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THE HEBREW CONCEPTION  
OF THE WORLD

ROMAE  
E PONTIFICIO INSTITUTO BIBLICO  
1970

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# THE HEBREW CONCEPTION OF THE WORLD

A PHILOLOGICAL AND LITERARY STUDY



ROME  
PONTIFICAL BIBLICAL INSTITUTE  
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INVESTIGATIONS DER BIBEL  
UNIVERSITÄT VON SANKT PETERSBURG  
(SANKT PETERSBURG, RUSSLAND)

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OF THE WORLD

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TYPIS PONTIFICIAE UNIVERSITATIS GREGORIANAE — ROMAE

## Preface

Among the ancient Near Eastern peoples the Hebrews uniquely contributed to man's knowledge and understanding of the cosmos. Since their attitude towards the external world reveals the profound conviction that nature plays an integral role in the drama of religious history, the physical universe was hardly a neutral world between Yahweh and Israel.

Through their awareness of Yahweh's dealings with his people and of events that the ancient Hebrews gradually came to discover the structure of God. They realized, even in the world of nature around them, the exact outline of the plan to which their own history was to conform. Hence, the study of their world view is less an inquiry into an intangible world concept than an analysis which discloses their insights into the structure of the physical universe.

### TO MY PARENTS

In order to appreciate the Hebrews' unique world view we shall investigate the creation narratives against the wider background of the ancient Near Eastern literature. We shall journey into all the levels of the universe: the heavens with their luminaries and the meteorological phenomena; the earth with its topographical features; the geophysical phenomena which emphasize the very stability of the universe; the waters welling up as springs, or flowing the earth's surface as rivers, or dotting it as seas, lakes and swamps; the division of the earth into four segments, known as the cardinal points, where the different countries are located, the relation of all these segments to "the level of the earth"; finally, the underworld in which are located the subterranean waters, the foundations of the mountains, and the realm of the dead.

Since the world view of the ancient Hebrews cannot be comprehended from a mere study of notions and themes, we shall examine the meaning of the relevant terms by determining their etymology and we shall gather all biblical material which bears on the subject. By this method we shall endeavor to study the ancient Hebrews' vision of the whole universe.

We have translated all Scripture quotations directly from Hebrew into English, unless otherwise indicated. The Hebrew Bible is followed in the numbering of chapters and verse.

The present study was submitted in a slightly altered form to Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati, Ohio, in candidacy for the Ph.D. degree. To my teachers and friends who have played a great part in the production of this study, I express my sincere thanks. I am especially grateful to Dr. Sheldon

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TIPIE PONTIFICIAE UNIVERSITATIS ANTONIANAE — ROMA

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Through their awareness of Yahweh's dealings with his people and of cosmic realities the ancient Hebrews gradually came to discover the attributes of God. They realized, even in the world of nature around them, the broad outline of the plan to which their own destiny was to conform. Hence, the study of their world view is less an inquiry into an intangible cosmic concept than an analysis which discloses their insights into the realities of the physical universe.

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Since the world view of the ancient Hebrews cannot be comprehended from a mere study of notions and themes, we shall examine the meaning of the relevant terms by determining their etymology and we shall gather all biblical material which bears on the subject. By this method we shall endeavor to study the ancient Hebrews' vision of the whole universe.

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H. Blank for his expert guidance and stimulating discussions of problems pertaining to the content of this work. I should like further to express my gratitude to Dr. Matitiah Tsevat for valuable assistance with the philological notes. I am also greatly indebted to Professor Thomas G. Savage, S.J. for having undertaken the laborious task of correcting my English text. My particular thanks are due to Professors M. Dahood, S.J., J. B. Kipper, S.J., and E. Vogt, S.J. who have found time in a very full program of teaching and research to read the first draft of this study and make many valuable suggestions. Nonetheless, the final draft is my own as are the conclusions and viewpoints expressed.

I wish to thank Very Rev. R. A. F. MacKenzie, S.J. who accepted this study for the *Analecta Biblica* series, and the editorial staff of the Pontifical Biblical Institute.

L. S.

Loyola University,  
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## List of Abbreviations

<i>AFO</i>	<i>Archiv für Orientforschung</i> (Berlin), Graz.
<i>AJSL</i>	<i>American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures</i> , Chicago (Ill.).
<i>ANEP</i>	<i>The Ancient Near East in Pictures Relating to the Old Testament</i> , ed. by J. B. Pritchard.
<i>ANET</i>	<i>Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament</i> , ed. by J. B. Pritchard.
<i>BASOR</i>	<i>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research</i> , New Haven (Conn.), Baltimore (Md.).
<i>B.D.B.</i>	<i>A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> , ed. by F. Brown, S. R. Driver and C. A. Briggs.
<i>EUT</i>	<i>EI in the Ugaritic Texts</i> , by Marvin H. Pope.
<i>HUCA</i>	<i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i> , Cincinnati (Ohio).
<i>JAOS</i>	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i> , Boston (Mass.), New Haven (Conn.).
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i> , New Haven (Conn.), Philadelphia (Pa.).
<i>JNES</i>	<i>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</i> , Chicago (Ill.).
<i>JPOS</i>	<i>Journal of the Palestine Oriental Society</i> , Jerusalem.
<i>JSS</i>	<i>Journal of Semitic Studies</i> , Manchester.
<i>JST</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i> , Oxford.
<i>KBH</i> <sup>13</sup>	<i>Biblia Hebraica</i> , ed. by R. Kittel/P. Kahle, thirteenth edition.
<i>LXX</i>	Septuagint.
<i>MT</i>	Masoretic Text.
<i>RB</i>	<i>Revue biblique</i> , Paris.
<i>RES</i>	<i>Revue des études sémitiques</i> , Paris.
<i>RHS</i>	<i>Revue de l'histoire des religions</i> , Paris.
<i>VT</i>	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i> , Leiden.
<i>ZAW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i> (Giessen), Berlin.
<i>ZDMG</i>	<i>Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft</i> (Leipzig), Wiesbaden.

Gen., Ex., Lev., Num., Deut., Josh., Judg., Sam., K., Is., Jer., Ez., Hos., Joel,  
Am., Ob., Jon., Mic., Nah., Hab., Zeph., Hag., Zech., Mal., Ps., Prov., Job, Cant.,  
Ruth, Lam., Eccl., Esth., Dan., Ezr., Neh., Ch.



## PART ONE

### CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS OF HEBRAIC TERMS FOR THE WORLD AND OF THEIR CONTEXT

#### SECTION A. HEBRAIC NOTION OF THE WORLD IMPLICIT IN THE TERMINOLOGY

Our current concept of "world" was foreign to the ancient Hebrews. The idea "world" was conveyed by the term *kl* or by the expression *kl šmym w<sup>o</sup>rš*. *kl* is a noun meaning "the whole, all" (attested in all Semitic languages with the same meaning and function as e.g., in Aram. *kwl*, in Syr. *kvl*, in Arab. *kull*, in Ug. *kl* [*kl*, *klkl*], in Akk. *kullatu*). *kl* used in the absolute state means "totality, all things, (with following definite noun) whole, all, every." The sense in which "all" is to be taken is gathered from the context, as in the following sentences:

*yhwh cšh kl nḥ šmym lbdy rq<sup>c</sup> h<sup>o</sup>rš m<sup>o</sup>ty<sup>1</sup>*  
*ky kl bšmym wb<sup>o</sup>rš lk<sup>2</sup>*  
*kl p<sup>c</sup>l yhwh lm<sup>c</sup>nhw<sup>3</sup>*

*hkl* used with the article signifies "all, the totality of all things" and hence, "the universe" (*to pan*), occurring chiefly in postexilic biblical literature.<sup>4</sup> In combination with preposition such as *b* and *l* the meaning of totality is still retained in *bkl*<sup>5</sup> and *lkl*.<sup>6</sup>

The idea of "world" was also rendered by the expression *hšmym wh<sup>o</sup>rš* following the Sumerian *an.ki* (that which is above and below) with its equivalent in Akkadian *šamû u eršetum* (heaven and earth). The expression "earth and heaven" (*arš w šmm*) in Ugaritic is an antonymic pair signifying "the universe."<sup>7</sup> Whether the expression "heaven and earth" is comprehensive, including the primeval waters, cannot be decided on the basis of the

<sup>1</sup> Is. 44:24.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Ch. 29:11.

<sup>3</sup> Prov. 16:4.

<sup>4</sup> Jer. 10:16 (51:19); Ps. 119:91; Eccl. 1:2; 3:11, 19-20; 11:5; 12:8.

<sup>5</sup> 1 Ch. 29:12.

<sup>6</sup> Ps. 145:9; Eccl. 3:1.

<sup>7</sup> See C. H. Gordon, *Ugaritic Textbook* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1965), Glossary, No. 2427.

texts in which this expression occurs. The expression "heaven and earth" occurs more frequently with an article *hšmym whʾrš*<sup>8</sup> and a prefixed preposition *bšmym wbʾrš*<sup>9</sup> or with the prefixed ʾt of the "nota accusativi" *wʾt hšmym ʾt (ʾt-) hʾrš*<sup>10</sup> without any article *wʾrš šmym*<sup>11</sup> and, finally, in inverse order *ʾrš wšmym*.<sup>12</sup>

A still more comprehensive idea of how the "world" was defined is rendered in phrases like:

*ʿšh yhwʾ ʾt-hšmym wʾt-hʾrš ʾt-hym wʾt-kl ʾšr bm*<sup>13</sup>

*ʿšh šmym wʾrš ʾt-hym wʾt-kl-ʾšr-bm*<sup>14</sup>

*wykw hšmym whʾrš wkl-šbʾm*<sup>15</sup>

*šmym wʾrš wkl ʾšr bhm*<sup>16</sup>

Nowhere in the Bible is *ʿwlm* used to designate the world but it always has the meaning either of a limited time span or of an ordered totality of concrete durations.<sup>17</sup>

The preceding analysis of terms and expressions for "world" has shown us that the spatial complex of the universe was conceived as a structure of strata separated from but related to each other. Here we may merely refer to the ancient Hebrews' spatial images and intuitions which are particularly reflected in the spatial terms. However, the purpose and meaning of spatial articulation which underlies the Hebrew world view will be analyzed in detail in a subsequent section of this study. Since the concept of an external world seems to be a Greek abstraction, unknown, at all events, to the Semites, it is not surprising that the Bible does not distinguish container from contents, or, conversely, the living from its environment. Thus, for example, space never appears as an inert, lifeless receptacle; it is the sea where fish swim, the ground on which beasts tread, the land belonging to such and such people, the heavens where the winds are stored, the snow and hail are kept.<sup>18</sup> Yet, even though the term for "world" is lacking in the vocabulary of the ancient Hebrews, it does not mean that

<sup>8</sup> Gen. 2:1, 4; Is. 45:18; 66:1, 22; Ps. 96:11; 1 Ch. 16:31.

<sup>9</sup> Deut. 3:24; Joel 3:3; Ps. 135:6; 1 Ch. 29:11; 2 Ch. 6:14.

<sup>10</sup> Gen. 1:1; 2:1; Ex. 20:11, 17; 31:17; Deut. 4:26; 30:19; 31:28; 2 K. 19:15; Is. 37:16; Jer 23:24; 32:17; Hag. 2:6, 21; 2 Ch. 2:11.

<sup>11</sup> Gen. 14:19, 22; Is. 1:2; 49:13; 51:13, 16; 55:17; Jer. 33:25; Zech. 12:1; Ps. 69:35; 89:12; 115:15; 121:2; 124:8; 134:3; 146:6; Joel 4:16.

<sup>12</sup> Gen. 2:4; Joel 2:10; Prov. 3:19.

<sup>13</sup> Ex. 20:11.

<sup>14</sup> Ps. 146:6.

<sup>15</sup> Gen. 2:1.

<sup>16</sup> Jer. 51:48; cf. also Job 12:7f.

<sup>17</sup> See E. Jenni, *Das Wort ʿwlm im Alten Testament* (Berlin: Verlag A. Töpelmann, 1953), p. 23, who distinguishes two usages of *ʿwlm* in later Aramaic dialects: *ʿlm* in the Status emphaticus is employed as a generalized synonym for universe, whereas *ʿlm* in the Status absolutus maintains the meaning of eternity. In § 25 the author attributes the emergence of a new meaning of *ʿwlm* to the influence of the Greek *aiōn*.

<sup>18</sup> Ps. 135:7 *rwh mʾwšrwtyw*; Job 38:22 *brd*; *ʾwšrw t šlg*.

the idea of the unity of the world was unknown among them. The Yahwist creation account is illuminating when considered from the viewpoint of God who is regarded as the author of all works of creation, and from that of man who is their beneficiary. We are not, of course, expressly informed about the concept of the universe, but we may reasonably infer from the Yahwist account that the world was conceived of as a unity. The Priestly writer is more articulate in this respect. His theological ideology is known for its tendency towards making the conception of God less material and more spiritual. Hence, divine productivity is presented first as a command and then as an action. What is common to both accounts is the idea of God's being the sole operative cause of the works of creation. While we have no means of knowing the precise extent of the cosmological knowledge of the ancient Hebrews based on mere observation of nature, we may infer, nevertheless, that they conceived of the world as a unity, because their world view was based on the faith in Yahweh as the creator of all things.<sup>19</sup> What we designate "the universe," they regarded as two separate entities:

The heavens are the heavens of the Lord,  
but the earth has he given to mankind.<sup>20</sup>

By earth here is to be understood everything under the heavens, including the seas:

Praise the Lord from the earth;  
sea-monsters and all the deeps.<sup>21</sup>

Furthermore, their idea of "world" was not an entity, philosophically objectified, since they considered the world much less a being than an event, less an ordered organism in repose than a process. "It was for man something continually new and experienced in many different ways, and was, therefore, much more difficult to comprehend conceptually, least of all by reducing it to a principle."<sup>22</sup>

The essentials of the notion "world" as an event, reflected in the Old Testament, are understood and interpreted by the biblical authors within a frame of reference common to the people with whom they lived. The system of location in space, called a frame of space, is only part of a fuller system of location of beings in space and time. Since nature provides no indication that one of many frames is to be preferred to others, the partic-

<sup>19</sup> On the suggestion that the concept of the unity of the world was unknown among the ancient Hebrews till a late period, because of the lack of a term for "world" in their vocabulary, see U. Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis* (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1951), vol. I, p. 20.

<sup>20</sup> Ps. 115:16.

<sup>21</sup> Ps. 148:7.

<sup>22</sup> See G. von Rad, *Old Testament Theology* (New York and Evanston: Harper & Row, 1962), I, p. 152.

ular frame, as will be shown later, in which the ancient Hebrews were at rest had symmetry which simply parallels their religious outlook, and is easily accommodated to their historical perspective, which other frames lack. Their contemplation of the world, then, begins with the experience of the facts of the salvation history. History commences with Abraham, for in this story God's saving will manifests itself for the first time. The Yahwistic record of the Abraham story links him, by means of a genealogy, to the beginning of mankind and, thus, to the origin of the world. To consider the world in this manner is, therefore, to discover history. Any attempt to understand and to interpret the world is a quest to unfold its meaning and purpose within Israel's history. The world provides the environment within which God shall achieve his purpose for Israel. It establishes the setting for history whereby the world then becomes one of Yahweh's tools for shaping his people. All that is achieved in the world subserves Yahweh's final purpose which ultimately is the forming of a people to render him praise.<sup>23</sup> World and history are, then, for the ancient Hebrews not merely interrelated, but actually intertwined. This intimate connection between the purpose of the world with the purpose of history is illustrated by the fact that both the Yahwist and the Priestly writer commencing their narration of the creation of the world, through a documentation of God's personal dealing with Israel, pass on immediately to the account of the creation of the Hebrew nation. It is not surprising, therefore, that the expressions "heaven and earth" and "totality" with the meaning of "world" are mostly related to the idea of creation.

The origin of the world is clearly indicated in the Bible by the choice of the verbs employed to convey the idea of creation. In addition to textual and linguistic analysis of the various accounts of the world's creation we discern traces of borrowings from or parallels to the myths of people neighboring Israel which are found within larger as well as smaller literary units.<sup>24</sup> It is true, however, that the distinctive covenant faith always permeates the creation accounts, without completely overthrowing the cosmological ideas taken over from other peoples, and that is one of the ancient Hebrews' religious contributions to the cultural heritage of antiquity. A summary of the whole creative process of the world is given by Second Isaiah who uses the verb *br*<sup>2</sup> in the sense of creating and sets it alongside *yšr* and *šh*.<sup>25</sup> *br*<sup>2</sup>, implying the idea of fashioning or creating, is a technical term designating God's creative activity. This verb depends

<sup>23</sup> Is. 43:21.

<sup>24</sup> If all the passages of the OT dealing with the creation of the world are taken as a whole, a series of allusions to what may reasonably be regarded as features of Sumero-Babylonian, Canaanite, and Egyptian cosmogonic myths can be made out. The fact that different creation accounts are represented in the literary tradition of the OT provides the explanation for variant stories and for the transference of themes to different contexts.

<sup>25</sup> Is. 45:18.

in form and meaning upon the Akk. *barû*, to make, create. While the subject of *br*<sup>2</sup> is exclusively God himself, the objects brought forth may be grouped under works of creation, strictly speaking, and in a broader sense under works of conservation. By analyzing God's efficient causality as well as his active control manifested in the world-order as a whole and in each of its aspects and details we find that *br*<sup>2</sup> expresses, together with its basic meaning of creating, the idea either of novelty or of an extraordinary result.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, since *br*<sup>2</sup> is the term par excellence for God's creative activity,<sup>27</sup> it is only natural that it also implies the idea of his effortless production by means of his powerful word without any help of outside intervention.<sup>28</sup>

*yšr* occurs in connection with the activity of a potter who forms and fashions a vessel. Both the Ugar. equivalent *yšr*, with the meaning of creating, shaping, cultivating,<sup>29</sup> and the related Akk. *ešeru* "to construct," underlie the Hebrew word. Thus the world is said to have been formed by God.<sup>30</sup>

*šh* attains in the thought of the biblical authors the general significance of making something. When *šh* is used of the divine act of creation it occurs interchangeably with *br*<sup>2</sup>. In this usage, unlike *br*<sup>2</sup> and *yšr*, the anthropomorphic sense of fashioning drops into the background, suggesting only the general idea of production.<sup>31</sup> The broad notion of making may also be rendered by the verb *p'l* and it is thus linked to God's creative act.<sup>32</sup> The sublime and transcendent conception of the creation of the world finds its full significance alongside an increasingly spiritualized anthropomorphism. Yahweh stretches out the heavens and lays the foundation of the earth.<sup>33</sup>

In any inquiry on cosmology one cannot fail, first, to recognize that the language has in many instances preserved the traces of a mythical thinking and, second, to discern an echo of primordial mythical notions. For instance, if we examine one of the many divine epithets we observe a strikingly similar diction among the Canaanites and the Israelites. Although both belong to diverse cultures and stages in the development of mythico-

<sup>26</sup> Cf. the passages which express the idea of novelty: Is. 48:6f; 41:20; 65:17f; Jer. 31:22. The following references denote the notion of an extraordinary result: Ex. 34:10; Num. 16:30.

<sup>27</sup> See F. M. Th. Böhl's classic treatment of "*br*<sup>2</sup>, bara: als Terminus technicus der Weltschöpfung im alttestamentlichen Sprachgebrauch," in *Alttestamentliche Studien Rudolf Kittel* . . . *dargebracht* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1913), pp. 42-60.

<sup>28</sup> Gen. 1:3ff; Ps. 33:9; 148:5.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. C. H. Gordon, *op. cit.*, Glossary, No. 1142.

<sup>30</sup> Jer. 10:16 (51:19); Is. 45:18.

<sup>31</sup> Ex. 20:11; 31:17; 2 K. 19:15; Is. 37:16; 44:24; 66:22; Jer. 32:17; Ps. 115:15; 121:2; 124:8; 134:3; 146:6; Eccl. 3:11; 11:5; Neh. 9:6; 2 Ch. 2:11.

<sup>32</sup> Prov. 16:4.

<sup>33</sup> See the references to Yahweh's stretching out of the heavens: Is. 44:24; 51:13; Zech. 12:1. The following passages refer to the foundation of the earth: Is. 51:13; Zech. 12:1; Prov. 3:19.

religious thinking, both reveal the same basic characteristics of what we may call the cosmogonic consciousness. It is not surprising, therefore, that vestiges of mythological idioms appear in the Bible which were transferred from its mythical environment and assimilated into the Hebrew vocabulary. Hence, if God is given the epithet *qnh šmym wʾrṣ* "Creator of heaven and earth,"<sup>34</sup> in a text which Lods calls a narrative in haggadic form,<sup>35</sup> there is no doubt that this idiom bears the stamp of a mythological background. This lofty conception of faith in God the creator is shared with the Ugaritic ideology where El, the supreme male deity of the Ugaritic pantheon, is known as *bny bnwt* "creator of creatures," whereas Asherath the female counterpart of El, is addressed with the title of *qnyt ilm* "creatress of gods."<sup>36</sup> Yet of much greater significance for the understanding of Yahweh's epithet is an elucidative parallel which is found in the Hurrian-Hittite name *El-kunirša*. This name is attested in a cultic text from Boghazköy: *A-NA Dku-ni-ir-ša BAL-an-ti* "he pours a libation to the god *Kunirša*." An interesting analogy can be pointed out within an inscription from Karatepe (ca. 30 miles north of Aleppo), dating from the eighth century B.C., where the expression *ʾl qn ʾrṣ* "El, the creator (or possessor) of the earth" is mentioned.<sup>37</sup>

The basic meaning of the verb *qnh* as related to business practices is generally accepted. Hence, *qnh* appears with the sense of purchasing, of making an acquisition. Apart from this significance, there are six instances where *qnh* implies the sense of creating.<sup>38</sup> In order to solve the problem of divergence in the meaning of this verb, Gordon suggests that the antithesis between the alleged diverse values of *qnh* "to acquire" and "to create" is reduced when we consider "the begetting idea as primary, and the getting or owning as secondary in Semitic, on the principle that the concrete strongly tends to precede the abstract."<sup>39</sup>

At the climax of the creation story as related by the Priestly narrative the entire universe is said to have been completed.<sup>40</sup> The verb *klh* used in the passive voice of the intensive form adds the interesting feature of God's

<sup>34</sup> Gen. 14:19, 22.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. A. Lods, *Histoire de la littérature hébraïque et juive: dès origines à la ruine de l'état juif* [135 après J.-C.] (Paris: Payot, 1950), pp. 616-623. Lods abstains from the attempt to ascribe the authorship to one of the sources of the Pentateuch based on the evidence that other analogous compositions have been intercalated in the Bible by redactors in a later period. He concludes, therefore, that chapter 14 of Genesis is "une haggada composée en l'honneur d'Abraham et de Jérusalem."

<sup>36</sup> Cf. C. H. Gordon, *op. cit.*, texts 51: I: 23; III: 26, 30, 35; IV: 32.

<sup>37</sup> See H. Otten, "Ein kanaänischer Mythos aus Bogazköy," in *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Orientforschung*, I (1953), pp. 125-150, especially pp. 135-139, where the author deals with the phonological relations between the Hurrian-Hittite name and its Canaanite equivalent.

<sup>38</sup> Gen. 14:19, 22; Deut. 32:6; Ps. 78:54 (?); 139:13; Prov. 8:22.

<sup>39</sup> See C. H. Gordon, quoted by Irwin in his article, "Where Shall Wisdom Be Found?" in *JBL*, LXXX, Part II (1961), pp. 133-142, especially p. 142.

<sup>40</sup> Gen. 2:1. The completion of the creation was the resting on the seventh day.

creative work having come to an end, which implies the completion of the creation that God had set forth to do.<sup>41</sup>

The study of the Hebraic concept of "world," however, is not restricted to a merely linguistic analysis of the terms pertinent to this subject. It is desirable, therefore, to comment on the implications of those terms in their context which open up vistas of a broader perspective. The wealth and subtlety of allusions to the creation of the world found widely scattered throughout Israel's literature show that the biblical authors speculated about the beginning of the world and its authorship. In view of the great antiquity of the different cosmogonies which were transmitted by Israel's neighbors as their cultural and religious heritage, it is not surprising to find a specific purpose pursued in the Hebrew cosmogonic thought. Within the account of the origin of the world we will discover a veritable philosophy of history designed to trace out the purpose of Yahweh from the very creation of the world to the settlement of his Chosen People in the land of Canaan. This mighty theme served the purpose of establishing the authorship of the world and was to give the various Semitic tribes that ultimately formed the nation of Israel a sense of unity. This sense of unity resulted from the feeling of belonging which they developed both by reviewing their own historical origins and by speculating about the beginning of the world.

In order to promote the understanding that the world belongs to Yahweh, this theme of Yahweh's ownership is mentioned again and again throughout the Bible.<sup>42</sup> But once God had created the world, he did not leave it on its own by withdrawing his providential guidance. He continues to rule over this universe<sup>43</sup> and provides for its best possible function.<sup>44</sup> It is natural, therefore, that the universe should share with mankind the duty of proclaiming God's praises.<sup>45</sup> As a matter of fact, the universe seems to have its own life and stands over against Yahweh sufficiently to offer its praises, to act as witness against mankind<sup>46</sup> and to await in awful surrender the day of judgment.<sup>47</sup>

On the basis of a group of passages which express the idea rather of divine activity than of a passive scene on which the universal history is depicted or of a stage on which God acts as sceneshifter, we are led to the conclusion that the universe is thoroughly alive, and, therefore, the

<sup>41</sup> The Priestly account of the creation of the world comes to a close in verse 3 of the second chapter, although the first half of the following verse is ascribed to the P source. Eissfeldt regards this half verse as a formula which "stands not as a superscription but as a colophon. It has perhaps been added secondarily." Cf. O. Eissfeldt, *The Old Testament: An Introduction* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), p. 205.

<sup>42</sup> Ps. 89:12; I Chron. 29:11.

<sup>43</sup> I Chron. 29:12; Ps. 104; 148:6; Job 38:33. God's providential care of the world is frequently expressed by the verb *br*<sup>2</sup>, cf. Is. 45:7; 48:7), being regarded as a continuous creation.

<sup>44</sup> Ps. 145:9.

<sup>45</sup> Ps. 69:35.

<sup>46</sup> Deut. 4:26; 30:19; 31:28.

<sup>47</sup> Joel 2:10; 3:3; 4:16; Hag. 2:6, 21.

more capable of sympathy with man and of response to the rule of its Creator on whom both man and universe directly depend. Certainly we have here more than a poetical personification of the cosmos when it is invited to rejoice.<sup>48</sup>

The conception of the universe proposed by Ecclesiastes expresses a fundamentally new idea. We recall how intimately associated the world was with its inhabitants since the very beginning of creation.<sup>49</sup> In fact, the universe is summoned to share in the religious adventure of humanity. By his acceptance or refusal of this adventure man commits the fate of the whole work of the Creator. His failure or his success involves the failure or success of all creation.<sup>50</sup> In the book of Ecclesiastes, however, we are faced with a change in the old values and the advent of a new conception of the universe. Here the inspired writer unfolds a cosmic crisis. For him the world moves aimlessly and human activity advances similarly, in a perpetual cycle, without producing anything essentially new. His conclusion: *hbl hblym hkl hbl*<sup>51</sup> might be thought of as a protest against the traditional teaching of earlier biblical authors who believed that God who created the cosmic order is alone its active force and still continues to alter and renew it in accordance with his inscrutable judgment. The author of the book of Ecclesiastes does not hide his disillusionment about the world, yet he is not pessimistic in the sense that he maintains the belief that the world is growing worse and worse and hastening to its ruin. He is caught up in a conflict between his faith in which he tries to hold on both to a world-order governed by God and to his experience which convinces him that apparently the world lacks a specific purpose. Clearly enough, the implications of his disillusioned and somewhat sceptical view of the world fail to reveal the meaning and purpose of the world since everything, the universe included, lacks meaning or value.<sup>52</sup> The idea here expressed elucidates part of the conflict created by the impact of Greek philosophies in confrontation with biblical doctrines on Palestinian soil.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>48</sup> Is. 49:13; Jer. 51:48; Ps. 96:11; I Ch. 16:31.

<sup>49</sup> Is. 51:16.

<sup>50</sup> Is. 51:6; 44:23; 45:18.

<sup>51</sup> Eccl. 1:2.

<sup>52</sup> Eccl. 1:2; 3:19, 20; 12:8.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. J. Pedersen, *Scepticisme israélite* (Paris: Librairie Félix Alcan, 1931), pp. 1-54.

## SECTION B. THE THREE-LEVELED STRUCTURE OF THE WORLD IMPLIED IN THE TERMS

The three-leveled structure of the world, attested in several passages throughout the Bible, accounts for a better understanding of the expression "heaven and earth," clarifying this less explicit concept of the universe by adding a new dimension. Apart from several instances where the expression "heaven and earth" is modified and determined more specifically by the use of prepositions thus designating the relationship between heaven and earth, there are also specific words which convey more precisely what prepositions fail to bring out. For instance, terms like *thwm*, *bwr* and *šwl*, directly refer to a place, the lower level of the world. These will be studied more in detail in a subsequent chapter. When the words for the three layers of the world occur with prepositions, the distinctions between these is clearly mentioned, e.g., *bšmym mm<sup>cl</sup>—b<sup>r</sup>rš mtht—bmym mtht l<sup>r</sup>rš*<sup>54</sup> However, even when these prepositions are omitted, the architectonic structure of the world still is clearly discernible particularly when all of those layers are mentioned either in the same sentence of a paragraph, as e.g., *šmym—tbl—thwm(wt)*<sup>55</sup> *šmym—<sup>r</sup>rš—dwmh*<sup>56</sup> The picture of the three-leveled structure of the world has its roots not only in the basic human experience of the external world from whose impressions man conceived such an imaginative depiction,<sup>57</sup> but also in the mythological traditions so cherished among Israel's neighbors. It is only natural that the Hebrews be influenced by the cultural achievements and thought patterns of the peoples of the ancient Near East with whom they came into contact. However manifold the origin of such a representation might have been, it nonetheless proved to be very valuable to the biblical authors for through their interpretation it led to the formulation of God's transcendence. This intuition of lordly exaltation and loftiness magnificently expresses God's universal domination extending his power beyond the limit of all creation *šmym—<sup>r</sup>rš—thwmwt*.<sup>58</sup> This idea of "above and beyond" is not merely the starting point; it is found at the conclusion of Israel's thought, for God shows himself to mankind by demonstrating his superiority over the universe through his direct intervention.<sup>59</sup> The world thus reveals the presence of God whether by ensuring or by disturbing the normal order of things in *šmym—<sup>r</sup>rš—šwl*.<sup>60</sup> Efforts to find some independent principle immanent in those three layers

<sup>54</sup> Ex. 20:4; Deut. 5:8.

<sup>55</sup> Prov. 8:27-32; Ps. 33:6-8.

<sup>56</sup> Ps. 115:16-17.

<sup>57</sup> Deut. 33:13-16.

<sup>58</sup> Ps. 135:6; 148:1-7. The poetic figure of speech "the highest mountains" in Ps. 36:6-7 stands for "earth" as *pars pro toto*.

<sup>59</sup> Is. 14:7-12; Ez. 31:10-17; Job 14:5-13.

<sup>60</sup> Deut. 33:13-16.

of the world do not hold against the repeated statements that *šmym—ʔrš—thwm(wt)*<sup>61</sup> *šʔwl—ʔrš—šmym*<sup>62</sup> did not emerge by themselves but were created by God. However, in explaining how those layers came into being before they took their present shape, we should expect to find evidence enabling us to decide the question whether Babylonian, Egyptian and Canaanite sources had found their way into Israel's thought pattern. At the same time, we must keep in mind that resemblance in form and meaning is sufficient neither to establish a dependence of one on the other nor to deny it. Thus, when Yahweh is spoken of as being present everywhere:

If I ascend to the heavens, thou art there!  
If I make Sheol my bed, thou art there also!<sup>63</sup>

it can hardly be considered a monotheistic version of a passage taken from the hymn to the Nile dating from the older Egyptian period which reads: "... every god, be he in the underworld, in heaven, or upon earth..."<sup>64</sup>

### SECTION C. BIBLICAL ACCOUNTS OF THE CREATION AND THEIR ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN PARALLELS

When we turn our attention to the many accounts of the creation in the books of the Bible, both narratives of the whole of Hebrew cosmology and brief references to specific details of the creation, we discover traces either of borrowings or of parallels to the cosmogonic traditions of the ancient Near East.

It has long been established that the Genesis story of the creation consists of two sources: one, which runs from I:1 to II:4a, is assigned to what is known as the Priestly source and dates from the postexilic period;<sup>65</sup> another, which extends from II:4b to II:25 is ascribed to the Yahwistic source and comes from the ninth century B.C.<sup>66</sup> The Yahwistic primeval history begins with the creation of "earth and heaven." That in effect is all that the Yahwist writer says about the actual creation of the world; as such it scarcely merits the designation "cosmogony."

4b At that time when God Yahweh made earth and heaven —  
5 no shrub of the field being yet in the earth and no grass of the field having sprouted, for God Yahweh had not sent rain upon the earth and no man was there to till the soil;

<sup>61</sup> Ps. 33:7-8; 104:2-6; Prov. 3:19-20; 8:26-28; Job 38:16-29.

<sup>62</sup> I Sam. 2:6-10; Job 26:6-13.

<sup>63</sup> Ps. 135:6.

<sup>64</sup> Cf. Hymn to the Nile, in *ANET* (translated by J. A. Wilson), pp. 372-373.

<sup>65</sup> See O. Eissfeldt, *op. cit.*, p. 208.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 200.

- 6 instead, a flow would well up from the ground and water the whole of the soil —.<sup>67</sup>

The object of the Yahwist narrative seems to be, not so much to explain the origin of the world, as to describe, in the subsequent verses, the creation of man and his position in the world. As regards the world, the earth appears to be already existent as a barren place without shrubs and herbs, an arid waterless waste. Linked with this creation story is, first, the narrative of the locale of paradise and, second, the etymological association of terms with the Akkadian language that suggests traces of Sumerio-Babylonian influence. The name <sup>c</sup>*dn*, mentioned in verse 8, reflects the Sumerian *edin*, "plain," which is read in Akk. as *šēru*, "plain, steppe." The term <sup>2</sup>*d* compares with the Akk. *edû* and is known in the sense of "ground flow, flood, waves, swell." "Whether one derives the word, with W. F. Albright,<sup>68</sup> from *id* "river," or from *a.dé.a* (Akk. *edû*) "ground flow," ... its origin would be Sumerian in any case."<sup>69</sup> The etymological derivation of terms suggests Mesopotamian background for the Yahwistic account. Furthermore, the topographical features of the Yahwistic creation narrative portray the Mesopotamian valley dependent upon rain and artificial irrigation.

The creation account ascribed to the Priestly tradition adds to the Yahwist story of the creation and fall of man the narrative of the creation of the universe that runs from Genesis I:1 to II:4a. The following verses, quoted below, provide the elements for the structured picture of the world. They purport to describe the creative activity of God and in the course of doing so they paint a vivid picture of the way in which an ancient Hebrew imagined the primeval state and what he thought might have been the first acts in the process of divine creation:

- 1 When God set about to create heaven and earth —
- 2 the world being then a formless waste, with darkness over the seas and only an awesome wind sweeping over the water —
- 6 God said, "Let there be an expanse in the middle of the water to form a division between the waters."
- 7 God made the expanse, and it divided the water below it from the water above it...<sup>70</sup>
- 8 God called the expanse Sky...
- 9 God said, "Let the water beneath the sky be gathered into a single area, that the dry land may be visible." And it was so.

<sup>67</sup> Translated by E. A. Speiser, *Genesis, The Anchor Bible*, vol. I (Garden City: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1964), p. 14.

<sup>68</sup> See W. F. Albright, *JBL*, LVIII (1939), pp. 102-103.

<sup>69</sup> E. A. Speiser, "The Rivers of Paradise," in *Festschrift Johannes Friedrich* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, Universitätsverlag, 1959), pp. 473-485, especially p. 478.

<sup>70</sup> In Hebrew the "expanse" (twice).

- 10 God called the dry land Earth, and he called the gathered waters Seas . . .
- 16 God made the great lights, the greater one to dominate the day and the lesser one to dominate the night — and the stars.
- 17 God set them in the expanse of the sky to shine upon the earth . . .<sup>71</sup>

It has long been recognized by Bible scholars that the Priestly account of the creation of the world reveals obvious traces of Mesopotamian influence. This influence is most apparent in the cosmological presuppositions, and in this sense the Priestly account differs significantly in its outlook from that of the Yahwist. For example, whereas the Yahwist record envisages the primeval state as a desert needing water to make it fertile, the Priestly presupposes the existence of an unformed chaos enveloped in primeval darkness.<sup>72</sup> The precise notion of this formless waste known in Hebrew as *thw wbhwh*, usually translated as "unformed-and-void," cannot be obtained solely by a comparative study of passages in which the words *thw* and *bhw* occur.<sup>73</sup> Whether one relates *bhw*, with Grimme,<sup>74</sup> to *Baau*, the nocturnal mother goddess in Phoenician mythology, or denies such connection, following Ebeling's assertion,<sup>75</sup> its mythical meaning does not appear in our text in the form of a transfer of this term and its cosmogonic overtones to the Priestly account of the creation story. The term *thw* occurs elsewhere (Is. 34:11 and 24:10) in the sense of "destruction" which, however, is not the meaning required here by its context. To ascertain the idea expressed by the idiom, *thw wbhwh*, only its context is of any assistance. The world is pictured as "being then a formless waste, with darkness over the seas,"<sup>76</sup> in short, as a watery caos. The passage concerned seems to indicate a situation in which the world was envisaged as immersed in the *thwm*, "seas". As further development of the idea shows, the chief features of the primeval chaos were those of the raw material of the universe. U. Cassuto describes the chaotic situation as follows: "In this chaos of unformed matter, the heaviest materials were naturally at the bottom, and the waters, which were the lightest, floated on top. This apart, the whole material was an undifferentiated, unorganized, confused and lifeless agglomeration. It is this terrestrial state that is called *thw wbhwh*."<sup>77</sup>

<sup>71</sup> Translated by E. A. Speiser, *op. cit.*, pp. 3-4.

<sup>72</sup> See G. von Rad, *Genesis* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1961), p. 47, who is inclined to regard the chaotic condition of the earth as described by the Priestly document as a watery chaos; "the primeval waters over which darkness was superimposed characterizes the chaos materially as a watery primeval element."

<sup>73</sup> Cf. Jer. 4:23; Is. 34:11.

<sup>74</sup> See Grimme's treatment of "*Baau*," in the article "Sanchuniathon," in *Pauly's Real-Encyclopädie* (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzlersche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1920), 2. Reihe, 2. Halbband, pp. 2232-2240.

<sup>75</sup> See Ebeling's article "*Ba'u*," in *Reallexikon der Assyriologie* (Berlin und Leipzig: Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1932) I, pp. 432-433.

<sup>76</sup> Gen. I:2.

<sup>77</sup> U. Cassuto, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

The term *thwm*, rendered "deep, sea, abyss," can be compared with the Babylonian *tāmtu*, denoting the sea, the ocean, and with *Tiāmat*, the personified primordial sea, or ocean. Heidel denies the Babylonian derivation of *thwm* from *Tiāmat* on the basis of a difference in gender.<sup>78</sup> J. Lewy regards the term *thwm*, from the viewpoint of linguistics, as a Hurrian adjective, derived from the root *thw* with an appended suffix (*mh*>) *m*.<sup>79</sup> However, the semantic and morphological relationship between Ugaritic *thm* and *thwm* "the deep(s)" makes it unnecessary to explain the Hebrew term as a word borrowed either from Akkadian or Hurrian. The word *thwm* pl. *thwmwt*, treated both as a masculine and feminine (neuter) noun, is used without an article (except in Is. 63:13; Ps. 106:9), with a number of meanings. It occurs both in the singular and in the plural denoting "the deep, abyss primeval ocean, deep sea." In two passages (Dt. 8:7, Ez. 31:4) *thwm*[*wt*] refers to the underground water.

The cosmogonic section of the *Enūma eliš* creation epic of the Babylonians shows resemblances to the Hebrew records. It begins with a primeval watery chaos out of which the world was made. In the primeval state, two personified principles are suggested, *Apsu* and *Tiāmat*; but *Apsu*, the male principle which represents the cosmic river of fresh water, soon disappears and we are left with *Tiāmat*, the female principle which personifies the deep of the salt waters.<sup>80</sup> After an elaborate theogony in which the gods evolve in their successive generations from these two principles, and after *Apsu* has been subdued by *Ea*, one of the emergent gods, *Tiāmat* is represented as reigning unsubdued, opposed by and oppressing the gods whom she has begotten. At length one of them, Marduk, becomes their champion and slays *Tiāmat*, cutting her in two and with these halves forming the heavens and the earth.<sup>81</sup>

<sup>78</sup> Cf. A. Heidel, *The Babylonian Genesis* (2nd Phoenix ed.; Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1965), p. 100, who denies that *thwm* is derived from the Akkadian word *Tiāmat*, "because the former has a masculine, the latter a feminine, ending. As a loan word from *Tiāmat*, *thwm* would need a feminine ending, in accordance with the laws of derivation from Babylonian in Hebrew. Moreover, it would have no *h*, unless it had been derived from a Babylonian form *Tihāmat*, which may have existed in Babylonian speech. . . . The only way in which we can account for the above-mentioned morphological differences between *Tiāmat* and *thwm* is by assuming that both words go back to a common Semitic form.

<sup>79</sup> See J. Lewy, "Influences hurrites sur Israël," in *RES* 5 (1938), pp. 49-75, especially pp. 63-65.

<sup>80</sup> M. H. Pope suggests that "the Hebrew use of *thwm*, as originally with Sumerian *abzu*, *engur a.ab.ba*, makes no distinction as to sweet or salt water." See M. H. Pope, *El in the Ugaritic Texts* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1955), pp. 63-64.

<sup>81</sup> See R. Labat, "Les origines et la formation de la terre dans le poème Babylonien de la création," in *Studia Biblica et Orientalia* (Roma: Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1959), III, p. 205-207.

In considering the creation account in *Enūma eliš*, W. G. Lambert has indicated a number of heterogeneous elements. Thus, for instance, the description of the battle which precedes the dividing of the cosmic waters is not of uniform character with the story of creation; the diversity of origin can be concluded from the diversity of details and background. The dragon-slaying episode is just hitched on to the greater glory of

He split her open like a mussel [shell-fish?] into two (parts). Half of her he set in a place and formed the sky (therewith) as a roof.<sup>82</sup>

The question whether the Babylonians derived from the Sumerians their conception of creation out of a watery chaos must be answered in the negative because the idea of the sea (water) representing the unformed matter and the raw material of the universe was totally alien to them.<sup>83</sup> The concept of *Tiāmat* is used on different levels as can be seen from the different applications of the term. The underlying meanings are water and solid mass. But the term is also used to depict a being uttering incantations and casting a magical spell.<sup>84</sup> Later, however, she is depicted as producing fearsome serpents, dragons, and other monsters to aid her in destroying the gods — a representation that would seem to imply that she herself existed in some monstrous serpentine or dragon form, an image that has support in representations on cylinder seals.<sup>85</sup>

The primordial state in which the world was pictured at the outset of the creation is further determined by its relation to darkness. It is worth noting that the "darkness over the seas,"<sup>86</sup> an expansion of *thwm*, does not offer any resistance to God's creative activity. Since neither the darkness nor the chaos is personified, nothing is said of its needing to be subdued before the work of creation can begin. We may venture to say that this outlook towards the world is due to the intention of the Priestly writer to present it almost completely depersonalized and deprived of its naturalistic powers. In the concluding remark on the chaos the Priestly account concentrates its attention on the dynamic element which, in form of "an awesome wind sweeping over the water,"<sup>87</sup> kept the chaos in motion. "The phrase *rwḥ ʾlḥym*, as used here, should probably be taken in the sense of 'mighty wind,' or a terrific wind, *ʾlḥym* here being used as the equivalent of a strong superlative. All winds, to be sure, were thought of as sent by God, but a *rwḥ ʾlḥym* was a 'wind of God' par excellence."<sup>88</sup> The motion of the wind has often been thought of as an allusion to Egyptian cosmogony where an interesting parallel in imagery is afforded. In the Hermopolitan and Theban cosmogonies, Amon is considered as the primeval

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Marduk. Lambert suggests the possibility of foreign provenance; it is likely that Babylonian folklore suffered Amorite influence in this respect. See W. G. Lambert, "A New Look at the Babylonian Background of Genesis," in *JTS* 16 (1965), pp. 287-300.

<sup>82</sup> *Enūma eliš*, (Tablet IV, 137-138), translated by A. Heidel, *op. cit.*, p. 42.

<sup>83</sup> Cf. B. Landsberger, "Assyriologische Notizen," in *Die Welt des Orients* (Stuttgart: K. F. Koehler Verlag, 1950), 5. Heft. pp. 362-376, especially p. 365.

<sup>84</sup> Cf. *Enūma eliš* (Tablet IV, 90-91), in A. Heidel, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

<sup>85</sup> See A. Heidel, *ibid.*, figs. 8, 16. In order to explain the inconsistencies in the description of *Tiāmat*, W. G. Lambert suggests that the author of *Enūma eliš* conflated two traditions. See W. G. Lambert, *op. cit.*, pp. 294f.

<sup>86</sup> Gen. 1:2.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.* 1:2.

<sup>88</sup> J. M. Powis Smith, "The Syntax and Meaning of Genesis 1:1-3," in *AJSL*, XLIV (1927-28), pp. 108-115, especially p. 111.

wind that moves across the surface of stagnant Nun, imparting to it the motion necessary for creation.<sup>89</sup> Beside this, others see traces of Phoenician influence in view of the connotation of "brooding" provided by the Syriac verb *rahhep* in Pa<sup>c</sup>el, for the Hebrew *mrhpt*. The use of the word "brooding," as of a bird on an egg, would suggest the world egg theory. This opinion, however, cannot be maintained because of weak philological support from the verb *rhp*, since even in Syriac "brooding" is only a secondary meaning of the word, derived from its primary signification, "to fly to and fro, to flutter." The meaning of the verb *rhp* is the same in three places in which it occurs,<sup>90</sup> and it indicates in all cases violent, not gentle motion.<sup>91</sup> Another parallel to the imagery implicit here is found in the Phoenician cosmogony where Philo Byblius mentions the existence of marshlands enveloped in darkness and the motion of a wind which were thought to have been the two primordial elements.<sup>92</sup> Attempts have been made to pursue still further in the creation account its analogy to the Egyptian cosmogonies, where the very appearance of the sun-god Atum as the creator dispelled the primeval darkness.<sup>93</sup> As a matter of fact, according to the cosmogonic myths where the gradual evolution of creation begins from the succession of day and night, light and darkness were conceived of as two antagonistic elements in contest for supremacy. Thus, it is not by mere coincidence that the Priestly account of the creation itself begins by presenting two abstract terms, the darkness and the light. Before the creation unfolds its successive stages, the newly created light is set over against the darkness and only then, when "God was pleased with the light that he saw, . . . he separated the light from the darkness."<sup>94</sup> Light as well as darkness are now integrated in the world-order, giving start to the succession of day and night which is part of the cosmic order.<sup>95</sup>

<sup>89</sup> See P. Hamlyn, *Egyptian Mythology* (London: Westbook House, 1965), pp. 35-36.

<sup>90</sup> Gen. 1:2; Deut. 32:11; Jer. 23:9.

<sup>91</sup> See J. P. Peters, "The Wind of God," in *JBL*, XXXIII (1914), pp. 81-86.

<sup>92</sup> See Eusebius of Caesarea, quoted in *Eusebii Pamphili Evangelicae Praeparationis* (ed. E. H. Gifford, Oxford: Typography of the Academy, 1903), I, p. 33, c. [p. 44], *Tēn tōn °olōn archēn ypotithetai aera zophōdē kai pneumatodē ē pnoēn aeros zophōdoys kai chaos thelon erēbōdes*. ("As the beginning of all things he assumes [i.e., Philo Byblius] a dark and windy air or a blowing of dark air and a marshy [and] dark chaos.")

<sup>93</sup> Whether and in what manner the Hermopolitan-Theban cosmogony could have been known to the Priestly writer of the postexilic period, it is impossible to tell. On the other hand, it must be recognized that, while Mesopotamian influence appears to be very evident in the Priestly account of the creation, it is possible that a wider syncretism contributed to this postexilic picture of the creation.

<sup>94</sup> Gen. 1:4.

