes for restoration, they also remember a scenario to Yhwh that would be desirable to him also. The remembered past in fact comprises an implicit pledge to Yhwh, on the model of numerous other psalms: "save me—so that I may then praise you" (e.g., Psalms 9, 22, 51).[495] The past can become present once more—*if* Yhwh acts to save. The ideal past indicates a potential future, in view of which it is perhaps even more exaggerated than it would have been otherwise. The psalm's aggressive stanza of accusation (vv. 39-46) is also designed to elicit pain—maybe even to confer "scorn" (*ḥerpâ*) —on the deity. Yhwh presumably would wish for this current situation of being on the hot seat (so to speak) to conclude.

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[494] Cf. Charney's remarks on Psalm 44 and "God's Breach of Covenant" (*Persuading God*, 65-70).
[495] Ibid., 22-23.

4.2.1.3. Divine Aggression in Psalm 89

The name Yhwh occurs nine times in Psalm 89. Yhwh is also called *'ēl*, "God," in vv. 8a, 9a, 27a; "holy one" in v. 19b; and "Lord" in vv. 50, 51.

Verb	Verse	Object(s)
'āmartā, "you said"	3a	
kārattî, "I cut"	4a	a covenant *libḥîrî*
nišba'tî, "I swore"	4b	David
'ākîn, "I will establish*"*	5a	David's offspring
ûbānîtî, "I built"	5b	David's throne
môšēl, (you) "are ruling"	10a	the sea
tĕšabbĕḥēm, "you still them"	10b	the sea's waves
dikki'tā, "you crushed,"	11a	Rahab
pizzartā, "you scattered"	11b	enemies
yĕsadtām, "you founded them"	12b	heaven and earth
bĕrā'tām, "you created them"	13a	north and south
dibbartā, "you spoke	20a	to his devoted ones
wattō'mer, "you said"	20b	to his devoted ones
šiwwîtî, "I stood"	20c	help on a warrior (David)
hărîmôtî, "I raised up"	20d	his chosen one (David)
māṣā'tî, "I found"	21a	David
mĕšaḥtîw, "I anointed him"	21b	David
wĕkattôtî, "I will crush"	24a	the king's enemies
'eggôp, "I will plague"	24b	the king's enemies
wĕśamtî, "I will place"	26a	the king's hand
'ettĕnēhû, "I will give him"	28a	the king
'ešmôr, "I will keep"	29a	solicitous acts
wĕśamtî, "I will place"	30a	his offspring
'ûpāqadtî, "I will visit"	33a	the king's offspring's transgressions
lō'-'āpîr, "I will not withdraw"	34a	the king
wĕlō'-'ăšaqqēr, "I will not lie"	34b	to the king
lō'-'ăḥallēl, "I will not profane"	35a	the covenant

lō' 'ăšaggeh, "I will not change"	35b	*ûmôṣā' śĕpātay*, "that which issues from my lips"
nišba'tî , "I swore"	36a	David
'ăkazzēb, "I lie"	36b	David
zānaḥtā, "you cast off"	39a	the anointed
wattim'ās, "you rejected"	39b	the anointed
hit'abbartā, "you grew furious"	39c	the anointed
nē'artâ, "you voided"	40a	covenant
ḥillaltā, "you profaned"	40b	the king's diadem
pāraṣtā, "you breached"	41a	the king's walls
śamtā , "you placed"	41b	the king's fortresses
hărîmôtā, "you exalted"	43a	the king's foes
hiśmaḥtā, "you caused to rejoice"	43b	the king's enemies
tāšîb, "you turned back"	44a	the king's sword
wĕlō' hăqêmōtô, "you did not make him stand"	44b	the king
hišbattā, "you ended"	45a	the king's radiance
miggartâ, "you threw"	45b	the king's throne
hiqṣartā, "you shortened"	46a	the king's youth
he'ĕṭîtā, "you clothed"	46b	the king
tissātēr, "you hide"	47a	Yhwh's own self
bārā'tā, "you made"	48b	all humankind
nišba'tā, "you swore"	50b	David

Yhwh is the subject of twenty-seven 2ms verbs in Psalm 89, if the count includes the emended *'āmartā* in v. 3a and the participle *môšēl* in v. 10a. He is also the speaker of twenty-one 1cs verb forms. Yhwh's 1st person speaking clusters in vv. 4b and 5 and in the middle stanza of vv. 20-36—the two so-called oracles of the psalm.[496] The sections invoking Yhwh in 2nd person flank these oracles, in the opening stanza of praise and in the closing stanza of accusation. Intriguingly, Psalm 89 also includes several actions effected by Yhwh's *agents*: Yhwh's "hand" is exalted in v. 13, his "favor" (*rāṣōn*) lifts up his people in v. 17b, his "hand" and "arm" succor David in v. 21, his solicitude and faithfulness are with David in v. 25a, his "name" exalts David's

[496] Cf. the treatment by Scott Starbuck (*Court Oracles in the Psalms*, 127-36); also Steymans, *Psalm 89*, 114, 294.

horn in 25b, his "covenant" stands firm in v. 29b. Yhwh's action in Psalm 89 is thus relatively more mediated than in the other psalms examined to this point.

In the first half of Psalm 89—the time of Yhwh's solicitous deeds *hāri'šōnîm*—the preponderance of verbs indicates a positive action, especially of *foundation*: initiating and upholding an enduring institution. These verbs include √*krt*, "to cut" (a covenant), √*šb'*, "to swear," √*kwn*, "to establish," √*bnh*, "to build," √*ysd*, "to found," √*br'*, "to create," √*šwh* and √*śym*, "to place," √*rwm*, "to exalt," √*šmr*, "to keep." A few times the objects of these verbs of creation are the world (v. 12b) and its primordial axes (v. 13). Much more often, the objects are David and his dynasty; as Clifford has shown, these two in fact coincide: the Davidic dynasty is as basic to the world order as the coordinates North and South. Several verbs in the psalm's first half also describe Yhwh's *aggression*.[497] Yhwh rules (√*mšl*) the sea, stills (√*šbḥ*) its waves, crushes (√*dk'*) Rahab and scatters (√*pzr*) enemies (vv. 10, 11). Just so, in the "oracle" stanza, Yhwh crushes (√*ktt*) David's enemies and strikes down (√*ngp*) those who hate him (v. 24). The primeval enemies and the "historical" enemies coincide. Interestingly, however, Yhwh's actions towards the enemies in the psalm's first half are not described with words for "anger" (cf. Psalm 2); there is no divine wrath in the time *hāri'šōnîm*, not even conditionally in the event that David's children forsake Yhwh's instruction (vv. 31-34).

Yhwh's aggression in the first half of Psalm 89 is, then, directed *outwards*—towards enemies like the sea as well as more historical foes of his king. No reason is given for Yhwh's destructiveness towards these entities, except that they threaten to extort and oppress him (v. 23). Loyalty to his "devoted one" motivates Yhwh's aggression. In the latter part of the fourth stanza, the psalm introduces a note of conditionality: the sons of Yhwh's chosen king can opt into divine

[497] Clifford, "Psalm 89."

aggression, and the psalm illustrates the scenario that triggers divine punishment. Although Yhwh by an oracle coronates his king (v. 19) and makes him firstborn (v. 27), vv. 30-34 raise the possibility that Yhwh could punish even the royal heir if he should forsake Yhwh's law. The language for divine aggression in v. 32 is more moderate than that used of Yhwh's aggression towards enemies earlier in the same stanza: they describe a beating rather than annihilation: one can rise up from visitation "with a rod" (*bĕšēbeṭ*) or "with blows" (*ûbingāʿîm*), where the crushing and striking down of v. 23 sound more permanent. This permanency of these enemies' defeat rings out especially given the surrounding verses about the corresponding permanency of Yhwh's commitment to David's line (vv. 33-37).

All this is reversed in the second half of the psalm—in the "present time" of indeterminacy and suffering. There, a litany of verbs denoting destruction apply, not to the enemies of David and his descendants, but *to the Davidic kingship itself*. The institution and not only the individual monarch are struck down: this can be seen from the psalm's references to all the insignia of rule, which pass on from generation to generation (crown, scepter, throne). Moreover, as Terrien observes, the verbs of aggression in vv. 38-45 far outpace those stipulated conditionally in the v. 32. That is to say: Yhwh's actual aggression goes much further than his promised punishment on the royal heir who forsakes his instruction. Yhwh goes too far: "the wrath of God, which inflamed itself against the anointed son of David, exceeds the proportions of a most severe punishment."[498]

None of the exact same verbs for destruction from the first half of Psalm 89 recur in the closing stanza of accusation (though see √*ḥll* in vv. 32, 35, 40)[499]—but the sense of contradiction

[498] Terrien, *Psalms*, 638; cf. also Goldingay: "Yhwh has behaved more like the kind of wayward king who would deserve chastisement than someone fulfilling the undertaking expressed there" (*Psalms,* 2:685). For further remarks on the offense of Psalm 89—even and including that several medieval rabbinic authorities considered it blasphemous—see Hayyim Angel, "The Eternal Davidic Covenant in II Samuel Chapter 7 and its Later Manifestations in the Bible," *JBQ* 44 (2016): 83-90, here 85-87.

[499] Veijola, *Verheissung*, 39; Goldingay, *Psalms,* 2:691.

with what precedes is nonetheless robust and intentional. The contradiction is also *modulated*: whereas in the first half of the psalm, Yhwh directly prosecuted the destruction of the primeval dragon and the enemies of his king, in the psalm's second half, Yhwh's aggression pursues the *insignia* of his king rather than the king himself. Yhwh does indeed "spurn" and "reject" his anointed, but he renounces his *covenant*; profanes the crown; removes the scepter; hurls down the throne; shortens the king's youth and covers him with shame.[500] What Yhwh does *not* do is crush (√*dk'* or √*ktt*) the person of the king or strike him down *per se* (√*ngp*), as with the enemies in the earlier stanza. So, too, verbs of exaltation in this stanza now involve the enemies rather the Davidic kingship: Yhwh "lifts up" (√*rwm*) the right hand of the king's foes (v. 43) just as before he lifted up the right hand of David (v. 14); and he causes the enemies to rejoice (√*śmḥ*) just as Yhwh's name initially occasioned joy (√*gyl*) among his people (v. 17b).

Notably, the same verbs used to evoke the foundation of the world order are absent from the second half of the psalm: Yhwh's actions are not primordial and constitutive, but punctiliar, and concrete. Nothing in the psalm's first half matches the specificity of broken walls and ruined cities in v. 41. So, too, the emotional power of the second half is unmatched. The section twice features vocabulary for Yhwh's anger: at first and most remarkably in v. 38b, when Yhwh is full of wrath against his anointed (*hit'abbartā 'im-měšîḥekā*). In the interrogatory refrain, the psalm also asks Yhwh, "how long will your fury burn like fire" (v. 46b)? In these ways, the second half of the psalm affords more insight into the deity's psyche, as it were, and the deity's own affect as he performs these destructive actions.

4.2.1.4. Conclusion.

[500] For further comparative remarks on these verbs, see Steymans, *Psalm 89*, 145-52.

Could Yhwh aggress against his own client king and country? Not only *could* he in Psalm 89, but the psalm insists: Yhwh *did*, and ferociously, in defiance of his covenant which he thereby voided (√*n'r*, v. 39).[501]

Much depends on the interpretation of "the anointed" in v. 39b—the only explicit recipient of all Yhwh's aggression in vv. 39-46. In what sense is this "anointed one" (*měšî*^{a}*ḥ*) the same persona that Yhwh "anointed" (√*mšḥ*) in v. 21b? Hans Steymans argues that "der Gesalbte der Klage [in v. 39b] ist keinesfalls der, von dessen Salbung Jhwh in v. 21 spricht."[502] If Steymans were correct, then Psalm 89 would in some sense run theologically parallel to the Hadad inscription: in HI, the individual, named king Pannamuwa, whom the patron deity favors, remains exempt from divine aggression—even as the inscription subjects his progeny to wrath in the future conditional event that they should fail to maintain their dead father's name through the mortuary cult. As Steymans interprets it, Psalm 89 similarly exempts its individual, named king David from divine aggression, even as it forcefully remembers the definite past event of divine wrath against his aftercomers.

But this exemption does not hold up, exegetically. Several factors suggest a kind of porousness throughout Psalm 89 between the individual, named king David, his successors, and the whole community loyal to him. This can be seen even in the stanza that evokes Yhwh's past aggression: in v. 41a, for instance, Yhwh "breaches" the king's walls—which hardly makes sense to say about the body of an individual king, but does for a city. So, too, v. 51a urges Yhwh to remember "the scorning of your *servants*," plural, but the communal experience of enduring

[501] Saur writes that "Im Zentrum von Ps 89 steht eine Reflexion über den Untergang der davidischen Dynastie" (*Königspsalmen*, 182).

[502] Steymans, *Psalm 89*, 151. He continues: "Denn Jhwh zürnt dem Gesalbten, was für David, dem in v. 21 gemeinten Empfänger der Salbung, nicht zutrifft…Der Gesalbte ist also ein Nachkomme Davids" (ibid.). See also idem, "'Deinen Thron habe ich unter den großen Himmeln festgemacht': die formgeschichtliche Nähe von Ps 89,4-5.20-38 zu Texten vom neuassyrischen Hof," in *'Mein Sohn bist du',* 184-245. By contrast, Pietsch writes of v. 39: "Der Gesalbte, den Jahwe verworfen hat, ist Israel" (*'Dieser ist der Sproß Davids*,' 119).

derision recalls v. 42b when the singular anointed one became an object of scorn. As Goldingay observes, "[t]hings that are happening to the city and the people are spoken of as if they are happening to [the king]. He stands for city and people."[503]

This porousness between David, his successors, and his community is also clear in the so-called "Kollektivierende Züge"—collectivizing traits—which appear throughout the versional evidence of Psalm 89.[504] Positive claims demonstrate this porousness; for example in MT v. 20a, Yhwh speaks in a vision to "[his] devoted ones" (*laḥăsîdêkā*)—even though the content of his speech pertains, ostensively, only to the individual king David. In view of this mismatch, some variants correct to *laḥăsîdkā*, "your devoted one." A community of devoted ones participates in Yhwh's *benedictory* promises to David, but at the same time, this community also participates in the king's downfall and shame: if scorn applies to a singular, anointed persona in v. 42b, the "anointed" of v. 52b follows so closely on the heels of a collective scorning in v. 51a that the individual character of the latter—as the singular, self-contained David—seems suspect.[505]

The point is, the individual named king is *not* exempted from divine aggression. Rather, he and he especially is depicted in Psalm 89 as the target of Yhwh's aggression. In other psalms like Psalm 20 or 21, the king's persona lies open to the community's participation insofar as his own experience of divine blessing is prior and paradigmatic—but he does not stand as the prior and paradigmatic figure for the community's afflictions. These psalms do not imagine that the king's persona also indexes the suffering of the community through divine disfavor. But this is exactly what Psalm 89 does, and indeed, its second half is more direct and articulate about divine

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[503] Goldingay, *Psalms,* 2:686. Cf. Broyles, who writes that "the welfare of the state [is] here 'embodied' in the king" (*The Conflict of Faith and Experience in the Psalms,* 169).