<sup>95</sup> The succession of day and night belongs to the category of "h<sup>q</sup>wt of heaven and earth," cf. Jer. 33:25 in connection with this idea; see also Jer. 31:35f; Gen 8:22; Am. 4:13; Is. 45:7. However day and night are on a completely different footing. Day is light from the primeval light which was the firstborn of the world of creation, whereas night is a survival of the darkness of chaos, but now kept in bounds by a protective order.

In the passage, including verses 6 and 8, we are firmly back in the tradition of Mesopotamian cosmology:

- 6 And God said, "Let there be an expanse in the middle of the water to form a division between the waters." And it was so.  
 7 God made the expanse, and it divided the water below it from the water above it.  
 8 And God called the expanse Sky . . .

The imagery here is akin to Marduk's creative act in the *Enūma eliš*, but with a notable difference with regard to how the canopy of the sky was fashioned and the material employed for that purpose. Marduk created the three levels of the world by slicing the body of *Tiāmat*. The world that emerges from the primeval chaos has three parts. There are the heavens, formed from the belly of *Tiāmat*; the earth, formed from the head and the breast of her body;<sup>96</sup> and the deep, the immensity of waters surrounding the whole, which have flowed from the veins of the slain *Tiāmat*, but which are prevented from entering within the space enclosed by the two halves because of guards and crossbars set by Marduk himself. The creation in the Priestly narrative, however, was accomplished by the pronouncement of the divine *fiat*. The *thwm* was split and separated by means of the *rqy*<sup>c</sup> which was let down into the *thwm*. Yet, the function of the *rqy*<sup>c</sup> appears to be that of a partitioning wall to hold apart the waters which were on either side of it, but still it does not account for the space cleared of water beneath the dome, wherein the creation was to take place. Conscious of this difficulty the writer advances in conceptual thought and adds a special *fiat* to offset it:

- 9 God said, "Let the water beneath the sky be gathered into a single area, that the dry land may be visible." And it was so.

But even this is only partly satisfactory for it still does not explain how the space appeared which was cleared of the waters. That is, the seas drawn off to one area do not account for the waters that filled the dome beneath. Indeed, the seas have not enough water even to submerge the land again, as the flood sagas clearly show. The whole difficulty arose from the fact that the Priestly writer with his depersonalized *thwm* felt that he had no materials at hand out of which to create the *rqy*<sup>c</sup>. In a word, it was of no use to cleave the waters by any means whatsoever, if there was not at hand some means of keeping the inert waters apart. The solid canopy of the sky fashioned out of the carcass of the primeval chaotic monster, sliced in three

<sup>96</sup> The Fifth Tablet of *Enūma eliš* (vss. 53-58) contains an account of the formation both of the mountains, built upon *Tiāmat's* head and breast, and of the Euphrates and Tigris, released through *Tiāmat's* eyes. Simultaneously the waters are stored in her nostrils. Cf. B. Landsberger and J. V. Kinnier Wilson, "The Fifth Tablet of 'Enuma Elish,'" in *JNES* 20 (1961), Nr. 3, pp. 154-179, especially p. 161.

parts, according to the Babylonian Genesis, explains more adequately how the three layers of the universe came into being, whereas the biblical account is more concerned with the function of the *raqy<sup>c</sup>* representing it as a mere instrument in the form of a partitioning wall.<sup>97</sup>

The subsequent acts of creating the heavenly bodies, which will be studied in a later chapter, manifest the same antimythical view as we have noted in the cosmological presuppositions of the Priestly writer. With regard to the primeval chaos, it is pictured as a formless waste covered with water which he designates *thwm*. He thus seemingly equates it with *Tiāmat*, the personified deep of the salt waters conquered by Marduk, the Babylonian creator deity. However, in the Priestly creation story neither is this chaos personified nor is there any mention of a conflict between God and the chaos, nor is the world fashioned from its own substance as in the *Enūma eliš*.

Despite the traces of foreign influence, thus far analyzed in the Priestly account of the creation, there is one particular feature which distinguishes this story from all ancient Near Eastern parallels. In the absence of any suggestion that God accomplished the creation of the world after subduing a monster which personified the primeval chaos we surmise that the Priestly writer clearly refrained from following the Babylonian creation tradition in this matter.<sup>98</sup> The conception of creation by division is common to all accounts in ancient Near Eastern mythologies. The process of separation is presented by the Sumerians as the sundering of heaven from earth.<sup>99</sup> The Babylonian creation epic adds the battle motif to the division. In Egyptian cosmogony creation is described as the pushing apart of Nu (heaven) and Geb (earth) by Shu (air).<sup>100</sup> The Hittite version of a Hurrian myth visualizes this process as the cutting of heaven from earth by means of a saw.<sup>101</sup> In Phoenician mythology the division is pictured as splitting the world egg.<sup>102</sup> In all these accounts the separation is done peacefully and even the battle motif of the Babylonian version seems to have been added later.

Nevertheless the idea of a primeval conflict between Yahweh and some monster was a well established belief of Hebrew folklore. The motive of the struggle referred to in texts, which are postexilic in their present form,

<sup>97</sup> See L. Waterman, "Cosmogonic Affinities in Genesis 1:2," in *AJSL* 43 (1926-27), pp. 177-184, especially p. 182.

<sup>98</sup> That the Priestly author followed another tradition in his schematic account of the separation of sea and dry land can be seen from the fact that a different presentation of this theme existed. In Ps. 104:6-9; Prov. 8:29; Job 38:8-11 (see the analysis of these passages below), the separation is presented as involving a conflict. Yahweh is depicted as pushing back the cosmic waters from the land and defining their limits.

<sup>99</sup> See S. N. Kramer, *Sumerian Mythology* (Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1944), pp. 37-41.

<sup>100</sup> Cf. below, pp. 57 f.

<sup>101</sup> See H. G. Güterbock, "The Song of Ullikummi," in *JCS* 6 (1952), p. 29.

<sup>102</sup> See H. W. Haussig (ed.), *Wörterbuch der Mythologie* (Stuttgart: E. Klett, 1961), I. Abteilung, I. Teil, pp. 309-310.

discloses phraseology and imagery borrowed from old Near Eastern myths. Hence, it is not surprising that Yahweh was described as having, at the dawn of creation, overcome a monster that either personified or was closely associated with a primeval chaos of waters. Even the element of water appears to be dangerous, threatening to destroy life, to cover the earth and to turn it again into chaos.<sup>103</sup> Thus, in a text which antedates the Exile we have indications of a belief that Yahweh had to contend with the deep:

Thou didst cover it [earth] with the deep as with a garment;  
The waters stood upon the mountains.  
At thy rebuke they fled;  
At the sound of thy thunder they fled in terror.  
Thou didst set a bound which they should not cross,  
So that they should not again cover the earth.<sup>104</sup>

Indeed, the agitated billows of the sea are regarded as a violent menace and continuously have to be kept back from flooding into the world which had been created:

... I set the sand as a bound for the sea,  
As an everlasting barrier, which it may not pass over —  
Its waves may toss, but they cannot prevail,  
Its billows may roar, but they cannot pass over —.<sup>105</sup>

Further evidence of this notion is found in the book of Proverbs:

When he established the heavens I was there,  
When he traced the vault over the face of the deep;  
When he made firm the skies above,  
When he fixed the fountains of the deep;  
When he set for the sea its bound,  
So that the waters should not transgress his command;  
When he traced the fountains of the earth, ...<sup>106</sup>

From what is known of these references to cosmogonic myths contained in the Bible it has so far appeared that the element of water was consistently imagined as a threat to the land. The following reference to the sea shows the birth of a sea-god and the use of swaddling bands to restrain the violent infant:

<sup>103</sup> Cf. J. Pedersen, *Israel: its Life and Culture* (London: Humphrey Milford, 1926) I-II, p. 471, who assumes that the idea of water as a dangerous element is not native to Israelite thought, where water is only known as something good, but as adopted from without, i.e., from river countries like Egypt and Mesopotamia.

<sup>104</sup> Ps. 104:6-8.

<sup>105</sup> Jer. 5:22.

<sup>106</sup> Prov. 8:27-29.

Who shut the sea within two-leaved doors,  
 When it came gushing from the womb;  
 When I made the cloud its garment,  
 Dark mist its swaddling bands,  
 When I imposed my law upon it,  
 Set up bars and doors,  
 Saying, "Thus far come, but no more.  
 Here your wild waves halt"?<sup>107</sup>

But, while the imagery of water as a dangerous element is intelligible, it is impossible to follow the thought of the mythographer in all his detailed description of waters, either when he represents them as a single living entity, or when he identifies them with some mythical dragon. Apart from this view we find that these myths were interpreted in different ways because they are rooted in more than one cultural background and because of the tendency of the biblical authors to obscure gross pagan mythological allusions. Thus the sea is identified with the dragon:

Thou [Yahweh] rulest over the raging of the sea;  
 When its waves rise thou stillest them.  
 Thou hast crushed Rahab like one who is slain;  
 With thy strong arm thou hast scattered thy foes.<sup>108</sup>

In another text<sup>109</sup> Yahweh is described as having, at the beginning of creation, divided the sea by his strength, smitten the heads of dragons, crushed the heads of Leviathan, and given him for food to the desert demons. This is part of the creation myth, as shown by the effects; for, as a consequence of this battle with the sea monsters, God digs out the fountains and the valleys in which they run, dries up the primitive rivers, forms night and day, moon and sun, and establishes the boundaries of the earth. Yet those waters still retain their rebellious character:

Ocean currents raised, Yahweh,  
 Ocean currents raised their thunderous roar,  
 Ocean currents raised their pounding waves.  
 Stronger than thundering waters,  
 Mightier than breakers of the sea,  
 Mightier than high heaven was Yahweh.<sup>110</sup>

<sup>107</sup> Job 38:8-11. *yšyt bg<sup>2</sup>wn*, in verse 11 b, is probably corrupt; we follow the emendation *yšbt g<sup>2</sup>wn* suggested by G. Beer in *KBH*<sup>13</sup>.

<sup>108</sup> On the west-Semitic origin of the name *Rhb* see Albright, "The Babylonian Matter in the Predeuteronomomic Primeval History (JE) in Gen. I-II," in *JBL* 58 (1939), pp. 91-103, esp. p. 94, n. 5. He observes that the presence of medial *h* in the name *Rhb* attests to its west-Semitic origin and precludes the hypothesis of its being a word borrowed from Akkadian.

<sup>109</sup> See Ps. 74:12-17.

<sup>110</sup> Ps. 93:3-4. As translated by M. Dahood, *Psalms II: 51-100. The Anchor Bible*, vol. 17 (Garden City: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1968), p. 339. For pertinent discus-

The book of Job abounds in references to the creation myths and to the mythical monsters with whom God contended in creating the world:

Alone he [Yahweh] stretched out the heavens,  
Trode on the back of the Sea . . .  
A god could not turn back his anger;  
The cohorts of Rahab groveled 'neath him.<sup>111</sup>

The same image of a vanquished god is applied to the human soul when under the violent stress of trials it is completely overpowered:

Therefore I'll not restrain my mouth;  
I will speak in anguish of spirit,  
Complain in the bitterness of my soul.  
Am I the Sea or the Dragon,  
That you set a guard over me?<sup>112</sup>

The Sea and the Dragon were, at times, identified with the primeval chaos<sup>113</sup> and therefore the subduing or controlling of this deep had been the first necessary stage in the process of creating the world.<sup>114</sup> The name *lwytn* given to the monster and the allusion to its several heads recalls the Ugaritic mythology, where the goddess 'Anat is mentioned as having fought against such a monster:

<i>k-tmḥṣ ltn bṭn brḥ</i>	When you [O 'Anat] smote Ltn, the fleeting serpent,
<i>tkly bṭn 'qltn</i>	When you destroyed the coiling snake,
<i>šlyṭ d-šb<sup>c</sup>t rašm</i>	Shlyṭ of seven heads. <sup>115</sup>

*bṭn brḥ* with its Hebrew equivalent *nḥš brḥ*<sup>116</sup> frequently translated "the fleeting, volatile serpent" (but the meaning of *brḥ* is unknown) is applied to Leviathan as its epithet. The Ugaritic term *bṭn*, related to *patnā* in Syriac, *bathan* in Arabic and *bašmu* in Akkadian, makes the serpentine character of the monster a certainty. The same passage concerned mentions Leviathan as *bṭn 'qltn* which is the "coiling, winding serpent," and in this sense it is used by Isaiah: *lwytn nḥš 'qltwn*.<sup>117</sup> The sea-serpent mentioned in Amos may refer to the same mythical creature.<sup>118</sup> Finally,

sion and documentation of the principles on which the translation is based see pp. 340-342.

<sup>111</sup> Job 9:8, 13; translated by Marvin H. Pope, *Job, The Anchor Bible*, vol. 15 (Garden City: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1965).

<sup>112</sup> Job 7:11-12.

<sup>113</sup> Ps. 148:7b.

<sup>114</sup> Job 26:10-13.

<sup>115</sup> See C. H. Gordon, *op. cit.*, text 67: I:1-3 (English translation mine).

<sup>116</sup> Is. 27:1; Job 26:13b.

<sup>117</sup> Is. 27:1.

<sup>118</sup> Am. 9:3.

the primordial monster is depicted as having seven heads. Moreover, the monstrous appearance of Leviathan is still further elucidated in view of its shifting identity with *ym* or *tnynym* — according to what we learn from this passage:

It was you who shattered the Sea with your strength,  
 who smashed the heads of Tannin,  
 who was the waters' most treacherous.  
 It was you who crushed the heads of Leviathan,  
 who gave him as food  
 to be gathered by desert tribes.<sup>119</sup>

We may notice another creature parallel to Leviathan, the monster Rahab, an otherwise unknown primordial being:

By his power he quelled the Sea,  
 By his cunning he smote Rahab.  
 By his wind he bagged the Sea,  
 His hand pierced the fleeting serpent.<sup>120</sup>

From the aforementioned texts concerning Leviathan the most that might be concluded is that Leviathan represents a west-Semitic counterpart of *Tiāmat*, the personified chaos of the Babylonians. It is possible, however, that several versions of those cosmogonic myths existed and that the mythographers made use of them with considerable freedom. As we have yet to see from an Egyptian cosmogonic account, there is reason for believing that the Egyptian conception of such a primordial dragon underlies the biblical and perhaps also the Canaanite imagery of Leviathan. The following extracts from the "Book of Apophis," a document written in 312-311 B.C., illustrate some passages parallel to ones in the book of Job, since in both books the watery abyss is said to be inhabited by a dragon. Apart from this record, rather late to be compared with the book of Job, we know from the "Book of the Dead," composed and compiled during the time embracing the eighteenth (1580-1450 B.C.) and twentieth (1200 B.C.) dynasties that Apophis, the chief of Ra's enemies, was imagined as a huge serpent who lived in the waters of Nun or in the depths of the celestial Nile and who each day attempted to obstruct the passage of the solar barque. In the myth of the Great Quarrel, Set claims that it is he who stands in the prow of the solar barque and vanquishes all the enemies of Ra and casts them back into the abyss. Stormy weather would be inter-

<sup>119</sup> Ps. 74:13-14. As translated by M. Dahood, *op. cit.*, p. 199. For notes of philological character pertaining to this passage see pp. 205-206.

<sup>120</sup> Job 26:12-13.

preted by the Egyptians as a momentary victory of the dragon Apophis. Likewise, when there was a total eclipse, it was thought as a total triumph of Apophis who had swallowed the solar barque.

The idea which we notice in the biblical and Egyptian context is that ceaseless antagonism between the creator-god and the dragon living in the sea. Despite such a conflict, Yahweh's sovereignty is absolute and the primeval chaos retains no powers of resistance as soon as Rahab has been cut to pieces.<sup>121</sup> Putting side by side some extracts from the "Book of Apophis" and from the book of Job we find some striking similarities.

Book of Apophis	Book of Job
22:11 Arise, Ra, because your enemies are destroyed,	26:12 By his power he quelled the Sea, By his cunning he smote Rahab.
Apophis has been cut to pieces, And the evil opponents are lying on the ground. Arise, Pharaoh, because your adversaries are annihilated; Apophis has been cut to pieces, And his associates lie prostrate.	13 By his wind he bagged the Sea, His hand pierced the fleeting serpent.
22:15 Arise, Ra, your enemies are destroyed, Fire is applied to Apophis So that he bites his coiling back.	9:8b He trod on the back of the Sea.
23:20 Turn around and go back, Apophis, you will fall in your retreat and in your evasion.	13b The cohorts of Rahab groveled 'neath him.
22:17 Apophis is put in fetters.	26:13 ... the fleeting serpent.
29:7 Apophis' arms are no more, neither are his legs.	7:12 Am I the Sea or the Dragon, That you set a guard over me?
29:18 Apophis the "stinking" crocodile. <sup>122</sup>	40:25-32 [Description of the crocodile?]
	41: 5-26 [Leviathan has all the features of a crocodile].

<sup>121</sup> Cf. Is. 51:9f; Is. 30:7.

<sup>122</sup> Cf. "Das Apophisbuch", in *Urkunden zur Religion des alten Aegypten* (übersetzt und eingeleitet von Günther Roeder, Jena: Eugen Diederichs, 1923), pp. 98-11. [English translation mine from the German].

The lengthy description of the marine monster in chapters 40 and 41 of the book of Job fits perfectly the crocodile, although its name is never spelled out. However provocative those parallel passage and the description of the crocodile may be, we do not see in them any attempt to represent the primordial dragon as a crocodile. It seems appropriate to point out some related poetic idioms and ideas on the basis of which we surmise that the Egyptian mythological imagery may very well have been the source of Job's description of the serpentine monster Leviathan. Egyptian creation legends not only found their way into the Israelite cosmogonic thought and imagery but also embodied certain common ideas that may be regarded as characteristic of Egypt. If Egypt is known to the ancient Hebrews by its emblematic name Rahab,<sup>123</sup> it is presupposed that they were familiar with this idea and conscious of its related significance.

Another mythical animal referred to in this context is closely related to Leviathan and its name *bhmwt*, an apparent plural of the common noun *bhmh*, "beast, cattle."<sup>124</sup> We may relate this word to the bovine creature mentioned in the Ugaritic mythology. *°gl* "bullock" as well as Leviathan were two of the mythical monsters opposed and finally defeated by the goddess *°Anat*:

*lištbm tnn ištbmnh*

Did I [*°Anat*] not muzzle the dragon  
— muzzle him, I say?

*mḥšt bṯn °qltn*

Did I not destroy the coiling snake,  
Shlyṯ of seven heads?

*šlyṯ d-šb°t rašm*

Did I not destroy the beloved of Eī,  
[as requested?]?

*mḥšt mdd ilm ar[š]*

*šmt °gl il °tk*

Did I not smite the bullock of Eī,  
°tk?<sup>125</sup>

The juxtaposition of Dragon, Leviathan (i.e., *bṯn °qltn*) and of *°gl* "bullock" suggests that they belong to the realm of some ancient myth and have a supernatural character. In the religious traditions of the ancient Near East, the theme of the dramatic conflict between Yahweh and the waters was part of a pattern of myth and ritual, which was re-enacted each year

<sup>123</sup> Ps. 87:4; Is. 30:7.

<sup>124</sup> The word *bhmh* has tentatively been derived from a hypothetical Egyptian compound *p°-ih mw*, "the ox of the waters." The identification of "Behemoth" with the hippopotamus has recently been taken for granted despite both certain considerations in Job's text which militate against this view and the lack of written evidence from Egypt which never designated the hippopotamus "the ox of the water." On the suggestion that *bhmwt* is to be regarded as a *pluralis maiestatis* designating a beast distinguished by its size, viz. "the Huge Beast," see F. Hommel, *Ethnologie und Geographie des Alten Orients* (München: C. H. Beck, 1926), p. 177, n. 2.

<sup>125</sup> Cf. C. H. Gordon, *op. cit.*, text *°nt*: III: 37-41 (English translation mine). See also Marvin H. Pope's comment on "Behemoth" in *op. cit.*, pp. 268-278, footnote 15a, who quotes an additional fragmentary text: Gordon 75: I: 26-33, in which such a bovine creature seems to be described.

in connection with the seasonal cycle of fertility and summer barrenness. When the ancient Hebrews appropriated the elements of the seasonal pattern of death and revival, they prescinded from the polytheistic motive and reinterpreted it within the context of exclusive faith in Yahweh, the Lord of history.<sup>126</sup> They "historicized" the myth in terms of their own salvation history and of the world itself, since Yahweh's victory at the beginning of creation was the evidence of his lordship over history. It was as Redeemer that the Hebrews first came to know Yahweh.<sup>127</sup> Thus, the crossing of the Reed Sea is the triumphal assertion that the foes who threaten Israel's existence will finally be defeated as Yahweh had subdued the chaotic powers "in days of old."<sup>128</sup> References to the creation myths should not be understood as mere poetical embroideries, since they recall God's creative activity at the dawn of history:

Awake, awake, put on strength,  
 O arm of the Lord!  
 Awake, as in days of old,  
 as in generations long gone!  
 Was it not thou that didst hew Rahab in pieces,  
 that didst pierce the dragon?  
 Was it not thou that didst dry up the sea,  
 the waters of the mighty deep;  
 That didst make the depths of the sea a way  
 for the redeemed to pass over?<sup>129</sup>

The association of the primeval dragon with Pharaoh portrays the timeless realm of mythology, where Yahweh was engaged in battle with the primeval monsters, as the background of the description of Israel's deliverance from Egypt. Pharaoh is identified by Ezekiel with *htnym hgdwl*, similar to what Isaiah calls Egypt in his "oracle against the beasts of the south."<sup>130</sup> Following an initial dialogue with clear indications of the speaker and the person addressed, a subsequent scene evokes a rehearsal of Yahweh's dramatic conflict with the dragon. The same theme is expressed in two poems:

Ez. 29:3-5

Behold, I am against you  
 O Pharaoh, king of Egypt,

Ez. 32:2-5

O mortal man, raise a dirge over  
 Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and say: . . .

<sup>126</sup> See T. H. Gaster, *Thespis* (2nd rev. ed., Anchor Books, Garden City: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1961), pp. 64-66.

<sup>127</sup> Ps. 77:20-21.

<sup>128</sup> It is worth noting that almost all the passages in question are of exilic or postexilic date.

<sup>129</sup> Is. 51:9-10.

<sup>130</sup> Is. 30:7, where we read: "Egypt, whose help is empty and vain. Wherefore I have called her 'Rahab Sitstill.'"

The great dragon, that lies  
 In the midst of its stream,  
 That says, "This stream of  
 mine is my own —  
 It was I that made it."  
 I will put hooks in your jaws,  
 ...  
 And I will cast you into the  
 desert,  
 On the open field shall you lie,  
 Ungathered and unburied;  
 To the beasts of the earth  
 and the birds of the air  
 Will I leave you for food.

"You are nought but a dragon in the  
 seas, sprouting water from your  
 nostrils,  
 Troubling the water with your feet,  
 and fouling their streams ...  
 I will spread my net over you, ...  
 And I will draw you up in my seine,  
 And I will cast you on the ground;  
 On the open field will I toss you.  
 I will cause all the birds of the air  
 to settle upon you,  
 And with you will I glut all the  
 beasts of the earth; ..." <sup>131</sup>

In both poems the capturing and slaying of the dragon involves a question of sovereignty; Pharaoh had to be defeated because he challenged Yahweh, the victor. The mythical theme of the slaying of the dragon is here interwoven with an historical situation where Egypt oppressed its satellite states.

Another subtle resemblance to the old myth of the fight of Yahweh with the demon of chaos appears in the psalm of Habakkuk.<sup>132</sup> Aside from the imagery and the language employed in this psalm which lend themselves so readily to mythological interpretation, there is an important aspect connected with this cosmic myth. Throughout this chapter it becomes quite clear that the main theme is a theophany. This divine manifestation is particularly sensed in the natural phenomena: lightning, thunder, storm, earthquake, etc. The concern of the Hebrew poet with the illustration of Yahweh's manifestation is as much a confession of his dependence on similar views held by neighboring peoples as it is an example of sublimation of an originally mythical appreciation of natural phenomena. Attention must be focused on the allusions to that episode which through devout, imaginative treatment made so deep an impression upon Israel's thinking: the deliverance at the Reed Sea.<sup>133</sup> Mythological motives reminiscent of that primeval conflict between the creator and the chaos fur-

<sup>131</sup> Ez. 29:3-5; 32:2-5. To appreciate the full force of this oracle it is necessary to bear in mind that, according to Egyptian ideas, the Pharaoh caused the annual inundation of the Nile. This view gives the prophet the opportunity of likening him to the dragon who was subdued in primeval time.

<sup>132</sup> Hab. 3:8-11; creation is pictured as a combat between Yahweh and the rebellious elements. Popular mythology represents God as a warrior and puts him on horseback and on war chariots.

<sup>133</sup> Allusion to the crossing of the Reed Sea; cf. Ps. 77:16, 19-20.

nished the background to the imagery applied to these phenomena. The translation of this psalm is still far from being satisfactorily established. But enough of its content is now clear to permit an attempt to show how, under the guise of comparisons and motives borrowed from myths, the author announced the coming of Yahweh who would engage in battle with Israel's enemies, overthrow them, and once again triumph over all his foes, re-enacting the pristine and perennial victory:

- 8 Did your anger burn against the rivers, O Lord,  
 Your indignation against the streams,  
 Your rage against the sea,  
 That you rode upon your steeds,  
 Upon your victorious chariots?
- 9 Your bow was completely uncovered,  
 You filled your quiver full [with arrows].  
 You split the earth with rivers;
- 10 The mountains saw you; they writhed in pain.  
 The clouds poured down water;  
 The abyss uttered its voice.  
 The sun lifted up its hands on high.
- 11 The moon stood still in its habitation;  
 At the light of your arrows they flew,  
 At the glittering flash of your spear.
- 15 You trod the sea with your horses,  
 The turmoil of great waters.

This motive of combat and defeat either of a dragon or the rebellious elements, as expressed in verse 8, often appealed to the Israelites in times of oppression, as we may safely assume, and came to be projected both backward into cosmogony and forward into eschatology. Just as God once created the world, after destroying the monsters of chaos, so he will perforce again, out of a world reduced to chaos because of the wickedness of man, recreate a new world by the same means.

An appraisal of the creation accounts in Genesis reveals the fact that the conception of a primeval struggle between Yahweh and the personified chaos has been adopted neither by the Yahwist nor by the Priestly writers although ancient cosmogonies contributed to the biblical creation account in terms of the mythological imagery, the highly dramatic quality, and, to some extent, the sequential form in which this material had already been organized. For the proper evaluation of the creation stories extant in the books of the Bible, but apart from Genesis, it must be recognized that those narratives of the creation are the product of that peculiar Hebrew interest in the past which finds expression in the attempt to contemplate history in a typological way. As in "the days of old" Yahweh succeeded

in subduing the primordial deep and proceeded to create the world, so he will perform once more his wonderful deeds in a specific historical setting, on behalf of Israel and in punishment of foreign oppressors. The success of this original attempt was immense, and it set the pattern for all subsequent Hebrew thinking. Its requirements determined that current cosmogonic tradition should be shaped to form a consequential narrative of Yahweh's creative and redemptive activity in accordance with the monotheistic outlook that had been established as the faith of Israel. The measure of this achievement is to be seen when reference is made to the cosmogonic mythology that also existed concerning Yahweh's struggle with the monsters of the primeval chaos. For that mythology represented the earlier popular tradition of Israel, though taken over from pagan folklore and adapted to their own mentality and belief. In particular, the early history of Israel acquired a new significance as the prototype of any historical situation where the existence of Israel was threatened. The main emphasis, therefore, is placed on a God who works through history and not upon a nature deity identifiable with the realm of nature. Yet the God who controls history must also control and order the forces of nature which play their part in the historical life of the nation.

With Second Isaiah, the Lord of history and the Creator of the world coalesce in a single image.

This prophet grasped the intimate connection between the history of Israel and the creation of the world:

This is what the Lord says,  
he that created you, Jacob  
and formed you, Israel.<sup>134</sup>

The Lord is the eternal God,  
Creator of the ends of the earth.<sup>135</sup>

The whole process of nature is under God's command, for he cut Rahab to pieces, he pierced the dragon, he dried up the waters of the deep.<sup>136</sup> The interesting point to note is the way in which this myth is linked with the deliverance from Egypt, so that the creation of the world and the deliverance of Israel are again revealed as the acts of the same God. Yahweh is primarily the Lord of history. Yet this disclosure carries within it the germ of the creation faith as well. Because of this sovereignty in history and because history is wrought in the sphere of nature, Yahweh's control must also extend over nature. This is tacitly assumed throughout the religious faith of Israel from the Exodus onwards. Only because he is able to control the waters of the Reed Sea can he deliver his people.<sup>137</sup>

<sup>134</sup> Is. 43:1.

<sup>135</sup> Is. 40:28.

<sup>136</sup> See Is. 51:9-11; cf. also Is. 30:7.

<sup>137</sup> See Is. 43:16-21.

The prophet's emphasis on the divine transcendence is extolled in the lofty conception of creation to which human experience can offer no parallels:

I am the Lord, maker of all that is,  
 who stretched out the heavens, I alone;  
 who spread the earth — no one was with me!<sup>138</sup>

He forms the light, creates darkness,<sup>139</sup> and leads out the stars on the paths of the gauzy skies.<sup>140</sup> His creative power stretches over the whole realm of nature and is brought to a focus in the prophet's sublime and transcendent conception of creation. The pagan creation myths with their naturalistic setting are moved into the background. Yet the conception of chaos still remains, and this Yahweh has not created:

Who created the heavens  
 — he is God! —  
 who formed the earth and made it;  
 he established it firmly;  
 he did not create it a chaos,  
 he formed it to be inhabited.<sup>141</sup>

Despite that, Yahweh stands over against it not as a demiurge who along with his creatures belongs to the primeval formless matter, but as God who is supreme, majestic in his creating, and unlimited in his power. The whole world emerges from chaos at the word of his command, and already the stage is set for the disappearance of the chaos and the primeval monster to give place to the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* which first is explicitly stated in the time of the Maccabees.<sup>142</sup>

Of all the many accounts of the creation extant in the Bible none arrests the attention more than that contained in chapter 38 of the book of Job. The poetic description of the theophany and its dramatic quality evoke a lively impression both of God's transcendence and omnipotence.<sup>143</sup> As it becomes evident in the sequel, God's omnipotence is beyond man's understanding. That the author intended to deal with the theme of the omnipotent God under two different aspects is seen from the answers implied in the rhetorical questions. Mindful of this, it would appear that the author's purpose of demonstrating the omnipotence of God was to provide an explanation of how God is related to the world and how he transcends

<sup>138</sup> Is. 44:24; see also Is. 40:22; 42:5; 45:12; 48:13.

<sup>139</sup> Cf. Is. 45:7.

<sup>140</sup> Cf. Is. 40:22-26; see also 45:12.

<sup>141</sup> Is. 45:18.

<sup>142</sup> See 2 Macc. 7:28; cf. also Prov. 8:22-30.

<sup>143</sup> Cf. J. Bottéro, "La naissance du monde selon Israël," in *Sources Orientales* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1959), vol. I, p. 215.

man's understanding. Indeed, in the questions which the Creator addresses to Job we reach the heart of the problem which man faces in seeking to understand his role in the processes of nature. In the dialogue that follows, Yahweh challenges Job to show what he knows of the founding of the earth, the subjugation of the violent sea, the dawn of the day, the depths of the infernal regions, the expanse of the earth, the abodes of light and darkness, the treasure house of the snow and ice, the ordering of the constellations and the rains.

The founding of the earth, vss. 4-6:

Where were you when I founded the earth?  
 Tell me, if you know so much.  
 Who drafted its dimensions? Do you know?  
 Who stretched the line over it?  
 On what are its sockets sunk,  
 Who laid its cornerstone? . . .

The subjugation of the violent sea, vss. 8-11:

Who shut the sea within two-leaved doors,  
 When it came gushing from the womb;  
 When I made the cloud its garment,  
 Dark mist its swaddling bands,  
 When I imposed my law upon it,  
 Set up bars and doors,  
 Saying, "Thus far come, but no more.  
 Here your wild waves halt"? <sup>144</sup>

The dawn of the day, vs. 12:

Did you ever command a morning,  
 Post Dawn in his place? <sup>145</sup>

The depths of the infernal regions, vss. 16-17:

Have you entered the springs of the sea,  
 Have you walked in the recesses of the deep?  
 Have Death's Gates been revealed to you,  
 Have you seen the Dark Portals?

The expanse of the earth, vs. 18:

Have you examined earth's expanse?  
 Tell, if you know all this.

<sup>144</sup> See above, footnote 107.

<sup>145</sup> Literally "caused to know"; *šhr* designates either "dawn" or the deified "dawn."

The abodes of light and darkness, vs. 19:

Where is the way to light's dwelling,  
Darkness, where its abode?

The treasure houses of the snow and ice, wind and rain, vss. 22-30:

Have you entered the snow stores,  
Or seen the hoards of hail, . . .  
By what power is the flood divided,  
The east [wind] spread over the earth?  
Who cleft a channel for the downpour,  
A path for the thundershower, . . .  
Does the rain have a father,  
Who sired the dew drops?  
From whose womb comes the ice,  
The hoarfrost of heaven, who bore it,  
When water hardens like stone,<sup>146</sup>  
The surface of the deep imprisoned?

The ordering of the constellations, vss. 31-32:

Can you tie Pleiades' fetters,  
Or loose Orion's bands?<sup>147</sup>  
Can you lead out Mazzarot on time,<sup>148</sup>  
Guide the Bear with her cubs?

The season of rains, vss. 34-38:

Can you raise your voice in the clouds,  
And let the streaming water cover you?  
Can you send lightning scurrying,  
To say to you, "Here we are"? . . .  
Who counts the clouds in wisdom,  
Tilts the water jars of heaven,  
When the dust fuses to lumps,  
And the clods cleave together?

In thus presenting the transcendence of God the creator and Job's shocking charges against him, as related in previous chapters of the same book, the author was also able to use this dramatic dialogue to express his views on the inscrutability of nature. Thus any mysteries in nature — the springs of the sea, the coming of the rains, the movements of the heavenly bodies —

<sup>146</sup> *yḥb<sup>2</sup>w* is to be read *yḥbrw* as proposed by G. Beer in *KBH*<sup>13</sup>.

<sup>147</sup> The fetters of the Pleiades and the bands of Orion refer to the configuration of these constellations.

<sup>148</sup> We will examine the term Mazzarot at length below on pp. 85-87.

served but to convince him that Yahweh's ways were higher than his ways and to prepare him for a like incomprehensibility in Yahweh's dealings with men. Confronted with the succession of mysteries, Job can but bow before the greatness of God, acknowledging that He can do all things and that His purpose cannot be thwarted.<sup>149</sup>

Some further insight into biblical cosmogony is afforded by the lofty conception of creation made by the author of Psalm 104. Comparing this psalm with the hymn to Aton we note a similarity in diction as well as in tone which leads us to conclude that the author of this psalm had unmistakably a knowledge of the Hymn to the Sun composed by the Pharaoh Amenhotep IV (ca. 1370-1552) who called himself Akhenaten. Yet whatever influence Akhenaten's hymn might have had upon Psalm 104, any borrowed material has been thoroughly assimilated to the faith in Yahweh and transformed to express the creation mythology and the Hebrew cosmology.<sup>150</sup> We may best approach the issue of resemblance of Psalm 104 to the Egyptian Hymn to the Sun by observing related features in the structure of the two poems.

Psalm 104	Hymn to the Sun
Introduction, vss. 1-2a	Introduction
The creation of the world, vss. 2b-9	The night
	The day
The blessings of water, vss. 10-18	The living creatures and their sustenance
The night, vss. 19-21	The blessings of water
The day, vss. 22-23	The creation of the world
The living creatures and their sustenance, vss. 24-30	
Conclusion, vss. 31-35	Conclusion

In the introduction and conclusion of both poems we notice a dissimilarity in conception of the creator God who was identified by the latter with the cosmic life giving powers of the sun's rays, whereas the former arrives at the concept of a transcendent God from the simple realization

<sup>149</sup> Cf. Job 42:1-6.

<sup>150</sup> Akhenaten's conception of the sun-god was most influential in establishing the biblical creation account according to its Egyptian pattern. The cult of the sun disc which was characteristically devoid of the usual association of the sun with the destructive aspect of the storm or weather-god, was stamped with a profound spirit of humanity. Akhenaten's deity was the sole god, beside whom there was no other, the beginning of life, the creator of countries, the maker of mankind and of all that is upon the earth and on high. There is, however, no evidence that any effort was made to spread Akhenaten's cult over the Egyptian dominions in western Asia. The possibility of Asiatic influence upon the shaping of the cult cannot be altogether excluded. See J. H. Breasted, *A History of Egypt* (New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936), pp. 355-378.

of the all-encompassing quality of the element of light, "O Lord, my God, thou art very great; who veilest thyself in light as in a garment." The similarity in pattern is most apparent in the description of the living creatures and their sustenance, and the theme of the creation of the world. This mighty theme, represented in dynamic imagery, takes the form of a brief exposition of the spreading of the heavens in the midst of the surrounding deep, the sending out of wind and lightning, the establishing of the earth, the setting of bounds to the waters of the primordial chaos.

## Psalm 104

## Hymn to the Sun

Creation of the heavens:

- 2b Who stretches out the heavens  
like a tent;  
3 Who lays the beams of his upper  
chambers in the waters;

Thou hast made the distant sky in  
order to rise therein,

Function of the natural phenomena:

- Who makes the clouds his chariot  
Who walks upon the wings of the  
wind.  
4 Who makes the winds his mes-  
sengers;  
His ministers, flames of fire.

Though thou art far away, thy rays  
are on earth;  
Though thou art in their faces, no  
one knows thy going.  
Rising in thy form as the living Aton,  
Appearing, shining, withdrawing or  
approaching.

The establishing of the earth:

- 5 He founded the earth upon its  
pillars,  
That it might not be moved for-  
ever and ever.

The waters above the firmament:

- 6 Thou didst cover it with the deep  
as with a garment;

For thou hast set a Nile in heaven,  
That it may descend for them [coun-  
tries] and make waves upon the  
mountains

The waters stood upon the  
mountains.

Like the great green sea.

The motive of the primeval combat:

- 7 At thy rebuke they fled;  
At the sound of thy thunder they  
fled in terror.

- 8 Thou didst set a bound which  
they should not cross,  
So that they should not again  
cover the earth.

The different locations in space:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 9 The mountains rose, the valleys<br>sank down,<br>To the place which thou hadst<br>founded for them. | Thou madest millions of forms thy-<br>self alone,<br>Cities, towns, fields, road and riv-<br>er. <sup>151</sup> |
|---|---|

In one notable way the account of the creation in Psalm 104 appears to differ from the Egyptian prototype. The Egyptian poem does not regard the primeval waters as a violent menace that the creator god overcomes; indeed Akhenaten's cosmogony is in line with the Egyptian tradition on this point.<sup>152</sup> Moreover, the sun, although it was recognized by the biblical authors as a source of light, never was associated with divine attributes in the Old Testament, over against the Egyptian belief which maintained the opinion that the sun was not just a manifestation of god but god himself.

The sequence of the processes of creation followed in this psalm suggests also, by way of comparison, a striking parallel to the creation narrative of the Priestly tradition contained in Genesis.

Psalm 104	Genesis 1
2 Who veilest thyself in light as as in a garment; Who stretches out the heavens like a tent;	3-5 Creation of light  6-8 Creation of the firmament
3 Who lays the beams of his upper chambers in the wa- ters.	7 Division between the waters that were below the firma- ment from those that were above.
5-9 Emergence of the earth out of the deep.	9-10 God's establishing of the earth and the seas.
10-18 The blessings of water	11-13 The growth of vegetation
19-23 Creation of the heavenly bodies	14-19 Creation of the luminaries
— No reference to the creation of winged animals	20 Creation of winged animals

<sup>151</sup> Cf. The Hymn to the Aton, in *ANET*, Translated by J. A. Wilson pp. 369-371.

<sup>152</sup> With the exception of the Heliopolitan cosmogony where, in the "Book of the Dead" and in the "Book of Apophis," Ra is said to have killed the Apophis serpent (and by this alluding to the theme of the conflict between light-gods and chaotic darkness), the Egyptian cosmogonic tradition abstains from describing the creation as the achievement of an awful struggle against the forces of primeval chaos. Sumerian cosmogony was like the Egyptian in this respect.

25-26 Creation of aquatic animals	21-22 Creation of sea creatures
— No reference to the creation of terrestrial animals	24-25 Creation of domestic and wild animals
— No reference to the creation of man	26-28 Creation of man
27-30 God's providential care of the created world.	29-30 Man and his sustenance

The content of these passages attests a similarity in idea that displays itself both in the creative imagination of the origin of the world and in the belief in a transcendent God. It is, then, along the line of the growing concepts of the transcendence of God and of the universality of his rule within Israel's thinking that we are to trace the advance in theological insight. The intensive theological concentration of the Priestly creation account is nowhere better manifested than in the assertion that the creation moves from chaos to cosmos which serves as a cosmic parallel with the human situation: though chaos and evil be dominant for a while, order and right will achieve victory at the end. The points of resemblance, as in the plan and general contents, between the narrative developed in Psalm 104 and in the Priestly document, suggest the plausible hypothesis that the account of the Priestly cosmogony was modelled on the pattern of this psalm.

To complete our survey of the creation accounts in the Bible, we have to consider the problem of poetical personification of an attribute of Yahweh in the context of the creation of the world. At first consideration wisdom might appear to be a mere human insight. Such, however, is not its meaning in the book of Proverbs:

The Lord by wisdom founded the earth,  
By reason he established the heavens;  
By his knowledge the depths are broken up,  
And the clouds drop down dew.<sup>153</sup>

Wisdom here is clearly identified with the divine purpose by which the universe is directed, and with the thoughts which God cherished in creating the world. Here we are indeed very close to a concept of wisdom's co-operation with God. It would appear, however, that wisdom was a means by which Yahweh created the world. Wisdom might thus very well be compared to a constructive principle by which God allowed himself to be guided in the construction of the world. And yet, wisdom is not Yahweh himself; it is something separate from him. Indeed, in a passage referring to the description of the primordial condition, wisdom introduces herself in a quite peculiar way, speaking of primeval existence and of pre-existence before all the works of creation. Though coeval with the beginning of

<sup>153</sup> Prov. 3:19-20.

God's creative activity, she is created, being the first-born of God's works of creation.<sup>154</sup>

Wisdom anterior to the physical world, vss. 22-26:

The Lord formed me as the first of his works,  
 The beginning of his deeds of old;  
 In the earliest ages was I fashioned,  
 At the first, when the earth began.  
 When there were no depths was I brought forth,  
 When there were no fountains brimming with water;  
 Before the mountains were sunk,  
 Before the hills was I brought forth;  
 While as yet he had not made the earth and the fields,  
 Nor the first clods of the world.

Wisdom present at the construction of the universe, vss. 27-29:

When he established the heavens I was there,  
 When he traced the vault over the face of the deep;  
 When he made firm the skies above,  
 When he fixed the fountains of the deep;  
 When he set for the sea its bound,  
 So that the waters should not transgress his command;  
 When he traced the foundations of the earth.

Wisdom's manner of life during the work of creation, vss. 30-31:

I was beside him as a ward of his;  
 And daily was I filled with delight.  
 As I sported before him all the time,  
 Sported in this world of his,  
 And found my delight in the sons of men.<sup>155</sup>

Wisdom's existence before the actual work of creation had taken place is a clear postulate of man's seeking of the rational clarification and ordering of the world. Moreover, that there must be an order underlying the processes of nature was already inherent in the faith in a divine being creating and governing the world. But the way the intellectual encounter with and confrontation of the world was pursued by the Israelites was entirely new

<sup>154</sup> G. von Rad commenting on this chapter defines "wisdom" as follows: "The Wisdom who here reveals herself is none other than that secret of creation, instinct of the universe itself, of which the poem in Job 38 speaks." Cf. G. von Rad, "Some Aspects of the Old Testament World-view," in *The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays* (Edinburgh and London: Oliver & Boyd, 1966), pp. 144-165, especially p. 160.

<sup>155</sup> Prov. 8:22-31.

among them. Foreign influence, particularly Egyptian ideologies and Persian speculations, have undoubtedly given start to this inquisitive mood dominant then in Israel. On general grounds it must be recognized, however, that the biblical authors never expressed the interdependence of the various parts of the cosmos in terms of relations governed by unchangeable laws. Hence, "wisdom" is not an expression of these laws and thus it cannot be compared with the Greek concept of an *archē* of the cosmos as its ultimate determining principle.<sup>156</sup> The world in which the ancient Hebrews found themselves placed was too mysterious and too much a realm of Yahweh's intervention for them to be able to arrive, in their striving after rational insight, at a first principle. The conception of creation, however, underwent a special development in the Israelite tradition. As we already have seen in the Priestly document of Genesis, creation opened up the dimension of history, linking it thus with the beginning of mankind. Wisdom literature, on the other hand, widened the historical perspective by presenting "wisdom" within a cosmic background.<sup>157</sup> It was she who would know about the secrets of creation, since she was present at the construction of the world, she herself being anterior to it, and having stood at the side of Yahweh during his creative work. It is not surprising therefore that "wisdom" claims to satisfy the intellectual need in man in his endeavour to apprehend the revealed truth which is unattainable by natural knowledge.<sup>158</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> See G. von Rad, *Old Testament Theology* (transl. by D. M. G. Stalker; New York and Evanston: Harper & Rows, 1962), I, pp. 426-427.

<sup>157</sup> It is worth noting that in Wisdom literature the theme of creation is characterized by rational interest in the technical aspect of the creative process.

<sup>158</sup> See Prov. 8:32-36.

## PART TWO

### PARTS OF THE WORLD

#### SECTION A: THE HEAVEN

##### 1. Analysis of the Terms for Heaven and of Their Context

In designating heaven some Semitic languages start from the sensuous impression of height and, therefore, form the names denoting it from the roots *samā* (*samawa*) and *rwm*, (cf. *warima* to be swollen), both of which express the idea of "being high." To the latter group belong the Ethiopic *rayam*, which denotes "heaven" (cf. also *samai*). Both roots are combined in the Phoenician *šmym rmm*.<sup>159</sup> The term *šmym*, cst. *šmy*, def. *hšmym*, most frequently used in the Bible to designate "the heaven" in a masculine noun and like *šmy*<sup>2</sup> in Aramaic and *šmayyā* in Syriac is used only in the plural. The Ugaritic term *šmm* (var. *šmym*) "heaven" is a plural noun. In the Akkadian language *šamû* <*šamā*<sup>2</sup>*u* with the meaning of "heaven", is a "plurale tantum." In "Jungbabylonisch" it occurs also poetically as *šamāwu*, while in "Albabylonisch" (using these terms as defined by W. von Soden in GAG), *šamûm* denotes "rain."<sup>160</sup>

A deeper insight into the concept of heaven is afforded by studying the relation of the heaven to the deity inhabiting it. The Babylonian sky god is Anu (whose ideogram is the same as that for "star"), and means *šamû* (heaven), Anu, and *ilu* (god). Sky and god are thus indicated with the same cuneiform sign, but with different words. From the ancient data it is quite certain that the sky, more than any other phenomenon or subject, expresses the divine essence and the character of divine power. The sky is "god" in general. It is sensed even more strongly than this,

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<sup>159</sup> See M. Lidzbarski, *Ephemeris für semitische Epigraphik* (Giessen: Verlag von A. Töpelmann, 1908), II (1903-1907), p. 51. The Bodašart inscription provides evidence in this connection, where the expression "High Heaven" occurs in parallel with "Sea, Earth and Flames": *ym šmym-rmm ʾrš ršpym*. Lidzbarski interprets *šmym rmm* as an appellation, whereas O. Eissfeldt explains *šmym rmm* as "ein Stadtteil von Gross-Sidon," in *Ras Schamra und Sanchuniaton* (Halle [Saale]: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1939), pp. 62-67.

<sup>160</sup> See W. von Soden, *Grundriss der akkadischen Grammatik* (Roma: Pontificium Institutum Biblicum, 1952) § 2f, 2d, 61h. [Henceforth abbreviated GAG].

for the sky's divine nature determines the theological system in which Anu is at the head of the Babylonian pantheon.<sup>161</sup>

The Arabic *samāʾ*, pl. *samāwāt*, is used both as a masculine and, though rarely, as a feminine noun. In his view of nature the nomad gazing at the sky at night concludes that the sky by itself is the dark or clouded heaven; thus it would appear that the sunshine in the sky by day is an accessory. Hence, it happens that in Arabic the word *samāʾ* is very often used to designate both "clouds," because of their height, and "rain," because it comes from the clouds. The notions of "rain" and "sky" are so closely linked that even the Arabs are associated with *samāʾ* as is attested in the appellation *banū māʾ as-samāʾ* [signifying the sons of the water of the heaven]. The Arabs keep much to the deserts which are places of the falling rain by means of which they subsist.<sup>162</sup> The Semites thought of "heaven" as a space resembling a large vault, supported by the extreme parts of the earth, imagined to be inhabited by celestial beings. Heaven includes all the upper part of the world: it is the region of the winds and the clouds ruled by divine beings whose processes were conceived according to human reactions and as such could be either destructive or beneficent; it is the region of the stars, which were considered a form of manifestation of the deities<sup>163</sup> having the specific function of indicating the days, seasons and years, of sustaining the universal law, and of directing the destiny.

After determining the term for "heaven" derived either from the Semitic roots *šmh*, *rwm* or from Proto-Semitic *\*ša+\*maiu*,<sup>164</sup> we must consider the Hebrew term *šmym* which has often been explained as a dual and not as a plural form, thus conveying the meaning of "two skies." When grammarians and lexicographers sought in turn to explain the origin of the apparently dual form of *šmym*, they were inevitably led to believe that this resembles the Egyptian concept, where the heavens are the two heavens of the day and the night, symbolizing awakening and life, sleeping and death.<sup>165</sup> Different theories have been advanced to explain that *šmym* and *mym* are not a dual. A. S. Yahuda, operating with speculative methods of an inductive rather than a deductive nature, sees in *šmym* an old dual form whose dual meaning is no longer intended.

When the Hebrews came under Egyptian influence they dropped the word in its singular form as was current in all [?] Semitic languages,

<sup>161</sup> See É. Dhorme, *Les Religions de Babylonie et d'Assyrie* (Les Anciennes Religions Orientales, vol. II; Paris: Presse Universitaires de France, 1945), p. 12.

<sup>162</sup> Cf. Lane's *Arabic-English Lexicon* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1872), Book I, Part 4, *sub voce*.

<sup>163</sup> See H. Winckler, *Arabisch-Semitisch-Orientalisch* (Berlin: Wolf Peiser Verlag, 1901), p. 123, who insists that "die gestirne nicht die götter sondern nur offenbarungsformen der gottheit, und zwar derselben grossen göttlichen kraft sind [sic]."

<sup>164</sup> Cf. below.

<sup>165</sup> See H. Bonnet, *Reallexikon der ägyptischen Religionsgeschichte* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1952), pp. 302-304.

and adapted it to the Egyptian conception, using it in a dual form with reference to the two skies. It remained in use among the Hebrews during their long sojourn in Egypt, and became so deeply rooted in their language that, when the author of Genesis wrote the Creation story, he could not give up the word *šmym* altogether. But as, on the other hand, he could not admit the existence of a nether world, he had to apply *šmym*, in spite of its dual form, to the heaven covering the earth only.<sup>166</sup>

H. Torczyner regards the ending *-aj(i)m* of the nouns *šmym* and *mym* as an adverbial accusative according to the pattern of the dual.<sup>167</sup> P. Joüon explains the form of *šmym* grammatically as a "plurale tantum" and logically as a plural of extension whose apparent dual ending is to be taken as an abnormal plural form: "La finale du pluriel *im* a été réduite à *im* sous l'influence du ton. On peut comparer en araméen biblique le participe pluriel du type *ḅānāin* - 'bâtissant' (pour *banai+in*) des verbes Lamed Yôd."<sup>168</sup> In order to ascertain the meaning of *šmym*, Bauer and Leander return to Proto-Semitic postulating the reconstruction of *šamayim* from \**ša*, which is probably the (demonstrative and) relative pronoun, and \**maiu* "water." Thus \**ša-maii* would yield the meaning "place of water."<sup>169</sup>

The concept of space as a whole was alien to the ancient Hebrews. Space was divided into several zones: there are the upper and the lower world, the earth as such and, finally, the four cardinal points. Every reality occupied its unequivocal position, its definitely prescribed place, within this general classification. The elements of nature, the physical and spiritual beings as well as the separate phases of the world process, were differentiated accordingly. And this characteristic distinction was found in both the directions in space and the diverse positions. Here, too, we find that peculiar geography of space wherein space relates the most distant and dissimilar elements. The idea implicit in this spatial conception of the world characterizes the Hebrew world view that regarded the several zones of the world, linked together in what may be called a structural relationship. This fundamental view is expressed in biblical writings that picture the heaven, the subject now to be studied, as a world of its own, yet comparable to the earth. The whole of heaven is not pieced together out of its parts but is constructed from them as constitutive elements.

<sup>166</sup> A. S. Yahuda, *The Accuracy of the Bible* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1935), p. 141.

<sup>167</sup> See H. Torczyner, *Die Entstehung des semitischen Sprachtypus* (Wien: R. Löwit Verlag, 1916), pp. 67-72.

<sup>168</sup> P. Joüon, *Grammaire de l'Hébreu Biblique* (2nd ed.; Rome: Institut Biblique Pontifical, 1923, édition photomécanique corrigée, 1965), § 91f; cf. also §§ 90f, 98e, 136c.

<sup>169</sup> See H. Bauer - P. Leander, *Historische Grammatik der hebräischen Sprache des Alten Testaments I* (Halle: Max Niemeyer, 1922), p. 621.

On the causal meaning of \**ša* providing the meaning "the dispenser of rain" for *šmym*, see Hommel (cited by Bauer-Leander, *loc. cit.*).

Accordingly, an understanding of the heaven requires a return to the constitutive elements. We may arrive at a provisional and general characterization of the Hebrew conception of heaven by starting from the observation that *šmym* represents an expression for location in space. Heaven comprises the upper world, but, when used in connection with earth in the expression *hšmym wh²rš*, the upper level of the world, though retaining its position in space and its independent significance, is brought into an antithetical relationship with the earth. Between the two realms, however, there occurs a kind of exchange, a perpetual transition from one to the other. If the two are brought into relation with one another, they express the idea of totality, as we have already seen in the preceding chapter. But such a relation does not dissolve the dividing line between the different zones. This may be seen in the expressions used to designate the space under the heaven: *tht [kl] hšmym*<sup>170</sup> and *mtht hšmym [šmy yhw]*.<sup>171</sup> The significance of heaven is at times broader than that of the firmament, as it appears in the expression [*špwr*] *šwp hšmym*.<sup>172</sup> Hence the entire section of the cosmos which is above the earth includes the heaven as well as the "air." In the absence of a specific word for "air" in the vocabulary of the ancient Hebrews, the space between heaven and earth was designated by the expression *byn hšmym wbyn h²rš*<sup>173</sup> or *byn h²rš wbyn hšmym*.<sup>174</sup> In this connection it may be recalled that air in motion was expressed by the term *rwh*. The sensuous view of cosmic divisions seems partly to be overcome by a perspective which transcends man's horizon. Thus, the vertical direction from earth to heaven prompted the idea, in the intentional order of motion towards heaven. This direction is rendered by the accusative form of *šmym*. It must be recognized that the movement expressed by *hšmymh*<sup>175</sup> designates only motion from earth towards heaven. Indeed, on closer scrutiny, it becomes evident that the ancient Hebrews when they used the term *hšmymh*, which is only a spatial term and as such is limited in its meaning, did not intend to formulate a theory of a dynamic universe as contrasted with the Eleatic assertion that the universe is inert, static, finished, complete. In addition to the notion of direction, there are two concepts which connote the meaning of height and extension. The zenith became known *lb hšmym*<sup>176</sup> and *hšy hšmym*.<sup>177</sup> The attempt to describe the vast extension of the sky is notable for its imaginative endeavour to

<sup>170</sup> Cf. Gen. 7:19; Deut. 2:25; 4:19; Job 28:24; 37:3; Eccl. 1:13; 2:3; 3:1; Dan. 9:12.

<sup>171</sup> Cf. Gen. 1:9; 6:17; Ex. 17:14; Deut. 7:24; 9:14; 25:19; 29:19; 2 K. 14:27; Lam. 3:66.

<sup>172</sup> Cf. Gen. 1:28,30; 2:19f; 6:7; 7:3,23; 9:2; Deut. 4:17; 28:26; 1 Sam. 17:44,46; 1 K. 14:11; 16:4; 21:24; Jer. 4:25; 7:33; 9:9; 15:3; 16:4; 19:7; 34:20; Ez. 29:5; 31:6,13; 32:4; 38:20; Hos. 2:20; 4:3; 7:12; Zeph. 1:13; Ps. 79:2; 104:12; Job 12:7; 28:21; 35:4; Eccl. 10:20.

<sup>173</sup> Cf. 2 Sam. 18:9.

<sup>174</sup> Cf. Ez. 8:3; Zech. 5:9.

<sup>175</sup> Cf. Gen. 15:5; 28:12; Ex. 9:8,10; Deut. 4:19; 30:12; Josh. 8:20; Judg. 13:20; 20:40; 2 Ch. 6:13.

<sup>176</sup> Deut. 4:11.

<sup>177</sup> Josh. 10:13.

circumscribe the boundary of the sky by the horizon, as in the expressions: *qšh hšmym* [.. *m*, .. *b*]<sup>178</sup> or *mqšh hšmym w<sup>c</sup>d-qšh hšmym*<sup>179</sup> and finally in *ʔrb<sup>c</sup> qšwt hšmym*.<sup>180</sup>

The few references to different kinds of heaven are either so generic in their scope or metaphorical in their significance that an exact determination of the stages of the heavenly dome is impossible. In the graphic description of the brazen surface of the sky we are told that it could become as hard as if it were made out of *brzl* and *nhšt*.<sup>181</sup> The imagery of a brazen sky will be studied in detail in connection with the concept of *rqy<sup>c</sup>*. Apart from the theological conception, according to which the heaven is thought to be the residence of God, there is also mentioned the geographical heaven of the land of Israel.<sup>182</sup> The references to a geographical heaven as well as those which speak not only of the frailty of heaven<sup>183</sup> but go so far as to affirm that the heavens are not pure,<sup>184</sup> have certainly influenced the subsequent eschatological ideology according to which there will be created *šmym hšmym*.<sup>185</sup>

Before proceeding to examine the expression *šmy hšmym* we must recall that *šmym* designates the space above the earth, including the atmosphere, the region of the clouds, the heavenly vault, the firmament and that which exists above the firmament. It should be observed, however, that this space was not conceived as a structured complex of clearly distinguishable levels. Any conclusion regarding two heavens on the basis of the text, *hšmym wšmy hšmym*,<sup>186</sup> or even three, in which God dwelt, fails because of lack of support from the biblical records. The rabbinical literature after the second century A.D. speaks of seven heavens. R. Eliezer said: "There are seven firmaments: *šmym* [heaven], *šmy hšmym* [the heavens of heavens], *rqy<sup>c</sup>* [firmament], *šhqym* [sky], *m<sup>c</sup>wn* [habitation], *zbwl* [residence], *ʔrpl* [thick cloud]."<sup>187</sup> Another passage, though retaining the number seven, describes the separate layers of the sky as follows. Resh Lakīsh said: "There are seven heavens: *wylwn* [curtain, from Lat. *velum*], *rqy<sup>c</sup>* [firmament], *šhqym* [clouds], *zbwl* [lofty abode], *m<sup>c</sup>wn* [habitation], *mkwn* [residence], *ʔrbwt* [probably based on Ps. 68:5]."<sup>188</sup> The speculations about this seven-leveled structure of the sky are due to Babylonian influence. In Babylonian literature there are always seven heavens laid one

<sup>178</sup> Deut. 30:4; Neh. 1:9; Is. 13:5; Ps. 19:7.

<sup>179</sup> Deut. 4:32.

<sup>180</sup> Jer. 49:36.

<sup>181</sup> See Lev. 26:19; Deut. 28:23.

<sup>182</sup> Cf. Deut. 28:23; 33:28.

<sup>183</sup> See Job 14:12.

<sup>184</sup> See Job 15:15; cf. also 25:5 where it is mentioned that even the stars [substituted for heaven] are not pure in God's eyes.

<sup>185</sup> Is. 65:17; 66:22.

<sup>186</sup> 1 K. 8:27.

<sup>187</sup> Cf. Midrash Rabbah, Deuteronomy, Vaethhanan, II. 32.

<sup>188</sup> Cf. Babli Hagigah 12 b. The expression *rkb b<sup>c</sup>rbwt* (Ps. 68:5) has its equivalent in Ugaritic *rkb ʔrpt* "rider of clouds."

atop the other, through which one must pass successively in order to reach the highest, that of Anu.<sup>189</sup>

When we turn to consider the expression *šmy hšmym*, we are at once struck by its similarity to other expressions in Hebrew which render the idea of the superlative. P. Joüon describes them as: "Un group de deux substantifs, dont le premier est construit sur le même substantif au pluriel."<sup>190</sup> If one considers how the Hebrews expressed the superlative, *šmy hšmym* can therefore be explained grammatically as "the highest heaven." Exactly what this superlative of heaven might signify is impossible to say, unless the context, in which this expression occurs, provides some further insight. The expression *šmy hšmym* occurs in poetry,<sup>191</sup> in prayers,<sup>192</sup> in Moses' address to the people,<sup>193</sup> and in the message of Solomon to king Hiram.<sup>194</sup> *šmy hšmym*, then, was not used in current language, but belonged rather to the elevated style, implying an intensification of the idea of heaven. Furthermore, as those texts illustrate, *šmy hšmym* never represented the abode of God, since "The highest heaven cannot contain [God]."<sup>195</sup> *šmy hšmym* seems to be, therefore, an all-inclusive term to denote the space above the earth.

Another idea, particularly noteworthy because it concerns the horizon as the boundary between earth and heaven, more clearly indicates how the heavenly dome was linked with the earth. This boundary between earth and heaven was expressed by *ḥwg šmym*<sup>196</sup> or *ḥwg h'rš*.<sup>197</sup> Literally *ḥwg* denotes a circle. It is worth noting that this term is used in cosmogonic context:

He [God] marks a circle on the surface of the water  
As the boundary between light and darkness.<sup>198</sup>

Whether the boundary between light and darkness designates the dividing line between the realm of light above the earth and the realm of darkness beneath the ocean and under the earth, or refers to the space surrounded by the dome of heaven, thus including heaven and earth and separated from the waters which encompass the world globe, cannot be determined on the basis of this reference. In a similar passage *ḥwg* represents simply the boundary between the skies and the deep:

<sup>189</sup> See B. Meissner, *Babylonien und Assyrien* (Heidelberg: Carl Winters Universitätsbuchhandlung, 1925), II, pp. 107-108.

<sup>190</sup> P. Joüon, *op. cit.*, § 141 l.

<sup>191</sup> Cf. Ps. 148:4; Eccl. 16:16.

<sup>192</sup> Cf. 1 K. 8:27; 2 Ch. 6:18; Neh. 9:6.

<sup>193</sup> Cf. Deut. 10:4.

<sup>194</sup> Cf. 2 Ch. 2:5.

<sup>195</sup> 1 K. 8:27; 2 Ch. 2:5; 6:18.

<sup>196</sup> Job 22:14.

<sup>197</sup> Is. 40:22.

<sup>198</sup> Job 26:10.

When he traced the circle on the face of the deep,  
 When he made firm the skies above,  
 When he fixed the fountains of the deep.<sup>199</sup>

What appears to be a mere description of the horizon in terms of a circle around the earth gains in significance when its function is considered. A parallel passage from Mesopotamia may well illustrate what a prominent place the horizon held in Mesopotamian cosmogonic tradition and may suggest an explanation of the origin of differentiating *hwg šmym* from *hwg h<sup>2</sup>rs*. In speculating about the origin of the basic features of the universe, the Mesopotamians probably viewed the horizon as both male and female, as a circle (male) which circumscribed the sky and as a circle (female) which circumscribed the earth. From the horizon, the united pair, grew the sky and the earth. Sky and earth are apparently imagined as two enormous disks. Later, these disks were forced apart by the wind which expanded them into a great bag. This inflated bag, within which we live, is surrounded by and immersed in the primeval waters.<sup>200</sup> Whether the Mesopotamian conception of the horizon here provided, with the necessary adjustments, the prototype for the Hebrew concept of horizon is impossible to tell. However, both ideologies share the view that the horizon prevents the world from being flooded by the primeval waters by holding the sky and the earth firmly together. From the above-quoted scriptural texts we conclude that the ancient Hebrews conceived of the horizon not only as the boundary between heaven and earth, but also as the link between the dome of heaven and the surface of the earth.

But although the image of the heaven as the space above the earth is intelligible, it is impossible to establish a relation between several, at times conflicting, views of the heaven represented in the Bible. Probably any attempt to reconcile the different spheres of imagery would be misguided, since it seems likely that in the conception of the sky there has been some fusion of cosmological traditions which were not native to Israel.

Before we proceed to this subject, we must first analyze the context of the verbs used to describe the creation of the heaven, the study of which affords an interesting insight into the various conceptions of the sky. As we have seen above (on page 5) the verb generally used to signify "to do, to make" is *šh*, which is one of the verbs employed by the biblical authors to designate God's creative activity. Thus, the heavens are said to have been made by the Creator.<sup>201</sup> The creation of the heaven, however, is more

<sup>199</sup> Prov. 8:27b-28.

<sup>200</sup> Cf. T. Jacobsen's essay "Mesopotamia," in *The Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 4th ed., 1957), pp. 125-219, especially pp. 170-172.

<sup>201</sup> Cf. Gen. 2:4; Ex. 20:11; 31:17; 2 K. 19:15; Is. 37:16; Jer. 32:17; Ps. 33:6; 96:5; 102:26; 115:15; 136:5; Neh. 9:6; 1 Ch. 16:26.

precisely indicated by the verbs *br*<sup>202</sup> and *qnh*.<sup>203</sup> Besides these verbs there are three which involve a particular conception of the canopy of the sky: *nṯh* "to stretch out, unfold, extend;"<sup>204</sup> (*kwn*) *kwnn* "to set up, erect, establish;"<sup>205</sup> *tkn* "to weigh, here: to measure" (in Pi<sup>c</sup>el).<sup>206</sup> As we shall see in greater detail, the imagery behind the verb *nṯh* suggests both the stretching out the heaven in the form of a cloth and the pitching a tent. From the fact that the verb *kwn* denotes something firmly established, and the derived forms of this verb in Po<sup>c</sup>el and Hiph<sup>c</sup>il imply "setting up, making solid," it would be reasonable to suppose that the ancient Hebrews regarded heaven as the site of a building in which God dwells and in which the storehouses of rain, hail and snow are erected. As for the meaning of the phrase: *my... wšmym bzrt tkn*<sup>207</sup> a clue to its interpretation is provided by the fact that God is represented as the architect of the universe. To the Hebrew, thinking in terms of his own environmental experience, this notion of an architect designing and proportioning the structure of a building presents heaven as a building in all its concrete details. Before listing various conceptions of God's residence in the heaven drawn from poetic texts, we must allow that most of those expressions are much older than the particular composition. Thus it is implied that these picturesque ideas of the heavenly building as *hykl*,<sup>208</sup> *byt*,<sup>209</sup> *mqwm*,<sup>210</sup> *mkwn*,<sup>211</sup> *m<sup>c</sup>wn*,<sup>212</sup> *zbl*,<sup>213</sup> and *skh*<sup>214</sup> likewise follow ancient traditions reflecting in their basic theme either a nomadic background or an agricultural-urban social structure. It is impossible, however, to say which particular idea of the heavenly building belongs to which stage of social development. In the sky are located the storehouses *ʔwšr* [*wt*] rendered *thēsauros* [*ous*] by the LXX, containing winds, snow and hail.<sup>215</sup> The residence of God was provided with *ʕlywt* "upper or roof-chamber."<sup>216</sup> The elastic imagery wherein heaven is God's abode or a support of the primeval waters above which God resides, appears in several scriptural references. Thus, Yahweh built his

<sup>202</sup> Cf. Gen. 1:1; 2:4; Is. 42:5; 45:18; 65:17.

<sup>203</sup> Cf. Gen. 14:19, 22.

<sup>204</sup> Cf. Is. 40:22; 42:5; 44:24; 45:12; 51:13; Jer. 10:12; 51:15; Zech. 12:1; Ps. 104:2; Job 9:8; cf. also Is. 51:16 where *KBH*<sup>13</sup> emends *lnṯc* to *lnṯt*.

<sup>205</sup> Cf. Prov. 3:19; 8:27.

<sup>206</sup> Cf. Is. 40:12.

<sup>207</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>208</sup> Mic. 1:2; Hab. 2:20; Ps. 11:4; 18:7; 27:4; Is. 6:1; Jon. 2:8.

<sup>209</sup> Ps. 27:4; 31:3; 36:9; Is. 6:4.

<sup>210</sup> 1 K. 8:30.

<sup>211</sup> 1 K. 8:39, 49; 2 Ch. 6:30, 33, 39.

<sup>212</sup> Deut. 26:15; Jer. 25:30; 2 Ch. 30:27.

<sup>213</sup> Is. 63:15.

<sup>214</sup> 2 Sam 22:12; Ps. 18:12; 27:5 Job 36:29.

<sup>215</sup> Ps. 135:7; Jer. 10:13; 51:16. The LXX text of Jeremiah, according to the Codex Vat. B, has *phōs* whereas *MT* has *rwḥ*; for Jer. 10:13 the Codex Marchalianus correctly renders *rwḥ* by *anemos*. Cf. the reference to the "storehouses of snow and hail" in Job 38:22.

<sup>216</sup> Ps. 104:3. A. Weiser interprets *ʕlywt* as "balconies." Cf. A. Weiser, *The Psalms* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1962), p. 664.

royal palace on firm pillars in the rolling waters of the celestial sea above the canopy of heaven.<sup>217</sup> Another passage suggests that God's upper chambers were built in the sky itself.<sup>218</sup> The different views about God's dwelling place supports another interpretation of *'lywt*. For example, this passage: *mšqh hrym m'lywtyw*<sup>219</sup> has led many critics to believe that the upper chambers were similar to the reservoirs of the sky and, therefore, parallel in meaning to *'wšrwt*. In terms of the imagery employed here it would seem that *'lywt* stands as *pars pro toto* for the celestial ocean in which it is built, according to what we read in the preceding verses of the same psalm. Nowhere in the Bible is *'lywt* associated with storehouses of rain and water.

The parallelism between *'lywt* and *'gdtw*, in Am. 9:6, is not without interest for our study of the sky's structure. But difficulty arises when one seeks to determine the precise meaning of the word *'gdh*. Its verbal form, which does not occur in the Old Testament, is found in Aramaic and in rabbinic Hebrew as *'gd* "to bind" and is possibly related to the Akkadian noun *agittu* denoting "headgear," and probably "bandage" (attested only in lexical texts). Aside from the mention of *'gdtw* (Am. 9:6), the following expressions reflect the original meaning: *'gdt 'zwb* "bunch of hyssop" (Ex. 12:22), *wyhyw l'gdh 'ht* "and he formed into a troop band" (2 Sam. 2:25), *'gdwt mwth* "bonds of wickedness" (Is. 58:6). In the above-quoted passages we discern the basic meaning of *'gdh* as something held firmly together. This meaning has led interpreters to identify *'gdh*, in Am. 9:6, as the vault of the heavens (fitted together, constructed).<sup>220</sup> Although it is unnecessary here to attempt a description of the dome of heaven, yet, on the basis of the information derived from the word *'gdh*, we may infer that the firmament was considered as a structure.

The architectural features of the sky are further specified by explicit references to columns which support the canopy of heaven. However, in seeking to specify the number of these cosmic columns, we are particularly interested in knowing whether Egyptian or Mesopotamian cosmology had influenced this view. As we have seen from our study of the Egyptian cosmogony in the previous chapter, the Heliopolitan tradition maintained that the sky is supported by four columns, represented either by the four legs of the heavenly cow or by the arms and legs of Nut, the sky goddess.<sup>221</sup> The Babylonians believed that the horizon is the foundation, *išid šamî*, of heaven.<sup>222</sup> But since there is only one Old Testament reference to the

<sup>217</sup> Cf. Ps. 104:3.

<sup>218</sup> Cf. Am. 9:6. I follow here *KBH*<sup>13</sup> where *m'lwtyw* is emended to *'lytw*. The preformative *m* should be dropped as a dittograph of the preceding *m* in *bšmym*.

<sup>219</sup> Ps. 104:13.

<sup>220</sup> See *B.D.B.*, *sub voce*. For the emendation of *m'lwtyw* to *'lytw* see the footnote 218.

<sup>221</sup> See H. Kees, *Der Götterglaube im alten Aegypten* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs Verlag, 1941), pp. 168, 226.

<sup>222</sup> See P. Jensen, *Die Kosmologie der Babylonier* (Strassburg: Verlag von Karl J. Trübner, 1890), p. 9.

pillars of heaven, the general practice of interpreters, here as elsewhere, is to associate this idea with related subjects and themes for a fuller understanding of the notion therein implied. Thus, for example, *°mwdy šmym*<sup>223</sup> has been related to *mwsdwt šmym*<sup>224</sup> which apparently is a reminiscence here preserved of the Babylonian conception of the foundation of the heaven. Accordingly, the foundation of the heaven is generally understood to refer to the distant mountains which seem to support the dome of heaven.

The next significant aspect of the sky is related to the phenomenon of rainfall. Two essential factors for explaining this phenomenon played their part, namely, the ability to conceive of an ocean for the necessary water supply and the ability to relate the periodic rainfall to grills or sluices in the firmament which were opened at intervals to let the water pass through. This idea, that naturally suggests itself to men through their observation of rainfall, is found, though in diverse forms, among many peoples in ancient times. The ancient Hebrews believed that the firmament was punctured at intervals by *°rbwt*, the "windows of heaven."<sup>225</sup> Through these windows the rain was released in due measure. They were portrayed by the Greek translators of the Bible as *°oi kataraktai* [sic] "the sluices [of heaven]."<sup>226</sup> Another passage depicts impressively these openings in the sky as *dlyt šmym*<sup>227</sup> which idea does not differ significantly from that implied in *°rbwt* [*mrwm*], *°rbwt hšmym*. Quite different from the Hebrew idea of heaven's windows is the conception of the Egyptians of what they call the "doors of heaven," or "the portals of the horizon."<sup>228</sup> Since its context suggests no allusion to a celestial Nile releasing its water down to the earth through those gates, it appears that the Egyptian view differs fundamentally from the Hebrew idea of the windows of heaven. However, a rather similar conception of the windows of heaven existed in the Babylonian conception of the sky. Again there appears a similarity between the Babylonian and the Hebrew endeavour to explain the phenomenon of rainfall by means of those openings in the sky.<sup>229</sup> This picturesque imagery has led some scholars to explain *brqym lmr*, with the necessary adjustment of changing *r* into *d*, as "cracks" or "fissures" (of the clouds) for the rain.<sup>230</sup> Any proper evaluation of this interpretation is based upon *bdqt °rpt*, "the clefts [in] the clouds," which occurs only once in the Ras Shamra

<sup>223</sup> Job 26:11.

<sup>224</sup> 2 Sam. 22:8.

<sup>225</sup> Gen. 7:11; 8:2; 2 K. 7:2, 19; Is. 24:18; Mal. 3:10.

<sup>226</sup> With the exception of Is. 24:18, where *°rbwt* is rendered *thyrides*, the LXX translated *°rbwt °oi kataraktai* in Gen. 7:11; 8:2; 2 K. 7:2 and in Mal. 3:10. The substantive *kataraktēs* in classical and Hellenistic Greek is known in the sense of "waterfall, cataract (especially of the Nile)." Apart from this meaning it denotes also "portcullis, trap-door, sluice." Cf. Liddell and Scott, *op. cit.*, *sub voce*.

<sup>227</sup> Ps. 78:23.

<sup>228</sup> See ANET, p. 446.

<sup>229</sup> See B. Meissner, *op. cit.*, II, p. 108.

<sup>230</sup> Ps. 135:7; Jer. 10:13; 51:16.

texts in a Ugaritic mythological poem.<sup>231</sup> The Ugaritic noun *bdqt*, otherwise unknown, has been associated with the Hebrew *bdq* "the breach, fissure," and this has inspired the attractive suggestion that the same word should be recognized also for *brqym lmr*, thus yielding the sense: "He made fissures [instead of 'lightnings'] for the rain."<sup>232</sup>

For a complete exposition of the architectural features of the sky, it is necessary to discuss the specific function of each single section. In our study of the heaven and of its parts, it will become clear that water takes priority over all other existing elements. This undoubtedly is due to the Hebrews' dependence on rainfall for their sustenance either as settled agriculturists or as wandering nomads. Clearly, water was believed to exist both above the heaven<sup>233</sup> and inside it.<sup>234</sup> The waters above the heaven represent the celestial ocean called *mbwl*.<sup>235</sup> As a result of describing the cause of the world-wide flood as an emptying of the celestial ocean upon the earth, the original meaning of the word *mbwl* as "celestial ocean"<sup>236</sup> developed to the meaning "deluge."<sup>237</sup> The waters in the heaven were thought to be stored up in the "treasure houses," either as snow or hail<sup>238</sup> or kept in the clouds and released to the earth in the form of rain,<sup>239</sup> showers,<sup>240</sup> or dew.<sup>241</sup> Thus the sky was said to "drop, fall in drops" (*ntp*<sup>242</sup> and *rp*<sup>243</sup>). From the complex of the natural phenomena there may be discerned certain ideas associated with esoteric imagery which are evidently connected with myths preserved by the tradition of nomadism. The saga recorded in Genesis about the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah is essentially aetiological in character, in that it provides an explanation of the unfruitfulness and desolation of the area of the Dead Sea,<sup>244</sup> which was said to have been caused by fire and brimstone that fell from heaven.<sup>245</sup> With the experience of the devastating force of the natural phenomena, the idea of a universal cataclysm was evidently a well-established feature of

<sup>231</sup> Cf. H. C. Gordon, *op. cit.*, text 51: VII: 19.

<sup>232</sup> See T. H. Gaster's article "Heaven," in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (Nashville and New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), II, pp. 551-552.

<sup>233</sup> Cf. Ps. 148:4.

<sup>234</sup> Cf. Jer. 10:13; 51:16; see also 2 Sam. 21:10.

<sup>235</sup> On the etymological explanation of *mabbul*, see Littmann cited by Albright, "The Babylonian Matter . . ." in *JBL* 58 (1939), p. 98, who compared *mabbul* with *mabbu* "fountain," thus reaching the conclusion that *mabbul* is of west-Semitic origin.

<sup>236</sup> Cf. Gen. 6:17; 7:6, 7, 10, 17.

<sup>237</sup> Cf. Gen. 9:11, 15, 28; 10:1, 32; 11:10; Ps. 29:10.

For the original proposition of this view, see J. Begrich, "Mabbul. Eine exegetisch-lexikalische Studie," in *Zeitschrift für Semitistik und verwandte Gebiete* 6 (1928), pp. 135-153.

<sup>238</sup> Cf. Job 38:22; see also Is. 55:10; Josh. 10:11.

<sup>239</sup> Cf. Gen. 8:2; Is. 55:10; Deut. 11:11.

<sup>240</sup> Cf. Jer. 14:22.

<sup>241</sup> Cf. Gen. 27:28, 39; Deut. 33:28; Zech. 8:12; Dan. 5:21.

<sup>242</sup> Cf. Judg. 5:4; Ps. 68:9.

<sup>243</sup> Cf. Deut. 33:28; Is. 45:8.

<sup>244</sup> See O. Eissfeldt, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

<sup>245</sup> Cf. Gen. 19:24, *gpryt w<sup>3</sup>s*; cf. also the references to the destructive nature of the fire from heaven as mentioned in 2 K. 1:10, 12, 14; Job 1:14.

Hebrew folklore. This universal cataclysm constitutes obviously a traditional outlook towards the frailty of the world and, in the process of time, was incorporated into the Hebrew world view. Thus, eschatological imagery developed the theme that at the end of time the foundation of heaven would suddenly start to tremble,<sup>246</sup> so that the heavens would burst in noise and crashing.<sup>247</sup> The conception of the heaven as a building easily agrees with the ancient Hebrews' idea of the celestial ocean supported by a solid structure. The storehouses built in this structure incidentally provide us with valuable information about the architectural features of the heavenly building itself. Here, however, it is noteworthy that the Hebrew conception of the heaven is distinguished also for its extension beyond that of a solid structure. The appearance of an idea such as the conception of the sky as a tent or cloth further testifies to the early emergence of this notion among the ancient Hebrews. It seems that the implicit imagery here reflects the thought pattern of wandering nomads who often contemplated the starry sky at night. By contemplating the star-strewn sky, the nomads naturally thought of an adorned garment. The few extant references suggest a general picture of the heaven as a garment and as a tent. For example, the following passage from Psalm 102:

And the heavens are the work of your hands.  
They may perish, but you [God] will endure;  
All of them may wear out like a garment.  
You may change them like clothing and they will change.<sup>248</sup>

The conclusion here obviously shows the heavens undergoing a process of gradual deterioration. R. Eissler maintains the view that in this text there may be recognized a vestige of an anthropomorphic conception of God whose garments had to be renewed as soon as they were worn out.<sup>249</sup> This idea of a "heavenly garment" is slightly expanded by recalling a textual nuance from ancient Near Eastern literature. This text, particularly notable for its reference to the element of light, may possibly preserve some remnant of the original imagery.

You are robed with majesty and honor;  
You veiled yourself in light as in a garment.<sup>250</sup>

The context here provides further evidence of the Hebrew cosmogonic tradition. The sequence of events referred to in this creation account exactly

<sup>246</sup> Cf. 2 Sam. 22:8.

<sup>247</sup> See the primary notion of  $r^{\text{c}}\text{š}$  in which it is used in Joel 2:6, 10; Hag. 2:10, 21; 4:10.

<sup>248</sup> Ps. 102:26b-27.

<sup>249</sup> See R. Eissler, *Weltenmantel und Himmelszelt* (München: C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1910), I, p. 88.

<sup>250</sup> Ps. 104:1b-2a; I follow *KBH*<sup>13</sup> where  $^{\text{c}}\text{th}$  vocalized as a Qal participle, in verse 2a, is emended to  $r^{\text{c}}\text{th}$  in the Hiph<sup>il</sup>.

parallels the Priestly account in the opening chapter of Genesis, as we have seen above (page 15). Within the framework of both accounts it is clear that light, created prior to and independent of the heavenly luminaries, serves a further purpose: light manifests most adequately the divine operation in a world which without it is darkness and chaos. Probably this was the reason why the biblical author preferred this idea to the very familiar expression among the peoples of the ancient Near East that the deities were clothed in star-strewn robes. Thus, this passage emerges as a kind of Hebrew version that uses the same imagery of the heavenly garment as is found in other Semitic literatures. That the biblical author refrained from following closely, in this matter, the mythological traditions of other peoples is doubtlessly due to his disinclination towards anthropomorphism. The measure of his achievement is to be seen, then, when he mentions that God veiled himself in light. In order to understand fully this imaginative comparison it will suffice to refer to the treatment of the same theme by Israel's neighbors. However, similarity in concept does not substantiate mutual dependence and derivation from a common source. The idea of "garment of heaven" (*nalbaš šamê*) is found in astronomical texts from Babylon, denoting the clouds which cover the sky. Apart from this meaning, *nalbaš šamê* designates also a star-embroidered garment, which the king used to wear when officiating at ceremonies in the temple.<sup>251</sup> Another version of the same theme describes Heracles (i.e., Ba'al) of Tyre "wearing a jerkin of stars" and being wrapped in a garment which lights up the sky at night.<sup>252</sup> In Sumerian hymns, the goddess Inanna is addressed as "she who dons the garment of heaven;"<sup>253</sup> and the expression "garment of heaven" indeed occurs as a title of Ishtar.<sup>254</sup>

Beside the imagery which represents the heaven as a garment there is evidence of another concept that depicts the sky either as an outstretched curtain or as a tent. While the former might be considered as a detail of the latter in that it pictures the fabric of the sky as a gauze, both symbolize the heaven as a dwelling place in the form of a tent.

Who stretched out the skies like gauze,  
and opened them out to be a habitable tent.<sup>255</sup>

From such a picture of the sky represented as a curtain it was an easy transfer to the comparison of a scroll. "The heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll."<sup>256</sup>

<sup>251</sup> See E. F. Weidner, "Das Himmelsbild," in *AFO* 7 (1931-1932), p. 115f.

<sup>252</sup> See Nonnus, *Dionysiaca*, XI, 367-577; quoted by T. H. Gaster, *op. cit.*, p. 202.

<sup>253</sup> See in *Sumerian Religious Texts* (ed by E. Chiera; Upland, Pa.: Crozer Theological Seminary, 1929), III, pp. 17, 37.

<sup>254</sup> Cf. Langdon, *JRAS*, 1925, p. 717f.

<sup>255</sup> Is. 40:22; cf. also Ps. 104:2.

<sup>256</sup> Is. 34:4.

Heaven, then, was pictured as a tent. The implication of this view is that the heaven is a dwelling place, while the earth beneath lies under the sky's protective canopy:

Indeed he [God] will treasure me in his abode,  
after the evil day:  
He will shelter me in his sheltering tent,  
will set me high upon his mountain.<sup>257</sup>

The Hebrew may have associated this concept of the heavenly tent with that of a mountain. Scriptural references as well as indications from pictorial representations, mainly from Mesopotamia, reflect the image of the world-mountain. In a Babylonian relief representing the victory of king Naram-Sin of Agade (first half of the twenty-third century), the world-mountain is shown with the trinity of heavenly bodies — sun, moon and star — atop the mountain.<sup>258</sup> An Assyrian cone seal, dating from the eighth or seventh century B.C., represents the storied world-mountain, a ziggurat, with a star on top.<sup>259</sup> One characteristic feature of Canaanite sanctuaries was a standing stone which seemed to have had a phallic significance. Lagrange believes that the sacred stones, usually conical in shape, were a miniature of the ziggurat, the symbol of the world-mountain, and that the phallic significance was later associated with it because of a religious aberration.<sup>260</sup> It is likely that Babylonian influence contributed to the utilization of this particular idea in the poetic texts of the Old Testament. A passage in Isaiah refers to the story of the cherub fallen from the world-mountain in which the cherub says:

The heavens will I scale;  
Above the stars of God  
will I set up my throne;  
I will sit on the Mount of Assembly,  
in the recesses of the north;  
I will scale the heights of the clouds,  
I will match the Most High.<sup>261</sup>

Although in the theme of the world-mountain expressed succinctly by the biblical authors only the general view of "height" persisted, sometimes the world-mountain suggested a shape of the sky comparable to a tent.<sup>262</sup> In Mesopotamian cosmology, however, the idea of the world-mountain is

<sup>257</sup> Ps. 27:5.

<sup>258</sup> See *ANEP*, No. 309.

<sup>259</sup> See A. Parrot, *The Tower of Babel* (London: SCM Press, LTD, 1955), p. 27, fig. 1b.

<sup>260</sup> See M. J. Lagrange, *Etudes sur les religions sémitiques* (Paris: Librairie V. Le-coffre, 1905), p. 190.

<sup>261</sup> Is. 14:13-14.

<sup>262</sup> Cf. Ps. 27:5.

strictly parallel to the accepted view of the seven-storied structure of the earth.<sup>263</sup> In the aforementioned passage there may be implied the biblical author's attempt to portray a transcendent God removed from mortal men and their physical environment.

Another important aspect of this imagery appears if the terms used to designate the tent of heaven are considered and their meaning is established. The general term for tent is *ʔhl*, whereas *skh* means a booth. There is yet another concept, *hph*, "a covering, nuptial chamber bridal pavilion," which suggests a characteristic tribal custom practiced in the ancient world. For instance, there appear traces of a common observance in the Ancient East concerning the marriage ritual. The main point of interest to our discussion concerns the tent, since the newly wed are said to spend their first night in a special tent. According to W. R. Smith, a separate tent is still today erected, among certain Arab tribes, for the bride on the first night of marriage. This custom would explain the expression *daḥala ʿala* and its Hebrew equivalent *bʾ ʔlyh*, applied to the bridegroom.<sup>264</sup> From the few extant biblical references, it appears that the tent plays a similar role in the Hebrews' marriage ritual as in the Arabs'. Since these procedures were established by tradition rather than by statute, generalization must be avoided, because these customs might have been carried out in various ways. In all likelihood, we may infer that the tent which Absalom had spread on the roof was used for the consummation of marriage and thus is identical with the *hph*.<sup>265</sup> Samson asks to be taken to his wife in "the chamber" which may mean that, his anger now abated, he has returned to consummate his marriage.<sup>266</sup> Tobit describes the preparation of the bridal chamber for Tobias and Sarah.<sup>267</sup> R. Smith remarks that "originally the tent belonged to the wife and her children just as it did among the Saracens, for Isaac brings Rebekah into his mother Sarah's tent,<sup>268</sup> and, in like manner, the Kenite tent to which Sisera fled<sup>269</sup> is Jael's not Heber's."<sup>270</sup>

We are now in a position to consider the description of the heavenly tent in the light of this marriage custom. This text provides some problem of interpretation, and expert opinion is divided about its basic meaning. It may be so translated that it reads as a metaphor for the wedding ceremony.

He [El] has pitched a tent for the sun [-god];  
Then like a bridegroom he [i.e. the sun-god] goes forth from his bower,

<sup>263</sup> See B. Meissner, *op. cit.*, II, p. 108.

<sup>264</sup> See W. R. Smith, *Kinship and Marriage* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1903), pp. 198-199.

<sup>265</sup> Cf. 2 Sam. 16:22.

<sup>266</sup> Cf. Judg. 15:1.

<sup>267</sup> Cf. Tob. 7:15-16.

<sup>268</sup> Cf. Gen. 24:67.

<sup>269</sup> Cf. Judg. 4:17.

<sup>270</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 200.

rejoicing like a warrior to run his course,  
 From the edge of the heavens is his going forth,  
 and his return is to their edge,  
 Never turning aside from his pavilion.<sup>271</sup>

This passage becomes clear if we render *šmš* as the "sun-god." According to M. Dahood's opinion, "the first seven verses are probably an adaptation to Yahwistic purposes of an ancient hymn to the sun."<sup>272</sup> The introduction to this hymn deals with a general theme of praise, rendered to God by the heavens, and with a message of good tidings which traverses the whole universe. The second half of verse 5 offers the reason for this cosmic exultation: it is the wedding feast of Shamash with Aya. In spite of the omission of this phrase, which for obvious reasons the psalmist eliminated from the original hymn, this seems to be the plain sense. Some mythical overtones, carried over from the alleged Canaanite hymn, may still be recognized in this psalm. Apart from the marriage theme, these mythical overtones appear in the use of the term *gbwr*, in verse 6, that recalls the motif of the invincible hero.<sup>273</sup> The sun-god is compared to a warrior who emerges from the heavenly tent to traverse the sky from horizon to horizon. Thus, the conception of the heaven as a tent is embodied in the general mythical tradition that regarded the sky as the dwelling place of the heavenly being. These myths, borrowed from and adapted by the biblical authors to their religious outlook, have been removed from the mythical context. The few scanty allusions to these myths, preserved in the Bible, show how profound can be the influence of geographical environment in suggesting and moulding speculation about the world and its natural processes.

<sup>271</sup> Ps. 19:5b-7. This translation seems to us to be the more probable and, therefore, we depart from M. Dahood's interpretation, but we adopt his analysis of *nstr* as Niph'al participle of the infixed -t- conjugation of *swr* "to turn aside." We equally follow his proposed emendation of *hēmātō* for MT *hammātō* on the basis of the Arabic-Ugaritic vocable *hmt*, "tent, pavilion, arbor." Stylistically, *hemato* balances verse 6a, *hl* "tent," and with it forms an *inclusio*. On the meaning of *bhm* "then, thereupon" in vs. 5b and for the reason of joining it to vs. 6a, see M. Dahood, *Psalms I, The Anchor Bible*, vol. 16 (Garden City: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1965), pp. 122f, nn. 6-7.

<sup>272</sup> See M. Dahood, *op. cit.*, p. 121. On the basis of Dahood's assertion, we suggest that El, the head of the Canaanite pantheon, converted the sky into a nuptial tent for Shamash and Aya, his bride. An Aramaic inscription from Sefire associates Shamash with Nuru, the personified "light, luminary." Nuru, who is identical with the Babylonian Aya, is the goddess of light and the bride of Shamash. Cf. H. Donner W. Röllig, *Kanaanäische und Aramäische Inschriften* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1964), B. II: Kommentar, Nr. 22 A 9.

<sup>273</sup> See T. R. Robinson, "Hebrew Myths," in *Myth and Ritual*, ed. by S. H. Hooke (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933), pp. 189-190, who mentions that there are features of such stories present in the OT which recall sun-myths current elsewhere. The biblical authors were apparently unaware of the fact and believed that they were telling the story of a human national hero. The reference to the sun-myth, in Psalm 19, may have been based on one of the variants of the divine marriage which we find in the normal "pattern".

Thus far we have emphasized the architectural features of the heaven, represented either as a building or as a tent. We now turn our attention to the luminaries which are placed in the expanse of the heaven. However, since we shall devote a special chapter to the subject of stars and constellations, we here limit ourselves to those references where the luminaries are explicitly associated with the concept of heaven. An expression such as *kl-m<sup>2</sup>ry <sup>2</sup>wr bšmym*<sup>274</sup> affords us a glimpse of folk belief that regarded "the shining lights of the heavens" as but small parts in the whole scope of the heavens. The relation between what the heavenly bodies are and the place in which they are situated is not purely external and accidental; the place itself is part of those heavenly bodies conferring upon them very specific inner ties. Such a relationship is still reflected in the diverse significance of *šb<sup>3</sup> hšmym*, understood both as "army of the heavenly bodies"<sup>275</sup> and as "company of angels."<sup>276</sup> The basic features of those luminaries are, of course, connected with their function, which is to illumine the sky at night so that men may orient themselves within the world. As regards a direct allusion to the stars of heaven, *kwkby hšmym*,<sup>277</sup> it is to be noted that this is a very general term designating stars as well as planets. One of those heavenly bodies, called *mlkt hšmym*,<sup>278</sup> holds sway over all of them. For the identification of the "queen of heaven" we refer to page 91 of our study. While most of the particular aspects of the universe are devoid of a mythical overtone, there are some instances, like the aforementioned *mlkt hšmym*, which show a definite mythico-religious imprint and thus disclose traces of a popular religion opposed to the official Yahwistic religion.

One particular area of the universe, which by all the primitive peoples was acknowledged as the sacred place par excellence, is the heaven. The ancient Hebrews resembled other peoples, since they too shared the view that the star-strewn sky at night as well as the cloudless blue sky by day, with its unobstructed light, is the divine prototype of purity<sup>279</sup> and became the basis for the conception of the dwelling place of God and the heavenly beings. But before the Hebrews arrived at the unity of this concept, in which all particular distinctions seem dissolved, their thought pattern passed through a process of demythologization. This pattern is reflected in their interpretation of the natural phenomena, which, according to their belief, were not caused by nature deities, because nowhere in the Old Testament is it attested that the Hebrews invoked the god of rain or sought to

<sup>274</sup> Ez. 32:8.

<sup>275</sup> Deut. 4:19; 17:3; 2 K. 17:3; 21:3, 5; 23:4, 5; Is. 34:4 [cf. also Is. 40:26; 45:12]; Jer. 8:2; 19:13; 33:22; Zeph. 1:5; Neh. 9:6; 2 Ch. 33:3, 5.

<sup>276</sup> 1 K. 22:19; 2 Ch. 18:18; cf. also Dan. 8:10.

<sup>277</sup> Gen. 22:17; 26:4; Ex. 32:13; Deut. 1:10; 10:22; 28:62; Is. 13:10; Nah. 3:16; Neh. 9:23; 1 Ch. 27:23.

<sup>278</sup> Jer. 7:18; 44:17-19, 25.