[504] Veijola, *Verheissung in der Krise,* 135-143; also Marttila, *Collective Reinterpretation of the Psalms,* 142-44.

[505] Cf. Veijola, *Verheissung in der Krise*, 135. Marttila: "Even the parallelism in vv. 51-52 between [*ăbādêkā*] and [*měšîḥekā*] indicates that the 'anointed' must have been a collective reference" (*Collective Reinterpretation of the Psalms,* 143). Cf. also Pietsch, *'Dieser ist der Sproß Davids',* 121.

aggression falling on *the king* than it is on his successors or his community. The travail of the king's persona stands in metonymically for that of his dynasty and his country: Hamilton rightly observes that Psalm 89 "frames the calamities befalling the nation…in terms of harm to the king's body."[506]

4.2.2. Psalm 132

Translation.

1. A song of the ascents.

   Remember, Yhwh, David / and all his afflictions
2. Which he swore to Yhwh / he vowed to the Bull of Jacob:
3. "If I go into the tent of my house / if I go up on the bed spread for me
4. "If I give sleep to my eyes / to my eyelids, slumber
5. "Before I find a place for Yhwh / a dwelling for the Bull of Jacob…"

6. Look! we heard of it at Ephrata / we found it in the fields of Yaar.
7. Let us go into his dwelling / let us worship at his footstool.
8. Rise, Yhwh! to your resting-place / you and the ark of your strength.
9. Let your priests clothe themselves with righteousness / and let your devoted ones shout for joy.
10. For the sake of David your servant / do not turn away the face of your anointed.

11. Yhwh swore to David truthfully, he will not turn from it:
    "From the fruit of your belly, I will place upon your throne.
12. "If your sons keep my covenant / and my testimony that I will teach them
    "Their sons also will sit forever on your throne.

13. For Yhwh chose Zion / he desired it as his home:
14. "This is my resting-place forever / here I will dwell, for I desired it.

15. "Its resources I will bless richly / Its needy I will satisfy with bread
16. "And its priests I will clothe with salvation / and its devoted ones will shout greatly for joy.
17. "There I will flourish the horn of David / I set up a lamp for my anointed
18. "His enemies I will clothe with shame / but his crown will blossom on him."[507]

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[506] Hamilton, *The Body Royal*, 94.

[507] For the most part, "the text of Ps 132 is generally regarded as being in excellent condition" (Fretheim, "Psalm 132," 289). One exception is v. 18b, which in OG reads ἁγίασμα μου, "my sanctity" (NETS). Aquila reads ἀφόρισμα αὐτοῦ, "his wave offering," while Symmachus has ἁγίασμα αὐτοῦ. Hebrew *nēzer* derives from √*nzr*, to

4.2.2.1. Structure and Rhetoric of Psalm 132.

Psalm 132 is, as its title indicates, *šîr hamma'ălôt*, "a song of the ascents." Its division into stanzas is clear: the whole poem is organized into two halves (vv. 1-10; 11-18), each of which centers on an oath, the first made by David to Yhwh (*layhwh* in v. 2a) and the second made by Yhwh to David (*lĕdāwid* in v. 11a).[508] A speaking, communal voice—Terrien's "chorus" — surrounds and structures these two oaths. It opens with the first request to Yhwh in v. 1b to remember (*zĕkōr*). As will be seen, this voice also identifies with, not to say identifies *as*, the priests and *ḥăsîdîm* of vv. 9 and 16.[509] The chorus speaks in v. 1b and 2a, introducing David's direct speech in vv. 3-5, returns for the entirety of vv. 6-10, as well as v. 11 and v. 13, both of which latter prepare for Yhwh's direct speeches in vv. 12 and 14-18, respectively.[510]

Speaker	Verses
Chorus	1b-2
David	3-5
Chorus	6-10
Chorus	11a
Yhwh	12
Chorus	13
Yhwh	14-18

The second stanza (vv. 6-10) is thus the centerpiece of the whole song, a section spoken

consecrate, and so the interpretations of the versions are understandable—but in context the more concrete meaning of "crown" or "diadem" seems more probable, as well as the 3ms suffix.

[508] On the structure of Psalm 132, see Terence E. Fretheim, "Psalm 132: A Form-Critical Study," *JBL* 86 (1967): 289-300; C.H.W. Brekelmans, "Psalm 132: Unity and Structure," *Bijdragen* 44 (1983): 262-65; Gianna Barbiero, "Psalm 132: A Prayer of 'Solomon,'" *CBQ* 75 (2013): 239-58, here 240-42; Elizabeth A. Huwiler, "Patterns and Problems in Psalm 132," in *The Listening Heart: Essays in Wisdom and The Psalms in Honor of Roland E. Murphy, O. Carm.*, ed. Kenneth G. Hoglund, Elizabeth F. Huwiler, Jonathan T. Glass, and Roger W. Lee, JSOTSup 58 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1987), 199-215; also Haney, *Text and Concept*, 134.

[509] Saur identifies this voice as that of the "Sprechergruppe" (*Königspsalmen*, 226). Pietsch writes: "Die Frage, wer als Sprecher des Psalms vorauszusetzen ist, ein Einzelner oder eine Mehrzahl (z.B. das Volk), ist umstritten. Der Gesalbte, der in v. 10 mit dem Beter identifiziert wird, ist dort wahrscheinlich mit dem Volk gleichzusetzen" (*'Dieser ist der Sproß Davids*,' 130n742).

[510] On Yhwh's two speeches in Psalm 132 as oracles, see also Starbuck, *Court Oracles in the Psalms*, 123-27.

by the choral voice and inset between the two oaths of David and Yhwh. Not incidentally, this stanza is also the location for two of psalm's requests of Yhwh, made with imperative verbs: *qûmâ,* "rise!" in v. 8a and *'al-tāšēb* "do not turn away!" in v. 10b. Rösel and others rightly thus characterize Psalm 132 as a *prayer*.[511] So, too, does the psalm begin with the plea to Yhwh, articulated by the same choral voice, that Yhwh would *remember* David and all his afflictions.

The prayer quality of Psalm 132 is more urgent when its negative contrapuntal is considered. The psalm's opening verse foregrounds all of David's afflictions (*kol-'unnôtô*).[512] This phrase is usually understood as anticipatory: the verses that follow enumerate the content of David's afflictions, namely, his self-deprivations in order to find a dwelling for Yhwh. This interpretation seems sound in view of the relative pronoun linking v. 1b and v. 2—the afflictions *'ăšer nišba'*, "which David swore."[513] It is also sound on the grounds of the psalm's possible allusion to the tradition of David's afflictions, which other biblical passages mention.[514]

But it may be that "all [David's] afflictions" has a larger resonance and alludes to more than just David's self-deprivations of vv. 3-5.[515] The first evidence of this larger meaning is the form of the word *'unnôtô* itself, i.e., that it is (in MT) *pual* infinitive, and thus possibly passive in

[511] Rösel, *Messianische Redaktion*, 149-155. Cf. also Goldingay, *Psalms,* 3:541-542.

[512] OG translates: πάσης τῆς πραΰτητος αὐτοῦ, "all his meekness" (NETS), apparently reading the Hebrew as '*anwātô* from the noun '*ănāwâ*. Hillers supports this translation as correct and compares it to the boast of king Zakkur (ZI line 2; "Ritual Procession of the Ark and Ps 132," 53), but see also the critical comments of C.L. Seow on this comparison (*Myth, Drama, and the Politics of David's Dance*, HSM 44 [Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989], 151). For further text-critical remarks, see Haney, *Text and Concept*, 215n2.

[513] See Michel, *Tempora und Satzstellung*, in his section on relative clauses: "all sein Sich-Demütigen / das er Jahwe zugeschworen" (197); cf. also the helpful comments on *'ăšer* in Haney, *Text and Concept*, 216n3.

[514] Saur, *Königspsalmen*, 235; Adele Berlin, "Psalm 132: A Prayer for the Restoration of Judah," in *Marbeh Ḥokmah: Studies in the Bible and the Ancient Near East in Loving Memory of Victor Avigdor Hurowitz*, ed. Shamir Yonah (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2015), 65-72, here 68-71.

[515] This is also the opinion of, *inter alia*, Haney (*Text and Concept*, 137) and Brekelmans ("Psalm 132"). Haney speaks directly of "the affliction of the dynasty" (*Text and Concept*, 145), and Brekelmans writes of v. 1 that "the psalmist who speaks in these verses is praying for the house of David in a situation in which this dynasty is humiliated (*'unnoto*); he even has the impression that God is rejecting the dynasty" ("Psalm 132," 262). Cf. also Pietsch's reading of Psalm 132 as evidencing a "restaurative David-theologie" (*'Dieser ist der Sproß Davids*,' 128), as well as Wilson, "King, Messiah, and the Reign of God," here 396-97.

meaning: cf. Goldingay's translation, "all his *being* troubled."[516] The only other biblical texts featuring *pual* of √*'nh* refer to fasting (Lev 23:29) —but also to the discipline of Yhwh (Isa 53:4; Psalm 119:71). The latter would certainly apply in the case of Yhwh's "turning away" from his anointed.[517]

Another evidence of the larger resonance of *kol-'unnôtô* is the form of David's oath in the following vv. 3-5: it is "an unfinished self-curse."[518] That is: in the protasis of his oath, David refers *directly* to the afflictions that he imposed on himself. But the apodosis of his oath also alludes to an unspecified conditional future: if David fails to prioritize the task of finding a place for Yhwh, then…the consequence is left to the reader's imagination, but whatever its exact nature would be, *it, too, could count as an affliction*. In this way, and especially since "David" need not refer only to the man himself but can include his descendants,[519] Psalm 132 prays that Yhwh would remember David's past and actual self-denial—but also perhaps that Yhwh would remember the unspoken, painful scenario that would ensue (and perhaps *has* ensued) from lack of self-discipline on the part of David and his progeny to find a place for Yhwh.

Two other features of Psalm 132 lend credence to this interpretive possibility, that David's afflictions in v. 1b encompass not just his personal privations but also the deleterious fate of his aftercomers. The first and more decisive datum is the occurrence of another '*im*-clause in Yhwh's own oath, in v. 12. There Yhwh spells out a conditional future scenario in an explicit apodosis: if David's sons keep Yhwh's covenant, "their sons also will sit forever on [David's] throne." But even here, another, negative possibility looms.[520] Although it remains implicit, Yhwh's oath, like

[516] Goldingay, *Psalms*, 3:540; my emphasis.
[517] *DCH* 6:498-99.
[518] Goldingay, *Psalms*, 3:547.
[519] As, for example, in v. 17a, "the horn of David"; cf. also the close collocation of "devoted ones" in v. 16b (plural) and "anointed one" (singular) in v. 17b (Veijola, *Verheissung in der Krise*, 161; Marttila, *Collective Reinterpretation of the Psalms*, 176).
[520] Cf. Huwiler's remarks in "Patterns and Problems in Psalm 132," 211.

David's, opens up another, baleful future: one of divine *turning away* (√*šwb* in vv. 10b, 11b). If David's sons do *not* keep Yhwh's covenant, then they will *not* sit on David's throne. The prayer for the "face of your anointed" (*pĕnê-mĕšîḥekā*, v. 10b) is in earnest.[521]

The second and more suggestive datum in favor of an expansive interpretation of *kol-'unnôtô* is the dynamism of the psalm's middle stanza: there Yhwh's residence is not so much an established and meritorious fact but something that is still urged upon Yhwh (v. 8).[522] Also, the first cohortative verb of the middle stanza echoes the first verb of David's oath: the chorus exhorts itself to "go into" (√*bw'*) Yhwh's dwelling (v. 7a) —the alternative being perhaps that they would "go into" (√*bw'*) the tent of their own house like David (v. 3a). These features suggest that the protasis of David's oath is not necessarily already fulfilled—David and his lineage have *not* assiduously found a home for Yhwh; the condition of David's oath remains unsettled, an empty set, meaning that the unspecified future of the apodosis hangs in the balance as a real possibility. If the fidelity of David and his descendants to establish a place for Yhwh is up in the air, a matter for exhortation, so also is Yhwh's fidelity to David's line up in the air, and a matter for urgent prayer. The specter of divine reneging hangs over the psalm—and so, too, the afflictions of David, in prospect if not retrospect.[523] Haney altogether favors the latter interpretation, writing baldly: "the composer of the psalm is petitioning [Yhwh] for the house of David concerning a predicament

[521] So also Wilson: "It seems a bit disingenuous to believe that the readers of this psalm could not have seen the relationship of the condition expressed here to the judgment expressed in the Exile. The condition is essentially unlike that relayed in 2 Sam 7:14-16 where the Davidic descendant's 'wrongdoing' encounters punishment, not revocation of the covenant promises. Here continued rule is directly linked to keeping the covenant, a condition the monarchy patently failed to fulfill" (Wilson, "King, Messiah, and the Reign of God," 397n19).

[522] Though cf. v. 14a. On the meaning of the final stanza within the whole psalm, see the section on divine aggression in Psalm 132 below.