<sup>279</sup> Ex. 24:10.

placate the gods of storm, thunder, and lightning. Instead, they believed that Yahweh alone was the direct or indirect cause of those phenomena, since it was he who would send rain<sup>280</sup> or withhold it,<sup>281</sup> cover the heavens with clouds<sup>282</sup> and cause the wind to blow over the earth.<sup>283</sup> In all these intuitions there looms that monotheistic character of Yahwism which leads to the interpretation of the events a special religious imprint. When in turn the biblical authors sought to objectify the omnipresence of God, they detached from space as a whole a specific zone and distinguished it from other zones and, one might say, religiously hedged it around. Those particular places became withdrawn from ordinary uses and this idea has found its linguistic deposit in the word *mqdš*, "sacred place, sanctuary." For *mqdš* goes back to the root *qdš* whose original meaning is "separation, withdrawal," and thus signifies that which is sacred on account of its association with a deity. It first designates the sacred precinct belonging to God and consecrated to him. But by a primal and basic religious intuition the heavens as a whole appear as just such a consecrated zone,<sup>284</sup> as the temple inhabited by Yahweh and governed by his divine will. From this fundamental view it followed that sacred actions for which God could be invoked as either helper or witness were performed under the sky or in the temple. The sacrifices, whose sanctity is based upon the invocation of the all-seeing, all-knowing, sanctioning God as witness to one's self-dedication, were originally offered under the open sky. This intuition finds expression in the liturgical language which speaks of God looking down from heaven<sup>285</sup> and speaking to men on earth.<sup>286</sup> From heaven God descends to the earth.<sup>287</sup>

A sanctuary, on the other hand, is like a gigantic ladder connecting men with God,<sup>288</sup> whose heavenly residence is accessible through a gate.<sup>289</sup> Within the gates of heaven the celestial court holds session to which Satan, one of the members of the divine court, comes with other attendants to present himself at this court and report on the fulfillment of his duties.<sup>290</sup> Similarly in the presence of such a court is enacted a scene narrated by the prophet Micaiah.<sup>291</sup> This ancient conception of God's dwelling in heaven is stressed especially by the Deuteronomic theology.<sup>292</sup> However, this locali-

<sup>280</sup> Cf. 2 Sam. 21:10.

<sup>281</sup> Cf. Deut. 11:17; 1 K. 8:35.

<sup>282</sup> Cf. Ps. 147:8; cf. also Is. 50:3.

<sup>283</sup> Cf. Ps. 78:26.

<sup>284</sup> Cf. Ps. 20:4, 7.

<sup>285</sup> Cf. Ps. 33:13; 80:15, 102:20; Is. 63:15; cf. also Ps. 14:2; 53:3; Ps. 89:12; Lam. 3:50.

<sup>286</sup> Cf. Ex. 20:22; Neh. 9:13, 15; cf. also Deut. 4:36; Ps. 76:9.

<sup>287</sup> Cf. Gen. 11:5, 7; Ex. 19:11, 18, 20; Is. 63:19.

<sup>288</sup> Cf. Gen. 20:10ff.

<sup>289</sup> Cf. Gen. 28:17.

<sup>290</sup> Cf. Job 1:6-12.

<sup>291</sup> Cf. 1 K. 22:19-22.

<sup>292</sup> Cf. Deut. 4:36, (compare with Ex. 19:11, 18, 20; 1 Sam. 8; in the temple God is present only by "his name," Deut. 12:11).

zation in no way diminishes God's power or omnipresence.<sup>293</sup> In the Persian period Yahweh is usually called *ʾlhy hšmym*,<sup>294</sup> in Aramaic *ʾlh šmyʾ*.<sup>295</sup> Whether the celestial character of Yahweh was particularly emphasized by the Israelites through their contact with other nations from the Exile onwards, or was the logical outcome of their reasoning about the transcendence of God, cannot be established with absolute certainty because of insufficient data. It is true that Yahwism, since it is an original, living synthesis, gradually built up in the development of an historical experience, is not a sort of fixed, millennial monolith, made up of notions transplanted in their entirety from the surrounding world of religious beliefs. Nevertheless there are certain aspects in Hebrew religion which have been developed through the influence of other religions. If the Jews, after the Exile, were not reluctant to present Yahweh as the God of heaven, we may consider this tendency as a formulation of an idea already inherent in their religious tradition. This interpretation of a divine attribute such as transcendence could have been the reason, besides other political interests, that the Achaemenian rulers, who did not disguise their sympathy for the celestial divinities, gave some consideration to the religion of Yahweh:

Thus says Cyrus, king of Persia: "All the kingdoms of the earth has the Lord, the God of the heaven, given me, and he has commissioned me to build him a house in Jerusalem . . ." <sup>296</sup>

Since heaven is God's dwelling place, by a metonymy *šmym* came to be used for God himself.<sup>297</sup> This became a general practice among the Jews after the Maccabaeian period because of a religious scruple against using the divine name.<sup>298</sup>

The references to the celestial court serve to remind us of another notable feature of the heaven. As mentioned above, the Hebrews thought primarily of the heaven as the residence of God. There are, however, some allusions to *bny hʾlthym*, *rwḥ*, *šbʾ hšmym*, *mlʾk hʾlthym*, whose abode was believed to be in heaven [on or above the clouds].<sup>299</sup> These "angels" descend from heaven to earth, a figure which assumes a very concrete form in the "ladder" (an image possibly borrowed from the Babylonian ziggurat) of Jacob.<sup>300</sup>

<sup>293</sup> Cf. 1 K. 8:27; Is. 66:1; Ps. 139:8-12; 2 Ch. 2:6; 6:18.

<sup>294</sup> Jon. 1:9; Ezr. 1:2; Neh. 1:4, 5; 2:4, 20.

<sup>295</sup> Ezr. 6:9, 10; 7:21, 23; Dan. 2:37, 44.

<sup>296</sup> Ezr. 1:2.

<sup>297</sup> Cf. 1 Mac. 4:10, 24, 55; 12:15; 2 Mac. 7:11. See the equivalent expression in Aramaic, *šmyʾ*, Dan. 4:23.

<sup>298</sup> See J. T. Milik, "Une lettre de Siméon Bar Kokheba," *RB* 60 (1953), pp. 276-294, especially p. 284.

<sup>299</sup> Cf. Ps. 89:6-8.

<sup>300</sup> Cf. Gen. 28:12.

In the concept *rqy<sup>c</sup>* (referred to on page 41), used to describe the firmament, the function and the shape of the heavenly dome are essentially related. The Hebrew word *rqy<sup>c</sup>* comes from the root *rq<sup>c</sup>* which means "to beat, stamp, expand by beating," and "to spread out." The meaning of the substantive *rqy<sup>c</sup>* is "extended surface, (solid) expanse." From this meaning there is derived a second, which the same root *rq<sup>c</sup>* takes in the Syriac language: this may be expressed by "press down, spread out, consolidate."

The beaten out expanse over the earth, as we have recognized in our analysis of the creation account on page 16, stands as a partition in the midst of the waters to separate the upper from the lower waters. The imagery contained therein reproduces with an amazing fidelity what is implicit in Marduk's creative act in the *Enūma eliš*, but with one notable difference. As we have seen above, the Babylonian god used half of the body of *Tiāmat* to form the vault of heaven, the solid canopy of the sky, to hold back the encompassing waters; after that he dealt with *Apsu*, the personified deep of the fresh waters, and placed the earth (*Ešarra*) as a kind of canopy over *Apsu*. It can be inferred from this myth that the Priestly writer conceived of *rqy<sup>c</sup>* as something "solid." This idea of solidity of *rqy<sup>c</sup>* is conveyed also by Ezekiel in what might be called his Throne-chariot vision:

Over the heads of the creatures<sup>301</sup> was the semblance of a *rqy<sup>c</sup>*, glittering like transparent ice, stretched above their heads. Under the *rqy<sup>c</sup>* their wings touched those on the next [creature]. And above the *rqy<sup>c</sup>* that was over their heads was the semblance of a throne, colored like sapphire.<sup>302</sup>

Then I looked, and lo! upon<sup>303</sup> the *rqy<sup>c</sup>* that was over the head of the cherubim there appeared the semblance of a throne, colored like sapphire.<sup>304</sup>

The function of *rqy<sup>c</sup>* suggests, in this context, the idea of "pavement, floor, base." *rqy<sup>c</sup>* is definitely not to be identified with the earth, and it is upon this *rqy<sup>c</sup>* that the throne rests. The term under consideration is further determined by its construction in parallelism together with *šmym* and thus is known as the "sky."

The heavens are telling the glory of God,  
And the *rqy<sup>c</sup>* shows forth the work of his hands.<sup>305</sup>

In a doxological psalm the use of parallelism extends throughout all the verses, where the idea of the subjoined term is either identical or is expanded.

<sup>301</sup> I follow *KBH*<sup>13</sup>; *hḥyh* is emended to *hḥyt*.

<sup>302</sup> Ez. 1:22-23, 26.

<sup>303</sup> Ez. 10:1; I follow *KBH*<sup>13</sup>, where the expression <sup>2</sup>*l-hrqy<sup>c</sup>* is emended to <sup>1</sup>*l-hrqy<sup>c</sup>*.

<sup>304</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>305</sup> Ps. 19:2.

Praise God in his sanctuary!  
Praise him in his mighty *rqy*<sup>c</sup>.<sup>306</sup>

The obvious explanation is undoubtedly the likely one here, namely, that the author of this psalm is consciously drawing on the well-established tradition that God is dwelling in the heaven and, therefore, the sanctuary is the symbol of the "firmament" where God, in his might, resides.

There are admittedly many uncertainties and obscurities about the exact meaning of *rqy*<sup>c</sup>. However, there is some further scriptural material from which we surmise that *rqy*<sup>c</sup> is not the same as the heaven, in spite of the apparent identification of *rqy*<sup>c</sup> with *šmym*:

*wyqr*<sup>2</sup> <sup>2</sup>*lhy*m *lrqy*<sup>c</sup> *šmym*<sup>307</sup>

An interesting note of this is provided by the account of the creation where the luminaries are said to have been "set" (*ntn* is to be taken in the sense of *šym*),<sup>308</sup> in the *rqy*<sup>c</sup> of the sky.

*wytn* <sup>2</sup>*tm* (*hm*<sup>2</sup>*rt*) <sup>2</sup>*lhy*m *brqy*<sup>c</sup> *hšmym*<sup>309</sup>

The mention of the heavenly luminaries being put on the sky will serve to introduce us to another creation text which, besides being of Egyptian origin and belonging to the Heliopolitan tradition, contains a motive not hitherto met in our study of the cosmological views: it is the idea of the sky often represented as a woman with elongated body, touching the earth with toes and finger-tips, while her star-strewn belly, held aloft by Shu, forms the arch of heaven.<sup>310</sup> Indeed, in the comparative study of mythology, Egyptian thought presents an almost unique case by making the earth a male deity and the sky a female one. It is difficult to ascertain what could have led the Egyptian mind to make this distinction. It would seem that the Heliopolitan mythographers, in their desire to explain how the heavenly dome rests upon the four corners of the earth, were thus led to envisage that a god, named Shu, supports the firmament to which Ra attached the stars and the constellations to light the earth. Shu, whose name is derived from the verb SHU (*šw*), which means "to be empty" and *šwj* "to raise" and which can be translated as "he who holds up," is the Atlas of Egyptian mythology who supports the sky. It was told of him how, on the orders of Ra, he separated his two children: Geb, the earth-god, and Nut, goddess of the sky, who had until then been closely united. He threw them violently apart and elevated Nut high into the air, where

<sup>306</sup> Ps. 150:1.

<sup>307</sup> Gen. 1:8.

<sup>308</sup> See *B.D.B.* under *ntn*.

<sup>309</sup> Gen. 1:17; cf. also 1:14f.

<sup>310</sup> See E. A. Wallis Budge, *The Gods of the Egyptians* (Chicago: The Open Court Publishing Company, 1904), vol. II, pp. 98-112.

he maintained her with his upraised arms. Shu is also the god of air and becomes the god who set creation in motion, forming the world by separating earth from sky. Geb is often represented lying under the feet of Shu, against whom he had vainly struggled to defend his wife. Raised on one elbow, with one knee bent, he thus symbolizes the mountains and the undulations of the earth's crust. His body is sometimes covered with verdure.<sup>311</sup>

Related to this myth is a scene from the Tomb of Seti (ca. 1318-1298 B.C.) where Nut, the sky goddess, is represented as a cow, the body of which is strewn with stars and across whose body the sun-god travels in his boat. Shu, the god of the air, is depicted supporting Nut, assisted by other deities appointed to hold her four legs which became the four pillars of the sky.<sup>312</sup> A variant of this story makes Nut a heavenly sow, whose belly is covered with little sucking pigs, the stars.<sup>313</sup> She is often addressed too as the mother of the sun, which is reborn in various fashions each morning from her womb. The rosy color of the sky at dawn was supposed to be the blood which Nut shed in giving birth to the sun.<sup>314</sup>

In the earliest records of Egyptian thought, then, the sky was imagined as something solid. This idea of a solid expanse constitutes, therefore, a parallel to the Hebrew concept of *raqya*. To complete our survey of the scriptural references attention is called to the relationship between the *raqya* and the "habitat" of the winged animals in the context of the creation story. The Priestly document states

*w<sup>c</sup>wp y<sup>c</sup>wpp <sup>c</sup>l-h<sup>2</sup>rš <sup>c</sup>l-pny rqa<sup>c</sup> hšmym.*<sup>315</sup>

Accordingly, the birds were flying above the earth and across the "firmament" of the heaven. The LXX version (A) rendered *<sup>c</sup>l-pny rqa<sup>c</sup>* by *kata to stereōma* and understood it in terms of a (flying) motion downwards from the heaven, which idea is suggested by the usage of the preposition *kata* with the accusative.<sup>316</sup> The substantive *stereōma* denotes, in classical Greek, "a solid body," and also "foundation, framework." In the apocryphal books of the Old Testament *stereōma* is employed metaphorically in

<sup>311</sup> See S. A. Mercer, *The Religions of Ancient Egypt* (London: Luzac & Co., LTD, 1949), pp. 263-266.

<sup>312</sup> See E. A. Wallis Budge, *From Fetish to God in Ancient Egypt* (London: Humphrey Milford, 1934), p. 239.

<sup>313</sup> See H. Kees, *Der Götterglaube im alten Aegypten* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs Verlag, 1941), p. 72. This conception of the sky serves to remind us of an older representation of the heaven dating from the beginning of civilization where hunting and food-gathering continued to be the rule of life. The sky was pictured in the form of a falcon whose wings stretched over the earth are protecting it against the impeding chaos. See W. Helck, "Die Mythologie der alten Aegypter" in *Wörterbuch der Mythologie* (ed. H. W. Haussig; Stuttgart: Ernst Klett Verlag, 1965), vol. I, p. 360.

<sup>314</sup> See E. A. Wallis Budge, *The Gods of the Egyptians*, vol. I, p. 338f.

<sup>315</sup> Gen. 1:20.

<sup>316</sup> See Liddell and Scott, *Greek-English Lexikon* (rev. ed.; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1936), *sub voce*.

the sense of "solid part, strength" (of an army) and of "ratification" *epistolēs*.<sup>317</sup> Regarding the various scriptural references to *rqy<sup>c</sup>*, nothing as yet can be affirmed about its precise meaning. There is, however, another passage where Job is challenged: *trqy<sup>c</sup> <sup>c</sup>mw lšhqym ḥzqym kr<sup>2</sup>y mwšq*.<sup>318</sup> The term *šhqym* means "fine dust, thin clouds." Hence, the passage may be rendered as follows: Can you expand [by beating] the thin clouds hard as a molten mirror? (Ancient mirrors were made of polished bronze.) Translated in this manner the *rqy<sup>c</sup>* is visualized in the form of a solid expanse over the earth. *rqy<sup>c</sup>* seems to be the "firmament" in the shape of a beaten out hemispheric dome stretched across the sky. This line of interpretation seems in the end to be the more probable, owing to the absence of any explicit mention of the shape of the firmament in the biblical texts. If our interpretation of the firmament as a beaten out hemispheric dome is correct, then we may compare it with the Phoenician term *mrq<sup>c</sup>*, denoting a "beaten out vessel" (either dish or vase), which serves to illustrate the fact that the shape of the firmament resembles a bowl.<sup>319</sup> Another passage in Hebrew supplies a further detail of *mrq<sup>c</sup>*, namely *ksp mrq<sup>c</sup>*, "silver beaten into plates."<sup>320</sup> As a conceptual image of how the firmament was stretched out over the earth, the handicraft of the metal workers has undoubtedly supplied the imagery for its conception. The use of the verb *rq<sup>c</sup>* in the Pi<sup>c</sup>el provides sufficient support of such a graphic idea. The metal workers used to beat out metal-strips into thin plates, known as *rq<sup>c</sup>y ḥym* "beaten out plates,"<sup>321</sup> which could be used to overlay certain objects:

*bzhb yrq<sup>c</sup>nw*<sup>322</sup>  
*wyrq<sup>c</sup>w <sup>2</sup>t-ḥy hzhb*<sup>323</sup>  
*wyrq<sup>c</sup>wm špwy lmzbb*<sup>324</sup>

It is only natural, therefore, that the concept *rqy<sup>c</sup>* led the ancient Hebrews instinctively to think in terms of the material employed for its constitution. Consequently, in times of drought, they apparently thought of heaven turned into *brzl* and *nḥšt*,<sup>325</sup> which obstructed the rainfall. As mentioned above, *rqy<sup>c</sup>* appears also with the meaning of "stamping" (the ground)<sup>326</sup> and of

<sup>317</sup> *Ibid.*, "solid part, strength" (of an army), in LXX 1 Macc. 9:14; "ratification" *epistolēs*, in LXX Esther 9:29.

<sup>318</sup> Job 37:18. It should be noticed that this is the only instance where *rq<sup>c</sup>* is employed in the Hiph<sup>c</sup>il.

<sup>319</sup> Cf. *mrq<sup>c</sup>* in *Répertoire d'épigraphie sémitique* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1900-1905), vol. I, 1-500, No. 453.

<sup>320</sup> Jer. 10:9. It may be recalled that the word under consideration is a participle of the verb *rq<sup>c</sup>* in the Pu<sup>c</sup>al.

<sup>321</sup> Num. 17:3.

<sup>322</sup> Is. 40:19.

<sup>323</sup> Ez. 39:3.

<sup>324</sup> Num. 17:4.

<sup>325</sup> See Lev. 26:19; Deut. 28:23.

<sup>326</sup> Cf. 2 Sam. 22:43; Ez. 6:11; 25:6.

"spreading out," particularly when used in the Qal. We may note that the idea of "stretching out, spreading out" is found in context with the creation of the earth: *rq<sup>c</sup> h<sup>2</sup>rs*.<sup>327</sup> The impression most likely left on the modern mind by a survey of these ancient ideas about the shape of the firmament is that of a solid bowl put over the earth, like a vault or heavenly dome. The inner side of this bowl, also called heaven, is also compared to a tent spread out over the earth. As noted in the previous analysis, God who spreads out the heavenly tent is outside the *rqy<sup>c</sup>*-bowl. The study of these passages leads us to conclude that the firmament was regarded as the solid vault of heaven.

A completely different line of interpretation of *rqy<sup>c</sup>* has been adopted by H. Winckler. Assuming that the Priestly writer, because of his ignorance of ancient cosmology, treats the creation theme inadequately, Winckler maintains that the world view, represented in the Bible, is in no way related to the cosmological views accepted, though in diverse forms, by many peoples in ancient times.<sup>328</sup> In his speculations about the Hebrew world view, however, he explains its specific conceptions by emphasizing Mesopotamian influence. Seemingly unaware that his latter statement is logically inconsistent with his formerly expressed conviction, he further explains *rqy<sup>c</sup>* in terms of the *šupuk šamê* (literally "the piling up of heaven") of the Babylonians.<sup>329</sup>

A. Jeremias, following H. Winckler, identifies *rqy<sup>c</sup>* with *šupuk šamê* and explains them according to a description later employed by the Zodiac. A clue to its identification is possibly provided by the fact that the Babylonians believed in the similarity of composition of earth and heaven and in their interdependence. This in turn led to the conviction that every action in one sphere must necessarily produce its counterpart in the other.

<sup>327</sup> Is. 42:5; 44:24; Ps. 136:6.

<sup>328</sup> See H. Winckler, *Altorientalische Forschungen* (Leipzig: Verlag von E. Pfeiffer, 1905), 3. Reihe, Band 3, Heft 1, Zur Genesis, p. 386, who states: "Der *rakī<sup>c</sup>* . . . wird vom texte selbst als der himmel erklärt und soll doch den zweck haben, die urwasser nunmehr in zwei teile zu trennen. Das tut nun aber der himmel nach keiner [?] vorstellung, weder der der sonstigen orientalischen völker, noch der der Israeliten, noch der sonst irgend eines menschen. denn über dem *himmel* als ganzes gibt es nirgends wasser. also kann *rakī<sup>c</sup>* nicht der himmel sein oder nicht die wasser trennen.

Die biblische lehre steht aber in einem *gegensatze* zu der des übrigen orientis und daraus ergibt sich besonders für den *priestercodex* mit seinen *trockenen aller mythologie* abholden tendenzen eine vernachlässigung der gerade von der altorientalischen astrallehre ausgesprochenen und auf ihr beruhenden kosmologie, der verfassung von P ist ein schlechter astrolog und behandelt das schöpfungsthema, weil er muss, aber unwirisch und kurz [sic]."

<sup>329</sup> See H. Winckler, *op. cit.*, p. 387, who maintains the following opinion about the firmament: "Wenn der *rakī<sup>c</sup>* geschaffen wird, um wasser und wasser zu trennen und in der mitte der wasser errichtet wird, so ist er irdisch eben das feste land, das erdreich. dieses trennt in der tat zwei wasserreiche. nämlich den irdischen ocean, auf dem es ruht und der südwärts, "unterhalb," von ihm liegt, und den himmlischen ocean, den entsprechenden südlichen, unteren teil des *himmels*, der mit seinem unteren teil, dem horizonten, auf die erde stösst. er wird nach oben begrenzt durch den tierkreis, den *šupuk šamê*, und dieser ist der *himmlische rakī<sup>c</sup>*, der feste teil des himmels [sic]."

This conviction gave rise to the theory of a point-for-point correspondence between heaven and earth, according to which the Zodiac represents a heavenly earth.<sup>330</sup> But whatever be the truth about *šupuk šamê*, the meaning of *rqy*<sup>c</sup> in Hebrew is that of an "extended surface, (solid) expanse," which is the place of God's habitation and represents the function of separating the upper from the lower waters.

## 2. Celestial Bodies: Study of Terms and Their Context

In treating the available material in ancient Near Eastern literature about the conceptions of the celestial bodies, attention must first be paid to those references in which the narrators tell us something about the meaning of the concepts. This procedure would be futile, unless the narrators had given us some information on their views about the celestial bodies in many variations. These variations resemble associations to the same theme. Comparing all the variations there unfolds a composite in which each new detail adds something to the old. By interrelating all the details, one arrives at the significance of the concepts. On the other hand, when we consider the passages in the Old Testament relevant to the subject under consideration, we realize that they are linked with the preponderantly religious reflections of the biblical authors. They witness to a trend among the ancients to worship the heavenly bodies. The nomads indulged in lunar worship; the agricultural-urban society is associated with solar worship. What induced them to consider the luminaries as deities is probably linked with their observation of the natural processes. While primitive man observed his physical environment changing, he noted that the heaven remained unchanged. Despite brief seasonal changes, the sky had an abiding sameness of appearance which suggested permanence. Further, the constant succession of day and night and the unceasing spectacle of the rising and setting of the sun, the steady rhythm of the moon's phases, and the enduring pattern of the stars — all gave the impression that the structure of the sky was fixed and abiding. Accordingly, from experience of his physical environment primitive man would most likely have been led to deduce that the organic order of the earth depended upon the unchanging order of the sky. Moreover, the preoccupation of primitive man with his physical environment as a vital factor in his own well-being was calculated to change man's attitude towards it from that of an original unthinking acceptance to one of lively concern about its fundamental nature and the various changes to which it appeared to be subject. Man now became profoundly concerned with the earth's fecundity, and he observed its reactions to the climatic changes that the rotation of the seasons brought.

<sup>330</sup> See A. Jeremias, *The Old Testament in the Light of the Ancient East* (London: Williams & Norgate, 1911), vol. I, pp. 179-180, cf. also p. 14f.

Hence, he became interested in the signs of the heavens. From his basic experience that the emanations of force from the luminaries determine the processes of life it was an apparently logical step to think of those celestial bodies as autonomous powers over which man exercises no control and on which he is dependent. Thus, he represented them as gods.

The great significance of the worship of the heavenly bodies can be measured by the emphasis with which the biblical authors warn against it:

Beware, when you look to the heavens and see all the host of the heavens, the sun, moon and stars, that you do not let yourselves be allured into paying homage to them.<sup>331</sup>

Aside from the worship of idols, the Hebrew prophets considered star worship the most important form of foreign religious practice. The fact that the prophets conceived the danger to be so great proves the power of these forms of worship. They evidently contained religious thoughts and motives which even the Chosen People could cling to. Such prophetic reaction would have been unthinkable had this been a case of harmless and superficial worship, primitive idolatry without depth. This worship was supported by the entire civilization of the ancient Near East, which on the whole was religiously determined, especially by the civilization of Mesopotamia and Egypt. That biblical authors warned against star worship in which certain groups of the Hebrew population were engaged is confirmed in the Bible where it is reported that Manasseh, king of Judah, sacrificed to the sun, the moon, the constellations of stars, and all the host of heaven.<sup>332</sup> Perhaps no other passage dealing with the worship of celestial bodies so clearly acquaints us with what might be called the perception of the infinite as Job's final apology:

If I looked at the shining light,  
Or the moon marching in splendor,  
And my mind was secretly seduced,  
And my hand kissed my mouth;  
That were perfidious sin,  
I had betrayed God on high.<sup>333</sup>

He means that by this form of worship an infinite, divine reality is sensed as the essence of the perceptible phenomenon. Job clarifies his position with an oath whereby he repudiates this worship as thoroughly reprehensible and as an apostasy from pure and undefiled dedication to God.

<sup>331</sup> Deut. 4:19.

<sup>332</sup> Cf. 2 K. 21:3.

<sup>333</sup> Job 31:26-28. The sun is the light par excellence. The usage of placing the hand on the mouth as a token of reverent silence refers to an ancient practice in that the kiss represented a form of adoration. Because the stars were inaccessible, the worshippers may have thrown them a kiss.

## a. The Sun

The word, which pre-eminently denotes the sun in the Semitic languages and which drove all other names of the sun into the background, is derived from the root *šmš* whose original meaning is unknown.<sup>334</sup> *šmš* in Hebrew is used both in the masculine and the feminine gender. The plural of *šmš* occurs only once as *šmštyk* in the sense of "battlements, pinnacles, rampart"<sup>335</sup> *Šamšu* in Akkadian is consistently masculine like the Sumerian sun-god Utu; *šemšâ* in Syriac is usually masculine in gender, as is *šmš*<sup>2</sup> in Aramaic, whereas *šams* in Arabic is feminine. The feminine noun *špš* in Ugaritic, which denotes both the sun and the sun-goddess, apparently constitutes an exception to *šmš*, the common Semitic word for sun. W. F. Albright suggests that "the ordinary word for 'sun' appeared ominous to the North Canaanites, who replaced it by a synonym of a similar sound."<sup>336</sup> However, this opinion loses its validity, if it can be established that *špš* is related to *šmš*. A. Dietrich, commenting on the word *špš*, explains the transition *m > p* by means of a well-attested phenomenon of interchange between consonants; the intervocalic *-m-* produced a glottal stop through the influence of the sibilant *-š-* to the effect that the bilabial nasal *-m-* was eliminated: *špš > šampš > šamš*. To illustrate this phenomenon further he compares the Persian word *šamšer* "sword" with the Greek *sampsēra* and with the Syriac *sapsirâ* or the word in Greek *Sa(m)psigeramenos* (kings of Emesa).<sup>337</sup> Apart from this consonantal transition the feminine gender of the solar deity of Ras Shamra constitutes another peculiarity. As mentioned, west-Semitic languages hesitate to assign a grammatical gender to the sun: *šmš* in Hebrew is either masculine or feminine. The reason for this lies most likely in the conflation of Mesopotamian tradition where Shamash was regarded as a masculine deity, whereas *špš* in Ugaritic mythology was a goddess.

While the common Semitic word *šmš* might conceivably account for similar aspects of solar myths, it is impossible to trace synonymous or metaphorical terms for sun to a common source. That the terms <sup>2</sup>*wr*, *ḥmh*

<sup>334</sup> However Fleischer believes that *šmš* descends from the etymological basis of the idea of rapid motion, or busy running about. This original sense gives the point of connection with the Aramaic terms *šmš* "to serve, to be busy" and *šmšn*<sup>2</sup> [*šwšmn*<sup>2</sup>] "ant". Cf. Fleischer's remark, cited in Levy's *Neuhebräisches und Chaldäisches Wörterbuch* (Leipzig: F. A. Brockhaus, 1889), vol. IV, pp. 581-582.

<sup>335</sup> Is. 54:12. R. Kittel suggests that *šmš wmgm*, in Ps. 84:12, should be read as "rampart and shield!" See R. Kittel, *Die Psalmen* (Leipzig: A Deichertsche Verlagsbuchhandlung D. Werner Scholl, 1929), p. 279.

<sup>336</sup> See W. F. Albright's article "The North-Canaanite Epic of <sup>2</sup>Al'ēyān Ba'al and Môt," in *JPOS* 12 (1932), pp. 185-208, especially p. 195. Moreover, the same author maintains the opinion that "the name Shapash does not seem to be etymologically related to Shamash, though it was obviously selected in part because of its similarity in sound; it may mean 'the Radiant.'" See W. F. Albright, *Archaeology and the Religion of Israel* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 2nd rev. ed., 1946), p. 83.

<sup>337</sup> See A. Dietrich's recension of C. H. Gordon's *Ugaritic Manual*, in *Orientalia* 26 (Nova Series), 1957, pp. 63-65.

and *ḥrs* are translated also as sun, besides their original meaning, is confirmed by the relationship which exists between their basic idea and their function. This is quite obvious in the case of *ʿwr* "light" denoting, in certain instances, the light par excellence and hence the sun.<sup>338</sup> The technical term for heat — *ḥmh* — also agrees with and is supported by its usage to denote the sun.<sup>339</sup>

Closely connected with the different terms applied to the sun, derived from the observation of its effect and function, is found a natural consequence of associating the four cardinal points with the sun's daily motion. Hence *mzrḥ šmš* "the rising of the sun" was used in the sense of "east."<sup>340</sup> The actual rising of the sun is indicated by the verbs *zrḥ*,<sup>341</sup> which means "to rise, come forth," and by *yšʿ*.<sup>342</sup> Yet the imagery implied in the idea of dawn exhibits some aspects of mythical views for which the Hebrew language offers no satisfactory support or parallel. Thus we may look to the cognate idioms for further insight. First, we consider a word which has been retained in the language beyond the mythical stage: the Hebrew *šḥr* "dawn." It is necessary to distinguish between two roots of identical spelling: *šḥr*, with the meaning "to be black," and *šḥr*, with the meaning "to seek early, diligently." A likely explanation of "dawn" being related to the verb *šḥr* in the sense of "being black" is provided by a description which seems to refer to the dispersing of the clouds before dawn.

For the day of the Lord comes,  
For near is the day of darkness and gloom,  
The day of clouds and deep darkness,  
Like dawn [blackness] spread over the mountains.<sup>343</sup>

However, the mythical conception of the dawn points in a different direction from that which the meaning of the two verbs indicates. It therefore seems undetermined whether the term for dawn is derived from the one or the other. To the mythical imagery of dawn must be referred the wings assigned to the sun or the dawn. Just as the Egyptians, the Babylonians, the Assyrians, and the Persians in their monuments expressed this aspect of the sun by the picture either of a winged solar disk or of a falcon or of the solar deity with flames rising from both shoulders, so the Hebrews, although they did not give expression to their ideas in monuments which might have been preserved to the present time, have in their poetry left

<sup>338</sup> Cf. Is. 18:4; Hab. 3:4; Job 31:26; 37:21.

<sup>339</sup> Cf. Is. 30:26, [see also Is. 24:23]; Job 30:28; Cant. 6:10.

<sup>340</sup> Num. 21:11; Deut. 4:41, 47; Josh. 1:15; (12:1); 13:5; 19:12, 27, 34; Judg. 11:18; 20:43; 21:19; 2 K. 10:33; Is. 41:25; 45:6; 59:19; Ps. 50:1; 113:3; (cf. also Mal. 1:15).

<sup>341</sup> Gen. 32:31; Ex. 22:2; Judg. 9:33; 2 Sam. 23:4; 2 K. 3:22; Jon. 4:8; Nah. 3:17; Ps. 104:22; Eccl. 1:5.

<sup>342</sup> Gen. 19:23; Judg. 5:31.

<sup>343</sup> Joel 2:1b-2a.

behind them confirmation that they conceived of the sun and the dawn in the same way. For example.

But for you who revere my name, there will arise  
The sun of righteousness, with healing in its wings.<sup>344</sup>

The phrase "in its wings" at once suggests the winged solar disk as attested by the monuments. This representation was certainly known to the Israelites at this time, either as borrowed from without or as inherited from a remote antiquity in Israel itself as in the rest of the ancient world. As the Hebrews called the wind "winged,"<sup>345</sup> so they bound wings also upon the rapidly increasing light of the dawn:

If I take up the wings of the dawn,  
And dwell at the back of the sea.<sup>346</sup>

Amos speaks metaphorically of Yahweh's arrival in terms of the imagery taken from the sunrise where one peak after another is illumined.<sup>347</sup> From the observation of the regular phenomenon of sunrise it is possible that the comparisons either of the morning sun with the awakening of the dawn,<sup>348</sup> or with [the opening of] the eyelids of the dawn,<sup>349</sup> or with the [spreading of the] wings of the dawn,<sup>350</sup> have suggested themselves quite naturally to the biblical authors. It is more likely, however, that a mythical conception underlies these metaphors and that originally they were used to designate the attributes and role of a reappearing deity of the morning. We meet this deity in the Canaanite mythology in the figure of the god *Shhr*, son of El. From random references to this Canaanite god in the Old Testaments, it appears that the ideas connected with this nature deity have not found their way into the biblical ideology, but may be considered as poetical embroidery. In the seasonal myths from Ras Shamra, *Shahr* is associated with *Shalem*.<sup>351</sup>

The observation of the daily course of the sun from beyond the eastern horizon to beyond the western horizon led to the spatial conceptions of east and west. While the east is identified with the direction of the rising of the sun, the expression for west prompts the idea not only of the direction towards sunset<sup>352</sup> but also of the course of the sun as soon as it went down on the horizon. It is quite clear that the Hebrews did not

<sup>344</sup> Mal. 3:20.

<sup>345</sup> Cf. Ps. 18:11.

<sup>346</sup> Ps. 139:9.

<sup>347</sup> Cf. Am. 4:13.

<sup>348</sup> Cf. Ps. 57:9.

<sup>349</sup> Cf. Job 3:9.

<sup>350</sup> Cf. Ps. 139:9.

<sup>351</sup> Cf. C. H. Gordon, *op. cit.*, text 52:52f.

<sup>352</sup> Cf. Deut. 11:30; Josh. 1:4; 23:4; Zech. 8:7; Ps. 50:1; cf. also Mal. 1:11.

suppose that the sun actually disintegrated after sunset and that a new sun came up from the east each morning. It was the same sun throughout.

The sun rises and the sun sets,  
And hastens to the place where it rose.<sup>353</sup>

The final stage of the sun's diurnal rotation was understood as an approach of the sun to its exit through which it disappeared: *b' hšmš* "the sun came in, entered."<sup>354</sup> There, however, the circuit of the sun did not end nor was there any idea of its hiding itself behind a mysterious mountain during the night, since the sun, as described by Kohelet (1:5), actually *ʔl-mqwmw šwʔp* hastens to its place (where it rises), the metaphor being taken from racing horses which breathe hard. On the other and, nowhere in the Old Testament is there any mention of the region through which the sun travels between the time of its setting until its rising the next morning.<sup>355</sup> The biblical authors did not accept the conception of the sun's journey through the nether world. In Ugaritic mythology, however, is found the formulation of the descent of *špš* to the nether world as a practical application of the seasonal myth of death and revival. Because the sun marks the daily and yearly regularity of continually changing cosmic life the solar deity is envisaged as an intermediary between the upper and the nether world.<sup>356</sup> Among the Babylonians the belief prevailed that the phenomenon of the sunset represented the descent of Shamash to the nether world, submerging itself in the sea beyond the western horizon to return again the next morning from beyond the eastern mountain. As mentioned in Akkadian texts the mythical mountain range was known as *Māšu*.<sup>357</sup> During the night the solar deity traveled through the underworld dispensing light, food, and drink to the dead. The belief of the sun's entry into the nether world is also given another natural explanation: the scorching heat of the midday sun was explained in terms of the dual personality which the sun then assumed; to be sure, this heat was not attributed to the sun but was ascribed either to Nergal, the god of the nether world, or to Gibil, the god of fire.<sup>358</sup>

A parallel to the identification of the heat of the sun with some demon may be offered by the LXX text which translates *yšwd šhrym* by *daimonion mesēmbriṇon*<sup>359</sup> [reading *wšd šhrym*] and rendered by the Vulgate "dae-

<sup>353</sup> Eccl. 1:5.

<sup>354</sup> Gen. 28:11; Ex. 17:12; 22:25; Lev. 22:7; Deut. 16:6; 23:12; 24:13, 15; Josh. 8:29; 10:27; Judg. 19:14; 2 Sam. 3:35; 1 K. 22:36; Am. 8:9; Eccl. 1:5; 2 Ch. 18:34; cf. also Gen. 15:12, 17; Mich. 3:6; Ps. 104:19; Mal. 1:11.

<sup>355</sup> In reply to Job's argument God challenges him to direct light and darkness to their respective homes. Cf. Job 38:19-21.

<sup>356</sup> Cf. C. H. Gordon, *op. cit.*, texts 49: IV and 62.

<sup>357</sup> Cf. Gilgamesh epic, tablet IX, col. 2.

<sup>358</sup> See Dietz Otto Edzard, "Die Mythologie der Sumerer und Akkader," in *Wörterbuch der Mythologie* (ed. H. W. Haussig; Stuttgart: Ernst Klett Verlag, 1965), vol. I, pp. 126-127.

<sup>359</sup> Ps. 91:6; [LXX 90:6]; cf. also Is. 49:10.

monium meridianum." "This is the demon responsible for the overpowering noonday heat, which can cause sunstroke or dizzy spells."<sup>360</sup>

The Egyptian mythographers described the sunset in terms of a transfer of the sun-god from the day-barque to the night-barque. The stars form the crew of the solar barques. During the twelve hours of the night the perils which Ra, the sun-god, faces threaten his life and the very existence of the world. He is confronted by the serpent, Apep, his eternal enemy. In the nether world each of the twelve provinces which Ra must visit during the hours of darkness is infested by serpents which threaten the existence of the dead. As the sun-god passes along the infernal river, the various unfriendly spirits which inhabit the realm of the dead come forward to tow his barque. According to another belief, the sunset was thought to be the death of the sun-god who was born in the morning as a child, grew to maturity by midday, and by evening had become a doddering old man who would die that night.<sup>361</sup> In the Heliopolitan tradition, which represented the sky as the star-strewn body of the sky goddess Nut, the sunrise meant the birth of the sun-god, whereas the sunset was explained as the sun's disappearance in Nut's mouth to remain hidden in the body of the goddess, during the night, and to be born again the next day.

The regular rising and setting of the sun and its yearly movement have inspired the notion of the stable order, regularity, or law which reflects the order of nature and man. For ancient thought as well as modern "order" or "law" signifies permanence amid transitoriness, the imperishable amid the perishable, the abiding essence beneath changing phenomena. Nevertheless, there is a great difference between our modern conception and the ancient mythico-religious view of the sun's course. Natural science derives law from observing regular patterns in a number of different phenomena; the religious view superimposes the all-governing law on the phenomena. According to the biblical world view it is God who puts an energy, i.e., his law, into the world which sustains itself by the will of the Creator.

As long as the earth endures,  
Seedtime and harvest, cold and heat,  
Summer and winter, day and night,  
Shall never cease.<sup>362</sup>

The sun's regular course led Babylonian intuition to postulate a stable order in the world, of which the sun is the personification. "The fact that Shamash is regarded primarily as a god of justice," upholding the world

<sup>360</sup> See T. H. Gaster's article "Demon" in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, vol. I, pp. 817-824, especially p. 820.

<sup>361</sup> See H. Bonnet, *op. cit.*, pp. 733, 738-739.

<sup>362</sup> Gen. 8:22, which might be called a philosophical conclusion to Yahweh's covenant with Noah. Nature has its laws which are defined by the regular succession of season and days.

order and the individual law of life, "is an interesting sidelight on the mode of primitive thought which formed this conception of the all-seeing sun, flooding the world with light and dispersing the night which conceals the wrong-doers: attributes most appropriate to a god of justice. It was under his auspices and his protection that the great legislating kings, like Hammurabi, placed their laws, and this monarch's famous 'Code' depicts him in adoration before Shamash."<sup>363</sup> The expression *šmš šdqh* seems to be a parallel to the Babylonian Shamash, the god of justice. However, the Hebrew *šmš šdqh* is quite different from the Babylonian conception, since it does not indicate any personal agent, but rather figuratively represents righteousness itself.<sup>364</sup> Similar to the Babylonian idea of a stable order inherent in the world is the Egyptian belief according to which Ra, the sun-god, is the father of Ma-a-t, the goddess of order and law and of the life of the world including man. The various aspects of the function of the sun-god are represented by its twofold manifestation both of physical light with its life-giving and life preserving power and of moral light which is personified respectively by Ra himself and by his daughter, Ma-a-t.<sup>365</sup> Hence, the idea of order and stability is essentially connected with the idea of the sun-god.

If the ancient Hebrews did not represent the universal world-law by the regularity of the sun's course, they nevertheless were impressed by the apparent unchangeableness of the sun which symbolized eternal duration.

His dynasty shall last to eternity,  
his throne as the sun before me.  
Like the moon will his descendants live on,  
and his seat will be stabler than the sky.<sup>366</sup>

The regularly alternating periods of seasons, planets, stars and constellations impart their regularity to the whole world process. Hence, the Hebrews are more easily inspired by the life and vitality of the universe than by the harmony of its forms and colors. One seeks in vain colorful, romantic pages, inspired by the sight of a sunrise or a sunset, a starry night or the moon rising over a dark mountain top.<sup>367</sup> The foremost impression of the sun in ancient consciousness is one of warmth and heat.

<sup>363</sup> See G. Contenau, *Everyday Life in Babylon and Assyria* (transl. by K. R. & A. R. Maxell-Hyslop; London: Edward Arnold Publishers, 1954), p. 249.

<sup>364</sup> Cf. Mal. 3:20.

<sup>365</sup> See H. Bonnet, *op. cit.*, pp. 430-434.

<sup>366</sup> Ps. 89:37-38. As translated by M. Dahood, *Psalms II: 51-100. The Anchor Bible*, vol. 17, p. 310. For pertinent discussion and documentation of the principles on which the translation is based see p. 318.

<sup>367</sup> Ben Sira, for example, when evoking the sun, moon, stars and rainbow (Ecclus. 43:1-12), does not seem to discern any color; he is unaware of tonalities of color and perceives only sharp contrasts; for him, everything shines and dazzles.

We may here quote Homer's accustomed description of sunrise which has no parallel in the Bible: "when the rosy-fingered Dawn, child of the morning, appeared." Od. 2:1; 3:404, etc.

The polarity in the sun's manifestations of giving life by its warmth and of destroying life by its heat was sensed particularly by the Canaanite poets. The theme of the alternating succession of seasons was re-enacted on stage where the unequal struggle between life and death finds expression in a highly dramatic performance.<sup>368</sup>

The prevailing thought which the contemplation of the luminaries evoked in man from the most ancient times indicates their five functions: to divide day from night, to be signs, to indicate the seasons, to measure days, and to constitute the years. Particularly the sun as *hm<sup>wr</sup> hgdl* is designed to be *l<sup>wr</sup> ywmm* of the heaven.<sup>369</sup>

If these references to the sun's function of measuring time were too general in their scope, the practical implication might be blurred. However, the text relates with distinct features of reality how the Israelites used to tell the hours of the day by means of a sundial. We must concede, however, that "we know of no terms for the smaller divisions of time. The word *š<sup>h</sup>*, which later meant "hour," is only employed in the Aramaic of Daniel, in the vague sense of a moment or instant.<sup>370</sup> In Mesopotamia and Egypt water clocks and gnomons were used from the second millennium B.C. and an Egyptian sundial of the thirteenth century has been found in Gezer."<sup>371</sup> In a legendary account of king Hezekiah's illness and miraculous cure there are mentioned the *m<sup>lwt</sup> ḥz* on which the sun receded ten degrees at the prayer of Isaiah.

And Hezekiah said: "It is easy for the shadow to go forward ten degrees; rather let the shadow turn back ten degrees." So Isaiah the prophet cried to the Lord; and he brought back the shadow the ten degrees which it had gone down on the "sundial" of Ahaz.<sup>372</sup>

The "degrees of Ahaz" are not a sundial, properly speaking, but a stairway erected by Ahaz. As *m<sup>lh</sup>* may signify either one of the flight of steps or a degree, we might suppose the expression to refer to an actual succession of steps, leading perhaps to the "high chamber" mentioned in a gloss in 2 K. 23:12. There may have been an obelisk on a nearby square throwing the shadow of its highest point at noon upon the highest steps, and in the morning and evening upon the lowest, so that the obelisk itself served as a gnomon. *m<sup>lh</sup>* can, therefore, mean both step and degree, and consequently *m<sup>lwt</sup> ḥz* can be translated either as "the staircase of Ahaz" or "the sundial of Ahaz." The miracle in question would imply a sudden movement of a shadow on that stairway.

<sup>368</sup> See T. H. Gaster, *Thespis*, pp. 201-230.

<sup>369</sup> Cf. Is. 60:19-20; Jer. 31:35; Ps. 136:7-8.

<sup>370</sup> Cf. Dan 4:16; cf. also Dan. 3:6, 15; 4:30; 5:5.

<sup>371</sup> See R. de Vaux, *Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions* (transl. by J. McHugh; London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2nd ed. 1965), pp. 182-183.

<sup>372</sup> 2 K. 20:10-11 (Is. 38:8).

As to the supposed location of the luminaries, the biblical author does not seem concerned about speculations regarding their precise location in the sky. However, since the expression *brqy<sup>c</sup> hšmym*<sup>373</sup> allows two translations, namely "in the firmament of heaven" and "upon the firmament of heaven," we may assume that they were believed to be between the pavement of the firmament without and the heaven within.

As regards the relationship of the sun to organic life, the Babylonians felt it necessary to find a substitute for it during the night. Thus, they designated the planet Saturn, as the star of the sun, a concept the Greeks also accepted. The relation between sun and Saturn may perhaps be explained on the basis of the nature and the course of the planet Saturn. As a matter of fact, the light which is reflected by this planet is quite dim and its slow course resembles the movement of an old man, an image which in turn suggested the comparison to the dethroned sun. What is more probable, however, is that the Babylonians related the sun to the planet Saturn because of its dim light which they explained as due to a more distant arc which the sun described on the night sky.<sup>374</sup>

The sun was of far more significance to the ancient Egyptians than to the Babylonians as can be seen from one of their calendars, the solar (or, more correctly, the sidereal) based on observation of the heliacal rising of Sirius, which took place just before the Nile flood was due, and from the sun cult practiced in Egypt. For the bulk of the population of the Nile valley what mattered was the inundation. Almost no rain falls in the valley, though the delta receives light rains during part of the year. Since for Egypt, known as "the gift of the Nile," agriculture was the mainstay of its economy, it had to rely on the flooding of its arable land by the Nile. It was, therefore, of prime importance to devise a calendar system which would enable the farmers to know beforehand when the Nile would reach its flood stage and to fix the time of the seasonal year, which regulated the agricultural life of Egypt. Thus, the flood periods were not determined by a lunar calendrical system but by the relation of Sirius, the brightest fixed star, to the sun immediately before sunrise. It is not surprising, therefore, that the sun held a prominent position in the myths of the Egyptians and permeated every aspect of Egyptian life and even guided the religious belief during the time of Amenhotep IV (ca. 1367-1350 B.C.).<sup>375</sup> The monotheistic sun worship of this Egyptian king, known under the name of Akhenaten, predominated throughout Egypt in the middle of the fourteenth century. It is questionable, however, whether this form of sun worship is one of the more important types. It was conceived by Akhenaten and disappeared with him. But even if his theo-

<sup>373</sup> Gen. 1:17; cf. also Ps. 74:16.

<sup>374</sup> See F. Boll, *Kleine Schriften zur Sternkunde des Altertums* (Leipzig: Koehler & Amelang, 1959), p. 88.

<sup>375</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 89-90.

logical reform had no lasting effect on the religious reform of his people, his merit as a poet and a great thinker is not diminished. According to his "monotheistic" view all gods, except Aten, the sun, are rejected and denied, and the entire traditional cultus is abandoned. Aten, the only god, is creator and organizer of the world's life and is himself the life which permeates the organic world. This view is characteristic of the philosopher and poet. Laying aside, for the moment, any religious consideration, his idea would seemingly assert that all life on earth has arisen and exists through the light and warmth of the sun, which, as the source of all life, is the only god. A closer examination of the whole period of Akhenaten's reign reveals that he spiritualized everything; as might be expected of a thinker and a poet. There are no traces of religious myths and cultic acts. Thus, Akhenaten's sun cult is rather a religious rationalism than a new form of sun worship.<sup>376</sup>

There are a few idiomatic expressions used in context with the sun that demand examination. *Ngd hšmš* is used in the sense of "publicly, in the open,"<sup>377</sup> and is somehow identical in meaning with *l'yny hšmš* which is rendered "before the sun," that is, in the presence of the sun, with the sun, as it were, looking on.<sup>378</sup> A variant of the former two expressions is *l'yny šmš* which denotes "in the sunlight."<sup>379</sup> The poet compared the sun to the eye, and the sun accordingly possesses the attributes of a face. Thus, in the Hebrew poetry we meet with the eyelids [eyelashes], i.e., rays, of the dawn.<sup>380</sup> Hence, also, the dawn is spoken of as looking down.<sup>381</sup> The same tendency of imagining the sun as an eye may perhaps be detected in the name of the location called *ʿyn šmš* which is usually rendered "source of the sun," in accordance with the translation of the LXX as *pēgē ʿēliou*.<sup>382</sup> *ʿyn šmš* suggests the obvious conjecture that it originally meant "the eye of the sun" which harks back to Egyptian tradition. It is of interest to quote S. A. Cook who provides archeological evidence from Palestine whither the conception of the eye of the sun-god had found its way.

To the Egyptian, the "eye" symbolized the sun-god's providence, and the filial piety of Horus who lost his eye in his struggle with Set, and offered it to his dead father Osiris, and thus restored him to life, or rather made of him a soul. Precisely what the "Horus eye" meant to the Palestinian it would be difficult to say; but we meet with the god himself on later Hebrew seals, and in view of those close connec-

<sup>376</sup> See J. Pirenne, *Histoire de la civilisation de l'Égypte ancienne* (Neuchâtel: La Baconnière, 1962), II, pp. 294-328.

<sup>377</sup> Num. 25:4; 2 Sam. 12:12.

<sup>378</sup> 2 Sam. 12:11.

<sup>379</sup> Job 8:16.

<sup>380</sup> Cf. Job 3:9; 41:10.

<sup>381</sup> Cf. Cant. 6:10; *nšqp* is used in the sense of "leaning over in order to look down."

<sup>382</sup> Josh. 15:7.

tions between Palestine and Egypt there would certainly be some who knew that the "eye" was a symbol of the god's care, or that it would turn the dead into a living "soul," or that it had some sacrificial value.<sup>383</sup>

It is illuminating to recognize the freedom with which Israel appropriated religious symbols from whatever source available. For instance, the phrase *hnh ʿyn yhw ʿl-yrʿyw* "behold the eye of the Lord is upon those who fear him"<sup>384</sup> is an adaptation of a familiar conception from Egypt.

God "sees," hence the "eye" is a symbol of his watchfulness over the Judean captives in Babylonia.<sup>385</sup> For the representations of Egyptian eye-beads ("Horus eyes") the best and earliest evidence found in Palestine comes from the cities of the Northern Kingdom.<sup>386</sup> There is an expression to which biblical authors attached the meaning of being alive: [*hzh*] *rʿh hšmš*.<sup>387</sup> We may finally adduce a characteristic idiom widely used by Koheleth: *tʿht [h]šmš*<sup>388</sup> with its equivalent in Greek: *ʿyphʿ ʿēliou*, which corresponds to the more common expression *ʿl-hʿrš*. It designates the place where the affairs of human life are enacted.

Notwithstanding the incompleteness of our knowledge of all the aspects of the sun cult as it was practiced throughout the ancient Near East, the information thus far gathered on this subject inclines one to the view that sun worship is found in all countries where the seasonal cycle is marked. In all these countries the concentration of human attentiveness on the production of the fruits of the earth led people naturally to observe the relation of the celestial bodies to their various phases. The solar deity *špš* of Ugarit was closely involved in the mythical adventures of the weather-god Baʿal and of his sister and consort ʿAnat. In Egypt, where the seasons are not distinctly marked because of unusual climatic conditions, the solar cult of Ra rose to popularity long before that of the vegetation deity, Osiris, was introduced into the Nile valley. In the course of religious development and of conflation of many cultic traditions Osiris worship became both popular and official. Osiris, then, appropriated the attributes of Ra until he not only was identical with the sun-god, but came almost to displace him.

Finally, there are yet available further important references to the

<sup>383</sup> S. A. Cook, *The Religion of Ancient Palestine in the Light of Archaeology* (London: Humphrey Milford, 1930), pp. 42-43.

<sup>384</sup> Ps. 33:18.

<sup>385</sup> Cf. Ezra 5:5.

<sup>386</sup> S. A. Cook mentions some fine examples from Meggido, Samaria, Ain Shemesh, Nerab, Bet-Shan, etc., in *op. cit.*, p. 42, footnote 2.

<sup>387</sup> Eccl. 6:5; 7:11; 11:7; the expression *hzh hšmš* occurs in Ps. 58:9.

<sup>388</sup> Eccl. 1:3, 9, 14; 2:11, 17-20, 22; 3:16; 4:1, 3, 7, 15; 5:12, 17; 6:1, 12; 8:9, 15, 17; 9:3, 6, 9, 11, 13; 10:5.

sun which will provide the necessary background needed for the understanding of difficult passages in the Bible.

The intimate geographic and historic relations of Israel to the peoples, for whom their mythico-religious traditions were considered a sacred heritage, opened up vistas of influence from that source. It is, therefore, not a mere coincidence that vestiges of sun cult are found in the Old Testament, but it is rather cogent support of the soundness of our opinion that sun worship was actually practiced in Israel at one time or another. Certain place names still retain an element which postulates, if not conclusive evidence of a solar cult, at least some foreign influence. *byt šmš* house [shrine] of the sun[god], is the name of a city on the northern border of Judah between Kesalon and Timnah, which possibly suggests the site of an ancient religious shrine.<sup>389</sup> The antiquity of *byt šmš* was demonstrated by the excavations conducted by Duncan Mackenzie (1911-1913) and C. S. Fisher and Elihu Grant (1928-1931). It was first settled in early Bronze IV (twenty-third to twenty-first centuries B.C.). Another city in Issachar, close to the Jordan River, was called *byt šmš*.<sup>390</sup> The famous Egyptian religious city of On which was named *byt šmš* by the Hebrews, also known as Heliopolis, where there was a temple of the sun-god Ra.<sup>391</sup> The mention of *yr šmš*, a city in Dan, seems to refer to *byt šmš*.<sup>392</sup> Another city named *yn šmš* was situated on the borders of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin.<sup>393</sup> Moreover, the name of the city of *tmnt-ḥrs*, where Joshua was buried, suggests the presence of solar features.<sup>394</sup> It has been stated that the spelling of *tmnt-srḥ* was either a scribal error for *tmnt-ḥrs* or else was an intentional change to remove the stigma of sun worship which the older name would connote.<sup>395</sup>

Sun worship appears to have been associated with Solomon's temple. It is reported in the book of Kings concerning Josiah, king of Judah:

He took away the horses which the kings of Judah had given to the sun, at the entrance of the house of the Lord, by the chamber of Nathan-Melech, the eunuch, which was among the summer houses, and he burned the chariots of the sun.<sup>396</sup>

The erecting of model horses and chariots of the sun at the entrance to the sanctuary represented the conveyance in which the solar deity was believed to traverse the heavens. In Akkadian hymns to Shamash, he is, indeed,

<sup>389</sup> Cf. Josh. 15:10.

<sup>390</sup> *Ibid.*, 19:22.

<sup>391</sup> Cf. Jer. 43:13; Is. 19:18, *yr hrs* appears as *yr hrs* in the Isaiah scroll from Qumran. *hrs* is a name for the sun. See above p. 64.

<sup>392</sup> Cf. Josh. 19:41.

<sup>393</sup> Cf. Josh. 15:7. See above p. 71.

<sup>394</sup> Cf. Judg. 2:9.

<sup>395</sup> See Josh. 19:50, [cf. also LXX Cod. B. *Thamarcharēs*]; Josh. 24:30.

<sup>396</sup> 2 K. 23:11.

described as *rākib narkabti* "the chariot rider." Pottery models of horses and chariots have been found in the course of various excavations which date from the period prior to the Hebrew occupation in Palestine. These items have been interpreted as evidence of solar worship in the popular cult in Palestine.<sup>397</sup> The "chariot of fire and horses of fire" which separated Elijah from Elisha might be reminiscent of a solar myth applied to him. The observation of Elijah's translation into heaven by means of a whirlwind is possibly responsible for its association with the chariots and horses of fire.<sup>398</sup>

The presence of model horses and chariots of the sun at the entrance to the sanctuary reflects a survival of solar worship from pre-Israelite period. This fact suggests that sun cult was practiced within the precincts of the temple itself during the closing years of the Judean monarchy. Ezekiel stigmatizes this cult as a great abomination, perhaps because of its competitive nature with Yahwism.

At the door of the temple of the Lord, between the vestibule and the altar, there were about twenty-five men, with their backs to the temple of the Lord, and their faces to the east, worshiping the sun in the east.<sup>399</sup>

And significantly enough, Ezekiel considers this form of idolatry as a greater threat to the survival of the religion of Yahweh than the various forms of nature worship and the veneration of creeping things. But such a recrudescence of idolatrous worship is not unprecedented in the history of Israel. Manasseh in particular went to great lengths to restore *bmwt*, to erect *mzbħt lb<sup>c</sup>l*, and to set up *psl* and *ʔšrh* in the temple of Jerusalem. Moreover "he built altars for all the host of the heavens in the two courts of the house of the Lord."<sup>400</sup> In an account of a nationwide apostasy such as this patronized by the king, we should expect that all the idols which represent a specific form of foreign religion would be listed. In the absence of any reference to *ħmnym*, it would seem reasonable to conclude that they fall under the general category of idols and are not associated with any specific religion. As a matter of fact, several meanings have been suggested for *ħmnym*. The Hebrew word *ħmn*, used only in the plural, is attested equivalently in Palmyrene as *ħmn<sup>2</sup>* and in Phoenician as *lb<sup>c</sup>l ħmn*, often applied to Ba<sup>c</sup>al as an epithet. The usage of *ħmnym* in parallel with *ʔšrym*<sup>401</sup> has lent some support for its translation as "sun-

<sup>397</sup> See T. H. Gaster's article "Sun," in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, IV, pp. 463-465.

<sup>398</sup> Cf. 2 K. 2:11.

<sup>399</sup> Ez. 8:16.

<sup>400</sup> 2 K. 21:5.

<sup>401</sup> Cf. Is. 17:8; 27:9.

pillars."<sup>402</sup> These pillars have even been associated with Jachin and Boaz, the two pillars of the temple of Solomon.<sup>403</sup> There is, however, support from archeology that provides a measure of certain advance on the meaning and function of *ḥmnyṁ*. When Ingholt discovered an altar of incense bearing the inscription *ḥammānā*, it was then advocated that *ḥmnyṁ* means "altars of incense."<sup>404</sup> The biblical passages in which this term occurs tend to support this interpretation. In fact, the meaning of "altar of incense" seems to be confirmed in its context with *mzbḥ*.<sup>405</sup>

## b. The Moon

The study of the terms for moon involves the recovery not merely of the words, but also of the mythical and religious framework which accompanies them. It ought to be added that the comparison between the various conceptions which the ancient Semites held about the moon is not as pertinent linguistically as it is in the quest for meaning. As will appear, the Hebrew words for moon serve not only to reveal broader implications but also to conceal them. Such words as *yrḥ*, *lbnh*, *ḥdš* and *ks<sup>2</sup>* are often used with greater freedom than the situation warrants.

The brief references to *ks<sup>2</sup>* are insufficient to render the precise meaning. The mention of *ks<sup>2</sup>*, together with its variant spelling *ksh*, in the Wisdom literature, can be equated in terms of etymological ties with the Akkadian *kusiū* "headdress, crown, tiara," and "bears reference to the idea, well attested in Mesopotamian literature, that at the plenilune the moon wears a hat or a crown."<sup>406</sup> Although the connotation of "covering" is still extant in this term, it is impossible to say whether *ks<sup>2</sup>* refers to the first day of the full moon, or to the whole period of the full moon.

*m<sup>2</sup>ḥz pny-ksh*  
*pršz ʿlyw ʿnnw*<sup>407</sup>

He obscures the face of the full moon,  
Spreading his cloud over it.

<sup>402</sup> Acc. to Hommel, Ba'al Ḥammān originally represented the waning moon. His suggestion is based on the identification of *Ḥam[m]* with ʿAm[m], the name of a lunar deity. In his view, the *ḥammānīm*, mentioned together with ʿašerim in the OT, were later re-interpreted as "sun-pillars." See F. Hommel, *Ethnologie . . .*, p. 160.

<sup>403</sup> See W. Kornfeld, "Der Symbolismus der Tempelsäulen," in *ZAW* 74 (1962), pp. 50-57, especially p. 54, (cf. also footnote 46).

<sup>404</sup> See W. F. Albright's review of M. H. Wiener's "The Altars of the Old Testament," in *JPOS* 9 (1929), pp. 50-54.

<sup>405</sup> Cf. Ez. 6:4, 6; 2 Ch. 34:4, 7.

<sup>406</sup> See T. H. Gaster's article "Moon," in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, vol. III, pp. 436-437.

<sup>407</sup> Job 26:9. We follow *KBH*<sup>13</sup> with its suggested emendation that the *m* in *m<sup>2</sup>ḥz* should be omitted as a dittograph of the preceding *m* in *iḥtm*. The proposed emendation of *prš* or *prz* for the abnormal quadriliteral verb *pršz* provides the meaning for the second half verse. *ksh* should be vocalized as *kese<sup>2</sup>*, "full moon," instead of *kissē<sup>2</sup>*, "throne." See M. Pope, *Job . . .*, p. 165, note 9a.

To go a step further, the meaning of *ks*<sup>2</sup> becomes clearer in parallel with *hdš* denoting a subtle distinction:

*tq<sup>c</sup>w bhdš šwpr*  
*bksh lywm hgnw*<sup>408</sup>  
 Blow the trumpet at the new moon,  
 At the full moon on our festal day.

The first day of the month referred to is the official opening of the festal period at the end of which the feast was solemnly celebrated.<sup>409</sup> If, however, the context of those passages in which *ks*<sup>2</sup> occurs gives us very little information about its exact meaning, there is another expression *m<sup>2</sup>wr hqt<sup>n</sup>* "the smaller light," mentioned in the creation account,<sup>410</sup> whose important feature lies in the deeper meaning which it received by contrast to the *m<sup>2</sup>wr hgd<sup>l</sup>*. Like the sun, the full moon rises in the east in the evening and sets in the west in the morning. It is quite appropriate, therefore, that the full moon is assigned to *mmšlt hlylh*, while the sun's function is *lmmšlt hywm*.

We can judge how influential to human life and to vegetation the moon's activities were from the fact that many of the beliefs held by the peoples of the ancient Near East suggest that the moon was kindly and beneficent. Thus, in Jacob's blessing of Joseph special reference is made "to the lavish yield of the months."<sup>411</sup> However, most of the ancient myths which deal with the moon are based upon its changing phases and explain how and why it grows and shrinks and, at times, is suddenly eclipsed. On the other hand, there is also attested the common belief that the moon was not only unfavorable at certain stages but also dangerous to human life. For example, the period of the waning moon seems to have been regarded as unfavorable to conduct business:

... My husband is not home,  
 He has gone a far journey;  
 A bag of money he took with him,  
 He will not come home till full moon.<sup>412</sup>

Aside from the observation that the waning moon was believed to be unpropitious for the conduct of business, there is a reference, not attested elsewhere in the Old Testament, to the injury the moon might inflict: "The moon will not smite you by night."<sup>413</sup>

<sup>408</sup> Ps. 81:4.

<sup>409</sup> Cf. Lev. 23:34-44; Deut. 16:13-15.

<sup>410</sup> Cf. Gen. 1:16.

<sup>411</sup> Deut. 33:14b. The LXX text, cod. Ambros., retains what is possibly the original meaning of the verse, translating *yrhym* by *selēnē* "moon."

<sup>412</sup> Prov. 7:18-20.

<sup>413</sup> Ps. 121:6.

The term to be analyzed is *lbnh* "moon," which is typified by the company it keeps. It is significant, therefore, that it always occurs in context with *hnh*, another expression for sun. Thus, the relation of *lbnh* with *hnh* emphasizes the contrast between the soft light of the moon and the dazzling light of the sun.<sup>414</sup> The soft sheen of the moon's light is hinted at under the meaning of the root *lbn* "to be white," like its equivalent term in Arabic *qamar* "moon" whose idea suggests the effect of snow blindness.

The term most frequently used to designate the moon is *yrh*, which is applied to the planet as well as to the moon-god, though in a concealed form.<sup>415</sup> Aside from the Canaanite traces preserved in this term, *yrh* also denotes "month."<sup>416</sup> The Hebrew word *yrh* has tentatively been derived from the root *ʔrh* "to walk, travel." The derivation of *yrh* from the root which supplied the meaning for walking, traveling, has found support in the general historical view of nomadism being linked with the moon cult. This accounts for the fact that the nomadic peoples undertake their journey at night under the protection of the moon and the stars. A. Lods mentions that "the Southern Arabs worshipped ʔAshtar, the masculine form of ʔAshtar, the god of the planet Venus, and Sin, the moon-god. The Sarcens of the fourth century offered bloody sacrifices to the morning star."<sup>417</sup> That the Hebrews had similar beliefs is confirmed by the mention of centers of moon worship such as Ur and Harran. It was at Ur that the moon-god had established his residence on earth, since time immemorial. From that city the moon cult emigrated to the city of Harran.<sup>418</sup> In a text relating to Nabonidus, king of Babylon (555-539 B.C.) it is mentioned that this king had ties with far away Harran where his mother became high priestess of the moon-god.<sup>419</sup> The existence of the moon cult in Canaan may be inferred from the name of the city of Jericho. The earliest evidence produced by archeology, which can safely be taken as a material remain of the cultic life of the inhabitants of Jericho, dates from the Neolithic age. Among the more interesting objects unearthed there is a number of clay figurines which were probably votive offerings to a supernatural power believed to control the fertility of fields and flocks. "More striking is a figurine of a woman, only some two inches high, an elegant little lady with flowing gown gathered at the waist, her arms akimbo and her hands beneath her breast; unfortunately her head is missing. In attitude, the figure is typical of representations of the mother goddess common in much later cultures, and it is evidence that our early inhabit-

<sup>414</sup> Cf. Is. 24:23; 30:26; Cant. 6:10.

<sup>415</sup> Cf. Josh. 10:12-13.

<sup>416</sup> Ex. 2:2; Deut. 21:13; 1 K. 6:37-38; 8:2; 2 K. 15:13; Zech. 11:8; Job 3:6; 7:3; 29:2; 39:2

<sup>417</sup> See A. Lods, *Israel: From its Beginnings to the Middle of the Eighth Century* (transl. by S. H. Hooke; New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1932), p. 237.

<sup>418</sup> See E. Dhorme, *Les Religions . . .*, pp. 55, 7.

<sup>419</sup> See *Documents from Old Testament Times*, (ed. by D. Winton Thomas; New York and Evanston: Harper & Row, Harper Torchbook, 1961), p. 89.

ants already imagined a personified deity."<sup>420</sup> The influential survival of the Canaanite fertility cult is attested by a bronze figure of the mother goddess found at Gezer, from about the tenth century B.C. This figurine, less than five inches in height, has a most original headdress consisting of two horns.<sup>421</sup> This horned deity could be Ashtoreth Karnaim still preserved in a place name given to a town in Transjordan.<sup>422</sup> In this particular representation of the mother goddess there was possibly conveyed the idea that the fertility of the flock was derived from her. Probably the motivation for this particular representation was originally the desire to draw the nomadic-pastoral elements of the population into the cultic pattern. The horn associated with this mother goddess has tentatively linked her with some form of bull cult. It must be emphasized, however, that the horns of Astarte's headdress do not represent the crescent, because they are bent down and are similar to the horns of a cow. If Astarte was connected with the moon cult and was represented with a crescent on her head, it was through the mediation of Hathor, the Egyptian goddess whose pictorial representations are those of a cow and not of the moon.<sup>423</sup>

From the biblical references to *yrh* it is clear that the proper meaning of this term is "moon." The Hebrew word is structurally identical with the Ugaritic *yrh* which designates the moon, the moon-god, and the month alike. While in Hebrew the moon and the month may be expressed by words consisting of identical consonants, they are differentiated by their vocalization. From the mythological tablets of Ugarit in which *yrh* plays an effective role, we learn of his marriage with Nikkal. It has been proved, however, that this poem is not originally from Ugarit but a translation or adaptation in Canaanite or a Hurrian original.<sup>424</sup> Despite the fact that the moon-god plays a surprisingly small part in Canaanite religion and folklore, the numerous *-arah*, *-erah* *-rah* compound names, which occur in the early second millennium, show that the name was deeply rooted in northwest Canaan.<sup>425</sup> In his role as Nikkal's husband *yrh* may be substituted for Nannar-Sîn. His epithet as *nyr šmm* "illuminator of the sky" recalls *Sîn's* epithet "the one who illuminates heaven and earth."<sup>426</sup> In

<sup>420</sup> See K. M. Kenyon, *Archaeology in the Holy Land* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1960), pp. 50-51.

<sup>421</sup> See R. A. S. Macalister, *Bible Side Lights* (London: Holder and Stoughton, 2nd ed., 1907), fig. 19.

<sup>422</sup> Cf. Gen. 14:5.

<sup>423</sup> See M. J. Lagrange, *op. cit.*, pp. 126-127; cf. also footnote 1.

<sup>424</sup> On the Hurrian elements see Ginsberg, *Orientalia* 8 (1939), pp. 317-327; Goetze, *JBL* 60 (1941), pp. 353-374. It may be worth noting that the parallelism of members which is so characteristic of Semitic poetry, particularly in Ugaritic, appears rarely in this poem.

<sup>425</sup> These compound names which often occur as hypocoristica are consistently mentioned in Amorite sources, as it has been shown by T. Bauer, *Die Ostkanaanäer* (Leipzig: Verlag der Asia Major, 1926), p. 76.

<sup>426</sup> See E. Dhorme, *Les religions . . .*, p. 55.

view of the Akkadian parallel to the Ugaritic epithet of the moon-god we may expect to find some other aspects of this planet. If many of the stories told and beliefs held among the Babylonians and Canaanites show a striking agreement in conception we may conclude that the latter either derived their views from the former or else that the mythical and religious ideas about the moon acquired a fixed form, and perhaps have become known far beyond the boundaries of particular peoples and have become part of the spiritual inheritance of many peoples. The assumed origins can at most partially explain what has arisen from them. The moon-god is called *Sin* in Akkadian, whose cuneiform sign is often the same as that employed to designate the number thirty, which conveys the relationship between the month and the moon-god. In Sumerian theogony the moon-god is regarded as the son of *Enlil* and *Ninlil*, whose names mean "Lord Wind" and "Lady Wind" respectively. The personal ties between the moon-god and *Enlil* become clear in the epithet, "the young bull of *Enlil*" attested on a tablet dating from the pre-Sargonic period. The shape of the crescent which appears almost horizontally on the sky of the Euphrates valley gave rise to the conception of a barque; hence, the moon-god is known as "the freighter of the heaven." The crescent has also prompted the conception of the horns of a bull which became the widely accepted emblem of the moon-god throughout the ancient Near East. Akkadian sources also mention that the Amorites used to designate the moon-god as "the lord of the scimitar," which title alludes to the sicklelike form of the new moon. The same title is applied to *yrh* as *b'l gml* in the Nikkal poem from Ras Shamra.<sup>427</sup> The mysterious phenomenon of the waxing and waning moon was compared by the Babylonians to a "fruit self-sufficient for its growth" and was used as an attribute of the moon-god.<sup>428</sup> Hence, the moon with its phases became a symbol of transformation and growth. The concepts of transformation, birth, and periodicity taken together made the moon a symbol of renewal. The idea of this renewal of the new moon will be treated more extensively later in this chapter.

To return now to the consideration of those passages which refer to the function of the moon, we must examine the verbs which appear in its context. There are a number of references to the light of the moon. The verb generally used to designate the moon's function is *ʿwr*, in the Hiph<sup>il</sup>, which is rendered "to shine, to give light."<sup>429</sup> To be sure, *hʿyr* being the causative form of the intransitive verb *ʿwr* used in the Qal is predicated both of the sun and the moon, and both are considered sources of light. The same applies to the verb *ngh* in the Hiph<sup>il</sup> which is rendered "to cause to shine, to illuminate."<sup>430</sup> The verb *hll* denotes close connection

<sup>427</sup> Cf. C. H. Gordon, *op. cit.*, text 77:42.

<sup>428</sup> See D. O. Edzard, *Die Mythologie . . .*, pp. 101f.

<sup>429</sup> Cf. Is. 60:19; Ez. 32:7.

<sup>430</sup> Cf. Is. 31:10; cf. also Is. 60:19.

with the Arabic *halla*, which in the fifth form (i.e. causative-reflexive) means "to shine." The basic form of *halla* retains the original meaning, expressing the appearance of the new moon, *hilāl*, and the beginning of the month. Although the Hebrew verb *hll* in the Hiph'ıl is used indiscriminately of the sun, the moon and the stars, its original meaning was most likely that of the soft sheen of the moonlight.<sup>431</sup> Furthermore, it is very revealing that the moon worship is characterized by the fact that the moon-god turns out repeatedly to be , not the god of the full moon, but of the first crescent of the new moon. The light of the new moon was evidently of very little use to the nomads. What led the Babylonians to attribute divine character to this moon was the regenerative power which he was believed to possess. The first light of the new moon, notwithstanding its weakness, was considered an omen of good fortune. The glory of the king was compared with the luster of the new moon. According to Babylonian texts, the light of the moon, as well as that of the stars, existed before sunlight.<sup>432</sup>

In this connection one is tempted to remark that the descriptions of the destruction of the world and of other cosmic changes are highly suggestive of the withdrawal of the celestial bodies and of the subsequent spreading of darkness over the world. There was undoubtedly more significance attached to those pictures by the authors and by the people of that particular epoch than at other times, when social changes determined different imaginative prophetic visions. It would seem that the following passage mentioning the darkening of the sun and moon indicates the withdrawal of the life-giving power with its consequent lessening of the vital force in the organic world.

Sun and moon grow dark,  
And the stars withhold their brightness.<sup>433</sup>

The disappearance of the moon, whose continuous succession of alternating phases was looked at as a symbol for eternal duration,<sup>434</sup> leads inevitably to a breakdown of the permanent order in the world. From the allusions to the darkening of the sun and moon, it would seem reasonable to draw the inference that the biblical authors had observed eclipses of the sun and of the moon.<sup>435</sup>

Regarding the actual practice of moon cult in ancient Palestine, it is impossible to establish with certainty any details. Since there is not

<sup>431</sup> Cf. Job 25:5.

<sup>432</sup> Cf. *Enūma eliš*, Tablet V; for the references to the light of the new moon see A. Jeremias, *Handbuch der altorientalischen Geisteskultur* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1913), pp. 172, 77.

<sup>433</sup> Joel 2:10; 4:15; cf. also 3:4.

<sup>434</sup> Cf. Ps. 72:5, 9; 89:38.

<sup>435</sup> Cf. Is. 13:10; Joel 2:10, 31.

enough information in the Old Testament about the moon cult, there is no basis for a large scale hypothesis from a small number of facts. Moon worship is always referred to in context with other forms of astral cult which apparently was considered as some kind of more refined idolatry.<sup>436</sup> Perhaps the most striking single item in this connection is the allusion to the moon cult:

If I looked at the shining light [i.e., the sun],  
Or the moon marching in splendor,  
And my mind was secretly seduced,  
And my hand kissed my mouth.<sup>437</sup>

This translation can be glossed by reference to the Greek text of the LXX, cod. B, where *yrh yqr hlk* is rendered *selēnē de phthinousan* (cod. Sinaiticus has *phthinynthousan*). The Greek verb *phthinō* (poet. *phthinynthō*) has the meaning of "wasting" and, intransitively, of "decaying, waning." The Greek translation would render a plausible attempt to relate moon worship with the last quarter of the moon including the new moon.

Thus far we have confined ourselves to the investigation of moon worship proper. Once traces of this cult still detected here and there in the Old Testament are established, we may refer to certain practices in brief passages which recall lunar feasts. On the days of the new moon, during which no business affairs were conducted,<sup>438</sup> the court gathered for special meals and celebrations,<sup>439</sup> which custom, however, was opposed by the prophets as a pagan survival in Yahwism.<sup>440</sup> As for the existence of specific cultic objects found on Palestinian soil, it is sufficient to mention the crescents made either of gold or silver and the new-moon-shaped decorative pendants worn around the neck or sometimes sewed on garments, which witness to lunar cult or, at least, to its inspiration.<sup>441</sup> According to A. Lods these crescents "had a prophylactic value, perhaps against 'moonstroke,' that is against diseases attributed to this planet."<sup>442</sup>

The above terms and passages are of meager content and do not present a complete view of the beliefs held about the moon. However, we can analyze related material for additional information in order to assess the cultic significance of these beliefs for the peoples among whom they originated. It will first be necessary, however, to observe that the economy of any agrarian people depends upon the alternating cycle of the seasons, and since the farmer must plan ahead, he requires some-

<sup>436</sup> Cf. Deut. 17:3; 2 K. 23:5; Jer. 8:2.

<sup>437</sup> Job 31:26-27; see the general analysis of this passage above on p. 62.

<sup>438</sup> Cf. Am. 8:5.

<sup>439</sup> Cf. 1 Sam. 20:5-29.

<sup>440</sup> Cf. Hos. 2:13; Is. 1:13-14.

<sup>441</sup> Cf. Judg. 8:21; Is. 3:18.

<sup>442</sup> See A. Lods, *op. cit.*, p. 216.

thing like an almanac which will give him due warning of the year's changes. Again, religion demands that certain festivals should be celebrated at fixed times; these festivals are seasonal, generally related to agricultural happenings, and they, too, must be planned in advance. These festivals must be observed with more accuracy than the sowing and cultivating of a field, for this observance concerns special days, not merely seasons. At a very early date, therefore, official calendrical systems devised by priests were issued and came into general use. The most obvious regularly recurrent time-measuring phenomena were the changes of the moon. Thus, the Babylonian calendar was based upon the lunar months, consisting of 29 or 30 days each, changes not occurring in any regular order but being determined by observation of the new moon. Experience over a very short period sufficed to show that at the end of twelve lunar months one had returned to much the same season from which one had started. This system was the closest approximation possible. Yet there was a discrepancy of slightly over five days every year which amounted to an additional month at the end of every sixth year. The so-called intercalary month was then inserted into the calendar.<sup>443</sup> In early Sumer the feast days celebrated in the course of each year varied greatly in the different city states; only in Hammurabi's reign was uniformity imposed. The four phases of the moon led to a division of the month into four seven-day weeks with one or two feast days added at the end to make up the full tally. This calendar suited best religious requirements because it was ruled by the moon.<sup>444</sup> As for the system employed by the Egyptians in drawing up their time tables, the earliest one was based upon the floodings of the Nile. Since the dawn of history the inhabitants of the Nile valley observed each summer the rise of the Nile waters and counted the days that elapsed between the floodings. However, regular as the Nile's rise is, it does not begin on exactly the same day every year, and a calendar based upon the periodicity of the floodings was bound to get more and more out of sympathy with the march of the seasons. But at a very early date they noted that the heliacal rising of Sirius took place just before the Nile flood was due. Sirius was evidently more dependable than the Nile and in due course was adopted as a point of reference for determining the festival dates in the cycle of either the solar or the sidereal year.<sup>445</sup>

Though the biblical texts give no precise information about the origin of the calendar system adopted by the ancient Hebrews, it is certain in any case that they followed a lunar month. As we have seen above, they called the moon *yrh*, like the Canaanites, which term was used to designate the moon, the moon-god, and the month. But very soon, a special

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<sup>443</sup> See G. Contenau, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

<sup>444</sup> See E. Dhorme, *Les Religions . . .*, p. 234.

<sup>445</sup> See R. de Vaux, *op. cit.*, pp. 178-179.

word for month was coined, namely *ḥdš* which means primarily the new moon. The root *ḥdš*, which underlies this term, denotes "to renew," used only in the Pi<sup>e</sup>l, and "to repair," a rather late and poetic usage occurring in the Hithpa<sup>e</sup>l. The new moon marked the beginning of the month. The religious significance attached to the new moon is indicated by the nature of the cultic acts performed at the time of the new moon.

Also on your day of rejoicing, on your fixed festivals, and on your new moons you must blow the trumpets over [during?] your burnt offerings and thanksgiving sacrifices.<sup>446</sup>

The sacrificial aspect gives to those festivals a cosmic dimension by actualizing in nature the perpetuation and the strengthening of cosmic life and by reawakening in man the divine life. Most of the Israelite festivals were originally connected with the moon's phases. Thus, the feast of Passover was celebrated at the time of the full moon in the month of Abib<sup>447</sup> which was named Nisan after the Exile.<sup>448</sup> The celebration of the feast of Booths occurs at the time of the full moon in the month Tishri.<sup>449</sup> As at Ugarit, so also in Israel, the festival of the New Year's Day was originally kept at the new moon that began the month of the autumnal equinox, later called by the Babylonian name, the month of Tishri.<sup>450</sup> From the observation that not only the major festivals, with the exception of the Day of Atonement, but also every first day of the month was connected with the moon, it may not be too much to claim with E. Mahler that the feast days of the ancient Hebrews were regulated by the moon. The alternating succession of its phases reflects God's continuously intervening and withdrawing activities in the world.<sup>451</sup>

### c. The Planets

At the outset of this inquiry, let it be said, that insufficient information is at hand to supply an answer to the main questions regarding the terms used to designate the planets. The present study proposes to collect and to synthesize the principal etymological and scriptural material bearing on the subject. In a single brief chapter it is impossible, however, to treat all aspects of the matter and to discuss the extent of foreign influence which determined the Hebrews' view about the celestial bodies. Nevertheless, it will be well to call attention to certain terms which share several characteristics and point to a certain influence if not to a direct dependency on this foreign influence. As far as linguistic

<sup>446</sup> Num. 10:10; cf. also *ibid.* 28:11.

<sup>447</sup> Cf. Deut. 16:1; Ex. 13:4; 23:15.

<sup>448</sup> Cf. Neh. 2:1; Esther 3:7.

<sup>449</sup> Cf. Lev. 23:34; Deut. 16:13, 16; Zech. 14:16, 18-19; Ezra 3:4.

<sup>450</sup> See E. Mahler, "Der Sabbat," in *ZDMG* 62 (1902), pp. 33-79, esp. p. 56.

<sup>451</sup> Cf. *loc. cit.*

evidence goes, there is more conjecture than certainty about the identification of the terms and their exact meaning. Examining in greater detail the passages extant in the Old Testament which warn against astral worship, we may perhaps detect some indications of planets.

Beware, when you look up into the heavens and see all the host of the heavens, the sun, moon and stars, that you do not let yourselves be allured into paying homage to them.<sup>452</sup>

[... A man or a woman who has] paid homage to them [alien gods], namely, the sun, or the moon, or the whole host of the heavens, which I prohibited...<sup>453</sup>

They forsook all the commandments of the Lord their God and made for themselves molten images, even two calves, and made a sacred pole, and worshiped all the host of heavens and served Ba'al.<sup>454</sup>

Those who used to burn incense to Ba'al, to the sun, to the moon, and to *mzlw*t and to all the host of the heavens.<sup>455</sup>

The children are gathering wood, and the fathers are kindling fires, and the women are kneading dough, to make cakes for *mlkt hšmym*.<sup>456</sup>

[The people said] "We will not listen to you, but will assuredly carry out every word that has gone from our own mouths, by burning incense to *mlkt hšmym* and by pouring libations to her, as we did, both we and our fathers, our kings and our princes, in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem. For then we had plenty to eat, and we were well, and met with no trouble; but since we gave up offering sacrifices to *mlkt hšmym*, and pouring libations to her, we have been destitute of all things, and have been consumed by sword and famine."

The women also said:

"And we were burning incense to *mlkt hšmym*, and pouring libations to her, was it without the approval of our husbands that we made for her cakes, making them in her image, and poured libations to her?"<sup>457</sup>

You and your women have pledged your word, and have fulfilled it in actual deed, saying: "We will assuredly carry out the vows we

<sup>452</sup> Deut. 4:19.

<sup>453</sup> Deut. 17:3.

<sup>454</sup> 2 K. 17:16; cf. also 21:3, 5.

<sup>455</sup> 2 K. 23:5.

<sup>456</sup> Jer. 7:18.

<sup>457</sup> Jer. 44:17-19. The plural masculine ending of *mqrwym*, in verse 19, should be emended to the plural feminine *mqrwt*, as suggested by W. Rudolph in *KBH*<sup>13</sup>. For *leha<sup>c</sup>ašibhâ* we read *leha<sup>c</sup>ašibhâh*.

have taken, to burn incense to *mlkt hšmym*, and to pour libations to her." <sup>458</sup>

How are you fallen from heaven

*hyll bn-šhr*

How are you hewn to the earth,  
who vanquished all the nations! <sup>459</sup>

And you shall pick up *skwt*, your king, and *kywn*, your images (star of your god), which you had made for yourselves. <sup>460</sup>

Although these passages refer broadly to the celestial bodies in general, the mention of the sun, the moon, *mlkt hšmym*, *skwt*, *kywn*, and *mzlw* refers to specific planets.

Perhaps the Hebrews word *mzlw* is a comprehensive term for planets. Apart from the statement, in 2 K. 23:5, which speaks of "those who who used to burn incense to Ba'al, to the sun, to the moon and to *mzlw* and to all the host of heaven," there is in Job 38:32, *mzrw*, which is probably a dialectical pronunciation or a scribal error for *mzlw*. The word *mzrw* is not a variant of *mzry* with its meaning of "scatter winds," whose root is probably *zrh* in the sense of scattering, winnowing. E. Dhorme, however, suggests the possibility that the root *nzr* underlies the word *mzrw*. The sense of the noun *nzr* furnished by the same root leads to the meaning of "crown, diadem." In the light of this derivation, É. Dhorme concludes that *mzrw* contains an allusion to the constellation *Corona Borealis* (Northern Crown). <sup>461</sup> Further citations from *B.D.B.* only increase the conjectures without adding more evidence to clarify the term. Thus, *mzrw* has been assumed to refer to some particular star or constellation. According to this line of thought, G. Schiaparelli advanced an explanation of *mzrw* in terms of the twelve signs of the Zodiac. He finds support for his opinion in the Vulgate and in the Greek text (cod. B.), where *mzrw* is transcribed as *mazourōth*, which is rendered by the Vulgate as *Luciferum* (Job 38:32), and *duodecim signa* (2 K. 23:5). <sup>462</sup> In addition to the Septuagint reading, "Olympiodorus records two traditions worthy of mention: one that *mazourōth* means *zōdia*, namely the

<sup>458</sup> Jer. 44:25. For *ʔtm wnšykm* we read with W. Rudolph in *KBH*<sup>13</sup> *ʔtnh hnšym*. The vocalization of *melēketh haššamaym*, in vss. 17-19, 25, should be altered to *malkath haššamaym*, as proposed by W. Rudolph, *loc. cit.*

<sup>459</sup> Is. 14:12.

<sup>460</sup> Am. 5:26. We follow É. Dhorme who maintains that the word *skwt* which does not appear elsewhere, is a transliteration of the name of a Babylonian god *Sak-kut*, like *kywn*, which represents the Babylonian *Kayamānu*, one of the names of the planet Saturn. The phrase "star of your god" is a parenthesis which explains the word *kywn*. See É. Dhorme's critical notes on Amos, in *La Bible*, vol. II, *loc. cit.*

<sup>461</sup> See É. Dhorme, *Le Livre de Job*, in *La Bible*, vol. II, notes to ch. 38, vss. 33-38.

<sup>462</sup> See G. Schiaparelli, *Astronomy in the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1905), pp. 75-77.

Zodiacal signs, and the other that some interpreters take it to be *ton astrōn kynā*, that is Sirius."<sup>463</sup> However, we have to caution against too hasty a conclusion based upon these translations which date from a later period and may very well reflect a more advanced stage of knowledge about the Zodiac than was actually current in the time of this particular composition. A word may be added as to Schiaparelli's contention that *mzrwt* is derived from the root <sup>2</sup>*zr* "to gird." A previously suggested derivation of this word from the root <sup>2</sup>*zr* was advanced by ancient Jewish interpreters. They explained the word by *rota siderum*, or *zona siderum*, which is a highly suitable name for the Zodiacal system.<sup>464</sup> This idea seems to be confirmed by the equivalent name in Greek *zōnē* a "girdle" for the Zodiacal belt. G. R. Driver says:

The Zodiacal circle is a belt of the sky extending 8° on each side of the ecliptic and comprising the apparent paths of the sun and the moon and the principal planets. That of the sun is divided into twelve signs or constellations, which played a great part in ancient astronomy and astrology, that of the moon into twenty-four or twenty-eight, representing the moon's daily motion. Which, if one is meant, is not clear; the solar Zodiac is the best known, but the division of the twelve signs is purely conventional and not natural: contrariwise, the observation of the stations of the moon is not so difficult and is in a certain way suggested by nature. Possibly the plural *mzrt* refers to both belts [whereas the singular *mzrt* designates the Zodiac circle], although the singular pronominal suffix attached to *b<sup>c</sup>tw* "in its time" gives a hint of some doubt in regard to the precise sense intended. The meaning then of the question "canst thou bring forth" or "make to shine the constellations of the Zodiacal circle in their season?" is "canst thou make the Zodiacal stars rise and set at their proper times (as the year progresses?)."<sup>465</sup>

The meaning of "Zodiacal belt" thus suggested for *mzrwt* comes very close to that of *mzlw̄t*. Apart from the possibility of explaining the former word grammatically as a dialectical variant, whereby *l* has been hardened into *r*, and, therefore, both would be identical, attempts have been made to establish its meaning on the basis of the term *mzlw̄t*. The Hebrew *mzlw̄t* can be traced to the Akkadian *manzaztu* which is equivalent to the Babylonian word, *mazzaltu* for *manzaltu* which designates "the station," from the root *i/uzuzzu* "to stand." This term was employed to indicate the position of a star and the station or phase of the moon. In rabbinic

<sup>463</sup> See his commentary "In Beatum Job" (Migne Patrol. Lat.; quoted by G. R. Driver, in his article "Two Astronomical Passages in the OT," in *JTS* (Nova Series), 7 (1956), pp. 1-11, especially p. 5.

<sup>464</sup> See G. Schiaparelli, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

<sup>465</sup> See G. R. Driver, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

literature (Berakoth 32b, Shabbath 75a) we find the noun applied to the constellation of the Zodiac, which came to be used metonymically as the term for "fate."<sup>466</sup>

From speculation about such a hypothetical situation, where neither etymology nor the testimony of the ancient versions is of much help for determining the precise meaning of *mzlw*t and *mzrw*t, let us turn to consider the Zodiac of which we can be tolerably certain. The Zodiac was not invented until about the fourth century B.C., although the names of the constellations which gave their names to the signs of the Zodiac are much older.<sup>467</sup> On the basis of this observation it would appear most unlikely that either *mzlw*t or *mzrw*t refer to the Zodiacal constellations. Moreover, based on E. F. Weidner's assertion that there is no expression parallel to *mzrw*t attested in Babylonian astronomy,<sup>468</sup> there remains the possibility of explaining the word *mzrw*t as a dialectical variant, whereby *l* has been hardened into *r*, and, therefore, *mzrw*t would be identical with *mzlw*t. Further, from the context of the term *mzlw*t we are led to conclude that it designates the planets in general:

*hmq̄try*m lb<sup>c</sup>l lšmš wlyrh  
wlmzlw<sup>t</sup> wkl šb<sup>o</sup> hšmym<sup>469</sup>

Now, if we identify *mzrw*t with *mzlw*t, we are brought thus to ask why the noun *b<sup>c</sup>tw*, with its masculine pronominal suffix in the singular, does not agree with the preceding noun *mzrw*t which has a feminine plural ending. As we have seen above, the Greek text renders *htšy<sup>o</sup> mzrw*t *b<sup>c</sup>tw* as *ē dianoixeis Mazourōth en kairō autou*,<sup>470</sup> taking *Mazourōt*, presumably, in the sense either of constellation or planet. However, the usage of *b<sup>c</sup>tw* leads us to consider *mzrw*t as a plural of majesty (or perhaps, more precisely, as a collective plural). On the other hand, by identifying *mzrw*t with *mzlw*t and by taking the term *mzlw*t in the sense of "planets," we are now in a position to explain the construction. Not infrequently feminine plural forms with a masculine meaning are construed as masculine singular nouns.<sup>471</sup> We may, accordingly, conclude this analysis by observing that the term *mzrw*t is a variant of *mzlw*t which has the meaning of "planets." The passage from Job (38:32) *htšy<sup>o</sup> mzrw*t *b<sup>c</sup>tw* may thus be rendered: "Can you lead out the planets in their time?"

<sup>466</sup> See Koehler and Baumgartner, *Lexicon in Veteris Testamenti Libros* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1953), *sub voce*.

<sup>467</sup> See O. Neugebauer, *The Exact Sciences in Antiquity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1952), p. 97.

<sup>468</sup> See E. F. Weidner's observation on *mzrw*t in S. Mowinkel's study *Die Sternnamen im Alten Testament* (Oslo: Grøndahl & Søns Boktrykkeri, 1928), p. 33.

<sup>469</sup> 2 K. 23:5.

<sup>470</sup> Job 38:32.

<sup>471</sup> See Gesenius' *Hebrew Grammar* (ed. E. Kautzsch, transl. by A. E. Cowley; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2nd. ed., 1960), § 145 h.

As for the identification of the individual planets we should expect to find some reference to them in the Old Testament, since the ancient Hebrews must have noticed that, while almost all the stars keep their relative position to one another as they apparently move across the sky, a few of them change their position in relation to the rest. If such a conception were attained, would there have been speculation about the nature of these "wandering stars" or planets as they were known to the Babylonians and Assyrians? Unfortunately, the passages which warn against astral worship are disappointingly general in their reference to the celestial bodies. Despite the limited number of those passages, there still are some allusions to planets which hint at the identification of their names.

The passages in the Old Testament which provide some information about the planet Saturn are too meager in content to lend cogent support to Tacitus' assertion that the Jews venerated Saturn with divine honors.<sup>472</sup> If Tacitus' statement was valid for some Jewish communities in the first century A.D., immediately doubts arise as to whether this situation was analogous to that of eight centuries previous when Amos was sent to tell those Israelites who practiced idolatry that they will go into exile together with the image of *kywn* their star god: *kywn šlmykm kwkb ʿlhykm*.<sup>473</sup> The LXX text (cod. B.) renders this phrase as to *ʿastron tou theou ʿymōn ʿRaiphan* (cf. the variant *ʿRephan* in cod. Marchalianus). Neither *ʿRaiphan* nor *ʿRephan* is attested elsewhere in the Greek literature. The Syriac translators transliterated *kywn* as *kaivan*. *ʿRaiphan* would, therefore, be its equivalent in Greek, "where the initial *r* instead of *l* was probably already found by the translators in the Hebrew manuscript which they employed. As a matter of fact, in the Phoenician alphabet (used by the Jews down to the time of the LXX and still later) the letters *k* and *r* can easily be interchanged."<sup>474</sup> In order to restore the original reading of *kiyyûn* we must keep in mind that the Masoretes pointed the consonants of the word *kywn* as if it were to be read *špwš* "disgusting thing" (a standard Hebrew term for an idol). It should really be read as *kayyāwān* or *kaywān*, similar to the Akkadian *kayamānu* and to the Persian *kaiwan*, which is the name for the planet Saturn. In Akkadian, this word, from the root *kwn* "to be firm" means "the steady one." The planet Saturn was given this name on account of the slow movement of its revolution around the sun. Further evidence of relevant material relating to the planet Saturn was provided by H. Lewy in her investigation into all the references to *šalim*, both direct and indirect, extant in both the Bible and the literatures of Mesopotamia, Phoenicia and Arabia. Shalim, the principal deity of pre-Israelite Jerusalem, was

<sup>472</sup> Hist. 5, 4.