[523] Seow's comments are apropos: "The prayer may indicate a political crisis in which the Davidides appeared in danger of losing divine support" (*Myth, Drama, and the Politics of David's Dance, 154*).

in which the dynasty is humiliated (cf. [*ʿunnôtô*] in v. 1); the composer is also under the impression that *Yahweh is repudiating the dynasty*."[524]

Alongside the divine target of its rhetoric, however, Psalm 132 also envisions a human audience: its central stanza contains two cohortative verbs in v. 7. Its choral speakers urge their own membership should go up—virtually or otherwise—to Yhwh's abode. There is also the matter that the stanza's own rhetoric in some way mimes the action it evokes: vv. 9b and 16b both exhort (or declare) that the *ḥăsîdîm* "shout for joy" (√*rnn*) —a verbal action that the psalm itself effects. The psalm *is* the joyful shout. Perhaps, too, the self-clothing (√*lbš*) of the priests in righteousness in v. 9a is something to which recitation of the psalm itself contributes (on which more, see below). In the end, John Goldingay is correct to write that "throughout the psalm both Yhwh and the people are actually addressed, implicitly where this is not so explicitly."[525]

4.2.2.2. Divine Aggression in Psalm 132

The name Yhwh appears six times in Psalm 132, once in each stanza excepting the final one. Also, the divine title "Bull of Jacob" occurs twice in the first stanza.

Verb	Verse	Object(s)
zĕkōr, "remember!"	1b	David and his afflictions
qûmâ, "rise!"	8a	n/a
ʾal-tāšēb "do not turn away!"	10b	from the anointed
nišbaʿ, "he swore	11a	to David
lōʾ-yāšûb, "he will not turn"	11b	from his oath
ʾāšît, "I will place"	11c	an heir
ʾălammĕdēm, "I will teach them"	12b	Yhwh's testimony

[524] Haney, *Text and Concept*, 137; my emphasis. Cf. also Barbiero: "Responding to the accusations advanced in Psalm 89, Psalm 132 states that the downfall of the monarchy was not the result of God's being unfaithful to his promises but the consequence of the sins of the kings of Israel" ("Psalm 132," 258); also Berlin, "Psalm 132," 71; similarly, Wilson, "King, Messiah, and the Reign of God," 396-97.

[525] Goldingay, *Psalms*, 3:562. See also Rolf A. Jacobson, *Many Are Saying: The Function of Direct Discourse in the Hebrew Psalter*, JSOTSup 397 (London: T&T Clark, 2004), 100.

bāḥar, "he chose"	13a	Zion
'iwwāh, "he desired"	13b	Zion
'ēšēb, "I will dwell"	14b	
'iwwitîhā, "I desired it"	14b	Zion
bārēk 'ăbārēk, "I will richly bless"	15a	resources (of Zion)
'aśbîª', "I will satisfy"	15b	the poor (of Zion)
'albîš, "I will clothe"	16a	priests (of Zion)
'aṣmîªḥ, "I will flourish"	17a	David's horn
'āraktî, "I will set up"	17b	a lamp for the anointed
'albîš, "I will clothe"	18a	enemies with shame

Psalm 132 features four verbs for which Yhwh is the third-person subject: *nišba'*, "he swore" (v. 11a), *lō'-yāšûb,* "he will not turn" (v. 11b), *bāḥar*, "he chose" (13a), and *'iwwāh*, "he desired" (v. 13b). Besides these, Yhwh is the first-person speaker and subject for 10 verbs, all of which occur in the second half of the psalm (vv. 11-18), most of which is Yhwh's own speech, apparently to David (*lĕdāwid*, v. 11a). Additionally, Yhwh is the addressee of three imperative verbs, also tabulated above: *zĕkōr*, "remember!" in v. 1b; *qûmâ*, "rise!" in v. 8a; and the negative injunction, *'al-tāšēb* "do not turn away!" in v. 10b.

Of these verbs, only one describes Yhwh's aggression: Yhwh promises in the final v. 18a, "His enemies I will clothe (*'albîš*) with shame." Only a few verses earlier, directly inverse to this closing promise, Yhwh said, "its [Zion's] priests I will clothe (*'albîš*) with salvation" (v. 16a). The form of √*lbš* is identical (1cs *hiphil* imperfect), and the clause structure of both verses runs parallel, with the recipient of Yhwh's action fronted (priests // enemies) and the material of Yhwh's clothing following (salvation // shame).[526]

Both of these mirrored divine actions, salvific and aggressive, occur in the final stanza of the psalm, vv. 13-18. In this poetic, unit, Yhwh speaks, but unlike both the prior direct speeches

[526] On this metaphor of "clothing" with salvation or shame, see Erik Peterson, "Theologie des Kleides," *Benediktinische Monatschrift* 16 (1934): 347-56; *TDOT* 7:462-63.

of the psalm, David in vv. 3-5 and Yhwh in 11b-12, Yhwh's oracle at the close of the psalm is entirely unconditional: Yhwh declares what he will do for Zion, where before he described what he would do *if* David's sons kept his covenant. Intriguingly, then, two of Yhwh's actions in the final stanza repeat what the choral voice earlier had urged: in clothing the priests of Zion with salvation and promising that its devoted ones would shout for joy, Yhwh promises to do that which the people call for in v. 9. The choral voice says to Yhwh, "let your priests clothe themselves with righteousness," employing the same verb that Yhwh does later (√*lbš*), and which exhorts that the devoted ones shout for joy. Yhwh's voice at the end of the psalm reassures, in effect, that he will do what the people pray for in an earlier stanza.

All of these data have implications for the identity of the enemies in v. 18a. It might be thought that the enemies are simply the opponents of Zion: the Ammonites, for example, or some other identifiable, real-life foe of Zion's prosperity.[527] But the psalm has made the identity of these enemies more porous: the aggressive action Yhwh promises (clothing with shame) reverses a positive action (clothing with salvation) *which the psalm itself exhorts* on its reciters (let your priests clothe themselves with righteousness). This suggests that refusal of the psalm's own rhetoric could result in enmity towards Yhwh: members of the choral voice could decide not shout for joy, or not to clothe themselves in righteousness. The earlier speeches of David and Yhwh both make the status of David's descendants conditional: Yhwh later promises to flourish David's horn (v. 17a), but the effect of the earlier conditional sentences lingers. So also, Yhwh later promises to clothe enemies with shame, but the effect of the earlier, unfinished exhortation to the priests lingers. Belonging to the *ḥăsîdîm* is a matter of decision rather than birth, and it seems the same

[527] All the scholars that propose an "early," monarchic date for Psalm 132 also suppose that the enemies are real and concrete, e.g., Hillers, "Ritual Procession of the Ark and Ps 132"; Antti Laato, "Psalm 132 and the Development of the Jerusalemite/Israelite Royal Ideology," *CBQ* 54 (1992): 49-66.

holds true of the psalm's enemies. Yhwh's disposition is constant, but the human actors in the psalm can opt into Yhwh's promise to flourish the rulers of Zion—or to cocoon the enemies of Zion with shame.

4.2.2.3. Conclusion.

Could Yhwh aggress against his own king and country in Psalm 132? Unlike Psalm 89, Psalm 132 does not *overtly* picture Yhwh's aggression against his king, nor against his people. In this regard, it seems more akin to some of the psalms from the previous chapter, which suggest but do not directly claim that even members of Yhwh's own country, *even* descendants of David, can become recipients of Yhwh's aggression if they refuse to honor Yhwh in the ways that each psalm calls for. However, a few characteristics theologically differentiate Psalm 132 from these psalms. First, if the interpretation proposed above for *kol-ʿunnôtô* is correct, it is an admission, though somewhat veiled, that David *has experienced troubles* resulting from disobedience to Yhwh. More specifically: at this point in v. 1b, Psalm 132 looks back on Yhwh's aggression—or if not quite aggression, then Yhwh's disfavor and turning away. The psalm prays for Yhwh not to turn away, but it also hints strongly that this may already have taken place.[528] Once more, in Haney's words, the psalm addresses a situation in which "Yahweh is repudiating the dynasty."[529]

But Haney's claim can be made even more pointedly: Yhwh is repudiating *David*—his individual, named king. The "afflictions" to which Psalm 132 certainly apply to the *dynasty* of David, and it is likely that Psalm 132, like Psalm 89, shows "Kollektivierende Züge"—

[528] Cf. Adele Berlin: "The message of Psalm 132 is that the hope for the restoration of the Davidic monarchy is fully justified because tradition, or more precisely, a certain postexilic understanding of that tradition, demanded it" ("Psalm 132," 71).

[529] Haney, *Text and Concept*, 137.

collectivizing traits.[530] Marttila argues, for example, that "your anointed" in v. 10b refers in the same way as "your devoted ones" in v. 9b to the collective people of Israel.[531] But in connection with the experience of affliction in v. 1b, the psalm keeps the singular persona of David in view; so, too, the prayer not to turn away in v. 10b applies most directly to an individual "anointed one" in parallel with the name David. Even if this persona includes the dynasty of David and the community that stands loyal to his name, at the most exegetical level, what distinguishes Psalm 132 from the royal psalms of chapter 3 is that it imagines divinely-wrought affliction having fallen upon the patron deity's favored king himself. That is: Psalm 132 does not exempt its individual named king from divine aggression. In this way, Psalm 132 is theologically more akin to Psalm 89 than to the psalms of the previous chapter—and theologically more distant from the memorial inscriptions of chapter 2.[532]

4.3. Chapter Conclusion: Divine Aggression in Royal Psalms of Defeat

The goal of the present chapter was to assess the presentation of divine aggression in two psalms, which the chapter introduction labeled as "royal psalms of defeat." Both Psalm 89 and Psalm 132 are like other royal psalms in that they focus intensively on the king; they also employ nonnarrative rhetorical strategies and address a dual audience. However, whereas in chapter 3, divine aggression was only ever a *future threat*, in Psalms 89 and 132, it is a *past reality*—a reality of defeat and damage to the Davidic monarchy.

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[530] Veijola, *Verheissung in der Krise*, 161; cf. Marttila, *Collective Reinterpretation of the Psalms*, 173-77; also André Caquot, "La prophétie de Nathan et ses échos lyriques," in *Congress Volume Bonn 1962*, ed. G.W. Anderson et al., VTSup 9 (Leiden: Brill, 1963), 213-24, here 223.

[531] Marttila, *Collective Reinterpretation of the Psalms*, 176; also Pietsch, *'Dieser ist der Sproß Davids*,' 136.

[532] *Pace* Hillers, who argues that "general parallels to most of the major elements of our psalm are found in Northwest Semitic dedicatory inscriptions, especially in steles erected by kings" ("Ritual Procession of the Ark and Ps 132," 55).

So also, in the royal psalms of chapter 3, the king himself is absolutely exempted from divine aggression. Not so in Psalms 89 and 132: Psalm 89 says expressly that Yhwh has "grown furious with [his] anointed" (v. 39b). Even if Yhwh's aggression applies to the king's insignia rather more than to the king's person himself, the psalm goes much further in articulating Yhwh's destructiveness towards his own named king than any of the preceding materials of this study. Psalm 132 offers a more oblique testimony to Yhwh's aggression against his own king: but the idea is nonetheless present, especially in the "afflictions" to which David was subject. In addition to the persona of the king himself, Psalms 89 and 132 both in their various ways, like the royal psalms of chapter 3, suggest that "damnation" can befall even Yhwh's own client dynasty and country if they violate the deity's will.

4.4. Comparing Royal Psalms and Inscriptions Again

The conclusion of chapter 3 returned to the guiding question of the present work, namely, the extent, if any, to which Yhwh's aggression appears unique in comparison with other patron deities of the Levant. It found that, at least in the royal psalms that most closely resemble the memorial inscriptions of Israel's ancient neighbors, Yhwh's aggression was not so *very* unique. A few psalms brooked no possibility of divine aggression against the client king or country (Psalms 2* and 110). But for the most part, like the inscriptions, the royal psalms of chapter 3 absolutely exempted the king from the deity's aggression—while allowing that some persons from the deity's client country could provoke the deity's disfavor by failing to heed the texts' rhetorical request.

The two psalms examined in the present chapter exhibit one key difference from the royal inscriptions and the other royal psalms of the present study. Although similar in many other regards, they do in fact convey the possibility of the deity Yhwh's aggression against his own

favored king. Indeed, they communicate not just the possibility, but *the past actuality* of Yhwh's aggression against the king. This is especially so in Psalm 89, and more suggestively or inferentially in Psalm 132. On this basis the chapter categorized these psalms as royal psalms of *defeat*.

In view of this exact quality, of thematizing divine aggression against the client king, the present chapter begins to touch upon the uniqueness of Yhwh's aggression. None of the patron gods of the royal inscriptions imperil the king whose voice they inscribe. At most, the Hadad Inscription envisions a possible future scenario in which the disobedience of king Pannamuwa's heirs puts them in danger—but not the speaking king Pannamuwa himself. *Yhwh alone, it seems, has acted destructively towards his own favored king*. This represents a departure indeed from the unconditional loyalty of a patron god for his individual favored king—or even the deity's parental love, if the picture of the Luwian inscriptions holds for other royal texts.

CHAPTER 5: DIVINE AGGRESSION IN PROPHETIC TEXTS OF DEFEAT

5.1. Defining the Body of Textual Evidence

The main goal of the present work is to interrogate the thesis that Yhwh's aggression is the *proprium* of the Hebrew Bible.[533] To take an accurate measure of this claim, chapter 2 calibrated Yhwh's alleged uniqueness by examining the profile of divine aggression in several memorial inscriptions from the Iron Age Levant. Chapter 3 compared the theology of these inscriptions with the texts from the Hebrew Bible that most closely resemble them: namely, select royal psalms. The psalms of chapter 3 *gainsay* Yhwh's uniqueness, since in them at least, Yhwh and the patron deities of Israel/Judah's ancient neighbors *largely mirror one another, theologically*. The client king remains absolutely exempted from divine aggression, and so, too, does the client country, considered as a whole, although in most of these psalms and inscriptions, individual members of the deity's client country can become recipients of divine aggression.