<sup>473</sup> Am. 5:26.

<sup>474</sup> See G. Schiaparelli, *op. cit.*, p. 49, cf. especially footnote 1.

identified by the Assyrians with their god Ninurta, who was associated with the planet Saturn.

At a later stage in the development of the ideas about Shalim and Yahweh, the two deities were probably identified. H. Lewy remarks that "this identification did not deprive the divine lord of Jerusalem of any of the traits characteristic of this planetary deity... After a short eclipse during which it was replaced by the name 'Jebusite City' (Judg. 19:10f), the conspicuous name Jerusalem, the meaning of which was bound to be understood by everyone familiar with the divine name Shalim, remained in general use throughout the centuries."<sup>475</sup>

Through the analysis of the pertinent passages of the Bible, and consideration of the documentary evidence from the ancient Near Eastern literatures concerning the planet Saturn and the deity associated with it, the author is able to establish connections between these literatures and the Bible and suggests certain contribution to Yahwism from the Saturn cult, as it was practiced in Mesopotamia, Phoenicia and Arabia. While the statement about the identification of Shalim with Yahweh may be too sweeping, there can be discerned in Yahwism certain features similar to the Saturn cult, such as the anthropomorphic conception of Yahweh,<sup>476</sup> his role as tutelary deity of Israel, and the association of Shalim with the name of Jerusalem, and, hence, with Yahweh, because Jerusalem was known, from the period of David's reign onwards, as the cultic center of the religion of Yahweh.

In contrast to the many uncertainties about the planet Saturn, we are better informed about the planet Venus and the beliefs connected with it. The planet Venus was called *hyll* "the shining one." As appears from the meaning of the root *hll* "to shine" this word is closely related to the Akkadian verb *elēlu* "to be bright." The assertion that the Hebrew word *hyll* "the shining one," is identical with the Arabic *hilāl*, "new moon," considered philologically cannot be maintained, since many diverse elements have doubtlessly contributed to the formation of the name *hyll* which was applied to Venus.

In matters of mythical context that illustrate the stories told and the beliefs held by the ancient Hebrews about the planet Venus, there is an account, extant in the Bible, reminiscent of a "war in heaven."

How are you fallen from heaven,

*hyll bn-šhr*

How are you hewn to the earth,

who vanquished all the nations!

<sup>475</sup> See H. Lewy, "Origin and Significance of the Mâgen Dâwîd," in *Archiv Orientalní*, vol. 18, No. 3, 1950, pp. 320-365, especially p. 359.

<sup>476</sup> Cf. the anthropomorphic features of Yahweh: his face (Gen. 32:31; Ex. 33:14; Num. 6:26); eyes and eye-lashes (Ps. 11:4; 33:18); mouth (Jer. 9:19); hand (Is. 8:11; Job 23:2).

You said to yourself,  
 "The heavens will I scale;  
 Above the stars of God  
 will I set up my throne;  
 I will sit on the Mount of Assembly,  
 in the recesses of the north;  
 I will scale the heights of the cloud,  
 I will match the Most High."  
 But down to Sheol are you brought,  
 to the recesses of the Pit.<sup>477</sup>

The episode refers to an ancient myth where *hyll bn-šhr*, "the shining [star] of the Dawn," has sought presumptuously to take a dominant position among the celestial bodies, whose rulers have been (presumably) the sun and the moon. The rebel planet is forced to yield, and its light is extinguished. The theme of "the war in heaven" may refer in the form of a dramatic conflict in the heavenly spheres to the periodical disappearance of the planet Venus from the sky during periods of invisibility. It is possible too that this myth portrays and symbolizes the phenomenon which ensues at dawn when the planet Venus, as the last proud star to disappear from the night sky, defies the sun at sunrise. The Mountain of the North, which the shining star aspired to ascend, can be identified with *špn*, the holy mountain associated with Ba'al upon which, according to Ugaritic mythology, was located Ba'al's throne. According to the Babylonian conception, the Mountain of the North does not imply any topographical reference but rather a cosmic space. Above this space was thought to be located the dwelling place of the gods.<sup>478</sup> In this story we have an isolated fragment of a perhaps well-known myth which was familiar enough not to need telling in full. As we know from the prophecy hurled against the king of Babylon, this myth was adopted to serve as an allegory of the downfall of the ruler of that city who sought to bring all the nations of the ancient Near East under his sway.

The convincing picture, portrayed in the prophetic literature, of polytheism which was prevalent in Palestine during the pre-exilic period reflects a particular aspect of astral cult connected with fertility rites. In the material remains of this period there is evidence to indicate the association of star worship, especially with the mother goddess. To the Hebrews she was also "the queen of heaven."<sup>479</sup> Her Babylonian coun-

<sup>477</sup> Is. 14:12-15. We follow R. Kittel in *KBH*<sup>13</sup> where *ʿl-gwym*, in verse 12b, is emended to *kl-gwym*. The expression *bn-šhr* in analogy to *bn-bqr* "one of the herd" (cf. Gen. 18:7) is to be taken in the sense of "[one] of the Dawn."

<sup>478</sup> B. Alfrink has suggested that the imagery of vss. 12-15 is Babylonian in origin reflecting the customary practice of divinizing kings. See B. Alfrink, "Der Versammlungsbirg im Äussersten Norden," in *Biblica* 14 (1933), pp. 41-67, esp. p. 64.

<sup>479</sup> In Sumerian mythology this title was used as an appellation for Ningal, the

terpart, Ishtar, likewise had astral associations, and a star is commonly employed on the cylinder seals as her symbol. The star associated with her, as queen of heaven, is the one which in later Phoenician texts appears as Astarte, the goddess of the planet Venus.<sup>480</sup> The fact that Astarte epitomizes so many different goddesses, who were in reality various aspects of the fertility principle, makes her genealogy most obscure. She was worshiped among almost all the offshoots of the Semitic race: the Babylonians and Assyrians called her Ishtar who represents the blending of two different characters in the person of one goddess, the lady of love and the lady of battles. Thus, in Ishtar the dominating principle of fertility is combined with the character of the lady of battles. But her different aspects are always worshipped under two separate names. In still later religious systems the double aspect of the forces of nature inherent in this goddess are plainly visible: as Venus, by which name she was called later as the Greek mother goddess, she is the goddess of love and pleasure, and as Cybele she represents fertility incarnate.<sup>481</sup> Despite her different characters, attributes and symbols, the cult of Astarte among the Semites bears witness to a common idea, namely that of a nature deity associated with the planet Venus. The Semites, however, were hesitant in assigning a specific gender to this planet, which could be either masculine or feminine in gender. The Arabs regarded 'Ashtar as a male deity, whereas in north-Semitic 'Ashtart was considered as a goddess. The Masoretes degraded 'Ashtart into 'Ashtöreth to suggest the name *bōšeth* "shame." This fact together with another expression under which she was known as *mlkt hšmym*<sup>482</sup> enables us to recognize the double aspect of this deity: as the goddess of fertility associated with the planet Venus.<sup>483</sup>

We have now examined the passages which give us a clue to the identification of two planets. As we have seen, the inclusive term for planets is *mzlw*, while the word *mzrw* is a dialectical variant of the former. In particular, we noted that the terms *kywn* and *hyll* designate respectively the planets Saturn and Venus. The beliefs held by certain groups of the ancient Hebrews were to some degree similar to those of the Babylonians and the Assyrians who considered the "wandering stars" or planets not only as manifestations of the great gods but also as gods themselves. The Mesopotamian astrologers spoke figuratively of the fixed stars as a flock of sheep moving in ordered ranks across the sky, in which a few celestial bodies looked like "wild sheep" (*bibbi*) frisking among the ordinary sheep.

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wife of the moon-god Nanna (called *Sin* in Akk.). See P. Jensen, *Die Kosmologie der Babylonier* (Strassburg: K. J. Trübner, 1890), p. 14, n. 3. K. Tallqvist, "Akkadische Götterepitheta," in *StOr*, 7 (1938), p. 238.

<sup>480</sup> See D. Nielsen, "Die altsemitische Muttergöttin," in *ZDMG*, 92 (1938), pp. 504-551, especially p. 505.

<sup>481</sup> See G. Contenau, *op. cit.*, p. 250f.

<sup>482</sup> Cf. Jer. 7:18; 44:17-19, 25.

<sup>483</sup> See D. Nielsen, "Der semitische Venuskult," in *ZDMG*, 66 (1912), pp. 469-472.

Thus, the common Akkadian word for a planet is *bibbu*. This term, however, included not only the five planets that are visible to the naked eye, but also the sun and the moon which for the Mesopotamian astrologers ranked with the planets as "wandering" celestial bodies.<sup>484</sup> These seven *bibbi* together with their corresponding astral divinities were listed in a letter dating from the Sargonide period, in the following order: the planet Jupiter - the god Marduk, the planet Venus - the goddess Ishtar, the planet Saturn - the god Ninurta, the planet Mercury - the god Nabu, the planet Mars - the god Nergal, the moon - the god Sin, the sun - the god Shamash.<sup>485</sup> It cannot be shown, but it may be assumed, that the astral religion of the Assyro-Babylonians was introduced into Palestine with the Assyrian invasions of that country, beginning with Shalmaneser III (858-824 B.C.), and reached its climax during the reign of the Judean kings, Manasseh (ca. 687-642 B.C.) and Amon (ca. 642-640 B.C.), who were vassals of the Assyrians.

We may notice in conclusion that there is no evidence that either the Saturn or the Venus cult was a basic feature of popular religion or that it survived to any large extent among the Israelites.

#### d. The Stars and the Constellations

It must be remarked again, even at the risk of repetition, that the references to the celestial bodies, from which one may derive some idea of what the stars and the constellations known in the Old Testament look like, are too scanty to support a large scale demonstration of biblical astronomy. Even if the biblical records suggest the possibility of identifying one or another constellation, one ought to keep in mind the fact that the gap between the ancient Hebrews' knowledge of astronomy and the present day information available about this subject is too great to admit of any comparison. Unfortunately we lack the documents which we should most like to possess, similar to the reports of astrologers of Nineveh and Babylon. All our information is necessarily indirect and is based either on associations derived from etymology or on the testimony of the ancient versions which most likely reflect the stage of knowledge of the period when they were undertaken. The terminology of modern astronomy is rooted in the traditions of the Greeks and the Arabs, as well as in the ancient Semitic mythological ideas which were connected with the stars and the constellations in the ancient Near East and which also influenced the language of the Old Testament.

The Hebrew term used to designate "star" is *kwkb*, attested in Ugaritic as *kbkb* (*kbkbm* in the plural) and in Akkadian as *kakkabu*. As S. Moscati has demonstrated, the original Semitic form for star is "*kabkab*"

<sup>484</sup> See B. Meissner, *op. cit.*, II, p. 404.

<sup>485</sup> See E. Dhorme, *Les Religions . . .*, p. 80.

as retained by the Ugaritic *kbkb*, while in the Akkadian *kakkabu* the -b- is assimilated to -k-, forming a double consonant. The Syriac *kawkab* and the Arabic *kaukab* developed the -b- into the semivowel -w-. This development was further extended in Hebrew *kwkb* where the contraction of -aw- (*kawkab*) brought about the monophthongization of a diphthong.<sup>486</sup> The original meaning of the root underlying *kwkb* has usually been thought to be related with the Arabic *kabba* "to roll threads into a ball;" however it is safer to assume that the Akkadian root *kbb* (*kabâbu*) in the sense of burning, furnished the meaning for the Hebrew word *kwkb* "star." Although a casual reading of the comparison between "star" and "scepter" in this passage:

*drk kwkb my<sup>c</sup>qb wqm šbṭ mysr<sup>l</sup>*<sup>487</sup>

may create a somewhat confused impression of the implication involved, there can be little doubt that it is the common element of brilliance and splendor which suggested the metonymy.

Further, in accordance with the practice of trying to blend the practical value of the stars as a source of light on a moonless night in certain passages with a religious or an epic flavor,<sup>488</sup> life was attributed to the stars.<sup>489</sup> In the passage from Job in which the morning stars sang together at the creation, there appears a conception parallel to that formulated in Babylonian literature, and it is significant that in the parallel passage the gods [angels] rejoice.<sup>490</sup> The identification stands forth still more clearly in the following passage:

The heavens praise your wonders, O Lord,  
And your faithfulness in the divine assembly.  
For who in the sky can be compared to the Lord?  
Who is like the Lord among the gods [angels]?<sup>491</sup>

In Psalm 148, verse 2, in which the angels are summoned to praise Yahweh, links with the succeeding verse which enumerates the heavenly bodies — the "hosts" are even set in parallel structure with the "angels" in verse 2 itself. While the association of the stars with the angels may

<sup>486</sup> See S. Moscati, "Sull'etimologia di *kwkb*," in *Biblica* 27 (1946), pp. 269-272.

<sup>487</sup> Num. 24:17.

<sup>488</sup> Cf. Gen. 1:15ff; Jer. 31:35.

<sup>489</sup> See E. Dhorme, *Les Religions . . .*, p. 82, where evidence from astral cult practiced in Mesopotamia corroborates the general tendency of giving divine attributes to the stars, "Tout devenait dieu dans ce domaine où brillèrent les étoiles qu'on avait précisément adoptées, dans l'écriture, pour représenter la divinité." See also T. H. Gaster's article "Angel," in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, vol. I, pp. 128-234, where the idea of identifying the angels with the stars is traced to Mesopotamian origin.

<sup>490</sup> Cf. Job 38:7; the expression *bny ʾlhy* literally means "sons of the gods." These are lesser members of the ancient pagan pantheon who are retained in later monotheistic theology as angels; they are called simply "gods."

<sup>491</sup> Ps. 89:6f.

point to an adaptation of a characteristic Mesopotamian tradition, there is reason to assume that the ancient Hebrews believed in a psychic affinity between man and the celestial bodies. Thus, according to Job, the stars were not mere passive spectators when God created the world, but joined in that cosmic praise which nature renders to God, enjoying a position of beings provided with consciousness. Again, the stars are presented as following their orbits and as so possessed of sympathy for the Israelites that they fight against Sisera.<sup>492</sup> Another specially marked feature of the relation between man and the heavenly bodies can be recognized in the impression which the contemplation of the starry sky made on the people. It would seem that the view of the people cannot be separated from the biblical authors' own conception and thus both are unanimous in expressing their admiration of the vast, uncountable number of stars.<sup>493</sup> But they also noticed that each star had its own orbit in the firmament, and that they were grouped in constellations.<sup>494</sup>

Consider first the constellation *ksyl* which has generally been identified as Orion. The LXX renders *ksyl* as *Esperos*, in Job 9:9, and as *Oriōn*, in Job 38:31. While [*astēr*] *Esperos* designates, in classical Greek, the evening star and specially the planet Venus,<sup>495</sup> and as such does not offer any clue as to the reason why this term was employed by the LXX translators to render the Hebrew word *ksyl*, there is another term, *Oriōn*, which denotes the constellation named after him. T. H. Gaster links this astral manifestation with the seasonal myth of the dying and reviving lord of fertility:

The constellation sets late at the end of April and rises early at the beginning of July. Its absence from the evening sky thus coincides with the onset and the first part of the dry season. The point of the story of Aqhat [as a Ugaritic version of the myth of Orion], is now obvious: it mythologizes in astral terms the climatic and agricultural conditions prevalent during this time of the year. The drought and desiccation on earth are correlated with and explained by the discomfiture and disappearance of the Great Huntsman (the constellation of Orion was identified as a huntsman followed by a dog).<sup>496</sup>

The Targum renders *ksyl* as *npl* "the fallen one." The Arabic word for Orion *al-jabbār* "the Giant," still retains in its name an allusion to the astral legend which identifies Orion with the giant Nimrod who was

<sup>492</sup> Cf. Judg. 5:20.

<sup>493</sup> Cf. Gen. 15:5; 22:17; 26:4; Ex. 32:13; Deut. 1:10; 10:22; 28:62; Jer. 33:22; Nah. 3:16; Neh. 9:23; 1 Ch. 27:23.

<sup>494</sup> Cf. the expression *mšlwt* "courses, orbits" of the stars in Judg. 5:20. For the identification of some constellations we refer to our analysis below.

<sup>495</sup> Cf. Liddell & Scott, *op. cit.*, *sub voce*.

<sup>496</sup> See T. H. Gaster, *Thespis*, p. 323.

chained to the heavens in the form of a constellation.<sup>497</sup> The reference, in Job 38:31, to Orion's bands may thus either allude to this astral legend or to the three bright stars, *z*, *e*, and *d* Orionis in the "belt of Orion." In Is. 13:10 the plural *ksylyhm* is probably used in the general sense of "constellations" as we conclude from the Greek version of Symmachus which rendered it as *ta astra autōn*.

The constellation *kymh* always connected with *ksyl*, is generally explained in the light of the LXX version (cod. B) which translates it as *Pleias*.<sup>498</sup> The name of this constellation is found in the plural form in earlier classical Greek, while in later classical Greek as well as in the Alexandrian Greek *Pleias* appears in the singular form. The constellation of the Pleiades, as they find expression in Greek literature, seems to have been particularly important to farmers and fishermen, since they made known by their rising (in the middle of May) the approach of harvest, and by their setting (at the end of October) the time for the new sowing; also their rising and setting were looked upon as the sign of the opening and closing of the sailing season.<sup>499</sup> As to the representation of the Pleiades, we have direct evidence thus far back that the Greek poets represented them as doves flying before the hunter Orion.<sup>500</sup> The underlying root of *kymh* is possibly *kwm* with its equivalent attested in Arabic *kāma* (*kwm*) II, "to heap up, accumulate;" from this verb, the following nouns are derived: *kauma* "heap" and *kaum* "herd" [of camels]. Hence, it would seem that the term *kymh* designates the cluster of the Pleiades which are the conspicuous loose group of stars in the constellation of Taurus.

In the foregoing inquiry, it has not been possible to pursue every aspect of the topic in all literatures of the ancient Near East, but it is hoped that the material here assembled may at least suffice for a clearer understanding of the terms thus far analyzed. But when we approach more closely the study of two expressions ʿš and *ḥdry tymn*, about which no convincing explanation (as to the identification of these constellations) has so far been offered by biblical scholars, we find ourselves unable to decide what constellations are meant.

The sense of ʿš or ʿyš is obscure. It may be, then, that in ascertaining its meaning we shall be obliged to rely on the more subtle variants rather than on striking features for an accurate concept. The passage in which ʿyš occurs provides a hint that we must look for a constellation. ʿyš ʿl-bnyh tnḥim "can you guide ʿyš with her children?"<sup>501</sup> The testimony of the LXX is not unanimous on the meaning of this term: ʿš was rendered

<sup>497</sup> See Marvin H. Pope, *op. cit.*, p. 70, note 9.

<sup>498</sup> Cf. Job 9:9; 38:31; for the references to the constellations *ksyl* and *kymh*, cf. Am. 5:8.

<sup>499</sup> See *Harper's Dictionary of Classical Literature and Antiquities*; edited by H. T. Peck, (New York: Cooper Square Publishers, Inc., 1965), *sub voce*.

<sup>500</sup> See Liddell & Scott, *op. cit.*, *sub voce*.

<sup>501</sup> Job 38:32; cf. also the variant ʿš in ch. 9:9.

as *Esperos*, and  $\text{y}\check{\text{s}}$  as *Arktouros*. The Syriac version, on the other hand, translates both as  $\text{y}\check{\text{u}}\text{t}\check{\text{a}}$  "Aldebaran" (a star in the eye of Taurus), a term which is also used, in Amos 5:8, to render Heb. *ksyl* "Orion." The LXX reading is conflicting: thus  $\text{y}\check{\text{s}} \text{ } ^\text{l}\text{-bnyh } \text{tn}\check{\text{h}}\text{m}$  is translated *Esperon epi komēs autou axeis auta*. As we have seen above, *Esperos* was used by the LXX translators to designate Orion. The rendering of  $\text{y}\check{\text{s}}$  as *Arktouros* would make it plausible to interpret  $\text{š}$  or  $\text{y}\check{\text{s}}$  as the constellation Ursa Major "Great Bear"; *bnyh*, "her children," may refer, then, either to the little Bear or to the constellation Boötes which appears to follow the Great Bear.

We must make considerable reservations as to the meaning of *ḥdry tymn* suggested by the translators. The Greek *tameia Notoy* "the chambers of the south [or south wind]," can hardly suggest a constellation. However, from the observation attached to this verse, in Job 9:9, by the Greek translator or interpreter known as  $\text{o } ^\text{e}\text{braios}$ , who is quoted by various Greek fathers of the fourth and fifth centuries A.D., we learn that *ḥdry tymn* means: *panta ta astra kyklounta ton noton* (quoted from the Hexapla; Fied). G. R. Driver concludes that *ḥdry tymn* designates the *circulus austrinus*.<sup>502</sup>

Many other passages from the Old Testament could be listed which may contain some allusions to stars and constellations. But because of the meager evidence available for the ancient Hebrews' knowledge of astronomy, any attempt to clarify those passages, either by comparison with parallel expressions from other literatures or by emendation of the texts, would only increase the list of conjectures. In the absence of more information from the Bible on this subject it is impossible to get a clear picture of the map of the heaven. Yet it would indeed be too hazardous to affirm that the ancient Hebrews' attainment in this field is restricted to that which is preserved in the scarce allusions confined to almost a single book (viz. Job).

As we consider our study of the stars and constellations referred to in the Old Testament and seek to assess what ideas the ancient Hebrews held regarding the heavenly bodies, it would seem that astronomy was never grasped or pursued as a science in ancient Israel. Moreover, it is difficult to discern what has been, if any, the influence of Babylonian or Assyrian astronomy upon the Hebrews. As for the testimony of the ancient versions, it appeared in our study that the original meaning of the Hebrew names of constellations became rapidly lost. Those terms (denoting constellations) have been interpreted according to the views current in that particular epoch when the versions were produced. In view of these considerations, it is important to note that these interpretations, although they do not effectively explain the constellations mentioned in the Old Testament, seem to offer the greatest probability in their favour.

<sup>502</sup> See G. R. Driver, *op. cit.*, pp. 9-11.

### 3. Meteorological Phenomena

#### a. The Clouds

When the ancients raised their eyes to heaven and saw grey clouds moving slowly across the expanse of the firmament, they certainly must have resembled children today who in their imagination find figures of hills and animals in the heavens. And yet it appears in the ancient records that their observations on cloud formations differ less in the description of the shades and contours of the clouds than in the explanations of those cloud formations. The ancient mythographers attached their interpretations of the old animal mythology, which are based upon a sympathetic poetical feeling similar to the sentiments of a mythic age, to vivid memories of that early age in which the enquirer after myths himself looked up to heaven and made myths. In the *Enūma eliš* the cloud banks which float low over the earth are impersonated in the deity Mummu.<sup>503</sup> Although in the Old Testament many a vivid picture is found which exhibits a sympathetic view towards any given phenomenon in nature as well as in the sky without violating the strictly monotheistic principle, none of the references to the clouds is rooted in a mythical context. But, as we have yet to see, in the frequent allusions to the movements of the clouds, there are constant echoes of the traditional vocabulary of the seasonal myths. It must be admitted, however, that the basic material of the traditional seasonal pattern was adapted, in the course of its transmission, to the needs of monotheistic ideology and was transformed by the introduction of extraneous elements. Thus, by way of anticipation it might be well to observe at this point, that the references to one of the most familiar atmospheric phenomena, the rising of the clouds in the sky and their relation to the rain, manifest the bivalent function of revealing and concealing God and of bringing rain.

There is no detailed and scientific record of the ideas about the various type of cloud formation held by the ancient Hebrews. We can infer them only indirectly, from the several words for cloud attested in the Old Testament. The term <sup>ʿ</sup>*b*, which is to be distinguished from the word of the same spelling denoting "threshold, steps," is derived from the root <sup>ʿ</sup>*wb* "to wrap around, cover with darkness" and designates the ordinary cloud that brings rain as well as the cloud-mass. A survey of all usages of <sup>ʿ</sup>*b* also shows another aspect which is only loosely connected with that of "cloud," namely the thicket as refuge.<sup>504</sup> The plural of the Hebrew word <sup>ʿ</sup>*b* "cloud" is <sup>ʿ</sup>*bym* and <sup>ʿ</sup>*bwt*. Since only two refer-

<sup>503</sup> See T. Jacobsen's essay "Mesopotamia" in *The Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man*, p. 174.

<sup>504</sup> Cf. Jer. 4:29; *B.D.B.* suggests that <sup>ʿ</sup>*b* owes the meaning of "thicket" to Aramaic.

ences of *°bwt* are attested,<sup>505</sup> as contrasted with the frequent occurrences of *°bym*, the point of its grammatical gender cannot be pressed.

Considering the function of *°b* and analyzing the terms with which *°b* is used in parallel expressions, we are enabled to determine this particular kind of cloud. Thus, *°b* designates the "cumulus" under whose shadow men seek solace against the scorching heat during the summer.<sup>506</sup> During the prolonged dry season men anxiously waited for the rising of the cumulus clouds. The spreading of this cloud formation across the expanse of the firmament was associated with the advance of heavy rains.<sup>507</sup> The light, then, thrown on the meaning and the function of these clouds by the passages which refer not only to the approach of the rainy season but also to occasional heavy rains,<sup>508</sup> confirms the assumption that *°b* designates the cumulus and the rain cloud. A further illustration of this rain cloud is provided by the expression *°b mlqwš*, lit. the cloud of the spring shower, which confirms its basic meaning as rain cloud.<sup>509</sup> The heavy winter rains seem to have fallen from *°b šhqym*.<sup>510</sup> From the close affinity between these two terms, it has been possible to establish a second meaning for *šhqym*, which came to be used as a metonymy to designate the firmament of heaven. The word *šhq* primarily denotes "dust," more frequently, although it appears in parallel with *šmym* and thus assumed the meaning of "cloud." Its original meaning as well as its usage in context with *šmym* gives support to the commonly accepted translation of *šhqym* as the high cirrus clouds in the sky.<sup>511</sup>

Appropriate for consideration here is a questionable passage from Job which has been interpreted in various ways:

*b°štw lmr̄ ḥq*  
*wdrk ḥzyz qlwt*<sup>512</sup>

In another context the word *ḥzyz* denotes a formation of clouds which brings rain, and as such it seems to be related etymologically to the Arabic *kindīd* "storm cloud."<sup>513</sup> As to other derivations we refer to the entry of the word under consideration contained in *B.D.B.*, where *ḥzyz* is taken as "thunderbolt, lightning flash," for which apparently support

<sup>505</sup> Cf. 2 Sam. 23:4; Ps. 77:18; cf. also 1 K. 18:44 where the mention *°b qtnh* leads to assume that *°b* was taken but has a feminine as well as a masculine noun.

<sup>506</sup> Cf. Is. 25:5.

<sup>507</sup> Cf. 1 K. 18:41-46.

<sup>508</sup> Cf. Judg. 5:4; Is. 5:6; Ps. 77:18; Job 26:8; Eccl. 11:3f; 12:2.

<sup>509</sup> Cf. Prov. 16:15. In the figurative language of poetry, in Is. 18:4, the morning dew is compared to a cloud: *k°b ṭl bḥm qšyr*.

<sup>510</sup> Cf. 2 Sam. 22:12; Ps. 18:12.

<sup>511</sup> Cf. Deut. 33:26; Is. 45:8; Jer. 51:9; Ps. 36:6; 57:11; 68:35; 77:18; 78:23; 108:5; Job 35:5.

<sup>512</sup> Job 28:26.

<sup>513</sup> Cf. Zech. 10:1; cf. this etymology was advanced by Koehler and Baumgartner, in *op. cit.*, *sub voce*.

has been sought in the Arabic word *haziz* "thunder." As to the meaning of the preceding verse, the word *hzyz* is to be taken in the sense of "rain, shower."

When he allotted weight to the wind,  
 Meted out the waters by measure,  
 When he made a groove for the rain,  
 A path for the thundershowers.<sup>514</sup>

Furthermore the Hebrew word *nsy<sup>2</sup>ym* demands consideration. The root *ns<sup>2</sup>*, which underlies this noun, denotes "to lift, carry, take," lending support to the meaning of *nsy<sup>2</sup>ym* as "high clouds," rather than to the generally proposed translation as "vapors, rising mists." The formation of clouds which comes to our mind and which seems most likely to be the meaning of *nsy<sup>2</sup>ym* is "cumuli castellati." The passages which decisively support our view speak of rain and specifically of lightnings.<sup>515</sup>

It now remains to deal with the word *nn*, a very common term employed for cloud. Its precise meaning can be derived from the terms *lbwš* "garment" and *htlh* "swaddling bands" with which it is compared.<sup>516</sup> Thus, *nn* designates a "cloud-mass" or "overcast" which is opaque and obscuring. Based on a number of passages which bring out all the nuances of this cloud formation, R. Scott defines *nn* as:

- (i) cloud in general, (Ex. 14:20; 19:16; Is. 44:22; Job 38:9; Ps. 97:2);
- (ii) cloud-stuff composing a definite cloud: *b*, (Ex. 19:9; Job 26:8); or a cloud-column, (Ex. 13:21; 33:9f; Ez. 8:11);
- (iii) a thick, obscuring overcast, (Ex. 14:20; 19:16; Ez. 30:3; 34:12; Joel 2:2; Zeph. 1:15); veiling the sky, (Ez. 32:7; Ps. 97:2; Lam. 3:44; Job 26:9);
- (iv) fog or mist blanketing land or sea, (Ez. 38:9, 16; Job 38:9);
- (v) ground-fog, morning mist, (Hos. 6:4; 13:3; Job 7:9);
- (vi) the overcast and dust-filled air of the Sirocco, (Jer. 4:13; Ez. 30:18; Nah. 1:3);
- (vii) a distant cloud-mass as backdrop of rainbow, (Gen. 9:13-16; Ez. 1:28); lit by sheet-lightning, (Ez. 1:4; Job 37:15).<sup>517</sup>

<sup>514</sup> Job 28:25f. The purposive *l* placed before *šwt*, in verse 25, introduces a subordinate clause dependent upon the preceding sentence in verse 24. The literal translation is, "in order to allot weight . . ." The word *hq* here does not mean "decree," but is used in the sense of "bound, limit." The basic meaning of the root is "to engrave," hence as applied to the rain, rather than to the sea; "groove" may be an appropriate rendering. See Marvin H. Pope, *op. cit.*, p. 183, note 26a.

<sup>515</sup> Cf. Jer. 10:13; 51:16; Ps. 135:7; Prov. 25:14.

<sup>516</sup> Cf. Job 38:9.

<sup>517</sup> See R. B. Y. Scott, "Meteorological Phenomena and Terminology in the Old Testament," in *ZAW* 64 (1952), pp. 11-25, p. 24f.

A less common word such as *qytwr* has been rendered as "thick smoke," and hence as "dense cloud."<sup>518</sup>

Finally, an interpretation of the term *ʿrpl* can be given by equating it with Ugaritic *ḡrpl* "heavy cloud." Hence the Hebrew word *ʿrpl* denotes "heavy cloud,"<sup>519</sup> "lowering clouds obscuring the sky"<sup>520</sup> and "heavy clouds" in which God dwells.<sup>521</sup>

The above examination and interpretation of the various terms for cloud has shed some light on the weather phenomenon in the Old Testament literature. A word about the formation of the clouds should be added. We have to anticipate, however, that the passage regarding meteorological matters is frequently vague and ambiguous. Thus, the biblical authors say that the clouds rise (*ʿlh*) from the direction of the sea or, less precisely, from the extremities of the earth.<sup>522</sup> The advance of the clouds from beyond the horizon was once compared to the approach of hostile armies.<sup>523</sup> The unpredictable movement of the clouds drifting across the expanse of the firmament served as an appropriate metaphor for transitoriness.<sup>524</sup> The spreading of the clouds evoked also the experience of gloomy feelings.<sup>525</sup> More often, though, the clouds, which sometimes had the appearance of being fixed on the sky, suggested the idea of height which transcends all the notions of altitude,<sup>526</sup> to such an extent that they were actually identified with the firmament itself.<sup>527</sup>

The role of the clouds in the meteorological phenomena will be dealt with in a subsequent chapter together with other elements related to the phenomenon of precipitation. For now, however, it will be sufficient to discuss the significance of the cloud theme in the Old Testament literature. The expression *yhwḥ rkb ʿl-ʿb* (Is. 19:1), with its equivalent *rkb ʿrpt* "the rider of clouds," an epithet of Baʿal which frequently occurs in the mythological texts from Ras Shamra,<sup>528</sup> is interesting. Thus, poeti-

<sup>518</sup> The passages where *qytwr* is found do not strongly support the meaning "dense cloud," as appears in passages from Gen. 19:18; Ps. 119:83; 148:8 (the use of *qytwr*, in this verse, indicates that its meaning was less strictly defined; hence it may refer to "snow-cloud.")

<sup>519</sup> Cf. 2 Sam. 22:10; Ps. 18:10.

<sup>520</sup> Cf. Ez. 34:12; Zeph. 1:15; Joel 2:2; Job 22:13.

<sup>521</sup> Cf. Ex. 20:18; 1 K. 8:12; [2 Ch. 6:1]; Deut. 4:11; 5:19f.

<sup>522</sup> Cf. 1 K. 18:44; cf. also the expression *mšy (h)ʿrš* in Jer. 10:13; 51:16; Ps. 135:7.

<sup>523</sup> Cf. Jer. 4:13.

<sup>524</sup> Cf. Job 30:15, "Like a cloud my prosperity is gone." Moreover, "a cloud evaporates and vanishes," (Job 7:9). When the firmament is cleared from all the clouds, the sky appears in its shining brightness, cf. Job 37:21.

<sup>525</sup> Cf. Job 10:22.

<sup>526</sup> Cf. Prov. 8:28 (*bʿmšw šḥqym mmʿl*), cf. also Job 3:5. See the references to the maximum altitude, in Jer. 51:9; Ez. 31:10; Ps. 36:6; Job 20:6; 35:5; 38:34.

<sup>527</sup> Cf. Jer. 51:9; Ps. 89:7; Prov. 8:28.

<sup>528</sup> See C. H. Gordon, *op. cit.*, Glossary No. 2331. Cf. the similar expression *rkb bʿrbwt* in Ps. 68:5. On the morphological kinship between Heb. *ʿrbt* and Ug. *ʿrpt*, see M. Dahood, *Proverbs and Northwest Semitic Philology* (Rome: Pontificium Institutum Biblicum 1963), pp. 10f, 32f, 43.

cally Yahweh is said to ride on the high cirrus clouds (*šḥqym*)<sup>529</sup> as well as on the ordinary rain cloud (*°b*)<sup>530</sup> and to make them his chariot.<sup>531</sup>

Finally, the idea of God's mobility, which receives concrete form in his riding of the scudding clouds, ought to be mentioned.<sup>532</sup> These images and expressions, however, did not retain their original sense as was the case in Ugaritic and Mesopotamian literatures. They were used as mere poetic metaphors; Yahweh was not considered as actually present behind the cloud, but as controlling everything from a higher level. Nevertheless, this cloud theme, while it retains throughout the Old Testament literature its general significance, appears in a different light according to different theological viewpoints. In the Yahwistic tradition of the Pentateuch the idea of God's active intervention was prevalent. Thus, Yahweh makes use of a cloud to guide the Israelites on their journey through the desert.<sup>533</sup> In the Elohist tradition, in which heaven is God's fixed abode, he descends in a cloud in order to enter into dialogue with Moses.<sup>534</sup> We may conclude that the biblical authors maintained the view according to which the clouds, apart from their function of bringing rain, both reveal and screen the presence of the God of heaven, thereby making men aware of the active presence of this God who insists on remaining concealed.

#### b. Wind and Storm

The geographical location of Palestine, with the highly diversified nature of its terrain within a small circumscribed area, is bounded by the sea to the west and by the Jordan valley to the east, by the Negeb (southland) to the south and by the foothills of Mount Hermon to the north. As a result of these contrasts, where mountains and desert press so close together, the movements of air masses differ in temperature and humidity. Taking into consideration the results of modern observations

Palestine receives "maritime polar" air which comes from the North Atlantic across Europe and the Mediterranean. Occasionally there is "maritime tropical" air from the Atlantic nearer to the Equator, and not unfrequently there is "Continental Tropical" air from North Africa. "Continental polar" air from central Asia is usually blocked by

<sup>529</sup> Cf. Deut. 33:26.

<sup>530</sup> Cf. Is. 19:1; cf. also Num. 10:36.

<sup>531</sup> Cf. Ps. 104:3.

<sup>532</sup> Cf. 2 Sam. 22:11; Ps. 18:11. God is pictured as flying upon the Cherub of extended wings.

<sup>533</sup> Cf. Ex. 13:21; 14:19f; 19:16-25 (Eissfeldt, however, assigns this passage to the Lay source); 20:18; Num. 10:34-36.

<sup>534</sup> Cf. Ex. 24:15-18; 33:9-11; Num. 12:5-10; the following passages have been ascribed by A. Weiser to the Priestly writing, although it is difficult, at times, to decide whether the authors of P worked over an original passage belonging to the Elohist strand: Ex. 16:10; 25:14-18; 40:34. See A. Weiser, *The Old Testament: its Formation and Development* (New York: Association Press, 4th ed., 1964), pp. 111-142.

the mountain ranges of Anatolia and Iran, but sometimes it surges past these barriers and brings cold, dry easterly winds to Palestine. We have thus to reckon at different times in the Holy Land with four distinct types of atmosphere, — cool and moist, warm and moist, hot and dry, cold and dry.<sup>535</sup>

From an analysis of the references to the winds occurring in the Old Testament it will become clear that the ancient Hebrews attributed special qualities to each wind.

The general term for wind is *rwḥ*, which designates, in the first place, "breath," then "wind," and lastly, "spirit." This Hebrew word is derived from the root *rwḥ* which may be taken in the sense of breathing, blowing. The equivalent verb in Syriac *rāḥ* "to breathe" reflects the first meaning of the Hebrew *rwḥ*, while the Arabic *rāḥa* (*raiḥ* and *rauḥ*) "be windy" reflects the second meaning of the verb *rwḥ*. Besides the general term for wind, what are the specific words for the four winds? The east wind is called *rwḥ qdym* or just *qdym*.<sup>536</sup> The term *qdym*, used to designate the east and the east wind, was carried over from the common pattern in use among the peoples of the ancient Near East to indicate the four cardinal points. The observer is supposedly facing east, and the directions were indicated in relation to his position. Hence, the Hebrew word *qdym* "east, east wind" is derived from the root *qdm* "be before, in front," which is related to its equivalent in Akkadian *qudmu* "front, former time." As will appear in the sequence of the study of the winds, the term *tymn* denoting "south, south wind," further illustrates that the south was synonymous with the right-hand side (*ymyn* > *tymn*) of the observer facing east. The emerging pattern in thus clear regarding all four directions of the horizon. However, the words *ḥwr* (or *ḥrwn*) "behind, back," i.e., the west, and *śmʿl* "left," i.e., the north, were not used to designate the winds which arise from those respective directions.

Returning to the contextual analysis of the word *qdym*, we are at once struck by the visual descriptions of the east wind, which can easily be identified with the Sirocco.

The hot air of the east wind parches the fountains and streams and dries up the vegetation:

As soon as the east wind strikes it,  
shall it not wither away —  
Wither away on the bed in which it grows?<sup>537</sup>

<sup>535</sup> See R. Scott, *op. cit.*, p. 13f.

<sup>536</sup> Cf. the references to *rwḥ* (*h*)*qdym*, in Ex. 10:13; 14:21; Jer. 18:17; Ez. 17:10; 19:12; 27:26; Jon. 4:8; Ps. 48:8.

Cf. the references to *qdym*, in Gen. 41:6, 23, 27; Is. 27:8; Hos. 12:2; 13:15; Ps. 78:26; Job 15:2; 27:21; 38:24.

<sup>537</sup> Ez. 17:10; cf. also Gen. 41:6, 23, 27.

The east wind parched her,  
 tore off her fruit;  
 And her strong branch withered away,  
 the fire devoured it.<sup>538</sup>

The east wind, a wind of the Lord  
 shall come up from the desert;  
 And his fountain shall dry up  
 and his spring shall be parched.<sup>539</sup>

And when the sun arose, God ordered a burning east wind.<sup>540</sup>

Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the Lord  
 moved the sea away by means of a strong east wind all night,  
 and turned the sea into dry land.<sup>541</sup>

Ought a wise man answer with wind,  
 fill his belly with Sirocco?<sup>542</sup>

The east wind may mature into a cyclone when it moves towards the sea:

The east wind wrecked you  
 in the heart of the seas.<sup>543</sup>

By an east wind the ships of Tarshish are shattered.<sup>544</sup>

The east wind is known by its strength:

By his rough blast he swept them away on the day of the east wind.<sup>545</sup>

The east wind takes him away,  
 sweeps him from his place.<sup>546</sup>

Apart from the parching and cyclonic disturbances of the east wind it is mentioned that, on one occasion, the hot air masses were accompanied by swarms of locusts.<sup>547</sup> The characteristic features of the Sirocco as a

<sup>538</sup> Ez. 19:12.

<sup>539</sup> Hos. 13:15.

<sup>540</sup> Jon. 4:8.

<sup>541</sup> Ex. 14:21.

<sup>542</sup> Job 15:2. See Marvin H. Pope's comment to this translation, in *op. cit.*, p. 108, note 2. "The east wind, the searing Sirocco which blows from the desert, would be roughly the equivalent of our expression "hot air." Eliphaz calls Job a bag of hot air."

<sup>543</sup> Ez. 24:26.

<sup>544</sup> Ps. 48:8. We follow M. Dahood's emendation of *tešabbêr* to *tiššâbêr*, in Niph'al, whose subject is the collective plural <sup>2</sup>nywt. See M. Dahood, *op. cit.*, p. 291f, note 8.

<sup>545</sup> Is. 27:8.

<sup>546</sup> Job 27:21; cf. also Job 28:24b, where another aspect of the Sirocco is mentioned, namely its spreading over the earth.

<sup>547</sup> Cf. Ex. 10:13.

destructive storm wind will be studied in the course of this chapter. In view of the absence of any reference to the time of the occurrence of the Sirocco we may supplement it with modern observations, which point out that this particular weather phenomenon occurs during spring and autumn.<sup>548</sup>

The westerly winds coming from the Mediterranean are known for bringing cold air and moisture to northern and central Palestine. This meaning of west wind [sea wind] is still retained in the expression *rwḥ hym*.<sup>549</sup> Incidental references to those winds differing in temperature and humidity are contained in narratives:

They heard the sound of God Yahweh as he was walking in the garden at the breezy time of the day.<sup>550</sup>

[Elijah said to his servant]:

"Go up and look toward the sea." . . . So the servant went back seven times. However, the seventh time he said, "There is a cloud the size of a man's hand, rising out of the sea." "Go up," he said, "say to Ahab, harness your steeds and go down, so that the rain may not stop you."

Moreover, in a very short time the heavens grew black with clouds and wind, and there was a great downpour.<sup>551</sup>

With the exception of the on-shore breeze of afternoon which may be noticed throughout the year, the westerly winds occur normally during the winter season. R. Scott remarks:

In winter the eastern Mediterranean is normally an area of low barometric pressure between the continental high pressure areas of Europe and North Africa. Across this area move a series of depressions from west to east, and in their rear come outbreaks of cold moist air from Europe and ultimately from the North Atlantic. The atmospheric disturbance caused by the approach and passage of the "front," or leading edge, of the cold air, brings about the precipitation of rain or snow.<sup>552</sup>

The north wind is called *rwḥ ṣpwn*, or just *ṣpwn* (Cant. 4:16) and is associated with the approach of the cold air. Because of the movement of air masses coming from central Asia, the weather in Palestine is par-

<sup>548</sup> See R. Scott, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

<sup>549</sup> Ez. 42:19.

<sup>550</sup> Gen. 3:8. E. A. Speiser remarks that "the Hebrew preposition *l*, in the expression *lrwḥ hym*, may be used of time, but not temperature; hence the memorable "in the cool of the day" lacks linguistic support. The time involved is toward sundown, when fresh breezes bring welcome relief from the heat." See E. A. Speiser, *Genesis, The Anchor Bible*, vol. I (Garden City: Doubleday & Company, 1964), p. 24, note 8.

<sup>551</sup> 1 K. 18:43-45.

<sup>552</sup> See R. Scott, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

ticularly affected in the winter. The so-called "continental polar" air from central Asia, usually blocked by the mountain ranges of Anatolia and Iran, surges past these barriers and brings cold winds to Palestine.<sup>553</sup> The passage from Job, "from scatter winds [comes] cold" (37:9b), most likely refers to the north winds. The term *mzrym*, i.e., the scatter winds, is not to be identified with *mzrwt*, which is probably a dialectical variant of *mzlw* "planets," as we have seen above on page 85. Etymologically, *mzrym* is the participle Pī'el of the verb *zrh* "to scatter, fan, winnow." In the Koran the north winds which disperse the rainclouds are called (*ar—riyāh*) *adh—dhāriyāt* "the scatter winds."<sup>554</sup>

The winds coming from the south bring the sultry air from the desert. The south wind is called *tymn* and once it is referred to as *drwm* (Job 37:17b). The term *drwm* designates the south, occurring almost exclusively in poetic language, in the passage mentioned below it indicates the south wind.

You, who swelter in your garments  
When the earth is becalmed from the south.<sup>555</sup>

More frequently, however, the south wind evolved into a heavy storm:

Like whirlwinds as they sweep through the Negeb.<sup>556</sup>

And [the Lord God] will march forth amid the storms of the south.<sup>557</sup>

These quotations lead to the conclusion that there are two kinds of south wind. As has been observed by R. Scott, there are almost no storms in Palestine during the summer.

The distinctive weather of summer is controlled by the North Atlantic anti-cyclone extending over southern Europe, low pressure now being confined to the vicinity of the Persian Gulf and northern India. This gives to the eastern Mediterranean a season of mild, variable winds, with mainly clear skies and strong surface heating of the land. There are almost no storms, — no frontal storms because no fronts cross Palestine at this season, and only very exceptionally a thunderstorm due to the surface heating and convection.<sup>558</sup>

By virtue of this modern observation on meteorology in Palestine, it is believed that the weather conditions, as preserved on record in the Old

<sup>553</sup> See R. Scott, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

<sup>554</sup> Sura 51:1.

<sup>555</sup> Job 37:17. Literally "who your garments are hot."

<sup>556</sup> Is. 21:1.

<sup>557</sup> Zech. 9:14. Cf. also the reference to the south wind in the Song of Songs (4:16), where the maiden invokes the north and south winds to blow upon her garden so that they may carry far away the perfume of its flowers.

<sup>558</sup> See R. Scott, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

Testament, remained much the same in that area. Hence, we learn to distinguish between the calm summer wind coming from the south and the violent south wind occurring mainly at the beginning or at the end of the summer season. The description of this wind sweeping like a whirlwind through the Negeb matches the characteristic features of the Sirocco coming from the eastern desert. R. Scott says:

May and October are the times of the highest incidence of the Sirocco, the hot dry dust-laden winds from the southern deserts which can raise the temperature in Palestine to 46°C [ca. 110°F] and reduce humidity to 2% (an almost unendurable combination!)<sup>559</sup>

Since the winds were observed to come from particular directions, it was the practice among the ancient Hebrews to associate those directions with the four cardinal points.<sup>560</sup> However, the study of the different systems employed by the biblical authors to designate the four cardinal points will be discussed in greater detail in a subsequent chapter.

Of the passages cited above, on a close examination, only a few appear to refer both to wind and storm at the same time. The words *qdym* and *tymn* may in fact refer to the Sirocco which sometimes reaches gale force, producing dust storms which may reduce visibility to less than fifty yards.<sup>561</sup> This wind was known too as *rwḥ mḏbr* "desert wind."<sup>562</sup> More frequently, however, this violent wind was designated by the term *swph* "storm wind, whirlwind, tempest," which is derived from the root *swp*, whose original meaning is "to snatch away, to carry away." The Sirocco or Khamsin windstorm has lent its specific characteristics for the description of a theophany:

For behold, the Lord shall come like a fire,  
His chariots like a whirlwind.<sup>563</sup>

See! he comes up like a cloud,  
His chariots like a storm wind.<sup>564</sup>

The Sirocco is clearly described as a storm wind, tempest:

By night the tempest [*swph*] carries him off.  
The east wind [*qdym*] takes him away,

<sup>559</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

<sup>560</sup> In support of this statement we refer to the expression <sup>rb</sup> *rwḥwt*, 1 Ch. 9:24; Ez. 42:40.