However, chapter 4 took a new direction: it found two royal psalms that share many other features with the royal psalms of chapter 3—but which differ in one crucial respect: where all the previous royal psalms exempted Yhwh's favored king from experiencing divine aggression, Psalms 89 and 132 reflect Yhwh's past aggression exactly *towards his own king*. The chapter thus identifies these texts as psalms of *defeat* because in them, a past event of divinely sponsored damage to the king comes to speech.

The present chapter takes a yet further step—*away* from the royal theology characteristic of both memorial inscriptions (chapter 2) and some royal psalms (chapter 3). This chapter samples from several other biblical texts—texts which witness to a divine aggression more on par with

[533] For this language of *proprium*, see Jörg Jeremias, "Das proprium der alttestamentlichen Prophetie," in *Hosea und Amos: Studien zu den Anfängen des Dodekapropheten*, FAT 13 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996), 20-33. On Yhwh's aggression as that proprium, especially à la oracles of unconditional judgment, see de Jong, "Biblical Prophecy—a Scribal Enterprise," as well as, *inter alia*, Kratz, "Chemosh's Wrath and Yahweh's No."

chapter 4; indeed, the present chapter is intended as a sort of *tertium comparationis*.[534] That is: this chapter briefly engages an additional, third data-set in order to set the claims of the prior and primary comparison (between royal psalms and inscriptions) in sharper relief. In consequence, the present chapter remains short and suggestive: its purpose is not to construct a fully-fledged third term but to make targeted exegetical observations about divine aggression relative to chapter 4 of the present study.

The criteria of selection remain much the same as for the foregoing chapters. For the sake of control, these texts, too, like the royal inscriptions and royal psalms, exhibit a focus on the king; they are also short and non-narrative.[535] Although for the most part these prophetic texts address a human audience, they also at times directly address the deity Yhwh;[536] their discourse may additionally intend Yhwh as a listener even when he is not directly invoked—"God not only hears but overhears human address and in both cases these function as address to the deity."[537] In this way, like the previously examined psalms and inscriptions, the audience of these texts is dual, human and divine. They furthermore evoke an event or events of *defeat*, which, though oftentimes temporally *future* relative to the speaker's address, are so definite that suffix-conjugation verbs describe them.[538] The significance of verb aspect and temporality for the rendering of divine aggression in this body of defeat poetry receives further comment in the conclusion of the chapter.

[534] On the *tertium comparationis*, see Strawn, "Comparative Approaches," 128-29.

[535] Once more on the value of (relative) propinquity for comparison, see Shemaryahu Talmon, "The 'Comparative' Method."

[536] On the rhetoric of prophetic texts and especially oracles of judgment, see Dale Patrick, "Prophecy of Judgment," in *The Rhetoric of Revelation in the Hebrew Bible*, OBT (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999), 119-61.

[537] Mark J. Boda, "A Deafening Call to Silence: The Rhetorical 'End' of Human Address to the Deity in the Book of the Twelve," in *The Book of the Twelve and the New Form Criticism*, ed. Mark J. Boda, Michael H. Floyd, and Colin M. Toffelmire, ANEM 10 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2015), 183-204, here 184.

[538] See *GKC* §106n; also George L. Klein, "The Prophetic Perfect," *JNSL* 16 (1990): 45-60, and now, exhaustively, Daniel E. Carver, "A Reconsideration of the Prophetic Perfect in Biblical Hebrew," Ph.D. diss., Catholic University of America, 2017.

In the terms of the present project's two main and paradigmatic interlocutors, Wellhausen and Eichrodt, the texts of the present chapter display a theology that matches the deuteronomistic heart of the Hebrew Bible.[539] If Psalms 2 and 110 were for Eichrodt outliers to the otherwise consistent biblical message that the "possibility of annulment" hung primordially over Yhwh's relationship to Israel,[540] the prophet *Hosea* was the faithful, indeed archetypical, exponent of the Hebrew Bible's characteristic theology. Eichrodt argued that the institution of the monarchy always and innately tended to secure itself and to abrogate the doctrine of God's judgment: an act of "insolent self-sufficiency in the face of God's claim to absolute [that is to say: conditional, free] lordship [that] changed the monarchy from a blessing into a curse on the nation."[541] In Hosea on the other hand, "Yahwism voic[ed] its fundamental convictions."[542] Hosea more than any other writing in the Hebrew Bible articulates Yhwh's freedom—including his freedom to aggress against his own king and country. Eichrodt writes that "[t]he most thoroughgoing controversy with the monarchy is found in Hosea."[543]

Wellhausen similarly sees in Hosea a voice lifting up the "paradoxical thought—as if the national God were to cut the ground from under his feet!"[544] Wellhausen's famous article on "Israel" gives major credit to the prophet Amos, to whom Wellhausen attributes the epoch-making theological innovation: "Amos was the founder, and the purest type, of a new phase of

[539] For one proposal concerning the relationship between prophecy and Deuteronomy, see Konstantin Zobel, *Prophetie und Deuteronomium: die Rezeption prophetischer Theologie durch das Deuteronomium*, BZAW 199 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1992). But see also now Jacob Wöhrle, "'No Future for the Proud Exultant Ones': The Exilic Book of the Four Prophets (Hos., Am., Mic., Zeph.) as a Concept Opposed to the Deuteronomistic History," *VT* 58 (2008): 608-27.

[540] Eichrodt, *TOT* 1:457.

[541] Ibid., 1:450.

[542] Ibid., 1:451.

[543] Ibid., 1:449.

[544] Wellhausen, "Israel," published with *Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel*, 471.

prophecy"—a kind of prophecy marked exactly by Yhwh's *wrath* against his own people.[545] Amos may have innovated, but Hosea was on the same page:

> The canonical prophets, the series of whom begins with Amos, were separated by an essential distinction from the class which had preceded them and which still continued to be the type of common prophet [i.e., the court prophets]. They did not seek to kindle either the enthusiasm or the fanaticism of the multitude; they swam not with but against the stream. They were not patriotic, at least in the ordinary acceptation of that word; they prophesied not good but evil for their people (Jer. xxviii 8).[546]

That evil that they prophesied for their people, as will be seen, also included the king; most importantly for the purpose of the present project, that evil was *ordained by the patron deity Yhwh*. In other words, in these examples of (prophetic) defeat poetry, as in Psalms 89 and 132, Yhwh's aggression befalls his very own king.

5.2. Rhetoric and Deity Profile

The present chapter keeps the same procedure as in preceding chapters: its focus remains theological, in that it seeks to draw up a profile of deity, and most especially to characterize divine aggression. Its method remains rhetorical-literary: it examines the structure and rhetoric of the text-units in question and makes observations about its key verbs. Because the present chapter intends only to amplify and augment the prior comparison of psalms and inscriptions—and because the text-units it examines are briefer than many of those featured in earlier chapters—treatment of these structural and verbal issues is even more condensed in the present chapter.

5.2.1. Selections from Hosea

[545] Ibid.: "In wrath, in ruin, this holy reality makes its existence known" (472). Cf. Clifford, "Amos in Wellhausen's Prolegomena."

[546] Ibid., 473.

Peter Machinist, in his important chapter on kingship in Hosea, lists fourteen passages that touch upon Yhwh's client king.[547] They are enumerated below much as in his presentation, except that what follows comments on only *nine* passages from Hosea: namely, the texts that evoke divine aggression against the king.[548]

5.2.1.1. Hosea 1:4-5

> 4. Yhwh said to me, "Name him Jezreel, for in a little while I will visit the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu and I will put an end to the kingship of the house of Israel."
> 5. On that day I will break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel.

These verses comprise the second unit of Hosea's opening prophecy—"when Yhwh first spoke to Hosea" (v. 1:2a).[549] The "him" of v. 4a refers back to the son of v. 3b whom Gomer bore to Hosea. The first part of Yhwh's speech in v. 4b identifies a somewhat local incident deserving of a very targeted divine aggression: "the blood of Jezreel" evidently names an illegitimate act of

[547] Peter Machinist, "Hosea and the Ambiguity of Kingship in Ancient Israel," in *Constituting the Community Studies on the Polity of Ancient Israel in Honor of S. Dean McBride, Jr*., ed. John T. Strong and Steven S. Tuell (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2005), 153-81. Cf. the list of biblical passages in Anthony Gelston, "Kingship in the Book of Hosea," in *Language and Meaning: Studies in Hebrew Language and Biblical Exegesis*, ed. A.S. Van der Woude, OTS 19 (Leiden: Brill, 1974), 71-85, as well as the recent treatment of so-called "antimonarchic" Hosea texts in James M. Bos, *Reconsidering the Date and Provenance of the Book of Hosea: The Case for Persian-Period Yehud*, LHBOTS 580 (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2013), 35-69; also Adam Mackerle, "Monarchy in the Preexilic Prophets," 232-34, and James Luther Mays, *Hosea: A Commentary*, OTL (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1969), 178.

[548] Cf. André Caquot, "Osée et la Royauté," *RHPR* 41 (1961): 123-46; Ansgar Moenikes, "The Rejection of the Cult and Politics by Hosea," *Henoch* 19 (1997): 3-15; Frank Crüsemann, *Der Widerstand gegen das Königtum: die antikönigliche Texte des Alten Testaments und der Kampf um den frühen israelitischen Staat*, WMANT 49 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1978), 85-94; James M. Bos, "The Anti-Monarchical Ideology of the Book of Hosea as Evidence for a Persian-Period Date of Composition and Judahite Provenance," in *Reconsidering the Date and Provenance of the Book of Hosea*, 35-69; Martin Leuenberger, "Herrschaftsverheißungen im Zwölfprophetenbuch: Ein Beitrag zu seiner thematischen Kohärenz und Anlage," in *Prophetische Heils- und Herrschererwartungen*, ed. Konrad Schmid, SBS 194 (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 2005), 75-111, here 85-87; and Paul L. Redditt, "The King in Haggai—Zechariah 1-8—and the Book of the Twelve," in *Tradition in Transition: Haggai and Zechariah 1-8 in the Trajectory of Hebrew Theology*, ed. Mark Boda and Michael Floyd, LHBOTS 475 (New York: T&T Clark, 2008), 56-82, here 63-65. See also Izabela Jaruzelska, "The King and Officials according to Hosea," *Poznańskie Studia Teologiczne* 10 (2001): 13-20.

[549] On the structure of this chapter, see James D. Nogalski, *The Book of the Twelve, Hosea-Jonah*, Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary (Macon: Smyth & Helwys, 2011), 38; also Gale Yee, *Composition and Tradition in the Book of Hosea: A Redaction-Critical Investigation*, SBLDS 102 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987), 51-95.

violence perpetrated by the dynasty of Jehu, which Yhwh promises to repay.[550] However, the second part of Yhwh's speech in v. 4 escalates: Yhwh promises literally to "stop" (√*šbt* in *hiphil*) the kingship (*mamlĕkût*) of the house of Israel. In v. 5 Yhwh pledges to destroy (√*šbr*) Israel's military power—in the place where the illegitimate violence earlier took place.[551] All the finite verbs of this unit are in "prophetic perfect": they assume the form of a suffix-conjugation, but their meaning is apparently future.[552]

5.2.1.2. Hosea 3:4

> For the sons of Israel will dwell many days without a king and without a prince and without sacrifice and without pillar, without ephod or *teraphim*.

The prophecy of which this verse is a part runs from 3:1-3:5. In it, Yhwh commands Hosea to love an adulteress just as Yhwh loves the people of Israel. Hosea then buys a woman and, in a directly quoted speech, orders her to remain (√*yšb*) without sexual intercourse for *yāmîm rabbîm*—"many days" (2:3). The explanation for Hosea's command in v. 4—which is a continuation of Hosea's speech to her, or more likely an aside to the reader—returns to the *analogans*: the sons of Israel must likewise remain (√*yšb*) without a king, and without any other mediatory institution, either.[553] The following v. 5 claims that after this period of deprivation, the sons of Israel will turn (√*šwb*) and seek Yhwh and David their king. The main point remains clear, however: Yhwh himself, the patron deity, calls for an abstention from kingship, as well as from other cultic

[550] Most commentators agree that the event is the same that 2 King 10 narrates (Nogalski, *The Book of the Twelve*, 40).

[551] Terence E. Fretheim calls this "poetic justice," and also observes that "God engages in violence in order to 'break the bow,' so that Israel will no more participate in violence" (*Reading Hosea-Micah: A Literary and Theological Commentary*, Reading the Old Testament [Macon: Smyth & Helwys, 2013], 22-23). Cf. Patrick D. Miller, Jr., *Sin and Judgment in the Prophets: A Stylistic and Theological Analysis*, SBLMS 27 (Chico: Scholars Press, 1982). Yee observes that the verb of v. 5 creates a "parasonantic pun" with √*šbt* in v. 4b (*Composition and Tradition*, 65).

[552] See n538 above.

[553] The verb √*yšb* is here in prefix-conjugation.

practices.[554]

5.2.1.3. Hosea 5:1-2

1. Hear this, o priests
Give heed, o house of Israel
O house of the king, give ear
for yours is the judgment

For a snare you have been at Mizpah and a net spread out on Tabor
2. A pit they dug deep at Shittim, but I myself will be a discipline for all of them.

These two verses constitute a short but relatively self-standing oracle, the first in a series that ends in chapter 7. The speaking voice is Yhwh, in spite of the lack of an introduction. Yhwh addresses the priests, Israel, and the "house of the king"—a rather comprehensive group of leaders. Nonetheless, the "house of the king" or royal dynasty is part of those to whom judgment belongs. As scholars have noted, there is a double entendre with *hammišpāṭ* in v. 1b: *justice* is the responsibility of these leaders, but because of their noncompliance, *judgment* in the sense of punishment will become theirs.[555] Verse 2b also articulates a consequence, though more pedagogically (*mûśār*), and more actively stated, with Yhwh as the "I myself" (*wa'ănî*).[556]

5.2.1.4. Hosea 5:10

The princes of Judah have become like those who move the boundary / upon them I will pour out my wrath like water.

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[554] Whether this abstention is temporary or permanent is besides the present point. Gelston observes that "both the wilderness experience of ch ii and the 'many days' of iii 4 denote a period of exile, when the national institutions will naturally be in abeyance (cf. ix 3, 15, 17). On the other hand, it is likely that Hosea disapproved without qualification of the last three institutions listed in iii 4: pillar, ephod, and teraphim…it is [possible] that Hosea rejects the institution of kings and princes outright, but the verse in itself requires no more than a temporary deprivation" ("Kingship," 76).

[555] Bos, *Reconsidering the Date of Hosea*, 83n55.

[556] On the "*mûśār* theology of YHWH as chastiser," see Yee, *Composition and Tradition*, 171; also eadem, 148-49.

This verse occurs in a longer series of judgment oracles, the same that begins in 5:1.[557] Yhwh is the speaker. Excepting 5:1, 5:10 is the only verse in this unit that specifically singles out the *leaders* of either the north or the south for judgment. Here a moral infraction is ascribed to the princes of Judah, because of which Yhwh pledges to release wrath upon them. The verb evoking aggression (*√špk*) is in prefix-conjugation, i.e., imperfective.

5.2.1.5. Hosea 6:11b-7:7

11b. When I would restore my people;

7:1. when I would heal Israel
and the iniquity of Ephraim will be revealed
and the wicked deeds of Samaria, for they deal falsely; the thief enters; marauders raid outside.
7:2. They do not consider in their hearts that I remember all their wickedness
now their deeds surround them, they are before my face.
7:3. By their wickedness they rejoice the king
and by their deception, princes.
7:4. All of them are adulterers
they are like a blazing oven
whose baker ceases to stoke from kneading the dough until it is leavened.[558]
7:5. By day, they made our king sick, the princes, with the heat of wine. He stretched forth his hand with babblers.
7:6. For they approached like an oven, their heart with intrigue
All night long their anger sleeps
in the morning it blazed like a flaming fire.
7:7. All of them became hot like an oven and they eat their judges
all of their kings have fallen.
There is no one among them who calls on me.

The meaning of several verses in this unit remains obscure (vv. 4-6 especially). But the overall impact is clear enough: Yhwh, speaking in first-person, condemns the wickedness of his people. His words also suggest a connection between their iniquity and its result—Yhwh himself does not overtly aggress but observes the effects of the people's sin to them. The downfall of their

[557] Eadem, 114.
[558] Following Yee's translation (*Composition and Tradition*, 180).

kings is not so much directly prosecuted by Yhwh as it is a consequence of the people's own fiery appetite: a consequence that Yhwh guarantees. In Patrick Miller's words, "[e]ven in cases where no divine initiative is indicated one may assume that God is seen as the one who brings about the consequence."[559] So it is in this unit that Yhwh's memory (7:2) initiates and undergirds the events of defeat and destruction that follow.

5.2.1.6. Hosea 8:4

They made kings but not from me
they made princes but I did not know
With their silver and their gold they made idols for themselves
so that it will be cut off.

This verse appears in the unit 8:1-14, in which Yhwh in first-person voice also criticizes the calf cult (v. 5a directly following, as well as v. 6b) and pronounces judgment. Many interpreters understand v. 4 as referring to the institution of kingship *per se*, especially in view of 13:11. But the making of kings in 8:4 could just as easily take an iterative as an inaugural sense, referring to the series of short-lived northern dynasties narrated by 1-2 Kings. Regardless, the creation of idols and the making of kings are closely correlated; Hans Walter Wolff writes, "[j]ust as the kings are established by men [sic], without Yahweh, so the idols are fabricated by men [sic]."[560] The subject of MT's singular *yikkārēt*, "it will be cut off," is uncertain, and OG features a plural (ἐξολεθρευθῶσιν) to ensure that "idols" are understood as the antecedent. For the purpose of assessing the profile of divine aggression, it suffices to see that these actions—making kings and making idols—result in divinely-willed destruction.

5.2.1.7. Hosea 10:7-8a

[559] Miller, *Sin and Judgment in the Prophets*, 132; on Hosea, ibid., 7-20.
[560] Hans Walter Wolff, *Hosea: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Hosea*, trans. Gary Stansell, ed. Paul D. Hanson, Hermeneia (Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 1974), 139.

7. Samariah's king shall be cut off
like a chip on the face of the waters
8a. The high places of Awen, the sin of Israel, will be destroyed.

In these verses, the prophetic character speaks and predicts the death of Samariah's king. The text does not name Yhwh as the prosecutor of this destruction, but he is the hidden guarantor of this relationship: idolatry results in national, including royal, annihilation. The verbs here are in "prophetic perfect."

5.2.1.8. Hosea 10:13b-15

13b. Because you trusted in your own policy[561] and in the multitude of your warriors
14. tumult (of war) shall rise against your people
and all your fortresses shall be destroyed.
As Shalman destroyed Beth-arbel on the day of battle, a mother with her children, was dashed in pieces,
15. So he [Yhwh] shall do to you, O Bethel, because of your great wickedness.
At dawn the king of Israel shall be cut off.

In this passage, as in Hosea 7:7b or 10:7a, the destruction of the king is collateral damage: the main drama obtains between Yhwh and, in this, case, the city of Bethel, and presumably their leadership class that might have been responsible for "policy" (*derek*) and would have had "warriors" (*gibbōr*) at their disposal (v. 13b). The prophetic voice pronounces what Yhwh will do (√'*śh*).[562] Yhwh is not directly responsible for the destruction of the king, but his dashing of Bethel on account of their wickedness catches up the king as well.

5.2.1.9. Hosea 13:9-11

9. Your destruction, O Israel, is indeed by me, your helper.[563]

[561] Following Andrew A. Macintosh's translation of *derek* (*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Hosea*, ICC [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997], 425).

[562] √'*śh* is here in "prophetic perfect," as with √*dmh* in v. 15.

[563] This translation follows Bos and Macintosh (Bos, *Reconsidering the Date*, 48).

10. Where now is your king, that he may save you in all your cities? And your rulers, of whom you said, "Give me a king and rulers"?
11. I gave you a king in my anger, and I took him away in my wrath.[564]

This is perhaps the most famous of the "antimonarchic" texts in Hosea, and most scholars take it as an allusion to 1 Samuel 8.[565] In these verses, Yhwh directly addresses Israel. As Bos writes, "the one who should and could be Israel's help is the one actually destroying them."[566] Yhwh takes full credit for Israel's destruction—but he also and more to the point removes (√*lqḥ*) their king, whose establishment is in this text the occasion for divine anger.[567]

5.2.2. Divine Aggression in Hosea

Much has been written about the profile of Yhwh in the book of Hosea.[568] But the question of the present chapter is more targeted: could Yhwh in Hosea "damn Israel," and could he even damn his own favored king?

The answer that the above passages yield up is a rather unqualified *yes*: Yhwh *would* damn his own country, and quite explicitly: "your destruction is indeed by me" (13:9a). So, too, does Yhwh damn his own king. In some texts, Yhwh promises to aggress directly against the king, e.g., 1:4b, 13:11. In other texts, the downfall of Israel's king is described more passively: so, for example. in 8:4b, a *niphal* (passive) of the verb √*krt*, "to cut" occurs, and a *niphal* of √*dmh*, "to

[564] Gelston, following Rudolph Wolff, suggests an iterative sense, in view of the serial revolutions and replacements in the 8th c.: "I keep giving you / and taking him away" ("Kingship," 84).

[565] Machinist, "Ambiguity of Kingship," 49; Nogalski, *The Book of the Twelve*, 183; Bos, *Reconsidering the Date*, 49.

[566] Bos, *Reconsidering the Date*, 49.

[567] According to another possible interpretation, the verb of Yhwh's promise in v. 9a to destroy (√*šḥt*) is not a participle as in my translation above ("your destruction") but a finite verb in "prophetic perfect" (suffix-conjugation); the verbs of v. 11 are both in prefix-conjugation. Carver thus lists Hos 13:9 as a "potential example" of an "irrealis SC [suffix-conjugation]" ("A Reconsideration of the Prophetic Perfect," 225); "[i]rrealis situations can refer to a vast number of possible, potential, or alternative situations that may or may not ever exist in reality" (ibid., 9).

[568] See especially the papers presented at the 2007 Israelite Prophetic Literature Section on the characterization of God in the book of Hosea, later published as issue 30 of *HBT* and including Walter Brueggemann, "The Recovering God of Hosea," *HBT* 30 (2008): 5-20, esp. 9-10; and Ehud Ben Zvi, "Reading Hosea and Imagining YHWH," *HBT* 30 (2008): 43-57.

ruin," features in both 10:7a and 10:15b with the king as its subject—or again, in 7:7, the kings "have fallen" (√*npl*). In these places, the rhetorical point is to associate the sin of the people with its consequence and not to highlight Yhwh's active retribution.

The king himself is not the focal point of these Hosea texts, and nor is Yhwh's aggression against him. Instead, the king is oftentimes one institution set among the other offices of Israel, collocated with sacrifice, pillar, ephod and *teraphim* (3:4), priests (5:1), judges (7:7) and rulers (13:9). Sometimes these texts charge the whole leadership class (including the king) with corruption that then results in their destruction (5:1, 2; 5:10; 6:11b-7:7); the purpose of referring to the king in these places is to identify him as an agent of injustice. At other times, the purpose of referring to the king seems not to be to accuse him (or his office) of wrongdoing—but to specify an aspect of divine judgment: by taking away the king, Yhwh takes away something dear to the people. This is the force of 3:4 and 10:13b-15. Hosea 8:4 and 13:9-11 appear to address a different issue: the very establishment of kingship was itself the iniquity whose consequence is abolition of kingship. In all of the above cases, however, there is one thing in common: the king suffers Yhwh's aggression. He is not exempt from Yhwh's wrath and punishment.

5.2.3. Divine Aggression in Other "Eighth-Century Prophets"

Hosea is the preexilic minor prophet that is most voluble on the topic of kingship. The other "eighth-century prophets"[569] offer little data for profiling Yhwh's aggression relative to his client king; Jakob Wöhrle even speaks of a "Königschweigen" characteristic of the so-called Book of

[569] On the meaning of this phrase (and the quotation marks around it), see Mackerle: "I am referring here to the explicit statement at the beginning of the book of Hosea, Amos, Micah, and Zephaniah. They are said to contain the 'word(s)' of a prophet from the time of the Israelite and Judahite kingdoms" ("Monarchy in Preexilic Minor Prophets," 231). That is to say, the present chapter makes no judgment about whether or not the texts in question represent, in part or in whole, authentic products of the 8th c. BCE. They purport to.

the Four (Hosea, Amos, Micah, and Zephaniah).[570] Adam Mackerle identifies two negative statements about the Israelite kingdom in Amos: in the story of Amos confronting the priest Amaziah, Amos prophecies against the individual king, Jereboam (7:9, 11). Later in 9:8, the prophet says that Yhwh's eyes are on the "sinful kingdom," which he will destroy.[571] Zephaniah mentions the word "king" once, in a construct chain (1:8) inset within an oracle of doom; Yhwh promises there to punish the officials and king's sons on the day of Yhwh. Zephaniah 3:1-4 pronounces a woe upon the entire leadership class, including officials, rulers, prophets, and priests. In these texts as in several from Hosea, the king belongs to a larger group and a larger crisis: he is caught up either in the iniquity of other leaders or in the divinely-effected destruction befalling the whole nation—if not both! The book of Micah demonstrates these same themes.

5.2.3.1. Micah 3:1-4

1. I said
Listen, oh heads of Jacob
and rulers of the house of Israel
Is it not for you to know justice?
2. Haters of good and lovers of evil,
pluckers of their skin from off of them and their flesh from off their bones?
3. Who ate the flesh of my people; and they stripped their flesh from off their bones; and they spread them out as in a pot, and as meat in the midst of a cauldron.
4. Then they will cry out to Yhwh
but he will not answer them
He will hide his face from them at that time,
just as they made their deeds evil.

The Masoretic *parashah* groups Micah 3:1-8 as a unit. In this text, the prophetic character speaks, addressing the "heads" of Jacob (cf. also 3:9). This term (*rō'š*) can describe judicial as well

[570] Wöhrle makes the following very intriguing observation: "It could be said that the exilic Book of the Four reacts to the 'Prophetenschweigen' of DtrH with a 'Königsschweigen' ("silence about kings"")" ("'No Future for the Proud Exultant Ones,'" 624).

[571] Mackerle, "Monarchy in Preexilic Prophets," 230-31.

as military leaders.[572] It does not straightforwardly indicate a royal figure, although several prior works on kingship in Micah consider its occurrence in 3:1 relevant to the subject.[573] Micah condemns the entire leadership class; "[a]ll of them are convicted of abusing their office and authority for private benefit."[574] Yhwh responds by withholding his favor. A prefix-conjugation verb describes Yhwh's refusal to answer in v. 4b (*wĕlō' ya'ăneh*), matching the timestamp of the *'āz* in v. 4a.

5.2.3.2. Micah 3:9-12

9. Listen to this, o heads of the house of Jacob
and rulers of the house of Israel
The ones who abhor justice
and all equity, they pervert
10. Who build Zion with bloodshed
and Jerusalem with iniquity
11. Her heads administer justice for a bribe
her priests teach for hire
And her prophets divine for silver
but on Yhwh they lean, saying
"Is not Yhwh in our midst?
evil will not come upon us. "
12. Therefore because of you, Zion will be ploughed like a field
And Jerusalem will become heaps
and the mountain of the house like high places of a forest.

The Masoretes organized 3:9-12 as a separate unit; it relates closely to the oracle preceding, however. Here, too, the prophetic persona lambastes the leaders of Israel and Jerusalem for corruption. Verse 11 adds the charge of false piety to their sin of profiteering. The consequence of their iniquity is the ruination of Zion and its de-creation. The oracle does not specify that Yhwh

[572] J.R. Bartlett, "The Use of the Term *rō'š* as a Title in the Old Testament," *VT* 19 (1969): 1-10.

[573] Mark E. Biddle, "Dominion Comes to Jerusalem: An Examination of Developments in the Kingship and Zion Traditions as Reflected in the Book of the Twelve with Particular Attention to Micah 4-5," in *Perspectives on the Formation of the Book of the Twelve: Methodological Foundations—Redactional Processes—Historical Insights*, ed. Rainer Albertz, James Nogalski, and Jakob Wöhrle, BZAW 433 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2012), 253-67, here 255; Redditt, "The King in Haggai," 67; Mackerle, "Monarchy in the Preexilic Prophets," 231.