<sup>561</sup> See R. Scott, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

<sup>562</sup> Jer. 13:24. The general term "desert wind" which implies the place of origin and the direction through which this wind moves. There are other indications which are more precise about the place from which the Sirocco departs: from the east, (Job 27:20-22); from the south, (Job 37:9); from the Negeb, (Is. 21:1).

<sup>563</sup> Is. 66:15.

<sup>564</sup> Jer. 4:13a.

Sweeps him from his place.  
 It pounces on him without sparing,  
 From its power he fain would flee.  
 It claps its hands at him,  
 And hisses him from his place.<sup>565</sup>

And [the nations] will be chased like chaff of the mountains  
 before the wind,  
 Or like whirling dust [*glgl*]  
 before the storm wind.<sup>566</sup>

When your terror comes like a storm [*šw<sup>2</sup>h*]  
 And your doom descends like a storm wind [*swph*].<sup>567</sup>

These instances illustrate that the term *swph* was used to designate the Sirocco or Khamsin windstorm. From analysis of other passages where this word occurs *swph* also denotes a "destructive storm wind." For example:

From the Lord of hosts shall you be visited  
 With thunder and earthquake and mighty noise,  
 With a destructive storm wind and gale and flame of devouring fire.<sup>568</sup>

So do thou pursue them with thy gale,  
 And terrify them with the destructive storm wind.<sup>569</sup>

As regards the place whence this destructive storm wind comes, there is the passage: "from the Chamber comes the destructive storm wind."<sup>570</sup> Whether this "Chamber" is an abbreviation of the expression "Chambers of the south" (Job 9:9), is uncertain. Possibly, "Chamber" is parallel to the "storehouses" of heaven where the winds were kept.<sup>571</sup> Thus, the term *swph* is roughly synonymous with the word *s<sup>c</sup>r* and *s<sup>c</sup>rh*.

<sup>565</sup> Job 27:20b-23. The ambiguities of verse 22 and 23 are due to the unexpressed subject in these verses which may be either "God" or "the east wind," or the indefinite "one, men." On closer scrutiny, however, it becomes clear that it is the violent storm which pounces on him, claps its hands at him and hisses him from his place. See Marvin H. Pope, *op. cit.*, p. 173, note 23.

<sup>566</sup> Is. 17:13b; cf. also Jer. 13:24. See the parallel expression to *kms l<sup>2</sup>ny rwh*, in Job 21:18, *ktbn l<sup>2</sup>ny rwh* and in Ps. 83:14; *kqš l<sup>2</sup>ny rwh*.

<sup>567</sup> Prov. 1:27. MT has a Qerê for *š<sup>2</sup>wh*, which is to be read as *šw<sup>2</sup>h* "devastation, a sudden destructive storm."

<sup>568</sup> Is. 29:6.

<sup>569</sup> Ps. 83:16.

<sup>570</sup> Job 37:9a.

<sup>571</sup> Cf. the expression *mws<sup>2</sup>-rwh m<sup>2</sup>wšrwtyw*, Ps. 135:7. According to Sumerian conception the winds were kept in the mountains located at the extreme boundaries of the earth. In earlier Sumerian thought there appears a formulation of the cardinal points with a wide scope of detailed concepts. The Sumerians expressed the notion "universe" by the number VII. The reason for this lies in the fact that the seven winds, "which determined the seven principal directions" dividing the compass into

Analysis of the term *s<sup>c</sup>r* and its context establishes its meaning as a "windstorm, gale," (not specifically a "whirlwind"). The verbal form *s<sup>c</sup>r* has the meaning of being violently shaken, tossed. Its kindred root *s<sup>c</sup>r* denotes "to shudder, to quiver," and is used of the commotion of a storm or tempest which sweeps away whatever lies in its path. Other relevant passages clarify this concept, and the meaning of the term *s<sup>c</sup>r* remains much the same:

With a gale on the day of a destructive storm wind.<sup>572</sup>

A mighty windstorm in stirring  
From the ends of the earth.<sup>573</sup>

See! the storm of the Lord has gone out in fury,  
A sweeping storm, that will whirl on the head of the wicked.<sup>574</sup>

But the Lord hurled a great wind upon the sea, so that there  
was a great cyclone on the sea; and it was thought that the ship  
would be broken up.<sup>575</sup>

These passages help to determine the meaning of *s<sup>c</sup>r* as windstorm, gale, and, occasionally, whirlwind.

Although the term *s<sup>c</sup>r* is restricted in its use designating windstorms as such, its feminine counterpart *s<sup>c</sup>rh*, (spelled *s<sup>c</sup>rh* in Nah. 1:3 and Job 9:17), is often associated with thunderstorm.

I looked, and lo! there came from the north a violent gale, accompanied by a great cloud, with fire flashing through it, and a radiance round about it.<sup>576</sup>

A lasting rain shall come, and hailstones shall fall, and a violent gale shall break out.<sup>577</sup>

Occasionally *s<sup>c</sup>rh* occurs without reference to violent storms associated with rain. Then, the most suitable meaning in context is that of a "storm

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seven sectors, "cut the plane of the horizon into seven sectors or regions . . . The mountains which house those winds . . . represent the seven points of departure of the seven directions." Since these mountains "reach with their tops into heaven and with their foundations into the lower world, they determine at the same time seven spherical sectors in the vault of the heaven and seven divisions in the mass of the nether world." Hence, the universe was conceived "as the aggregation of those seven parts determined by the seven directions and the seven mountains," and thus the universe as symbolized by the numeral VII. See H. and J. Lewy, "The Origin of the Week and the Oldest West Asiatic Calendar," in *HUCA* 17 (1942-1943), pp. 1-155, especially p. 16f.

<sup>572</sup> Am. 1:14.

<sup>573</sup> Jer. 25:32.

<sup>574</sup> Jer. 23:19; cf. also 30:23.

<sup>575</sup> Jon. 1:4; cf. also 1:12.

<sup>576</sup> Ez. 1:4; cf. also Zech. 9:14; Is. 29:6.

<sup>577</sup> Ez. 13:11, 13.

wind."<sup>578</sup> Thus, perhaps, the terms *s<sup>c</sup>r* and *s<sup>c</sup>rh*, denoting a storm of wind and rain, could admit slight variations in their basic meaning, could admit slight variations in their basic meaning, in relation to different circumstances, as illustrated by the following examples.

Closely connected with the term *swph*, is a less common term which discloses an intensification in meaning of the term. In the Hebrew word *swph* denotes a "destructive storm of wind and rain." The word *šw<sup>h</sup>* designates a "devastation," specifically a "destructive storm of wind and rain." The root *šw<sup>h</sup>*, from which the word *šw<sup>h</sup>* is derived, has the meaning of making a noise and of crashing. In a deictic use we read that the approach of this sudden destructive storm is heralded by towering clouds.<sup>579</sup> It is worth noting that the same root runs as a sort of undertone through almost all the occurrences of the term *šw<sup>h</sup>* occurs.<sup>580</sup>

The final term to be studied in this context is *zrm*, denoting a "storm of wind and rain." The verb *zrm*, which is the Akkadian *šarāmu* "to exert, strive," means a pouring of rain and flooding away. In the light of this verb, the noun *zrm* denotes a storm, downpour."<sup>581</sup>

Furthermore, the wind and storm phenomena frequently occur in themselves to illustrate the divine manifestations. It is in Ezekiel describes his inaugural vision in these pictorial terms:

I looked, and lo there came from the north a violent storm (*rw<sup>h</sup> s<sup>c</sup>rh*), [accompanied by] a great cloud (*‘nn*), through it, and a radiance round about it.<sup>582</sup>

This radiance is compared with the appearance of "the rainbow in the cloud (*‘nn*) in the day of rain" (Ez. 1:28). It is referred to in the Flood narrative "as a bright and comforting sign for the race shall endure, however transient the individual life of the Bible is anything mentioned about the colors of the rainbow. The idea of considering the rainbow as the symbol of a covenant is found in a Phoenician stone relief which represents a hand holding a rainbow. [presumably the hand of a god, in a gesture of making a covenant.] The rainbow is an angel holding sun and moon. At the top of the mountain is represented with the sun on top, flanked by two lions." (W. Wolcott, *The Bible* (New York: Hermitage House, 1951), p. 207, fig. 54.)

<sup>578</sup> Cf. Job 38:1; 40:6; 2 K. 2:1, 11; Is. 40:24; 41:16; Ps. 107:25, 29.

<sup>579</sup> Cf. Ez. 38:9.

<sup>580</sup> Cf. Ps. 35:8; Prov. 3:25; cf. also Prov. 1:27 and Is. 10:3.

<sup>581</sup> Cf. Job 24:8; Is. 4:6; 25:4; 32:2; Hab. 3:10. This rainstorm is also mentioned in Job 38:22-25 and Is. 30:30.

<sup>582</sup> Ez. 1:4a.

<sup>583</sup> See E. A. Speiser, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

<sup>584</sup> Cf. Gen. 9:13, 14, 16; Ez. 1:28.

<sup>585</sup> See the illustration of this Phoenician stone relief in W. Wolcott, *The Bible* (New York: Hermitage House, 1951), p. 207, fig. 54.

wind."<sup>578</sup> Thus, perhaps, the terms *s<sup>c</sup>r* and *s<sup>c</sup>rh*, despite their precise meaning, could admit slight variations in their basic idea because of their relation to different circumstances, as illustrated by the context.

Closely connected with the term *swph*, is a less commonly used word which disposes an intensification in meaning of the term *swph*. As noted, the Hebrew word *swph* denotes a "destructive storm wind," whereas the word *šw<sup>2</sup>h* designates a "devastation," specifically a "sudden destructive storm." The root *šw<sup>2</sup>*, from which the word *šw<sup>2</sup>h* is derived, has the meaning of making a noise and of crashing. In a descriptive definition we read that the approach of this sudden destructive storm is accompanied by towering clouds.<sup>579</sup> It is worth noting that the notion of suddenness runs as a sort of undertone through almost all the passages where the term *šw<sup>2</sup>h* occurs.<sup>580</sup>

The final term to be studied in this context is *zrm* which denotes a "storm of wind and rain." The verb *zrm*, which is the equivalent of the Akkadian *šarāmu* "to exert, strive," means a pouring forth in floods, of flooding away. In the light of this verb, the noun *zrm* denotes a "rain-storm, downpour."<sup>581</sup>

Furthermore, the wind and storm phenomena quite naturally lend themselves to illustrate the divine manifestations. It is significant that Ezekiel describes his inaugural vision in these pictorial features:

I looked, and lo there came from the north a violent gale  
(*rwh<sup>2</sup> s<sup>c</sup>rh*), [accompanied by] a great cloud (*ʿnn*), with fire flashing  
through it, and a radiance round about it.<sup>582</sup>

This radiance is compared with the appearance of "the rainbow (*qšt*) that is in the cloud (*ʿnn*) in the day of rain" (Ez. 1:28). The rainbow is referred to in the Flood narrative "as a bright and comforting reminder that the race shall endure, however transient the individual."<sup>583</sup> Nowhere in the Bible is anything mentioned about the colors of the rainbow.<sup>584</sup> The idea of considering the rainbow as the symbol of a covenant has a parallel in a Phoenician stone relief which represents a hand above the rainbow [presumably the hand of a god, in a gesture of making an oath]. Beneath the rainbow is an angel holding sun and moon. At the bottom the world-mountain is represented with the sun on top, flanked by two birds.<sup>585</sup> In

<sup>578</sup> Cf. Job 38:1; 40:6; 2 K. 2:1, 11; Is. 40:24; 41:16; Ps. 107:25, 29.

<sup>579</sup> Cf. Ez. 38:9.

<sup>580</sup> Cf. Ps. 35:8; Prov. 3:25; cf. also Prov. 1:27 and Is. 10:3.

<sup>581</sup> Cf. Job 24:8; Is. 4:6; 25:4; 32:2; Hab. 3:10. This rainstorm could be accompanied too by hail, cf. Is. 4:6; 28:2; 30:30.

<sup>582</sup> Ez. 1:4a.

<sup>583</sup> See E. A. Speiser, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

<sup>584</sup> Cf. Gen. 9:13, 14, 16; Ez. 1:28.

<sup>585</sup> See the illustration of this Phoenician stone relief in W. Wolff, *Changing Concepts of the Bible* (New York: Hermitage House, 1951), p. 207, fig. 54.

another context Yahweh is referred to as having set aside a bow after shooting the arrows of his lightning (Hab. 3:9-11). Since the Hebrew word, *qš't* means both a "bow" and a "rainbow," it is difficult to say whether this particular passage refers to the rainbow or to any other bow.

Thus, meteorological elements combine to reproduce something ethereal and ineffable. This is particularly the case in the description of "the glory of God" (*kbwd yhw'h*). In the Exodus tradition Yahweh's glory is represented as something that can be perceived.

And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud (*b<sup>c</sup>mwd <sup>c</sup>mn*), to lead them on the way; and by night in a pillar of fire (*b<sup>c</sup>mwd <sup>š</sup>*), to give them light; to go by day and night.<sup>586</sup>

In an impressive description of a theophany where the biblical author presents Yahweh's "passing by," we see that the dramatic storm phenomena are being superseded as media of revelation and are being replaced by what might be called the prophetic consciousness.

Now behold, the Lord was passing by, and a great and mighty wind (*rwh gdlh*) was rending the mountain and shattering the rocks before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind came an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire, and after the fire the sound of a gentle whisper (*qwl dmmh dqh*). Now as soon as Elijah perceived it, he wrapped his face in his mantle.<sup>587</sup>

As seen above, Yahweh appeared in storm winds, which seemingly represented an earlier tradition of Yahweh's manifestations. The representation of Yahweh's contact with men by means of a light breeze suggests a development in the perception of God's presence. But the text implies, too, that, if God does not choose a particular place where he appears in order to make known his will to men, he does not do more than merely pass by as the sound of a gentle whisper uttered by the light breeze.<sup>588</sup>

<sup>586</sup> Ex. 13:21.

<sup>587</sup> 1 K. 19:11-13.

<sup>588</sup> In this polemic against the divine manifestations by means of storm, earthquake and fire we notice a reaction against the beliefs formerly held by the ancient Hebrews that specific cosmic disturbances announce Yahweh's entry upon the scene. Although it is mentioned that the presence of God is perceived in the gentle breeze, the biblical author seems to make a point by selecting one phenomenon in nature which yields a new understanding of the divine manifestation. This change of interpretation brings to light a new tendency in their "natural theology." The emphasis on empirical consciousness of God's presence moves (beyond dramatic cosmic phenomena) towards an awareness of Him by reflection upon subtler forms of natural phenomena. See F. Jeremias, *Theophanie* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1965), ch. II, § 7 "Jahwes Kommen in der '(Wind-)Stille,'" pp. 112-115.

## c. Thunder and Lightning

Among the meteorological phenomena, considered by primitive man to be both most dangerous and awe-inspiring, are thunder and lightning. An analysis of these two terms and of their contextual implication will indicate that the ancient Hebrews share this view.

The term *r<sup>c</sup>m* "thunder" springs from the primary onomatopoeic stock *r<sup>c</sup>m* which has the sense of moving violently, but referred to thunderous sound everywhere (as stated in *B.D.B.*). Although none of the passages where the noun *r<sup>c</sup>m* is used tends to explain the nature and the cause of this meteorological phenomenon, it would appear that the noisy atmospheric disturbances were considered as one of those forces of nature in which the ancient Hebrews recognized a manifestation of Yahweh.<sup>589</sup> The verb *r<sup>c</sup>m* "to thunder" provides information about the noise of the thunder without referring to the actual cause of such an atmospheric explosion due to the intense heat of the lightning's path. Indeed the imaginative ability that enabled the biblical authors to interpret the thunder as the voice of Yahweh<sup>590</sup> had been truly conditioned by their world view, wherein the natural phenomena were considered as the expression of Yahweh's might. A passage from Job is strikingly illuminating because lightning accompanies thunder and because the author intended to convey the idea that natural phenomena are beyond man's control:

Hear his thunderous voice,  
The rumble that comes from his mouth.  
Beneath the whole heaven it flashes,  
His lightning to the corners of the earth.  
After it growls his voice,  
Crashing with majestic roar.  
Men stay not when his voice is heard.  
God thunders with his voice wondrously,  
Does great things we cannot comprehend.<sup>591</sup>

It is hardly surprising that the crash and reverberation of the thunder caused such a vivid impression on the biblical authors, so as to suggest to them Yahweh's cosmic power. Assessing this interpretation of the thunder as a manifestation of Yahweh's might, we discern a reminiscence in form only of the mythological conceptions of the Canaanite Ba'al of Ras Shamra. Although Yahweh is given some features of the Canaanite

<sup>589</sup> Cf. Is. 29:6; Ex. 19:16; Ps. 77:19; 81:8; 104:7; Job 26:14.

<sup>590</sup> The thunder is simply called *qwl*; cf. Jer. 25:30; Joel 4:16; Am. 1:2; Ps. 29:3-5; 46:7; 68:34, etc.; or else the Lord is said to "thunder": 1 Sam. 1:6; 2:10; 7:10; Ps. 18:14; Job 40:9.

<sup>591</sup> Job 37:2-5. The verb *qb*, in verse 4c, is used in the sense which it has in Aramaic, "to stop, hold back." The subject then is not God, but one who hears his terrifying voice. The ending *m* of the verb *qb* should be considered as the enclitic emphatic particle, as in Akkadian and Ugaritic. See Marvin H. Pope, *op. cit.*, p. 241, note 4c.

weather-god, with thunder as his voice and flashes of lightning as his arrows,<sup>592</sup> the God of Israel steadfastly refuses to be recognized as a weather-god. Even if the biblical authors invented images similar to the Canaanite deity in an attempt to render the force of their God more tangible, they nevertheless did not endeavor to convey a picture of Yahweh as a nature deity. Yahweh does certainly assure the prosperity of the land of Israel, but he has nevertheless no intention of being confused with the god of tempests and fertility.

The impression that seems most likely to be left on the ancient Hebrews by the observation of the glitter and flash of the lightning, is that of the manifestation not only of an energy inherent in nature but also of a divine power.<sup>593</sup>

The term *brq* which is more frequently used to denote "lightning" occurs chiefly in poetry. The Hebrew word *brq* together with its verbal form may be compared with the equivalent verb *baraqa* in Arabic denoting "to gleam, flash, lighten," similar in form and meaning to the Akkadian term *barāqu*. The Ugaritic noun *brq* "lightning" is identical in meaning and spelling with the Hebrew term *brq*. The complex of the biblical references to lightning represents, apart from the designation of this meteorological phenomenon, an adaptation of images characteristically used in other literatures, mainly from Mesopotamia and Canaan, to describe the attributes of certain gods. In pictorial representations from Babylon the weather-god Adad is shown with the lightning trident in his hand.<sup>594</sup> In language with many similarities to Canaanite mythology, God's intervention in the form of a theophany is described in terms of an explosion of generalized cosmic upheavals:

From his light clouds scudded before him,  
 hailstones and flashes of fire [*ghly ʾš*]  
 Yahweh thundered from the heavens,  
 and the Most High gave forth his voice.  
 He forged his arrows and scattered them,  
 he multiplied the lightnings [*brqym*] and dispersed them.  
 The fountainheads of the sea were exposed,  
 and the world's foundations were laid bare,  
 At your roar, O Yahweh,  
 at the blast from your nostrils.  
 He reached down from on high and snatched me,  
 he drew me from the waters deep.<sup>595</sup>

<sup>592</sup> Cf. Hab. 3:9-11; Zech. 9:14; Ps. 18:13-15; cf. also the references mentioned in footnote 590.

<sup>593</sup> The divine power is impressively illustrated in a passage from Job 38:35, where it is mentioned that the thunderbolts obey Yahweh's command.

<sup>594</sup> See A. Jeremias, *op. cit.*, p. 280f.

<sup>595</sup> Ps. 18:13-17. The preposition *b* in the expression *bšmym*, in verse 14, should be taken in the sense of "from" comparable to the manifold usages of this preposition

In order to demonstrate conclusively the absolute, universal power of Yahweh who comes to the assistance of Israel, the discussion would have to be given an even wider basis of reference: to the lightning represented as his arrows, to the thunder which is his war cry, to the clouds which serve as his war chariot,<sup>596</sup> to the fire which is his most deadly weapon.<sup>597</sup> As seen in these examples, the cosmic phenomena are on the same scale of greatness as the divine intervention. It may also be noted here that the tendency of attributing to Yahweh the characteristic features of weather deities is not unprecedented in other ancient Near Eastern literatures. Thus, in a number of Babylonian hymns, which remind us of the biblical theophanies, Marduk, the supreme god of the Babylonians, assumes the functions of different weather-gods.<sup>598</sup>

Another aspect with which we must reckon in these considerations is the association of the lightning with violent storms.<sup>599</sup> Similar passages where the expression *brqym lmṭr* occurs,<sup>600</sup> have been interpreted by the majority of biblical scholars as a particular reference to the generalized belief held in the ancient Near East that the lightning gave rise to heavy rains. It would seem, however, that the Ugaritic expression *bdqt ʿrpt* "the clefts [in] the clouds" underlies this term *brq*, which should be emended though to *brq* "crack, fissure," as we have suggested above on page 46. The emended expression *bdqym lmṭr ʿsh* thus yields the sense: "He made fissures [instead of 'lightnings'] for the rain."

Unlike the term *brq* with its specific meaning of "lightning" there is a less commonly used word for lightning that contains a feature which is both notable in itself and for a characteristic trait recurring in Canaanite mythology that helps to clarify some aspects of the term *ršp*. The Hebrew word *ršp* "flame, firebolt" resembles in form the name Resheph, one of the leading gods of northern Syria and Cyprus in the eighth century B.C. In the Old Testament, the word Resheph occurs as an Ephraimite clan-name (1 Ch. 7:25) as well as the name of the flame or

attested in Ugaritic. The third colon, in verse 14b, *brd wghly-ʿš* seems to be a dittograph of verse 13b, hence we omit it. The Ugaritic verb *šlh* "to forge, hammer," suggests that in Hebrew a distinction should be set up between *šlh* "to send" and *šlh* "to forge". Thus, the translation "he forged arrows," in verse 15, seems to be the most appropriate. We follow M. Dahood's emendation of *rb* to *rbh*, in Pi<sup>c</sup>el. In verse 16, there is a different word division suggested by the same author who reads *ʿpyqym ym* with enclitic *m*, instead of MT *ʿpyqy mym*. The word *gʿrh* in the same verse, usually translated as "rebuke" may be taken in the sense of "roar" as attested in Aramaic and Ugaritic. See M. Dahood. *op. cit.*, p. 108ff.

Cf. also the references to lightning as an "arrow": 2 Sam. 22:15; Zech. 9:14; Hab. 3:9-11; a sharpened sword is compared with the glitter of lightning: Ez. 21:15, 20, 33; cf. also Deut. 32:41.

<sup>596</sup> Cf. Is. 19:1; Hab. 3:8; Ps. 18:11, etc.

<sup>597</sup> Cf. Is. 30:27; 66:15f; Ps. 18:9; 50:3; 97:3, etc.

<sup>598</sup> See A. Jeremias, *op. cit.*, p. 227f; cf. also *Enūma eliš*, Tablet IV, 39ff; VI, 123ff. See also F. M. Th. Böhl, "Die fünfzig Namen des Marduk," in *AFO XI* (1936-1937), pp. 191-218, especially No. 46.

<sup>599</sup> Cf. Ps. 77:18-19.

<sup>600</sup> Cf. Jer. 10:13; 51:16; Ps. 135:7.

firebolts, the fiery darts which Yahweh sends forth.<sup>601</sup> In the mythical texts from Ras Shamra the word *ršp* occurs as a personal name of a god. The inscription of Hadad furnishes us with an interesting detail of the god Resheph by mentioning his name between two pairs of deities: Hadad and El and Resheph and Rekub-el and Shamash.<sup>602</sup> Bilingual texts from Cyprus identify him with Apollo who was, in one aspect at least, a god of pestilence. In a list of gods, known as the "Ugaritic Pantheon," the god Resheph is equated with the Babylonian Nergal, the god of pestilence and of the nether world, one epithet of whom was *rašbu* (*rašubbu*). This equation accords with the use of the word in the sense of pestilence in the Old Testament (Deut. 32:24; Hab. 3:5). The plural of the term *ršp* is used of flames, of lightning (Ps. 78:48), and of love (Cant. 8:6). The expression *ršpy-qšt* "flames of the bow" (Ps. 76:4) is used of arrows and may be compared with an epithet of Resheph attested in Ugaritic: *b'l hz ršp* "Lord of the arrow." It is uncertain whether the expression *bny ršp* "Resheph's sons" is a poetic image for flames or sparks, or a more direct allusion to the god of pestilence.<sup>603</sup>

After analyzing the terms *brq* and *ršp*, which were employed by the biblical authors to designate lightning, and from an investigation of the passages relevant to it, there seems to be no ground for assuming that Yahweh was considered as a weather-god. If the lightning became part of the imagery in the description of Yahweh's majesty and power, they witness to the attempt of the biblical authors to render the force of their God more tangible.

#### d. Rain and Other Precipitation

Before an examination of the relevant material referring to rain and other precipitation, certain factors of geographical environment, which may possibly be of significance for interpreting and evaluating the terms and the meteorological context, ought to be considered. Water in its varying aspects of seasonal rains or rainstorms, of autumn or spring rains, was, and still is, among the most needed elements for the production of vegetation in Palestine as everywhere else. It is not surprising, therefore, that we should find terms which designate both "rain" in general and specific seasonal rains. These terms cannot simply be interpreted as synonyms for "rain"; real distinctions underlie the use of those words.

The heavy winter rains are designated by the term *gšm* which denotes more precisely "rainstorm, downpour." With the exception of two

<sup>601</sup> Cf. Ps. 78:48.

<sup>602</sup> See M. J. Lagrange, *op. cit.*, pp. 491-494.

<sup>603</sup> Cf. Job 5:7. See M. Dahood, *op. cit.*, p. 42f, note 7b. See also S. A. Cook, *The Religion of Ancient Palestine in the Light of Archaeology* (London: Humphrey Milford, 1930), pp. 112-116.

instances where the verb form is used,<sup>604</sup> the winter rains are designated, throughout the Old Testament, by the noun *gšm*, in the singular; its plural form, *gšmym*, acquired the meaning of "rainy season," i.e., of the winter itself.<sup>605</sup> What characterizes the winter rains is that they are generally accompanied by storms,<sup>606</sup> winds, an hail.<sup>607</sup> The heavy rains which fall frequently during the winter months are quite often described by explanatory nouns or adjectives which specify the term *gšm*. While heavy rains are known as *gšm gdwl* (1 K. 18:45), the expression *gšm ndbwt* (Ps. 68:10) refers to abundant rainfall in winter, like the phrase *gšm mtrwt* "the downpour of rain" (Job 37:6), which denotes the prolonged heavy rain of the Syrio-Palestinian winter. Exceptional heavy rain with devastating effect is designated *gšm štp*,<sup>608</sup> or simply *štp* (Job 38:25) which ordinarily denotes an "inundation, flood." In this connection occurs the term *sgryr* "steady, persistent rain" (Prov. 27:15). Its Arabic cognate verb *sajara* means "to fill with water"; the participle form *sājir* is used to designate a torrent that fills everything. Similarly, there is found in Syriac the word *sagrā* with the meaning of a "violent rain-storm." The idea of erosion as a result of some heavy rains is retained in the expression *tštp—šhpyyh* *pr—rš* "torrents [of rain] sweep away earth's soil."<sup>609</sup> Still more devastating than the torrents of rain are the floods, known as *ybl*, caused by prolonged rainfall: *ygl ybwl bytw* "a flood shall roll away his house."<sup>610</sup>

Because of the general application of the term *mtr* "rain," it is impossible to derive from this word any specific reference to a particular season of the year when rain, designated by *mtr*, falls.<sup>611</sup> Similarly, the verb *mtr* is understood in the sense of raining<sup>612</sup> and, figuratively, of

<sup>604</sup> Cf. the Pu<sup>a</sup>l form of the verb *gšm* "to be rained upon" which occurs in Ez. 22:24; we would expect the Hiph<sup>l</sup>il of *gšm* "cause (or: send) rain" to be used more frequently than only once, Jer. 14:22.

<sup>605</sup> Cf. Ezr. 10:9, 13; the noun *gšm* in the singular is used in the sense of "rainy season," Cant. 2:11, parallel to *stw* "winter."

<sup>606</sup> Cf. Gen 7:12; 1 K. 18:41; Prov. 25:23.

<sup>607</sup> Cf. Ez. 13:11; 38:22.

<sup>608</sup> Cf. Ez. 13:11; 38:22; cf. also Is. 30:30.

<sup>609</sup> Job 14:19. We follow G. Beer's suggestion, in *KBH*<sup>13</sup>, who emends *spyhyh* to *šhpyyh*, on the grounds of a metathesis of *p* with *h*. The verb *šhp* occurs in Prov. 28:3, in a similar context as *mtr šhp* "prostrating, overwhelming rain." Cf. the Akkadian *sahāpu* "throw down, overwhelm."

<sup>610</sup> Job 20:28. The translation above is based on a slight change in vocalization (*yagol* instead of *yigel*). See Marvin H. Pope, *op. cit.*, p. 141, note 28. The term *ybwl* is related to the Akkadian *bubbulu* or *bibbulu* "inundation," and to the Arabic *wabl* "violent rain." G. Fohrer, however, reads with G. Beer *yābāl* instead of *jebāl* and translates it as "Platzregen." See G. Fohrer, *Das Buch Hiob, Kommentar zum A.T.*, vol. 16; Gütersloh: Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1963), p. 325.

<sup>611</sup> In the following passages, the term *mtr* designates "rain" without giving a clue as to the time of the year when it falls: Deut. 11:11, 17; 32:2; 2 Sam. 1:21; 23:4; 1 K. 8:35f; 17:1; 18:1; Is. 4:6; 5:6; Ps. 147:8; Job 5:10; 28:26; 36:27; 38:28.

<sup>612</sup> Cf. Gen. 2:5; 7:4; Am. 4:7; Job 38:26.

falling like rain.<sup>613</sup> However, in many instances the context will decide about the specific kind of rain. For example, the noun *mṭr* designates "seasonal rains"<sup>614</sup> as well as "autumn rains" (Is. 30:23), "harvest rains" (1 Sam. 12:17f; Prov. 26:1), "spring rains" (Zech. 10:1; Job 29:23). In passages where the term *mṭr* is particularized by conjunction with *gšm* (Ps. 72:6), or when it accompanies thunderstorms,<sup>615</sup> it seems probable that the winter rains are meant. The context of the relevant passages where rain is mentioned makes it clear that the general term *mṭr* acquires different shades of meaning.

As mentioned earlier, there are, besides the general terms for rain, specific words in the vocabulary of the ancient Hebrews to designate the seasonal rains. The term *rbybym* denotes "spring rains, spring showers." This particular rain is needed for the full development of crops, as may be inferred from the meaning of its verbal form *rbb* "be, or, become many, increase."<sup>616</sup> A word should be added about this context. The term *s'yrym* in parallel with *rbybym* (Deut. 32:2), to be distinguished from another word, identically spelt but differing in meaning (Is. 13:21, etc. "satyrs, demons"), may be translated as "shower" according to the testimony of the ancient versions. More frequently, however, the "latter" or spring rains are designated by the term *mlqwš*.<sup>617</sup> They are indispensable for the growth of the late planted crops called *lqš*. If these "latter rains" continue to fall for an exceptionally long period, they can cause damage to the crops (Prov. 28:3). The "former" or autumn rains called *ywrh* or *mwrh*<sup>618</sup> fall in Palestine from the middle of October to the middle of December, preparing the earth to receive the seed. According to Gesenius this word is derived from the root *yrh* in the general sense of throwing, casting, and furnished the particular meaning of sprinkling, watering. We are on safer grounds, however, deriving the word *ywrh* from the root *rwh* "be saturated, to water," by way of a metathesis of *w* with *r*: (*rwh*) \**yarweh* > \**yawreh* > *yōreh*, as suggested by Koehler and Baumgartner. Another term for rain, *ṭwb*,<sup>619</sup> which often mistakenly has been rendered by "good," occurs in parallel with *mṭr* (Dt. 28:12). The meaning of *ṭwb* as rain can be gained by comparing the term *ḥwm* "heat" in contrast with the former.<sup>620</sup>

This brief investigation intended to show that the different nouns for "rain" are not mere synonyms but designate specific seasonal rains. Even

<sup>613</sup> Cf. Gen. 19:24; Ex. 9:18, 23; 16:4; Ez. 38:22; Ps. 11:6; 78:24, 27; Job 20:23.

<sup>614</sup> Cf. Deut. 11:14; 28:12; Job 29:23.

<sup>615</sup> Cf. Jer. 10:13; Ps. 135:7.

<sup>616</sup> Cf. Deut. 32:2; Mic. 5:6; Ps. 65:11; 72:6; cf. also Jer. 3:3; 14:22.

<sup>617</sup> Cf. Deut. 11:14; Jer. 3:3; Hos. 6:3; Joel 2:23; Zech. 10:1; Job 29:23; Prov. 16:15.

<sup>618</sup> Cf. Deut. 11:14; Jer. 5:24; Hos. 6:3; for *mwrh* cf. Joel 2:23; Ps. 84:7.

<sup>619</sup> Cf. Dt. 28:12; 1 K. 8:35; Jer 5:25; 17:6, 8; Hos. 10:1; Ps. 4:7; 85:13.

<sup>620</sup> For the contrast between *ṭwb* and *ḥwm* in Jer. 17:6 and 17:8 respectively, see M. Dahood, "Hebrew-Ugaritic Lexicography II," in *Biblica* 45 (1964), pp. 393-412, esp. p. 411.

the general term for rain, *mṭr*, may assume different shades of meaning and, depending upon its context, may occasionally refer to seasonal rains.<sup>621</sup>

Closely connected with the rains are other forms of precipitation such as dew, hail, frost, and snow. Water, in whatever form it might appear, was considered by the ancient Hebrews as the foundation material of the living organism. Hail, however, was not conceived in this manner, since it is never referred to as frozen raindrops, producing beneficial effects in nature, but instead as stones or pieces of ice precipitated during thunderstorms with devastating results. Dew, on the other hand, was considered as a visible sign of blessings from heaven bestowed on man, beasts, and vegetation<sup>622</sup> and as a symbol of abundance (1 K. 17:1). In a poetical passage, the restoration to life of the Israelites who have died is compared with the refreshing effect of dew:

But your dead will live, their bodies will rise,  
Those who dwell in the dust will awake, and will sing for joy  
For your dew is a dew of light,  
And the earth will bring the shades to birth.<sup>623</sup>

The general term for dew is *ṭl* which is derived from the root *ṭll* otherwise unused in Hebrew in the sense of raining fine rain, which is precisely the meaning of the equivalent Arabic verb *ṭalla*. The Ugaritic term for dew is *ṭl*, while its verbal form *ṭll* denotes "to fall (of dew)." The feminine noun *ṭly* is the name of the nymph of the dew or morning mist, who represents one of the daughters of Ba'al, the god of rain. C. H. Gordon remarks that dew in summer replaces the rain in winter, because it condenses most when the rainfall is least.<sup>624</sup> Dew may appear, too, in the form of drops *ṭgly ṭl*. Although the term *ṭgl* does not occur otherwise in the Old Testament, the context leaves no doubt regarding its meaning (Job 38:28). The word *rsys* "dew," a *hapax legomenon*, offers more clues to its precise meaning.<sup>625</sup> The Hebrew verb *rss* "to moisten" is also found in Aramaic and in Syriac, as *ras* with the same meaning, and may be compared with the Arabic verb *rašša* "to sprinkle." Further information about the phenomenon of condensation of water vapor during cool and calm nights in Palestine is provided by the description of the fall of dew.

When he [Gideon] rose early next morning, and wrung the fleece, he squeezed dew out of the fleece a bowlful of water.<sup>626</sup>

<sup>621</sup> Cf. Deut. 11:14; 28:12; Job 29:23.

<sup>622</sup> Cf. Gen. 27:28; Deut. 33:28.

<sup>623</sup> Is 26:19. As vegetation is refreshed by the dew drops glittering in the light of the morning sun, so will the Israelites, who have died, come to life by an act of God.

<sup>624</sup> See C. H. Gordon, *op. cit.*, Glossary, No. 1037.

<sup>625</sup> Cf. Cant. 5:2.

<sup>626</sup> Judg. 6:38.

During the almost rainless months of summer, dew is heaviest with the result that he who remains in the open during the night "is drenched by the dew of the heavens."<sup>627</sup>

For my head is filled with dew [ʔl]  
My locks with the dew drops of the night [rsysy lyth].<sup>628</sup>

According to R. Scott's observation, dew is heaviest on the coast west of Beer Sheba, in the Plain of Esdraelon, and at the sources of the Jordan beneath the slopes of Mount Hermon.<sup>629</sup> This had been observed, too, by the ancient Hebrews: "As the dew of Hermon that descends [yrd] upon the mountains of Zion."<sup>630</sup> This passage leads to a final remark about the usage of specific verbs which contain a reference to the copious dew in Palestine during summer, e.g., *npl* "to fall" (2 Sam. 17:12) and *yrd* "to go down, descend" (Num. 11:9; Ps. 133:3). These less significant passages lead us to more relevant ones and provide us with some interesting information. Thus, the heavens are said to "drip, drop" (*ʕrp*) dew (Deut. 32:2; 33:28); similarly, *šhqym yrʕpw ʔl* "the clouds drip (trickle) dew" (Prov. 3:20), a synonym for *npl* "to flow, trickle, drop, distil" (Deut. 32:2). Dew soon evaporates as the heat of the sun increases (Ex. 16:14). The phenomenon of dew lent itself quite naturally to be used as a figure of speech for abundant fruitfulness, for rejuvenescence (Ps. 110:3) and for all that is ephemeral.<sup>631</sup>

In contrast to the beneficent dew is that devastating hail, rather frequently mentioned in the Bible, which can cause considerable damage to crops and herds. From the results of modern meteorological observations we learn that:

Hail is not exclusively a winter phenomenon. It can occur only in connection with violent convection storms, and usually accompanies cold-front thunderstorms; of these there are seven to ten a year, occurring inland especially in spring and autumn.<sup>632</sup>

It is worth noting that hail is almost always mentioned in the Old Testament in connection with these violent cold-front thunderstorms, the so-called *zrm brd* "storm of hail" (Is. 28:2). From its parallel expression *šʕr qtb* "destroying tempest" we may gather the devastating nature of such a storm:

<sup>627</sup> Dan. 4:15, 23, 33.

<sup>628</sup> Cant. 5:2.

<sup>629</sup> See R. Scott's article "Dew," in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, vol. II, p. 839.

<sup>630</sup> Ps. 133:3.

<sup>631</sup> Cf. Hos. 6:14; 13:3; Prov. 19:12.

<sup>632</sup> See R. Scott, *Meteorological Phenomena . . .*, p. 17.

So Moses stretched his staff up to the sky, and the Lord sent thunder [*qlt*] and hail [*brd*], and fire [*š*] descended upon the earth; the Lord rained [*ymtr*] hail on the land of Egypt, and there was hail with fire darting in the midst of the hail [*š mtlqht btwk hbrd*], very severe, such as there had never been in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation. The hail struck down everything in the fields all through the land of Egypt, both man and beast; the hail struck down all the vegetation in the fields, and shattered every tree in the fields<sup>633</sup>

But we may not assume that the severe plague of hail in Egypt was regarded as a natural phenomenon there; it may have been of preternatural nature, since Egypt does not have the same weather conditions as Palestine and, therefore, hail is extremely rare in the Nile valley. It is significant to note, from what we learn from Israelite sources, that, at the time of warlike encounters between Israelites and Canaanites:

The Lord cast great stones from the sky upon them all the way to Azekah, so that they died, more dying from hailstones [*bnny hbrd*] than the Israelites slew with the sword.<sup>634</sup>

The two narratives (Ex 9:23-25 and Josh. 10:11) concerning Yahweh's miraculous intervention for the Israelites by means of a hailstorm belong to the Yahwistic strand, at least according to the opinion of O. Eissfeldt and A. Weiser.<sup>635</sup> It may very well be that the biblical authors described the phenomenon of the hailstorm in Egypt with the features they observed in those storms in Palestine.

If we detach the terms employed for hail from their context, in order to determine their basic meaning, other Semitic languages which exhibit words similar in form and meaning must be considered. Thus, the more frequently used term for hail, *brd*, is related to *baruda* "be, or, become cold" in Arabic. This term occurs, too, in a compound expression with *bn* "stone," as *bn[y] hbrd* "hailstone[s]" (Is. 32:30; Josh. 10:11). In one instance *brd* is used as a verb (Is. 32:19). Another term for hail is *lgbyš* whence *bnny lgbyš* "stones of ice, i.e., hail."<sup>636</sup> Its Akkadian cognate

<sup>633</sup> Ex. 9:23-25; cf. also Ex. 10:5, 12, 15; Ps. 78:47; 105:32

<sup>634</sup> Josh. 10:11. Though in keeping with the meteorological phenomena of Palestine, this incident must be considered as miraculous both in its intensity and in its opportuneness.

<sup>635</sup> See O. Eissfeldt, *The Old Testament: An Introduction*, (transl. by P. R. Ackroyd; New York and Evanston: Harper and Row, 1965), pp. 189, 254. See also A. Weiser, *op. cit.*, pp. 102, 144. Probably, however, the narrative of the conquest of Canaan (Josh. 10) belongs to the Elohist strand, because the "Elohist" describes the conquest as a united undertaking by the whole of Israel under the leadership of the Ephraimite Joshua, while the "Yahwist" describes the conquests as having been achieved by individual separate tribal groups at different times and in different places, without Joshua playing the predominant part as he does in the Elohist strand.

<sup>636</sup> Ez. 13:11; 38:22.

*algamešu* indicates a stone which is easy to carve, as, e.g., steatite. The noun *gbyš* "crystal" is derived from the root *gbš* which is the equivalent of the Akkadian *gapāšu* "be thick, massive."<sup>637</sup> In one passage, hail is referred to as *qrh* "ice": *mšlyk qrhw kptym* "he casts forth his ice like crumbs" (Ps. 147:17). The idea expressed in this verse is linked with the conception of the ancient Hebrews that in the heavens were located the storehouses for wind, snow, and hail (Job 38:22).

These passages lead us to conclude that the hailstorms not only prompted the idea of God's punishing intervention,<sup>638</sup> but also evoked thoughts of a theophany of Yahweh because of their fierce and awe-inspiring features.<sup>639</sup>

The few incidental references to *kpr* [*kpw*r] "hoarfrost," which is dew formed on clear nights when the temperature falls below freezing, merely state the fact. In the figurative language of poetry frost is compared with ashes: *kpw*r *k<sup>2</sup>pr* *ypzr* "he scatters hoarfrost like ashes."<sup>640</sup> The allusion to *qp<sup>2</sup>wn* "congelation, ice" permits us to include this term under the phenomenon of frost.<sup>641</sup> From the noun *qp<sup>2</sup>wn* derived from the root *qp<sup>2</sup>* "to thicken, condense, congeal," one may infer that the temperature falls below freezing in the Palestinian winter.

Another rare phenomenon in Palestine is snow, *šlg* in Hebrew, *tlg* in biblical Aramic, *talj* in Arabic, *šalgu* in Akkadian. On the average snowfall occurs on only about three days in the year, but there are winters with no snow at all.<sup>642</sup> While snow is chiefly referred to in figurative language,<sup>643</sup> there is an allusion to torrents resulting from the melting of ice and snow.<sup>644</sup> From the few incidental allusions to snowfall it is evident that the phenomenon of snow did not have a great impact on the daily life of the ancient Hebrews.

It now remains to deal with the Hebrew conception of the source of rain and of other forms of precipitation. Despite the limited number of passages which explicitly mention the place of origin of the precipitation, referring either to the heaven<sup>645</sup> or to the storehouses in heaven,<sup>646</sup> it can

<sup>637</sup> A variant spelling of *gbyš* occurs in Hab. 2:11 as *kpyš* "stucco-work (laid on panelling)."

<sup>638</sup> Cf. Is. 28:17; Hag. 2:17.

<sup>639</sup> Cf. Is. 30:30; Ps. 18:13.

<sup>640</sup> Ps. 147:16; cf. also Ex. 16:15; Job 38:29.

<sup>641</sup> Cf. Zech. 14:6. MT has a Qerê *wqp<sup>2</sup>wn* for the Kethibh *yqp<sup>2</sup>wn*.

<sup>642</sup> See F. M. Abel, *Géographie de la Palestine* (Paris: Librairie Lecoffre, 1933), I, p. 128. In the twenty-two years from 1860-81 inclusive there were eight winters with no snow at all; but a December storm in 1879 brought over seventeen inches in Jerusalem, and a February storm in 1920, twenty-nine inches. See also R. Scott, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

<sup>643</sup> Snow is used as a symbol of whiteness (Ex. 4:6; Num. 12:10; 2 K. 5:27); as a symbol of purity and innocence (Ps. 51:9; Is. 1:18); as an influential factor for fertilizing the soil (Is. 55:10); as a characteristic feature of the Lebanon (Jer. 18:14); as a metaphor for cold (Prov. 31:21).

<sup>644</sup> Cf. Job 6:16.

<sup>645</sup> Cf. the expressions *mṯr hšmym* (Deut. 11:11); *kpr šmym* (Job 38:29); *tl šmym* (Gen. 27:28).

be safely assumed that the ancient Hebrews actually conceived of an immense ocean located above the firmament supplying water for precipitation. This assumption rests on the usage of specific verbs employed in this context which speak of water flowing *nzl*, dripping *°rp*, descending *yrđ* and falling *npl* from above. It would seem, however, that the conception of storehouses for wind, snow, and hail, fundamentally does not differ from the view, with its widespread parallels in other Semitic literatures, that a celestial ocean surrounds the firmament. But when cosmological speculations and spatial thinking developed, the structure of the heaven was described in accordance with the same basic intuition which the spatial schema of the earth suggested. This systematization has its clearest expression in the form of mythical geography which grew out of astrology. As early as the old Babylonian period the terrestrial world was divided, according to its relation with the heavens, into four different realms<sup>647</sup> from which the expression "the four corners of the earth" is derived. With those four corners of the earth were associated the winds. This spatial view set the pattern for the subsequent division of the sky into storehouses. In the absence of more information about the provenance of rain, dew, snow, and hail, we may assume that the ancient Near Eastern cosmographers always conceived of a celestial ocean whence flow these forms of precipitation. As seen earlier, on pages 46 f., the ancient Hebrews conceived of an ocean located above the firmament and related the periodic rainfall to windows (*°rbwt*) and doors (*dlty*) in the firmament which were opened at intervals to let the waters pass through. These, however, are not the only openings in the sky through which the rain was released in due measure. This view of water channels, like irrigation canals, opened on the surface of the firmament, which caused the rain to flow down from all parts of heaven, is confirmed by a poetical passage:

*my plg lštp t°lh*  
*wdrk lhzyz qlwt.*<sup>648</sup>

The verb *plg* "to split, divide" employed in the Pi'el, is a technical term for making a channel. The equivalent word in Akkadian *palgu* denotes a "canal." The Hebrew noun *plg*, generally used in the plural, denotes a "channel, canal." Besides the information gathered from the use of the verb *plg*, the direct allusion to this conception in the term *t°lh* a "water conduit, trench, channel" strengthens the opinion that the biblical authors maintained the view that rain was released through water channels. Thus,

<sup>646</sup> Cf. the reference to the storehouses of snow and hail (Job 38:22).

<sup>647</sup> See M. Jastrow, *Hebrew and Babylonian Traditions* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1914), p. 144. See also B. Meissner, *op. cit.*, II, p. 247f.

<sup>648</sup> Job 38:25 (see a similar passage above on p. 98).

the expression *drk lhzyz* a "path for the thundershower" has to be taken in the sense of "course" (i.e., direction) of those channels, which also give the direction of the thundershowers. The idea of artificial irrigation is developed in this passage:

Who cleft a channel for the downpour,  
 A path for the thundershower,  
 To bring rain on no-man's land,  
 The wilderness with no man in it,  
 To sate the desolate desert,  
 Make the thirsty land sprout verdure?<sup>649</sup>

Hence, this interesting and picturesque illustration of the rainfall rests on a widespread idea held by the peoples of the ancient Near East that water was released from the celestial ocean through doors, windows, and water channels. Perhaps an even more significant attempt to explain the phenomenon of rainfall was made by Canaanite mythographers, who regarded the clouds as buckets:

... *wat qh*  
*ʿrptk rḥk mdlk*  
*mṯrtk ...*

And thou, take thou  
 thy clouds, thy winds, thy buckets,  
 thy rains<sup>650</sup>

When we recall that Baʿal has all the features of a rain-god as represented in the mythological texts from Ras Shamra, and that this particular passage attributes to Baʿal the specific function of leading forth the rain clouds, it becomes evident that the poet has here worked into his narrative one of the conceptions of the rain clouds as water buckets. We may conjecture that the word *mdl* is a noun of instrument with a -m- preformative. Although the use of a prefixed *m* to form nouns of instrument is not infrequent in Hebrew, it would seem that the Ugaritic term *mdl*, like the Akkadian word *mdlû* "bucket," is equivalent to the Hebrew term *dly* "bucket," derived from the root *dlh* "to draw (water)," attested in

<sup>649</sup> *Ibid.*, 38:25-27.