[574] Ibid.

guarantees this act-consequence relationship, but his supervision is implicit in the contrast with v. 11: Yhwh is, in fact, *not* in their midst, with the result that evil comes upon them with amplitude. The verbs denoting judgment in v. 12 (√*ḥrš*, *hyh*) are both in prefix-conjugation.

5.2.3.3. Micah 4:9, 14

> 9. Now, why are you shouting vehemently? Is there not a king within you?
> Or has your counselor perished, that agony has gripped you like a woman in childbirth?
>
> 14b. Now, you are gashing yourselves (√*gdd*), oh daughter of gashing (*gĕdûd*)!
> Siege is laid against us
> with a rod they will strike upon the cheek the ruler (*šōpēṭ*) of Israel.

Verse 9 belongs to an oracle extending from 4:9-14 (MT verse 14 = English 5:1). In it, the prophetic character speaks and addresses the daughter of Zion (4:10b); oracles of judgment prepare for promises of salvation.[575] Yhwh also taunts Zion: Mark Biddle writes that "if v. 14 alludes to the deposition of a Jerusalemite king, the question of v. 9 may function as a taunt: 'O, you poor thing, you have lost your king, haven't you?'"[576] Indeed, in both vv. 9 and 14, the people's anguish appears to derive from the downfall of their king.[577] But in Yhwh's speech, the powerlessness or absence of the king is a foil for Yhwh's own capacity to save. Yhwh's plan to exile his people and to allow his king to be struck (√*nkh*) in v. 14b is difficult to discern: other nations "do not divine [Yhwh's] intent" (4:12b), because it is *paradoxical* for a patron god to behave in this manner.[578]

5.2.4. Conclusion

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[575] *'attâ*, "now," introduces 4:9, 4:11, as well as 4:14 (ET 5:1), apparently linking these oracles into a larger whole (James Luther Mays, *Micah: A Commentary*, OTL [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976], 107).

[576] Biddle, "Dominion Comes to Jerusalem," 256.

[577] Mays writes of ET 5:1: "The king in his faithfulness or failure creates the destiny of the people in the way he fulfills his office…Where the divinely chosen king is absent, the community lacks a concrete historical centre and social structure for actualizing their life within God's sovereignty. That crisis is behind the call to self-mutilation in v. 1"—as well as the taunt in v. 9, we might add (*Micah*, 112).

[578] Note again Wellhausen: "a paradoxical thought—as if the national God were to cut the ground out from under His own feet!" (*Prolegomena*, 471).

In Micah as in the other "eighth-century prophets," a prophetic character voices messages from Yhwh to the entire community of Israel and/or Judah—the people of Yhwh. In the texts examined in the present chapter, Yhwh announces doom upon his client country. Micah 3:1 promises that Yhwh will hide his face from the predatory rulers of Israel; 3:12 pledges that Zion will be reduced to rubble; and 4:9 anticipates a siege. In all these cases, Israel's rulers are, as it were, included among the recipients of a far more encompassing divine judgment. As leaders, they bore some responsibility for the disaster—but Yhwh does not aggress against his client king solely or especially. Nonetheless, far from being exempted from divine aggression, these rulers, too, experience Yhwh's abandonment and destructive power, along with the whole nation.

In sum, Hosea, Micah, and the other "eighth-century prophets" share at least this much in common with reference to divine aggression: in their oracles, Yhwh *does* damn his own king and country—with emphasis on the latter. The patron god's destructiveness towards his king is not foregrounded or made a matter of special concern; it usually functions as part of a much wider event of divine judgment. Sometimes the downfall of the king even serves to exacerbate the *people's* loss: *they* are the focal point of Yhwh's speech, and his removal of the king is a weapon from the divine rhetorical arsenal that is mobilized against the populace.

With regard to the temporality of divine aggression in poetic defeat texts, it bears some illuminating similarities with the defeat texts of the chapter 4. From the perspective of the speaking, prophetic persona, voicing the oracles of each prophetic book, the event (or events) of defeat that Yhwh announces are *yet future*. The prophet *predicts* the annihilation of Israel, Judah, Jerusalem—and the king. So certain were these events that, as the present chapter noted, suffix-conjugation verbs oftentimes describe them: the so-called "prophetic perfect."[579] In this matter,

[579] Klein, "The Prophetic Perfect"; Carver, "A Reconsideration of the Prophetic Perfect in Biblical Hebrew."

the divine aggression of these prophetic texts *contrasts* with that of the royal psalms examined in chapter 3. Yhwh's aggression in these psalms was future from the vantage point of the speaking voice—but conditional. The hearers or readers of the psalm could, by complying with its rhetoric, nominate for themselves a future of divine benevolence. It is not clear that the prophetic oracles of the present chapter similarly include a possibility that the repentance of their hearers might forestall the devastations they depict. The prophetic texts seem to give little to no program for changing course.[580] Divine aggression, though future, is definite and fixed.

In the fixity of the divine aggression they evoke, the prophetic texts more closely resemble the royal psalms examined in chapter 4. In Psalm 89 and 132, the event of defeat is definite and irreversible, because it is *past*: divine aggression appears already to have taken place. These two psalms make an appeal to Yhwh: they look to the past of divine aggression so as to motivate Yhwh to act—to *remember* (Psalm 89:48, 51) and to *arise* (Psalm 132:8a) in the present. The fixed and certain divine aggression of the prophetic texts examined in this chapter serves a different rhetorical purpose. These do not make a request of Yhwh—at least not very directly or overtly.[581] Nor do they obviously seek to mobilize their human readership, although the terrors they describe may implicitly galvanize readers to turn from injustice and idolatry. But they do work in concert with the salvation oracles that follow them in the characteristic arc of the prophetic books.[582] What this means for the rhetorical function of divine aggression in the "eighth-century prophets" is that it, too, occurs in the *past*—the past relative to the salvation that each prophet also announces.

[580] See also Dale Patrick, "Prophecy of Judgment."

[581] See again Boda, "A Deafening Call to Silence," 184.

[582] Cf. Ronald E. Clements in his classic essay, "Patterns in the Prophetic Canon": "[The prophetic] message concerned the destruction and restoration of Israel, but special emphasis was attached to the latter. This was because this restoration was still looked for in the future, while the destruction was believed to have already taken place" (in *Canon and Authority: Essays in Old Testament Religion and Theology*, ed. George W. Coats and Burke O. Long (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977), 42-55, here 45. See also Donald E. Gowan, *Theology of the Prophetic Books: The Death and Resurrection of Israel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1998).

Doom, that is, always precedes salvation in the canonical presentation of prophetic books. More than that: the rhetoric of the prophetic books looks to the past of divine aggression to articulate its future of divinely-promised flourishing. In this way, divine aggression plays a parallel role as it does in the rhetoric of Psalms 89 and 110: in the minor prophets, too, divine aggression is an anchor and a prelude to a second act of future, hoped-for divine salvation. This observation holds even though the doom that the prophetic persona voices is, as noted, future within the "world of the lyric": if doom is in some sense future, though definite and fixed, then salvation remains *yet more future*.

It may also be the case, as some scholars allege, that prophetic announcements of catastrophe should be regarded as already fulfilled in spite of their futurity within world of the poetry. On this line of thinking, minor prophets "pretend" to predict doom, even though the readers of such literature "see through" the fiction and know that the predicted events have already taken place. Like Akkadian literary predictive prophecy, divine aggression would function in this interpretation as a guarantee for the truly predictive scenarios of restoration and flourishing the prophets envision.[583] Ehud Ben Zvi writes that

> these books tended to include fulfilled prophecies (usually of doom) as well as unfulfilled prophecies of a great future for the community with which the intended readers…identified. Among other things, this combination served a clear rhetorical purpose, reassuring readers (and hearers) that just as prophecies of doom were fulfilled in the past, so the still unrealized prophecies of salvation will also be fulfilled in the future.[584]

According to this interpretation of prophetic rhetoric, the fixity of the doom predictions in prophetic books reflects their *actual* past-ness. They happened—and as such, they act as an

[583] See Matthew Neujahr, "Royal Ideology and Utopian Futures in the Akkadian *ex eventu* Prophecies," in *Utopia and Dystopia in Prophetic Literature*, ed. Ehud Ben Zvi, PFES 92 (Helsinki: Finnish Exegetical Society; University of Helsinki, 2006), 41-54. See again de Jong, "Biblical Prophecy—a Scribal Enterprise."

[584] Ehud Ben Zvi, "Introduction: Writings, Speeches, and the Prophetic Books—Setting an Agenda," in *Writings and Speech in Israelite and Ancient Near Eastern Prophecy*, ed. Ehud Ben Zvi and Michael H. Floyd, SBLSS 10 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2000), 1-29, here 19.

experiential insurance for the predictions of salvation. Just as definitely as divine aggression was experienced in the lived past, so definitely, too, must divine benevolence arrive in the future.

Of course, the success of this interpretation is hard to gauge from a rhetorical-literary approach such as the present study pursues. From within the rhetoric of the prophetic texts, no indication exists that the predictions of doom are literarily future but in actuality past. But regardless the traction of the *ex eventu*, "literary predictive" reading of the biblical minor prophets, what this interpretation underscores for the present study is the importance of divine aggression in its relationship of antecedence to divine benevolence. Poetic texts of defeat share this temporal schema with the royal psalms of chapter 4. For them both, divine aggression is the crucial first act in their rhetorical appeal. It sets the stage: it reminds its participants, human and perhaps also divine, of the sufferings that must and ought to precede glory.[585]

5.3. Chapter Conclusion: Divine Aggression in the "Eighth-Century Prophets"

Chapter 4 of the present work began to touch upon the uniqueness of Yhwh's aggression. In Psalms 89 and 132, Yhwh aggressed against his own client king—something that seemed unthinkable within the rhetoric of the memorial inscriptions and royal psalms of chapters 2-3. Here in chapter 5, a sampling of prophetic oracles similarly demonstrates that many of these picture Yhwh acting destructively towards his own country and king. A few texts proceed even more radically: Hosea 13:9-11 appears to view the very institution and inauguration of kingship as an affront to Yhwh.

As such, the texts of the present chapter offer a useful *tertium comparationis*. They calibrate the theological profile of the memorial inscriptions and royal psalms, and they bring into

[585] Perhaps the prophetic texts are also like Psalm 89 and 132 in that they make a request, albeit obliquely, of Yhwh: appealing to the cost of aggression on its human recipients to motivate the deity to enact promised mercies.

sharper relief the distinctiveness of Yhwh's aggression within the characteristic view(s) of the Hebrew Bible. It seems that the notion of "God damning" his country is not utterly peculiar to the Bible, although it is peculiarly *developed*. In memorial inscriptions, patron gods threaten to destroy members of their own country. In some royal psalms, members of the community belonging to Yhwh and his king stand similarly at risk. But in neither of these texts is the king himself endangered. What *does*, then, mark the uniqueness of Yhwh's aggression is his capacity to aggress against his own king, which a few psalms of defeat (Psalm 89 and 132) and a sampling of prophetic defeat poetry exemplify.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

6.1. Conclusions

The present work pursued one principal research question: "Is the aggression of Yhwh really unique relative to other patron gods of the Iron Age Levant?" Does Yhwh alone damn his own king and country, such that the Reverend Jeremiah Wright's claim that "that's in the Bible" stands boldly, starkly true?[586] Is the contrast that Wellhausen drew between Yhwh and the "gods of the nations," and which many other scholars have reproduced in his wake, *warranted*?

The answer that the previous chapters together suggest is a qualified *no*: on the one hand, chapter 2 found that memorial inscriptions do mostly show the patron god acting to bless and protect his client country. The recipients of divine aggression in these texts are, for the most part, enemies *external* to the kingdom, not infrequently enemy kings. However, memorial inscriptions also present a notable exception to this general picture of a state-supportive patron god: these texts so vigorously champion the unconditional support of the patron god for his one, named client king that they effectively put *everyone else* in potential danger of divine aggression, implicitly at least and explicitly in some cases. Still further, this danger can extend, as in the Hadad inscription, even to the king's own descendants, should they fail to enact the inscription's rhetorical request. Such moves introduce a hefty qualification into the "natural bond" view of the relationship between god and country—one that will not permit Wellhausen's judgment to pass as a wholly accurate summary any longer.

On the other hand, chapter 3 demonstrated that, as with memorial inscriptions, the most obvious recipients of divine aggression in royal psalms are also enemies external to the kingdom. Even so, some royal psalms like Psalms 20 and 21—not to mention the canonical form of Psalm

[586] "Unofficial Transcript" from Carolyn J. Sharp, "Hewn by the Prophet," 71.

2—make the boundary between the reciting community and the enemies porous enough that even the psalm's own reciters can opt into enmity with Yhwh by refusing to comply with the psalm's rhetorical program. But even more importantly for the question of Yhwh's unique aggression, chapter 3 found that select royal psalms do indeed, to use Eichrodt's phrase, "abrogate the doctrine of election in judgment."[587] They yield a picture of the relationship between the patron god Yhwh and his client king that is absolutely unconditional. The king is wholly exempted from divine aggression. This theology of the god's intensive love for the one, individual king introduces a fixed and firm limit to the allegedly matchless ferocity of Yhwh's aggression. Eichrodt was therefore right, it would seem, to see that these psalms stand out from otherwise gratuitous and conditional biblical views of the relationship between Yhwh and his king and country.

At a certain level, then, the contrast that Wellhausen constructed between the biblical god and the "gods of the nations" *still holds*: the future conditional aggression of Levantine patron deities against members of their own client country and royal house does *not* begin to approximate the biblical god's annihilating wrath—whether in Amos's announcement of doom, the golden calf story, or after the return of the spies from Canaan. The destructiveness of Hadad or Milkom targets only one or a few individuals who jeopardize the king's name, and not an entire community. But at the same time, the conditionality these inscriptions open up within the patronage relationship between the deity and any persons from the client country undercuts strong claims for the unprecedented and radical scope of Yhwh's aggression. If Wellhausen's dictum still holds, it holds only to a limited degree—on account of both the divine aggression found in memorial inscriptions and on account of the exemption from divine aggression found in certain royal psalms.

[587] Eichrodt, *TOT* 1:373.

6.2. Results for the Study of Royal Psalms

The present work offers several results for the study of the royal psalms. First, in terms of categorizing the royal psalms, its chapter 4 proposed a new analytic: namely, that some royal psalms (Psalms 89 and 132) differ from other royal psalms (like Psalms 2, 110, 20, and 21) in their depiction of Yhwh's aggression. The present work labeled the former psalms "royal psalms of defeat" because in them, Yhwh's aggression is a *past* event whose recipients include his own favored king. By contrast, Yhwh's aggression is future and conditional in the other royal psalms examined by the present work—and in them, his aggression does not target the client king. As chapter 5 showed, royal psalms of defeat bear a theological affinity to other poetic biblical texts of defeat, in which Yhwh's aggression is definite and falls on his king as well as his country.

Second, the present work adds depth and specificity to previous scholarship on the theology of the royal psalms.[588] It draws in sharper silhouette the animating commitment of royal psalms like Psalms 2 and 110: Yhwh's unique investment in—even parental love for—his one individual king. This is the central theological tenet alongside of which the other characteristics of these royal psalms fall into place. The maintenance of Yhwh's commitment to the king into the future is what the rhetoric of these psalms seeks. The benefit of this commitment to the reciting community is, in turn, what motivated the psalms' preservation. The danger that noncompliance poses to those who deny this relationship—the equivalent of "conspiring against Yhwh and his king" by refusing to submit sincerely to the rule of Yhwh (Psalm 2)—is what these psalms threaten.

To the study of the Psalter as a whole, the present study offers further clarification to the proposed differences between the royal psalms of Books I-III and Books IV-V. In 1985, Gerald Wilson trailblazed in Psalms scholarship by suggesting that "[a] brief glance at Ps[alms] 2, 41, 72,

[588] Cf. Wälchli, *Gottes Zorn in den Psalmen*, 86-88; Saur, *Königspsalmen*, 279-82, 337; Philip J. Nel, "The Theology of the Royal Psalms," *OTE* 11 (1998): 71-92.

and 89 reveals an interesting progression in thought regarding kingship and the Davidic covenant."[589] More specifically, the earlier royal psalms—and especially their opening, paradigmatic Psalm 2—present a view of the "special relationship" between Yhwh and king that is secure and inviolable.[590] Psalm 89 then offers "a new perspective."[591] It voices "an almost frantic accusation [of] Yahweh for his failure to live up to his covenant promises by preserving the Davidic kings and kingdom."[592] According to Wilson, Books I-III of the Psalter thus end with the failure of this special patronage relationship. The remaining Books IV-V. of the Psalter respond by "direct[ing] the faithful to trust in Yahweh as king rather than in fragile and failing human princes."[593]

The "Achilles heel" of Wilson's interpretation is the presence of royal psalms in the final books of the Psalter—psalms such as Psalm 110 and 132.[594] These psalms would seem to disrupt the progression from an emphasis on *human* kingship in Books I-III to *divine* kingship in Books IV-V. Wilson counters with the argument that that Psalm 132 does *not* promote the same view of the Davidic monarchy as Psalm 2, because Psalm 132 relativizes the human king: Yhwh's strong and unconditional "declaration of self-enthronement" in vv. 13-14 contrasts with the conditional enthronement of David's descendants.[595] The present study adds another dimension to this difference noted by Wilson: namely, that of divine aggression. As chapter 4 argued, Psalm 132

[589] Gerald H. Wilson, *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter*, SBLDS 76 (Chico: Scholars Press, 1985), 209.
[590] Ibid., 210.
[591] Ibid., 212.
[592] Idem, "King, Messiah, and the Reign of God," 392. Cf. also idem, "The Use of Royal Psalms at the 'Seams' of the Hebrew Psalter," *JSOT* 35 (1986): 85-94, here 90.
[593] Idem, "King, Messiah, and the Reign of God," 393. See also J. Clinton McCann, "The Shape and Shaping of the Psalter: Psalms in Their Literary Context," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Psalms*, ed. William P. Brown (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 350-62.
[594] Bernhard W. Andersen, *Out of the Depths: The Psalms Speak for Us Today* (Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox, 2000), 208-9; also John C. Crutchfield, "The Redactional Agenda of the Book of Psalms," *HUCA* 74 (2003): 21-47, here 33.
[595] Wilson, "King, Messiah, and the Reign of God," 397.

indicates divine aggression as a *past event* that befell Yhwh's own king. This is indeed a "new perspective" relative to Psalm 2, and one that shares several features with Psalm 89. In this regard, the present study amplifies Wilson's exegetical observations. The matter is quite different, however, at least with respect to Psalm 110, which Wilson interprets in too strongly a priestly sense so as to reduce its royal character.[596] In the end, then, Wilson's progression cannot be wholly maintained. Robert Wallace's conclusions about Book V. seem more judicious: the Psalter does not conclude by *replacing* human with divine regency. Hope for Yhwh's king remains—but it is tempered by failure, and hope for Yhwh's own kingship is also present, and even more pronounced.[597]

6.3. Results for the Study of Syro-Palestinian Inscriptions

The present study also presents fresh insights to the study of Syro-Palestinian inscriptions. In its literary-rhetorical approach to these texts, it joins several other recent works of scholarship.[598] To this literature, it adds a new argument for the *nonnarrative* quality of memorial inscriptions. For the most part, even scholars who employ literary categories to interpret memorial inscriptions usually treat these texts as instances of *prose narrative*. So, too, when memorial inscriptions receive comparison with biblical literature, they are most commonly juxtaposed with biblical prose narrative, often the long narrative materials of the Former Prophets.[599] Over against this trend, chapter 1 of the present study argued that memorial inscriptions show several

[596] Ibid., 399-400; cf. also McCann, "The Shape and Shaping of the Psalter: Psalms in Their Literary Context."

[597] Robert E. Wallace, "Gerald Wilson and the Characterization of David in Book 5 of the Psalter," in *The Shape and Shaping of the Book of Psalms: The Current State of Scholarship*, ed. Nancy L. deClaissé-Walford, Ancient Israel and its Literature 20 (Atlanta: SBL, 2014), 193-207, here 204-5.

[598] Green, *"I Undertook Great Works"*; Suriano, "The Apology of Hazael: A Literary and Historical Analysis of the Tel Dan Inscription"; idem, "The Historicality of the King"; Parker, *Stories in Scripture and Inscriptions*; Schade, *A Syntactic and Literary Analysis of Ancient Northwest Semitic Inscriptions.*

[599] See, e.g., Molke, *Der Text der Mescha-Stele und die biblische Geschichtsschreibung*.

nonnarrative features. Even if they may not count as poetry *per se*, these inscriptions resemble *lyric* poetry in one key regard: their *uttered-ness*.[600] Memorial inscriptions, that is—by their very definition—mediate a *speaking voice*, that of the king. They also constitute an event of *address*. In and through inscription, the king renders himself present to his addressees. These characteristics of lyric make the memorial inscriptions very *unlike* biblical prose narrative, in which "events seem to narrate themselves."[601]

The present study also brings a special attentiveness to the character of the *curse sections* for understanding the inscriptions' overall rhetorical program. Chapters 1 and 2 of the present study argued that the curse sections of memorial inscriptions are not simply perfunctory protection clauses added to the more or less self-standing body of the text. Rather, the curse sections represent the rhetorical goal and climax of the whole inscription, when the voice of the speaking king most transparently lodges a request of his addressee(s). After declaiming his own piety and prowess, the curse section turns agency over to the hearers of the text, placing the king's name and legacy into their hands.

The curse section prays for the king's divine patron to avenge vandalism of his name and monument. As such, the gods comprise one important intended audience of the inscriptions' rhetoric. By drawing attention to the profile of memorial inscriptions as acts of persuasion oriented towards the divine world, the present study corrects an emphasis of some recent scholarship on inscriptions, which has envisioned their purpose rather exclusively as *political* and *human*: "securing power and mobilizing bodies" (viz., human ones solely!).[602] So, too, considering the inscriptions as attempts to persuade patron god(s) recasts the interpretation of these inscriptions as

[600] Dobbs-Allsopp, "The Psalms and Lyric Verse," 367-70. See also idem, "The Idea of Lyric Poetry in the Bible," 195-98; also Jonathon Culler, "Lyric Address."
[601] Kawashima, *Biblical Narrative and the Death of the Rhapsode*, 38.
[602] Routledge, *Moab in the Iron Age*, 152; Sanders, *The Invention of Hebrew*, 114.

a whole. The speaking king's rehearsal of his achievements does not only serve, as some scholarship would have it, to articulate a "good testimony" to his human subjects, and thereby to convince them to uphold his name and legacy.[603] Rather, the present study argued that the speaking king evokes his past deeds in part to impress his divine patron; to remind the deity of the king's obedience, and so to move the deity to the protect the king's future—and also to remind the deity of past favor to the king, in an appeal that the deity should continue in loyalty moving forward.

The attentiveness of the present study to curse sections also bore results in relation to the human audience of the inscriptions. As noted, recent scholarship has envisioned memorial inscriptions as acts of persuasion directed to the king's human subjects: an argument for loyalty to him and to his god.[604] This research has succeeded in raising an important observation about the inscriptions' vernacular character: through memorial inscriptions, the speaking kings address (incipient) countrymen in their own language. But prior research has *not* reflected on the meaning and significance of vernacular *curse sections* for the profile of the inscriptions' divine patron. This is what the present study repeatedly has highlighted. Memorial inscriptions in effect threaten members of the patron god's own client country, since they speak in the language of that country and its citizens. At some level this issues in a paradox: the god whose whole job it is to protect and bless his client nation is pictured as capable of aggressing against citizens of that nation. This is a strange result for the project that many scholars attribute to memorial inscriptions, namely, that of nation-building. At the moment of seeking to persuade tribal peoples that they belong to a larger political unit, the speaking king also reminds them that the god's deepest loyalty applies to him alone—and that to all others, the god presents a possible threat. By doing so, the king effectively

[603] Thompson, "A Testimony of the Good King."

[604] Sanders: "the Mesha inscription does not reflect the existence of a unified state, people, and written language, so much as make an argument for one" (*The Invention of Hebrew*, 114).

roots the nation-building project in a deeper or higher fealty, a more profound fear: the fealty of his human subjects to their patron god, and their fear of that god's destructive power.

6.4. Results for the Study of Hebrew Bible Theology

The contrast that the study's two paradigmatic interlocutors, Wellhausen and Eichrodt, draw between the core theology of the Hebrew Bible—which is deuteronomistic—and the theology of "the nations" has played a large part in subsequent scholarship on Hebrew Bible theology. Eichrodt's charge that "heathen" theology made inroads into the Bible through the royal tradition(s) has found many supporters; since his time, biblical theologians have often set the "Sinai covenant" and "Zion theology" against one another—and interpreted the latter as an incursion from ancient Israel's neighbors.[605] Indeed, for such writers, the *shared* character of Israel's royal traditions is exactly that which disqualifies it, theologically. J.J.M. Roberts summarizes this position well: "The monarchy is generally regarded as alien to genuine Yahwism, because the development of the monarchy in Israel involved the adaptation of elements taken over the surrounding cultures."[606]

Over against this trend, the present study offers a nuanced construal of the relation between at least some royal traditions in the Hebrew Bible and their ancient Levantine congeners. In so

[605] Jon D. Levenson once labeled this scholarship "segregationist," i.e., partitioning Sinai from Zion ("The Davidic Covenant and its Modern Interpreters," *CBQ* 41 [1979]: 205-19, here 207). Scholars that argue for the antinomy of these theological blocs within the Hebrew Bible include Leonhard Rost, "Sinaibund und Davidsbund," *TLZ* 72 (1949): 129-34; A.H. Gunneweg, "Sinaibund und Davidsbund," *VT* 10 (1960): 335-341; J. Coert Rylaarsdam, "Jewish-Christian Relationship: The Two Covenants and the Dilemmas of Christology," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 9 (1972): 249-70; and perhaps most vehemently, George E. Mendenhall, "The Monarchy," *Int* 29 (1975): 155-70; most famously, Walter Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), 21-38 ("Royal Consciousness: Countering the Counterculture").

[606] J.J.M. Roberts, "In Defense of the Monarchy: The Contribution of Israelite Kingship to Biblical Theology," in *Ancient Israelite Religion: Essays in Honor of Frank Moore Cross*, ed. Patrick D. Miller, Jr. Paul D. Hanson, and S. Dean McBride (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 377-96, here 379. Cf. also idem "The Enthronement of Yhwh and David: The Abiding Theological Significance of the Kingship Language of the Psalms," *CBQ* 64 (2002): 675-86; Ben C. Ollenburger, *Zion, The City of the Great King: A Theological Symbol of the Jerusalem Cult*, JSOTSup 41 (Sheffield: Sheffield University Press, 1987), 145-62.

doing, it supplements constructive theological work on the Bible's royal materials by scholars like Roberts, Levenson, and Ollenberger.[607] The major finding of the present study thus *qualifies* the grand contrast proposed between these two theological blocs within the Bible: as it turns out, the theology of the nations contained rather more subtlety than either Wellhausen or Eichrodt thought: yes, patron deities supported their client country—but with a notable potential exception. Very comparable exceptions obtained in many of the royal psalms. The fact that countrymen of the favored, client king—even his own descendants—could become the recipients of divine aggression brings the theology of the royal traditions, biblical and extrabiblical, rather closer to that of the Bible's deuteronomistic core. For both the royal and the deuteronomistic theologies, Yhwh's loyalty contains some conditions, although as noted throughout the present study, the severity and scope of divine aggression they envision varies between the two theological perspectives.

At the same time as the present study critiques too strong a difference between the royal traditions and the theology of the "Sinai covenant," it also holds up the important and distinctive theological offer of the royal texts. Royal psalms show affinities with the perspectives rooted in Sinai, true: but they also have a vital testimony to offer in their own right. The central belief of some of the royal psalms—and which they share in common with the royal texts of Israel's ancient neighbors—is itself valuable to the theology of the Hebrew Bible, and must be reckoned with. It is simply this: the absolute inviolability of Yhwh's patronage for his one, individual king acts as a theological anchor. Jon Levenson writes eloquently that

> the Davidic covenant…looks beyond the vicissitudes of history, since they cease to be critical. This covenant fixes attention to that which is constant beneath—or perhaps I

[607] Roberts, "In Defense of the Monarchy"; idem, "The Enthronement of Yhwh and David"; Jon D. Levenson, *Sinai and Zion: An Entry into the Jewish Bible*, New Voices in Biblical Studies (New York: Harper & Rowe, 1985), 89-184; Ben C. Ollenburger, *Zion, The City of the Great King*, 145-62. See also Niek Poulssen, *König und Tempel im Glaubenszeugnis des Alten Testamentes*, SBM 3 (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1967).

> should say, above—the flux of history. That suprahistorical constant is God's commitment to the Davidic dynasty; it shall always rule. And since the focus is upon the constancy of God rather than the changeability of man [sic], it brings to light what is secure and inviolable, whereas the Sinai texts tend to emphasize the precariousness of life and the consequent need for a continuously reinvigorated obedience.[608]

The *absoluteness* of this divine loyalty to a single human king—and I would add, its framing as a matter of the deity's *parenthood*—present a crucial witness within "theological polydoxy" of the Hebrew Bible.[609]

6.5. Results for the Study of the History of Israelite Religion

One thesis has gained considerable traction in recent scholarship on the history of Israelite religion. It follows like so: some portraits of Yhwh's aggression in the Hebrew Bible represent, at least in part, a response to Neo-Assyrian political propaganda.[610] Wellhausen partly anticipated this connection when he wrote of the Neo-Assyrian crisis that "the prophets of Israel…*absorbed into their religion that conception of the world which was destroying the religions of the nations*, even before it had been fully grasped by secular consciousness."[611] Wellhausen thought (that is to say) that the eighth-century prophets found a way of recognizing Assyrian political power and

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[608] Levenson, *Sinai and Zion*, 101; cf. Rylaarsdam: "This covenant [with David] alludes to and celebrates a supratemporal order of significance" ("Jewish-Christian Relationship," 249).

[609] Levenson, "The Davidic Covenant and its Modern Interpreters," 219. Cf. Eichrodt disapproving but consonant judgment: "because God was using this means to achieve his purpose in history, namely the establishment of his kingdom, he would therefore not allow this particular manifestation of his sovereignty to be vitiated" (*TOT* 1:458).

[610] For a few examples of this widespread thesis, see Baruch A. Levine, "'Ah, Assyria, My Rage' (Isa 10:15): Biblical Monotheism as Seen in an International Political Perspective," *ErIs* 27 (2003): 136-142; idem, "Assyrian Ideology and Israelite Monotheism," *Iraq* 67 (2005): 411-27; Shawn Zelig Aster, "Transmission of Neo-Assyrian Claims of Empire to Judah in the Late Eighth Century B.C.E.," *HUCA* 78 (2007): 1-44; also now Michael Chan, "Rhetorical Reversal and Usurpation: Isaiah 10:5–34 and the Use of Neo-Assyrian Royal Idiom in the Construction of an Anti-Assyrian Theology," *JBL* 128 (2009): 717–733.

[611] My emphasis. The fuller quote reads: "The prophets of Israel alone did not allow themselves to be taken by surprise by what had occurred, or to be plunged into despair; they solved by anticipation the grim problem which history set before them. They absorbed into their religion that conception of the world which was destroying the religions of the nations, even before it had been fully grasped by secular consciousness. Where others saw only the ruin of everything that is holiest, they saw the triumph of Jehovah over delusion and error. Whatever else might be overthrown, the really worthy remained unshaken" (Wellhausen, *Prolegomena*, 473).

destructiveness—by coopting it; by ascribing that same imperial power and destructiveness to their god, Yhwh. Subsequent scholarship has suggested an even more direct relationship: not just between Neo-Assyrian destructiveness and the Bible's wrathful portraiture of Yhwh,[612] but between Neo-Assyrian *propaganda* and Yhwh's aggression.[613] Prophetic literature didn't just redistribute Assyrian aggression to the person of Yhwh; it took up and repurposed specific features of Assyrian imperial rhetoric. Yhwh replaced the Assyrian king, for example, as "the fiercest vineyard-slashing siege warrior" (Isa 10:16-19), or the most awesome royal personage to journey west to Lebanon (Isa 10:33-34).[614] Critically for the present study, aspects of Yhwh's aggression—in its deuteronomistic freedom and conditionality—have often been traced to the same origin in Neo-Assyrian propaganda.[615]

Scholars have proposed various mechanisms by which biblical authors might have encountered and appropriated Neo-Assyrian discourse. So, for example, Shawn Zelig Aster (among others) has pointed to *victory stelae* as a propaganda medium through which the Neo-Assyrian Empire intimidated and persuaded its subjects.[616] Aster dates this transmission of Neo-Assyrian claims to Judah and Judean religion principally to the eighth century.

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[612] On which, see also Lemos, "The Apotheosis of Rage."

[613] For an overview and bibliography, see now Daniel R. Miller, "Objectives and Consequences of the Neo-Assyrian Imperial Exercise," *Religion and Theology* 16 (2009): 124-149.

[614] Chan, "Rhetorical Reversal and Usurpation: Isaiah 10:5–34 and the Use of Neo-Assyrian Royal Idiom in the Construction of an Anti-Assyrian Theology," 719.

[615] For one recent example, see C.L. Crouch, *Israel and the Assyrians: Deuteronomy, the Succession Treaty of Esarhaddon, and the Nature of Subversion*, ANEM 8 (Atlanta: SBL, 2014), and literature cited there; also Levine, "Assyrian Ideology and Israelite Monotheism."

[616] Aster, "Transmission of Neo-Assyrian Claims of Empire to Judah in the Late Eighth Century B.C.E."; see also Porter, "Intimidation and Friendly Persuasion: Re-evaluating the Propaganda of Ashurnasirpal III"; Julian E. Reade, "Ideology and Propaganda in Assyrian Art," in *Power and Propaganda: A Symposium on Ancient Empires*, ed. Mogens Trolle Larsen, Mesopotamia 7 (Copenhagen: Akademisk Forlag, 1979), 329-43; idem, "Neo-Assyrian Monuments in their Historical Context," in *Assyrian Royal Inscriptions: New Horizons in Literary, Ideological, and Historical Analysis: Papers of a Symposium held in Siena, June 26-28, 1980*, ed. Frederick Mario Fales, Orientis antiqui collectio 17 (Rome: Istituto per l'Oriente, 1981), 143-67; and Irene Winter, "*Art in Empire*: The Royal Image and the Visual Dimensions of Assyrian Ideology," in *Assyria 1995,* 359-81.

To this religion-historical proposal, the present study offers a friendly amendment. It observes that already in the *ninth century BCE*, royal inscriptions began to proliferate in the territorial kingdoms of the Levant—inscriptions in vernacular Northwest Semitic languages.[617] More to the point, the present study argues that these inscriptions present patron deities in a relationship of conditional loyalty to the members of their client countries: as potential aggressors, that is, against their own national constituency, whom they also address. What this means is that the Hebrew Bible's characteristic picture of Yhwh's aggression—as free and conditioned by human obedience—need not derive *only* from Israelite encounters with Neo-Assyrian propaganda in the eighth century.[618] Nor must it derive only and all at once from experiences of defeat during and after the downfall of the two kingdoms in the centuries thereafter.[619] Rather, biblical conceptions of Yhwh's wrath as devastating and sovereign may have emerged from *earlier* and *more local* tributaries. The raw materials were there, in other words, *even before* imperial subjugation or conquest by the world superpowers, to begin imagining that a patron god like Yhwh could turn away from members of his client community, and even from its royal house.

Of course, it is possible if not altogether likely that Levantine memorial inscriptions from the ninth century are in some sense still derivative, perhaps even "plagiaristic": they may well imitate Neo-Assyrian royal monuments already erected in the Levant during that (earlier) century.[620] But it is nonetheless true that these Levantine texts develop their own distinctive

[617] On which, see especially Sanders, *The Invention of Hebrew*, 113-120.

[618] For the laws of the king in relation to Neo-Assyrian propaganda, as well as Northwest Semitic inscriptions, see Hamilton, "The Past as Destiny," 230-46.

[619] For a strong presentation of the idea that depictions of Yhwh's destructiveness against king and country postdate the events of national downfall, see de Jong, "Biblical Prophecy—a Scribal Enterprise,"

[620] Sanders, *The Invention of Hebrew*, 120; also Green, *"I Undertook Great Works,"* 10-17. On formal similarities between Assyrian and Northwest Semitic royal inscriptions, see Thompson, "A Testimony of the Good King," 241.

conventions, in their own local languages—and that they depict their own patron gods.[621] This last point deserves fuller comment. In whatever ways Neo-Assyrian monuments and their conventions may have stimulated and changed Levantine theology in the ninth century BCE, the most basic feature of each royal cult stayed constant from its prior stratum: the worship of the patron deity, and that deity's identity. Kemosh must already have received worship among many or most Moabites or the Mesha Inscription would not have sought to capitalize on their religious loyalty to him to make its human-facing appeal.[622] Yhwh was already the patron god of most Israelites and Judeans whenever they first met forms of imperial discourse. In the transformations they sustained, these gods must have remained *recognizable*—to their worshippers and also to themselves. It is an open and unresolvable question whether aggression against the god's own countryman would have constituted an addition to the god's repertoire of characteristics, an imitation of the imperial god—or an expansion and intensification of theological possibilities already present in the Levant from of old. But at the least, this aggression did not disrupt the basic identity of the god. After all, the memorial inscriptions seek to persuade their human audience to preserve the king's name, and to persuade the god to avenge desecrators of the monument. The deity's identity—including recognizability and self-identity—is the rhetorical fulcrum for both acts of persuasion.

Even if one could prove that Levantine memorial inscriptions reflect contact with Neo-Assyrian royal ideology and its monuments, the memorial texts show that this contact may have

[621] Cf. Seth Sanders's delicate phraseology: "*Independent from but related to* pressure from the Assyrian Empire, we see in Hebrew the self-conscious creation of a native written culture. Starting in the 9th century, some alphabetic writing was engineered to present a unified people and territory under a single god and king, in a single local linguistic medium [i.e., in the memorial inscriptions]" ("When the Personal Became Political," here 73; my emphasis).

[622] Cf. Routledge: Mesha's "fully developed conception of Kemosh as the national god of Moab with himself as the deity's chief agent suggests[s] that many of the core ideas of the MI were already established in Dibon [Mesha's capital]" (*Moab in the Iron Age*, 153). Cf. also Sanders, who explains the durability of Yahwism as in part explicable in terms of the overlap between popular devotion to Yhwh with the devotion of the royal cult ("'The Mutation Peculiar to Hebrew Religion:' Monotheism, Pantheon Reduction, or Royal Adoption of Family Religion?" *JANER* 14 [2014]: 217-27).

occurred earlier than the eighth century; and it is clear that the kings of the Iron Age Levant have made this ideology their own, so to speak, since they seek their own power and immortality by the favor of their own specific divine patron. Some royal psalms indicate that these two facts—early adoption and thorough "localization," even of a potentially borrowed royal ideology—may hold for ancient Israel/Judah also. If so, the Bible's vision of Yhwh's aggression is not solely or simply a response to Neo-Assyrian propaganda. It is in part at any rate an outgrowth from a shared theological heritage of the Iron Age Levantine kingdoms, which spoke of their patron deity in so devoted a relationship with their one, individual king that all other parties stood in potential danger of his aggression.

The present study, like others, also suggests that experiences of defeat made a significant impact on the royal traditions and the royal theology of ancient Israel and Judah. While it remained possible to continue reading or reciting psalms that imagined no possibility of Yhwh's aggression against his own king (Psalm 2 and 110), it would seem from the literary testimony of Psalm 89 or Psalm 132 that some events of suffering and downfall resulted in a profoundly changed theological perspective: it became thinkable that Yhwh could (and did) aggress against his very own anointed one.

It is possible, of course, that Eichrodt was correct: that people in ancient Israel and Judah had always supposed that Yhwh could turn in aggression against his own king and country; that Sinai truly stands as the primordial font of (true) Israelite religion. On the other hand, perhaps it is Wellhausen who is right, that in early Israel and Judah, a "natural bond" view obtained—one more like that found in memorial inscriptions—and that the Hebrew Bible's typical view of Yhwh's aggression *emerged* later from the interaction of various theological and sociopolitical forces. If so, then Psalm 89 and Psalm 132 would represent "snapshots," as it were, of this theological

transformation: literary artefacts preserving a moment of breakthrough, when experiences of defeat had catalyzed new ways of considering Yhwh's patronage, and the king's exemption from wrath was suspended.

As such potential snapshots, it may be that these royal psalms provide an even closer or more immediate window onto the effects of defeat on certain strands of Israelite theology than do the prophetic texts examined in chapter 5. In the latter, the king receives the deity's aggression—but this is no cause for shock and lament, or really any special attention; the king is presented as only one among other leaders bringing judgment on themselves and their country. This relative nonchalance about the king's inclusion in divinely-ordained destruction could mean that in the forms of theology to which the prophets respond and which they rework, the king's exemption from divine aggression was not so consistent or sacrosanct as it was in memorial inscriptions and other royal psalms like Psalm 2 and 110. But the prophets' nonchalance vis-à-vis the king as recipient of divine wrath could also mean that in these prophetic texts, the king's subjection to Yhwh's wrath was no longer quite such a *novum*: that this paradoxical idea had already received longer theological attention and gestation. Were this true, then the present study would also contribute to the history of Israelite religion by pointing to Psalm 89 and Psalm 132 as important witnesses to a theologically catalytic moment—the *kol-ʿunnôtô*, "all his afflictions": the travails of Yhwh's king.[623]

[623] Cf. the essays in *Zerstörungen des Jerusalemer Tempels*; also Wright, "The Commemoration of Defeat and the Formation of a Nation."

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