<sup>650</sup> See C. H. Gordon, *op. cit.*, text *ʿnt*: 67: V: 6-8; cf. also T. H. Gaster, *Thespis*, pp. 209-211. C. H. Gordon suggests in his Glossary, No. 1430, that the word *mdl* designates a "weather phenomenon." On the basis of a similar passage: *bʿl mdlh ybʿr* "Baʿal shall make shine his lightning" (*ʿnt*: IV: 70), where the usage of the verb *bʿr* seems to denote "to shine," it would seem, then, that the term *mdl* is to be taken in the sense of "lightning." However, there is reason for assuming, on the grounds of several meanings given the verb *bʿr* such as "to pillage, turn down, disappoint, lead" (cf. Glossary No. 495), that the interpretation of this passage depends on the view which one adopts for the noun *mdl*. As we will suggest below, the meaning of *mdl* is "bucket." Hence, we propose that the phrase *bʿl mdlh ybʿr* should be translated as "Baʿal shall lead forth his buckets."

Arabic as *dalā*, in Syriac as *dlā* and in Akkadian as *dalū*. A number of converging clues enable us to determine the specific features of those rain clouds described as "buckets." The best illustration is a passage from Job:

When he [God] draws the waterdrops  
That distill rain from the flood,  
That trickle from the clouds [*šhqym*]  
Pour on the ground showers.<sup>651</sup>

It must be insisted upon that the idea of the formation of rain clouds by means of evaporation and condensation of water vapor is not found in the Old Testament. The same observation applies to the passage where both the effective power of the divine word and its irrevocability are compared with the rain. Thus, having once fallen to the earth, rain never returns to the clouds.

For as the rain comes down,  
and the snow from heaven,  
and do not return there,  
but water the earth,  
making it give birth and send out buds,  
and give seeds to him that sows  
and bread to him that eats,  
so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth;  
it shall not return to me unfruitful.<sup>652</sup>

In considering the function of the rain clouds, it is interesting to note that the Hebrews, unlike the Canaanite poets who compared the rain clouds with "buckets," represented them either as water jars (*nblym*), or jar (*knd*), or water-skins.

<sup>651</sup> Job 26:27-28. The verb *gr*<sup>c</sup> appears to have the basic sense of "diminishing, deducting," or the like. The Arabic cognate verb *jarā* "to flow, stream (water), suck in," supports the translation of *gr*<sup>c</sup> as "drawing, absorbing, swallowing." The meaning of the verb *zqq* as "binding" and as "squeezing through, refining" is applied to the conception that the waterdrops are distilled from the celestial ocean. The word *ʿd* is not to be taken in the sense of "mist" but of "flood" as mentioned above on page 11, designating both the subterranean and the celestial oceans. There is no need to emend *l<sup>2</sup>dw* to *m<sup>2</sup>dw*, as suggested by G. Beer in *KBH*<sup>13</sup>, because the preposition *l* frequently has the meaning "from" in Hebrew as it has in Ugaritic. Since the verb *nzl* is intransitive in the simple stem, it must be construed, in English translation, with a preposition, the choice of which is determined by the context. The expression *ʿdm rb* does not mean "many men," since *ʿdm* here and in several other instances has the same meaning as *ʿdmh* "ground." *rb* is a by-form of *rbybym* "showers" as attested in Ugaritic poems where both terms *rb* and *rbb* occur in the sense of "shower." See Marvin H. Pope, *op. cit.*, p. 235f, notes 27 and 28.

<sup>652</sup> Is. 55:10-11a.

Who counts the clouds in heaven,  
Tilts the water jars of heaven? [*nbly šmym*] <sup>653</sup>

He gathers into a jar [*knd*]  
the waters of the sea [*ym*],  
He puts the deeps [*thwmwt*] into storehouses. <sup>654</sup>

Who has bound the waters in a garment? [*my šrr-mym bšmlh*] <sup>655</sup>

*šrr mym b<sup>c</sup>byw*  
*wl<sup>2</sup>-nbq<sup>c</sup> <sup>2</sup>nn t<sup>h</sup>tm*  
He binds the waters in nimbus  
But the cloud is not rent with the burden. <sup>656</sup>

Hitherto we have considered the various conceptions held by the biblical authors about the phenomenon of rainfall. On the evidence of the aforementioned passages, it became clear that rain was considered as water released from the celestial ocean, either through doors (*dltym*) or windows [sluices] (*rbwt*) or a water channel (*t<sup>h</sup>lh*). The explanation of rain coming from the clouds, also attested in the Bible, does not differ fundamentally from these conceptions mentioned above. It has been conjectured that there are two kinds of rains: first, the beneficent rains brought by the rain clouds, and, second, downpours with devastating and destructive effect, because the water descends to the earth without the intermediary of the clouds. <sup>657</sup> However, this assertion lacks sufficient support from the Old Testament, since there are references to beneficent rain with no mention of clouds; <sup>658</sup> on the other hand, there are passages referring to violent rains brought by clouds. <sup>659</sup>

Regarding the role of Yahweh as ruler of seasons and his function as guardian over the regular recurrence of precipitation, attention is now called to certain passages of the biblical record which have significance.

<sup>653</sup> Job 38:37.

<sup>654</sup> Ps. 33:7. Vocalizing *kened* instead of MT *kannêd* and identifying it with Ugaritic *knd*, and Akkadian *kandu*, "jar, pitcher." See M. Dahood, *op. cit.*, p. 201f, note 7. The passage here concerned gives an account of water stored up in the heavens. Hence, it would seem that *ym* "sea" as well as *thwmwt* "deeps" designate the celestial ocean. Cf. Gen. 7:11. "All the fountains of the great deep [*thwm rbh*] burst forth; [*bq<sup>c</sup>w*] and the sluices [*rbt*] of the sky broke open."

<sup>655</sup> Prov. 30:4.

<sup>656</sup> Job 26:8. Literally: *t<sup>h</sup>tm* "under them." It is worth noting that, in a similar context, the same verb (*bq<sup>c</sup>*) is employed to designate the periodic opening of the great reservoir located in the heavens, in order to release the water in due measure for precipitation (Prov. 3:20).

<sup>657</sup> See E. F. Sutcliffe, "The Clouds as Water-carriers in Hebrew Thought," in *VT* III (1953), pp. 99-103.

<sup>658</sup> Cf. Deut. 28:12; Mal. 3:10.

<sup>659</sup> Cf. Judg. 5:4-5, where heavy rains brought by clouds cause a landslide. Cf. also 1 K. 18:41-45.

So long as the earth endures,  
Seedtime and harvest,  
Cold and heat,  
Summer and winter,  
And day and night  
Shall not cease.<sup>660</sup>

I will give rains for you in due season, the land shall yield its crops, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit; threshing shall last for you until the time of vintage, and the time of vintage shall last until sowing time.<sup>661</sup>

He [Yahweh] will give you rain for your land in due season, the winter rain and the spring rain.<sup>662</sup>

Ask rain from the Lord, in the season of the spring rain,  
From the Lord who makes the lightning,  
And gives them showers of rain,  
To everyone grass in the field.<sup>663</sup>

He changes the seasons and times.<sup>664</sup>

The theme of the seasonal pattern in Canaanite literature helps to clarify a series of characteristic traits recurring in the biblical literature. However, despite certain similarity in content and form between groups of compositions from Canaan and Israel, Yahweh was never considered as the counterpart of Ba'al, the Canaanite god of rain. If Yahweh assumed certain functions, formerly attributed to Ba'al, this is explicable in the light of an apologetic tendency of the biblical authors who attempted to overrule the influence of Canaanite religion upon the Israelites. The fundamental difference between Yahweh and Ba'al lies in the fact that Ba'al personifies the meteorological phenomena, whereas Yahweh controls them. Thus, Yahweh prepares (*mkyn*) and gives (*ntn*) rain,<sup>665</sup> he opens (*ptḥ*) the doors and windows of heaven, in order to release water from the celestial ocean,<sup>666</sup> or else he withholds rain (*šr*).<sup>667</sup> The same observation about God's function in nature applies to other forms of precipitation.

<sup>660</sup> Gen. 8:22; cf. also Ps. 74:17; 147:8, 16-18.

<sup>661</sup> Lev. 26:4-5.

<sup>662</sup> Deut. 11:14.

<sup>663</sup> Zech. 10:1; cf. also Job 28:25-27.

<sup>664</sup> Dan. 2:21.

<sup>665</sup> Cf. Ps. 147:8; "He prepares rain for the earth" (*hmkym l'rš mtr*); Is. 30:23, "He shall give rain for your seed" (*wntn mtr zr'k*); cf. also Lev. 26:4; 1 K. 8:36; 17:14; 18:1.

<sup>666</sup> Cf. the expression *dlti šmym* "doors of heaven" (Ps. 78:23); *rbwt hšmym* "the windows of heaven" (Mal. 3:10). Cf. also Is. 24:18.

<sup>667</sup> Cf. Deut. 11:17; 2 Ch. 7:13.

He gives snow like wool,  
 He scatters hoarfrost like ashes.  
 He casts forth his ice like crumbs;  
 Who can stand before his cold?  
 He sends forth his wind and melts them;  
 He makes his wind blow, the water flows.<sup>668</sup>

There may possibly have been many steps in the progressive march of ideas before the stage was reached when Yahwism displaced and eradicated those forms of mythico-religious beliefs, according to which special deities lay behind the natural phenomena, and before it attributed to Yahweh himself certain functions formerly ascribed to weather-gods. Indeed, the overwhelming impression left by these passages is that Yahweh is not a personification of the life process, nor does he make his presence felt in the universe as mere organizing agent of the meteorological phenomena. Yahweh always contrasts with these phenomena which are at his service for the benefit (or punishment) of men.

## SECTION B: THE EARTH

### 1. Analysis of Terms for Earth and of Their Context

We have previously observed that the ancient Hebrews considered the universe as a three-leveled structure. The earth was located between the heaven, the upper part, and the underworld, the lowest level of the universe. The earth was regarded as a vast plain, occupied partly by the sea, partly by continents studded with mountains, furrowed by rivers, and dotted with lakes. The horizon encircling the earth quite naturally suggested the idea of a circular shape to the ancient Hebrews. Similar to the conception that the heaven was thought to be constructed on pillars, there is abundant evidence that confirms the generally accepted view that the earth is firmly fixed in its place. The idea of the stability of the earth finds expression in the foundations, cornerstones, and pillars upon which the structure of the earth is said to be built.<sup>669</sup> Yet, besides the view of a firmly established earth there are traces of another conception derived from speculations about primeval cosmogony. The emergence of the dry land is preceded by the separation of the waters from the earth. But just as the word "earth," in Gen. 1:2, refers to the earth in its primitive chaotic, unformed state, so the term "waters," is taken in the

<sup>668</sup> Ps. 147:16-18; cf. also Job 37:2-6; Gen. 27:28; Mic. 5:6.

<sup>669</sup> Cf. 1 Sam. 2:8; Is. 51:13, 16; Jer. 31:37; Ps. 75:4; 96:10; 102:25; 104:5; Prov. 8:29; Job 9:6; 38:4, 6; 1 Ch. 16:30.

sense of abyss, the primeval ocean.<sup>670</sup> This idea also is reflected in a passage, whose interpretation led to much debate and speculation: "He suspends the earth on nothing."<sup>671</sup> A likely interpretation would seem to be that the terrestrial mass which supports the continents and seas in its upper part is floating in the primeval flood.

The schematic view of the three-leveled universe suggests that the constitutive elements of the world stand to each other in a structural relationship. This agrees with the foundations of the earth being laid in the underworld. Just as the earth, resting on its pillars, is linked with the underworld, so too, is the heaven, whose foundations are established upon the extreme parts of the earth. In the following study of the structure of the earth the term "earth" signifies the dwelling place of man, distinct from heaven and underworld. Since the word "earth" will be frequently used, it will be well to analyze the general as well as the specific Hebraic words with this meaning. The term  $\text{רָשׁ}$ , which is generally used to designate "earth," is feminine in gender, although its rare usage as a masculine noun is also attested. The equivalent word occurs in Akkadian as *eršetu*, in Ugaritic as  $\text{רָשׁ}$ , in Arabic as  $\text{أَرْض}$ , in biblical Aramaic either as  $\text{רָשׁ}$  or  $\text{רָשׁ}$ . From the general use of this term we can determine its precise meaning as well as various connotations in context. The term  $\text{רָשׁ}$  means primarily the entire area in which man thinks of himself as living, as opposed to the regions of heaven and underworld. In this sense, the word  $\text{רָשׁ}$  denotes the whole area as opposed to parts or sectors of it.<sup>672</sup> Closely linked with this idea is the geographical connotation of  $\text{רָשׁ}$  as "country, territory." Thus, the earth is conceived as extended continuously through the continents. Each country, however, represents a microcosm.<sup>673</sup> The changes of political (historical) geography alter nothing fundamentally, for the natural division always prevails in the end. When Palestine was allotted to the Israelites as a land of their very own, this reflects an established tradition in the ancient Near East which may be called a religious adaptation of the principle that every conquest, every political division of a country, and the foundation of every realm is divinely appointed.<sup>674</sup>

As seen above, the term  $\text{רָשׁ}$  denotes either the whole area of the earth or the entire region of a country. Thus, it would seem that the ancient Hebrews never succeeded in abstracting a sector from the world. Even to

<sup>670</sup> Cf. Ps. 24:2; 136:6.

<sup>671</sup> Job 26:7b. Literally, the word *blymh* means "without anything."

<sup>672</sup> Cf. Gen. 18:18, 25; 22:18; 2 K. 19:15, 19; Is. 37:16, 20; Jer. 25:26, 29, 30; Jer. 26:6; Zech. 4:10, 14.

<sup>673</sup> Cf. Gen. 47:13; 1 Sam. 13:7; Jer. 2:7; 16:18; Am. 2:10; 7:12; Zech. 2:5; Ps. 27:3; Neh. 9:22, etc. It is worth noting that the names *kn<sup>n</sup>* and *mšrym*, apposited as genitives to  $\text{רָשׁ}$  [*ršwt*], occur more frequently than other gentilic names in connection with the word  $\text{רָשׁ}$ .

<sup>674</sup> Cf. Ez. 47:13-48:35; Am. 3:1f; 9:7.

designate a piece of land for use as a burial site, the same term generally employed for "earth" served to indicate it.<sup>675</sup> It might be too much, however, to advance an explanation for this specific usage of  $\text{רָשׁ}$  in terms of a unique thought pattern of the Hebrews who understood distinct items in the universe as component elements of the whole.

Hitherto we have considered the specific meaning of the term  $\text{רָשׁ}$  with the connotations which it may assume in context. Our analysis of relevant passages has essentially been directed toward those in which the word  $\text{רָשׁ}$  is used in the singular form. Although no sharp distinction can be made between the meaning of  $\text{רָשׁ}$  and  $\text{רָשָׁוַי}$ , it becomes clear that the usage of  $\text{רָשׁ}$  in the singular is preferred in almost all the instances, although the plural form is attested in later biblical literature. That this linguistic phenomenon reflects the influence of political and cultural developments, because of closer political contacts between the peoples in the Near East and the creation of a number of "international" empires, cannot conclusively be established. What we observe, however, in the usage of  $\text{רָשׁ}$  and  $\text{רָשָׁוַי}$ , is a gradual distinction introduced in later biblical texts, whereby the singular form, formerly used to designate both the whole world and particular territories, came to be employed to indicate the "earth," whereas the plural was taken in the sense of "countries, territories of nations."<sup>676</sup>

Although the term  $\text{רָשׁ}$  basically means "earth, country, piece of land," a clarification of several biblical texts containing  $\text{רָשׁ}$  has led grammarians to recognize, in the light of mythological texts from Ras Shamra, that this term connotes also "nether world." Since we shall devote a special chapter to the nether world, we only list in a footnote the biblical passages employing this word in the sense of "nether world."<sup>677</sup> Another significant term to be studied in this context is  $\text{דָּמָה}$  more frequently used to designate the "ground," as tilled, yielding sustenance.<sup>678</sup> A few references support the translation of  $\text{דָּמָה}$  as "soil, humus." This material was used to build altars<sup>679</sup> and to make earthen vessels (Is. 45:9). To cover one's head with earth was considered a sign of grief.<sup>680</sup> Naaman took two mule-loads of earth from the land of Israel back to Syria with him, because he believed that sacrifice to Yahweh could be offered only on Israelite soil (2 K. 5:17). Another meaning of  $\text{דָּמָה}$  is a "piece of

<sup>675</sup> Cf. Gen. 23:1-19.

<sup>676</sup> The plural of  $\text{רָשׁ}$  occurs quite frequently in Ez. (23 times), in Ch. (14 x); less frequently in Jer. (7 x), in Gen. (6 x).

<sup>677</sup> Cf. Ex. 15:12; 1 Sam. 28:13; Is. 26:19; 29:4; 44:23; Jer. 17:13; Jon. 2:7; Ps. 7:6; 18:8; 22:30; 63:10; 71:20; 95:4; 106:17; 141:7; 143:3; 147:6; 148:7; Job 10:21; 12:8; 15:29; Prov. 25:3.

<sup>678</sup> Cf. Gen. 2:5, 9; 3:17, 23; 4:2f, 12; 5:29; 8:21; 19:25; 47:25; Ex. 34:26, (all these passages belong to the Yahwistic strand). Ex. 23:19; Deut. 7:13; 11:17; 26:2, 10, 15; 28:4, 11, 18, 33, 42, 51; 30:9; 2 Sam. 9:10; Is. 1:7; 28:24; 30:23f; Jer. 7:20; 14:4; 25:33; Hag. 1:11; Mal. 3:11; Ps. 83:11; 105:35; Prov. 12:11; 28:19; 1 Ch. 27:26; Neh. 10:36, 38.

<sup>679</sup> Cf. Ex. 20:24,  $mzbh$   $\text{דָּמָה}$  is contrasted with  $mzbh$   $\text{בְּנֵימ}$ , Ex. 20:25.

<sup>680</sup> Cf. 1 Sam. 4:12; 2 Sam. 1:2; 15:32; cf. also Neh. 9:1.

ground, landed property."<sup>681</sup> This use of the word is also connected with the fact that the ground was considered the visible surface of the earth. Hence, *dmh* represents, too, the "ground" with no reference to a particular spot.<sup>682</sup> By widening the scope of this concept, the less defined term "ground" acquired a spatial perspective expressing the idea of "land, territory, country." In this sense, then, *dmh* is a synonym of *rs*.<sup>683</sup> This term was especially used to designate the land as promised or given by Yahweh to his people.<sup>684</sup> And lastly, by way of transfer from a limited area to the whole earth, the word *dmh* was employed by the biblical authors in the sense of the "entire inhabited earth."<sup>685</sup>

Closely related with *dmh* is the less frequent word *ybsh* "dry land, dry ground." Although this term occurs fourteen times and seems to have been used almost exclusively in later texts, slight variations in meaning can be detected. The root *ybsh* "be dry, dried up, withered," not attested either in Akkadian or in Ugaritic, underlies this word. As regards the basic meaning of *ybsh* as "dry land," it is worth noting that the use of *ybsh* implies a contrast between "terra firma" and the sea.<sup>686</sup> Some variations in meaning of this concept appear in a number of passages, referring to the crossing of both the Reed Sea and the Jordan river. Hence, *ybsh* may be translated as "ford" in this context.<sup>687</sup> In two references, the word *ybsh* denotes the dry ground:

You are to take some water from the Nile and pour it on the dry ground (Ex. 4:9).

For I will pour water on the thirsty land,  
And streams on the dry ground (Is. 44:3).

The number of terms used to designate "earth" illustrates the view held by the ancient Hebrews regarding the spatio-physical word. Their notion of the world which basically is the concrete sphere of the ground and gradually widens its scope toward the concept of inhabited world as a whole. The same thought pattern is observed, although less explicitly, in the use of the word *tbl* "world," which occurs almost exclusively in poetry. We may compare in with its Akkadian equivalent *tābalu* which

<sup>681</sup> Cf. Gen. 47:18ff; Num. 32:11; Deut. 5:16; 7:13; 21:1; Is. 14:2; 19:17.

<sup>682</sup> Cf. Gen. 1:25; 6:20; Gen. 4:10; 7:8; 9:2; Lev. 20:25; Deut. 4:18; 2 Sam. 17:12; 1 K. 17:14; 18:1; Is. 24:21; Ez. 38:20; Hos. 2:20; Am. 3:5, Zeph. 1:2f.

<sup>683</sup> Cf. Gen. 47:19ff; Lev. 20:24; Is. 19:17; Ez. 11:17, etc.

<sup>684</sup> Cf. Gen. 28:15; Ex. 20:12; Num. 11:12; 32:11; Deut. 5:16, etc.; 1 K. 8:34, 40; Jer. 16:15; 24:10; 25:5; 35:15; Ez. 28:25; 2 Ch. 6:25, 31; 7:20; 33:8.

<sup>685</sup> Cf. Gen. 12:3; 28:14; Deut. 7:6; Is. 24:21.

<sup>686</sup> Cf. Gen. 1:9f; the term *ybsh* is used in this context as a synonym of *rs*: Jon. 1:9; 2:11; cf. also the word *ybšt* "terra firma" which is a variant of the term under consideration, Ex. 4:9; Ps. 95:5.

<sup>687</sup> The Israelites crossed the Reed Sea by way of fords: Ex. 14:16, 22, 29; 15:19; Neh. 9:11; Ps. 66:6. Cf. the references to the "ford" of the river Jordan, Jos. 4:22.

occurs in the expression *eli tabali* "by land," which is parallel to *eli nāru* "by water (river)." A survey of all the passage where *tbl* is mentioned shows that this word is used synonymously with  $\text{r}\dot{\text{r}}\dot{\text{s}}$ .<sup>688</sup> But what distinguishes the term *tbl* from  $\text{r}\dot{\text{r}}\dot{\text{s}}$  is a concrete intuition of its more particular designation as the habitable part of the world.<sup>689</sup> This distinction is clear in the following passages:

For the pillars of the earth are the Lord's  
And he has set the world [*tbl*] upon them.<sup>690</sup>

He scatters his light from the clouds.  
It changes direction as he wills,  
Doing whatever he commands  
All over his inhabited earth [*tbl*].<sup>691</sup>

Before the mountains were born,  
Or ever you have brought forth the earth and the world [*tbl*],  
Even from everlasting to everlasting you are, O God.<sup>692</sup>

Is this the man who caused the earth [*h* $\text{r}\dot{\text{r}}\dot{\text{s}}$ ] to quiver,  
caused kingdoms to quake;  
Who made the word [*tbl*] like a desert,  
and tore down its cities . . . ?<sup>693</sup>

A consideration of all the terms for earth, thus far analyzed, reveals exclusively a spatial extension and, in some cases, indicates distinct spatial boundaries. In the term *hld* however, we find an oscillation between the spatial and the temporal significance. Between the two there is actually no sharp differentiation, and by virtue of this relationship the term *hld* denotes both "era, age, lifetime" and "space of the world."

I said: "I shall no more see the Lord  
in the land of the living;  
I shall no more look upon man  
among the inhabitants of the world [*hld*]." <sup>694</sup>

<sup>688</sup> Cf. Is. 14:21; 18:13; 24:4; 26:9, 18; 34:1; Jer. 10:12; 51:15; 1 Ch. 16:30; Nah. 1:5; Ps. 19:5; 24:1; 77:19; 89:12, (cf. also Ps. 50:12); 96:13; 97:4; 98:9; Job 34:13; Lam. 4:12.

<sup>689</sup> Cf. Is. 13:11; 14:17, 21; 34:1; Ps. 9:9; 96:13; 98:7; (in this passage *tbl* stands over against *ym* "sea," cf. also Ps. 18:16); Prov. 8:31.

<sup>690</sup> 1 Sam. 2:8.

<sup>691</sup> Job 37:11b-12, as read by Pope, "MT has 'upon the face of the habitable world earthward.' In the light of the passage in Prov. 8:31," which is the only place where this phrase occurs, "it could scarcely be termed an emendation to read  $\text{r}\dot{\text{r}}\dot{\text{s}}\text{h}$  'earthward,' as  $\text{r}\dot{\text{r}}\dot{\text{s}}\text{w}$  'his earth.'" See Marvin H. Pope, *op. cit.*, p. 243, note 12c.

<sup>692</sup> Ps. 90:2.

<sup>693</sup> Is. 14:16b-17a. R. Kittel, in *KBH*<sup>13</sup>, emends  $\text{r}\dot{\text{r}}\dot{\text{y}}\text{w}$  to  $\text{r}\dot{\text{r}}\dot{\text{y}}\text{h}$ , on the basis that *tbl* is treated, throughout the Bible, as a feminine noun.

<sup>694</sup> Is. 38:11. Two Hebrew mss. read *yhwhh*, instead of the expression *yh yh*. The word *hld* should probably be emended to *hld* assuming a metathesis of *l* and *d*.

Remember, O Lord, what [our] span of life is [*hld*];  
For what frailty you have created all human beings.<sup>695</sup>

Hear this, all you peoples;  
Give heed, all you dwellers of the world [*hld*].<sup>696</sup>

Look, you have made my days but a few handbreaths,  
and my lifetime [*hldy*] is nothing before you.<sup>697</sup>

Slay them with your hand, O Yahweh,  
slay them from the world [*mhld*]  
Make them perish from among the living.<sup>698</sup>

Life [*hld*] would rise brighter than noon,  
Darkness become as morning.<sup>699</sup>

As appears from these passages, the same intuition, the interchange of time and space, underlies this concept. The context, however, will determine which particular idea is represented in each instance where the term *hld* occurs.

The interchange of temporal and spatial relations is partly retained in the designation of the directions of the horizon. While the expressions of spatial relation prevailed over the temporal in the three systems in use to indicate the orientation in space, there is evidence that the directions of east and west were also conceived from a temporal point of view. To verify this, consider the passage:

*wyyr<sup>2</sup>w yšby qšwt m<sup>2</sup>wttyk*  
*mws<sup>2</sup>y bqr w<sup>c</sup>rb trnyn*

Those who dwell in far regions are afraid of your tokens;  
You make the places of morning [east] and evening [west]  
to shout with joy.<sup>700</sup>

The geographical regions correspond to the division of the horizon into four equal sections, which are the cardinal points. In the designation of

<sup>695</sup> Ps. 89:48. We follow the emendation proposed by F. Buhl, in *KBH*<sup>13</sup>, reading *ʔdny* instead of *ʔny*.

<sup>696</sup> Ps. 49:2.

<sup>697</sup> Ps. 39:6a.

<sup>698</sup> Ps. 17:14. We follow M. Dahood who vocalizes *mmtm* as *memîtâm*, a participle employed as an imperative. Instead of *helqâm* we read *hallegêm* Pī'el imperative of *hlq* "to perish, die." In Ugaritic, the term *hlq* is paralleled with *mt*. Since the expression *bhyym* apparently balances *mhld* the preposition *b* must mean "from." See M. Dahood, *op. cit.*, p. 99, note 14.

<sup>699</sup> Job 11:17. MT vocalizes *t<sup>c</sup>ph* "it shall become dark" as a verbal form (3rd. pers. fem. sing. of the cohortative) of the verb *ʔwp*. In keeping with the nominal structure of the two half verses, this word should be vocalized as *te<sup>c</sup>uphâh*, an abstract noun derived from *ʔwp*, as suggested by G. Beer, in *KBH*<sup>13</sup>, on the basis of three mss. adduced by de Rossi.

<sup>700</sup> Ps. 65:9.

these directions there can be discerned three different systems of names, each resting on a separate principle. The first system is based upon the functional relation between the position of the observer facing one direction (i.e., east); the determination of the other three are related to the direction toward east. The directions are defined in relation to him facing *qdm* "that which is before," which corresponds to the east. Hence, in compound expressions such as  $\text{ʔrʃ } qdm$  "the country of the east" (Gen. 25:6) and *hr-hqdm* "the mountain to the east," (Gen. 10:30) we have an explicit reference to the region of the east, although geographically the term is a vague concept for an area of the eastern desert lands. Sometimes, *qdm* also includes Mesopotamia and Babylonia (Num. 23:7). When Isaiah accuses the people of Judah of superstitious practices, he simply mentions *ky mlʔw mqdm* "that they are full of the east" (Is. 2:6), i.e., of superstitions and sorceries brought from the east or from Babylonia. In addition to the spatial meaning "front, east," *qdm* denotes also the temporal idea of "past, ancient time."<sup>701</sup> The opposite of *qdm* is  $\text{ʔhrwr}$  or  $\text{ʔhrwn}$  "behind," corresponding to the west. Thus, in the expressions *plšty mʔhrwr* "the Philistines on the west" (Is. 9:11) and *hym hʔhrwn* "the wester sea," i.e., the Mediterranean, the forms of  $\text{ʔhrwr}$  indicate the west.<sup>702</sup> Another aspect of the word  $\text{ʔhrwn}$  is the temporal notion denoting "latter, last, future time."<sup>703</sup> The noun  $\text{ʔhryt}$  is frequently used to designate "afterpart, end" and "latter part," suggesting the idea of "future" or "posterity."

The direction to the north is defined in relation to the left-hand side of the observer facing east. The word *šmʔl* "what is on the left side" occurs in the expression *mšmʔl ldmšq* which may plausibly be translated "what lies north of Damascus" (Gen. 14:15). Similarly, *ymyn* "the right hand, lying to the right" (the favorable side), and *tymn* "what is on the right-hand side" denote the south. This meaning finds expression in *mymyn hyšymwn* "from the south of the desert,"<sup>704</sup> and in the adverbial accusative *tymnh* "southward."<sup>705</sup> All four directions are expressed in a passage from Job:

Lo I walk [towards] east (*qdm*), and he is not there;  
 And [towards] west ( $\text{ʔhrwr}$ ), and I cannot perceive him;  
 North (*šmʔl*) I turn and cannot see him;  
 I turn south (*ymyn*) and do not spy him.<sup>706</sup>

<sup>701</sup> Cf. Deut. 33:27; 2 K. 19:25; Is. 19:11; 23:7; 37:26; 51:9; Jer. 46:26; Mic. 7:20; Ps. 44:2; 55:20; 68:34; 74:2; 119:152; Prov. 8:22f; Lam. 1:7; 2:17. The word *qdm* occurs also with the preposition *mn* "from": *mqdm* "from of old," cf. Is. 45:21; 46:10; Hab. 1:12; Mic. 5:1; Ps. 74:12; 77:6; 12; 143:5; Neh. 12:46.

<sup>702</sup> Cf. Deut. 11:24; 34:2; Joel 2:20.

<sup>703</sup> Cf. Ex. 4:8; Deut. 24:3; 2 Sam. 19:12; Is. 8:23; 44:6; 48:12.

<sup>704</sup> Cf. 1 Sam. 23:19; cf. also 23:24; 2 Sam. 24:5.

<sup>705</sup> Cf. Ex. 26:18, 35; 27:9.

<sup>706</sup> Job 23:8f. The expression *bʔštw* "where/when he works," in vs. 9, makes little sense. The best suggestion has been to connect the word with Arabic *ʔassa* "to turn,

The second system of names used to designate the four cardinal points is associated with the sun's daily course. Thus, east is called *mzrh* "place of sunrise,"<sup>707</sup> whose root *zrh* denotes "to be bright, flash up, shine forth," and *mwš*<sup>2</sup> "place, act of going forth," hence "east" (Ps. 75:7). Likewise, the setting of the sun is identified with the west, for which there are two expressions: *mb*<sup>2</sup> *hšmš* "the entrance (i.e., place of setting) of the sun,"<sup>708</sup> and *m<sup>c</sup>rb* (and *m<sup>c</sup>rbh*, Is. 45:6), "the place of sunset, the west," derived from the root *rb* "to enter."<sup>709</sup> On the other hand, the north is known as *špwn*. By *rš* *špwn* "the northern land" is meant Babylonia.<sup>710</sup> *drwm* designates the south quarter.<sup>711</sup>

The third system, which takes into account the topographical features of Palestine, indicates directions by means of descriptive terms corresponding to the local panorama. Thus, the city *dmšq* "Damascus," which lies to the north of the land of Israel, seems to indicate the direction northward in this passage: "So will I carry you into exile beyond Damascus" (Am. 5:27). On the other hand, the south is frequently designated by the name *ngb*, derived from the root *ngb* "to be dry, parched," denoting "south country, south."<sup>712</sup> There is also a great number of biblical references to the west described by the name *ym* "sea," i.e., the Mediterranean, which forms the western boundary of Palestine.<sup>713</sup> Parallel topological allusions to the two other cardinal points, the east and the north, with the possible exception of the aforementioned passage, do not appear to have been used.

The very fact of the division of the world into four sections is consistent with the conception of space held by the ancient Hebrews. As appeared in the analysis of the cardinal points, they were never conceived as mere functional realities, devoid of all content, mere expressions of ideal

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make the rounds by night." We change the 3rd person of the pronominal suffix in *b<sup>c</sup>štw* to the 1st, *b<sup>c</sup>šty*; and likewise, we change the verb *y<sup>c</sup>tp*, in the 3rd person, to the 1st, *y<sup>c</sup>tp*. The apocopated form *h<sup>c</sup>z*, from the verb *h<sup>c</sup>zh* "to see" was emended by G. Beer in *KBH*<sup>13</sup>, to *h<sup>c</sup>zh* corresponding to *r<sup>2</sup>h* in the 2nd hemistich. For the sake of clarity we carry over the personal pronoun of the 3rd person, in vs. 8, to *h<sup>c</sup>z*, and to *r<sup>2</sup>h*. The verb *y<sup>c</sup>tp* "to cover" should be connected with Arabic *a<sup>c</sup>afa* "to bend, incline." Thus, the meaning of "leaning forward in order to search out" balances the idea of the preceding half verse.

<sup>707</sup> Cf. Josh. 4:19; Ps. 103:12; Neh. 12:37; cf. also Deut. 4:41, 47; Ex. 27:13.

<sup>708</sup> Cf. Deut. 11:30; Josh. 1:4; Ps. 50:1.

<sup>709</sup> Cf. Ps. 75:7; 103:12; 107:3; Is. 43:5; found also with *l* locale, in the sense of "westward," 1 Ch. 26:30, and with prefixed *l* "on the West," 2 Ch. 32:30.

<sup>710</sup> Cf. Jer. 16:15; Zech. 2:10; cf. also Jer. 6:22. The expression *rwh* *špwn* denotes, poetically, the northwind, Prov. 25:23.

<sup>711</sup> Cf. Ez. 40:24ff; 42:12ff; Eccl. 1:6. Poetically used of southwind, Job 37:17.

<sup>712</sup> Cf. also the expression *p<sup>2</sup>t ngb*, similar to Ugaritic *pat mdbr* "southside," (lit. edges of the desert), text *Kri*. 105; cf. also Ex. 27:9; 36:23; 38:9; Num. 34:3; 35:5; Josh. 18:15; Ez. 47:19; 48:16, 33.

<sup>713</sup> The term *ym* occurs in the expression *mym l* "westward", Josh. 8:9ff; or with *h* of direction, cf. Josh. 5:1; 15:8, 10; there are found compound expressions such as *drk hym* "westward," Ez. 41:12; *p<sup>2</sup>t-ym* "westside," Ex. 27:12; 38:12; Num. 35:5; Josh. 18:14; Ez. 45:7; 47:20; 48:2-34 (15 x).

relations. But the cardinal points were associated either with the position of an observer or with the sun's daily course or with topographical features. Hence, the ancient Hebrews could not conceive of those four directions in terms of purely functional relations, and likewise they did not realize the concept of infinity; from the very outset the extension of the world is confined within certain spatial limits imposed by their sense perception. As the different countries were in some way distributed among the diverse cardinal points and were differentiated accordingly, so the whole world was permeated by this form of classification. Thus, the spatial world was intelligible to them to the degree that they were able to describe it in terms of concrete images. Now we must attempt to understand their thought and to comprehend their view of the earth. From the biblical references to the entire area in which man thinks of himself as living, as opposed to the regions of heaven and underworld, a broad picture may be drawn to which details will be added in the course of this chapter.

Did you ever command a morning,  
 Post Dawn in his place,  
 Snatch off Earth's skirts,  
 So that the wicked be shaken out of it?<sup>714</sup>

The vast surface of the earth is thus represented as a garment spread out from horizon to horizon. The hem of this garment appropriately represents the boundaries of the earth which enclose and confine it. These boundaries are known as *qšwy ʾrš* "the borders (i.e., boundaries) of the earth."<sup>715</sup> The underlying root of this noun is *qšh* "to cut off" which furnishes the meaning of "end, border, edge, extremity" for the more frequently used noun *qšh*. This term became a kind of spatial expression for the boundaries of the earth.

The Creator of the end of the earth [*qšwt hʾrš*].

The coast-lands saw it, and were afraid;  
 The ends of the earth trembled.

I fetched you from the ends of the earth  
 And from its sides [*mʾšylyh*] I called you.<sup>716</sup>

When he looked to the ends of the earth.  
 He surveyed all under the heavens.<sup>717</sup>

<sup>714</sup> Job 38:13.

<sup>715</sup> Cf. Ps. 48:11; 65:6; cf. also Is. 26:15, where the same expression is used to designate the boundaries of the land of Israel.

<sup>716</sup> Cf. Is. 40:28; 41:5, 9.

<sup>717</sup> Cf. Job 28:24. We read with G. Beer, in *KBH*<sup>13</sup>, and with LXX, *kl tḥt hšmym* instead of MT *tḥt kl-hšmym*.

However, in all the references to those boundaries no clue is offered as to their specific form. For example, in the expression *yrkty ʔrš*<sup>718</sup> no indication is given of the shape of the earth. It suggests only the remote parts of the earth. Likewise, the expression *ʔrb<sup>c</sup> knpwt hʔrš* "the four corners of the earth,"<sup>719</sup> merely indicates the remotest regions of the earth in their antipodal relation. But the passage *hq—hg<sup>c</sup> l—pny—mym* "he marks a circle on the surface of the water,"<sup>720</sup> is an allusion to the horizon, and suggests that it was conceived as a circle and therefore implying that the earth is round.

Concerning the physical geography of the world, the biblical texts provide only regional data concerning the landscape of Palestine with occasional references to that of Mesopotamia and Egypt. The description of Palestine's terrain, particularly of its relief, varies with the authors of the books of the Old Testament. The massive nature of some mountain ridges — e.g., the Hermon (9,230 feet above sea level), the Sinai range (Jebel Musa; 7,500 feet) — as well as mountains of much less elevation such as Mount Gerizim, standing ca. 2,900 feet above the Mediterranean and ca. 700 feet above the narrow valley between it and Mount Ebal, are designated by the term *hr* a "mountain." Among the special features of a mountain there are the top or head (*rʔš*), while its peak is called tooth (*šn*);<sup>721</sup> a slope is known as *mwrđ*,<sup>722</sup> and *ktp*;<sup>723</sup> the steep inclines are designated by the term *ʔšdh*.<sup>724</sup> A terrace cut in the sides of the mountain is known as *šl<sup>c</sup>* a "rib" (2 Sam. 16:13). Mountain escarpments weathered into deep ravines, with forbidding cliffs of considerable height, are known as *mđrgwt*.<sup>725</sup> An interesting fact is the expression employed by the biblical authors to designate the foot of the mountain for which the term *tħtyt* is used (Ex. 19:17), which differs from *šrš* a "root" (Job 28:9). As the heaven is established on pillars resting on the earth, so the mountains have their foundations *mwsdy* (*ʔrš*), which are sunk deep into the underworld (Deut. 32:22). The term *gbnym* denotes a series of densely packed folds with gaps through the mountain ridges (Ps. 68:16f). The general term for hill is *gb<sup>c</sup>h*. Other terms for topographical features to be mentioned in this context are contained in this passage:

*wkl-hr wgb<sup>c</sup>h ʔšplw*  
*whyh h<sup>c</sup>qb lmyšwr*  
*whrksym lbq<sup>c</sup>h*

<sup>718</sup> Cf. Jer. 6:22; 25:32; 31:8; 50:41.

<sup>719</sup> Is. 11:12; cf. also Is. 41:9; Ez. 7:2, MT has Qerê *ʔrb<sup>c</sup>* for the Kethîbh *ʔrbt*.

<sup>720</sup> Job. 26:10. We follow E. Dhorme in *La Bible*, p. 1291, who vocalizes *ħaq-ħug* instead of *ħoq-ħâg*; cf. also Prov. 8:27.

<sup>721</sup> Cf. 1 Sam. 14:4f; Job 39:28.

<sup>722</sup> Josh. 7:5; 10:11; Jer. 48:5; Mic. 1:4; cf. also 1 K. 7:29.

<sup>723</sup> Num. 34:11; Dt. 33:12; Josh. 15:8ff; 18:12ff; Is. 11:14; Ez. 25:9.

<sup>724</sup> Deut. 3:17; 4:49; Josh. 12:3; 13:20.

<sup>725</sup> Ez. 38:20; Cant. 2:14.

Every mountain (*hr*) and hill (*gb<sup>c</sup>h*) are to become lowland,  
 And the steep [ground] (*°qb*) shall be [turned] to level surface,  
 And tangled hillocks (*rksym*) to open plain.<sup>726</sup>

The word *m<sup>c</sup>lh* connotes an ascent in general and a platform; in some instances it designates a defile between mountains or hills: *m<sup>c</sup>lh °dmym* "Adummim Pass" (between Jericho and Jerusalem);<sup>727</sup> *m<sup>c</sup>lh °qrbym* "Scorpions Pass" (which is the northern route between the land of Edom and Beer-sheba);<sup>728</sup> *m<sup>c</sup>lh hzytym* "the Mount of Olives Pass" (between Jerusalem and Jericho).<sup>729</sup> In passing we may mention the artificial mounds known as "tells," as they are called by the Arabs; the corresponding Hebrew word is *tl*.<sup>730</sup> The "tells" generally look like a low truncated cone, with flat top and sloping sides.

Because of the varied environment with well defined geographical contrasts, Palestine affords excellent opportunities for the study of topographical terms. The configuration of the valleys varies from deep V shaped valleys to broad valleylike depressions which are called *°mq*. The valleys etched in the hill or mountain slopes are designated by the term *gy<sup>2</sup>*. A narrow and gorgelike gully formed by the flowing water is designated *n<sup>h</sup>l*, which term usually denotes a "river, stream"; but, when required by its context, it means a "valley" with a river or torrent flowing during periods of rainfall.<sup>731</sup> These gullies, called "wadis" by the Arabs, may not altogether have been formed by river erosion, but could have been a tectonic feature subsequently enlarged by water action. Some of them have been deeply incised into the slopes and now are occupied for a short period by torrents following a heavy downpour of rain. Though short lived, the torrents have considerable erosive power. The water washing down those gullies not only widens them, but also performs equal erosion on their sides forming holes *°rwš* in the ground and rocks (Job 30:6). A broad valley resembling a plain is called a *bq<sup>c</sup>h*. When Amos mentions the plain (*bq<sup>c</sup>t*) of Aven, he refers to a level stretch of land near Damascus over ten miles wide (Am. 1:5). The same idea also is rendered by the word *myšwr* which more frequently denotes a "plain, level country." *myšwr* became the proper name of a region east of the Jordan.<sup>732</sup> It might be well to include the word *šplh* "the lowland" which occurs as a geographical term for "the low country west of the western border of the Judean hills."<sup>733</sup>

<sup>726</sup> Is. 40:4.

<sup>727</sup> Cf. Josh. 15:7; 18:17.

<sup>728</sup> Cf. Josh. 15:3; Num. 34:4; Judg. 1:36.

<sup>729</sup> Cf. 2 Sam. 15:30.

<sup>730</sup> Cf. Deut. 8:28; 11:13; Jer. 30:18; 49:2.

<sup>731</sup> Cf. Gen. 26:19; Cant. 6:4.

<sup>732</sup> Cf. Deut. 4:43; Josh. 20:8; cf. Jer. 48:24, where *myšr* is identical with the territory of Moab.

<sup>733</sup> Cf. Deut. 1:7; Josh. 9:1; 10:40; 11:2, 16; 12:8; 15:33; Judg. 1:9; Jer. 17:26; 32:44; 33:13; Ob. 19; Zech. 7:7; 2 Ch. 26:10; 28:18.

These words for valley apply mainly to the topographical features of Palestine. Yet almost all these terms, with the exception *nhl*, which in certain instances is used to designate a "wadi," may be applied to any other geographical region presenting a similar configuration of valleys. However, one type of scenery found in Palestine unparalleled elsewhere is the Jordan rift, extending for 250 miles to the head of the Gulf of Aqabah. The floor of the depression, where the Jordan river meanders extensively, is not uniform, and the lowest part occurs in the region of the northern Dead Sea (the lake bottom is 2,598 feet below sea level), southwards of this point the floor rises, and reaches sea level some 80 miles to the south of the Dead Sea. The rift varies in width from 2 to 15 miles, and almost throughout its entire length it is bounded by steep-sided, faulted edges of the Arabian platform to the east and the massifs of Galilee, Samaria, and Judea to the west. As the Judean and Transjordanian plateaus rise some 3,000 feet above sea level, there is a precipitous descent to the Jordan floor, which lies 1,300 feet below sea level at the Dead Sea shore. A number of streams and "wadis" plunge down the valley sides and have carved deep notches in the plateau-edge, a few of which are used as roads. The terms used to denote the Jordan Trough are *glylwt hyrdn* "the districts of the Jordan" indicating separate parts of this valley that have names of their own (Josh. 22:10f); *mq skwt* "the valley of Succoth" refers to the lower course of the river Jabbok and the regions nearby (Ps. 60:8; 108:8); *bq't yrhw* "the valley of Jericho" is a general term for the lower part of the Jordan depression (Deut. 34:3). The expression *kkh hyrdn* is to be taken in a geographical sense, even though we may assume that *kkh* had not completely lost its etymological meaning of circle (cf. Neh. 3:22; 12:8). In interpreting *kkh hyrdn* we must take into consideration two hypotheses: according to the northern hypothesis, this expression designates an area which is limited to a region north of the Dead Sea;<sup>734</sup> the larger interpretation of *kkh hyrdn*, implied by the southern hypothesis, explains the expression's extent in terms of the southern part of the Jordan Valley, including either the whole of the Dead Sea with its shores or a great part of it.<sup>735</sup> The word *h'rbh* designates a depression of three distinct parts: the Jordan Valley, the Dead Sea region, and the stretch from the Dead Sea to the Gulf of Aqabah. Its plural form indicates specific stretches, such as those in Moab or near Jericho.<sup>736</sup> A dense jungle of willow trees, tamarisk, and aquatic plants covers the banks of the river, which after winter floods

<sup>734</sup> Cf. 1 K. 7:46, and also 2 Sam. 18:23.

<sup>735</sup> Cf. Gen. 13:10f; in Gen. 19:25 the word *kkh* refers to the area of the five cities. J. Simons holds the opinion that *hkkh* designates a more or less independent area, while *kkh hyrdn* stands for a region north of the Dead Sea. See J. Simons, *The Geographical and Topographical Texts of the Old Testament* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1959), pp. 49-52, 224f.

<sup>736</sup> Cf. Num. 22:1; Deut. 34:1, 8; Josh. 5:10; 2 K. 25:5.

carry an unpleasant mass of rank, decaying vegetation. This uninviting region is called *g<sup>2</sup>wn hyrdn* "the jungle of the Jordan."<sup>737</sup>

A review of the terms for valley indicates the distinction among these words and their exact meanings. Thus, *nhl* designates a stream and the valley through which it flows. *gy<sup>2</sup>* denotes a well defined valley, which may be either narrow or broad, etched in the hill or mountain slopes. *mq* means a depression with easy recognizable borders on either side. It occurs, too, in the sense of a deep, narrow valley. *bq<sup>c</sup>h* is a broad stretch of land with a level surface bounded by mountains. Finally, *myšwr* connotes a plain or a plateau.

In the valleys and plains with sufficient surface water supply are located the areas suited for cultivation. These areas are called *sdh* a "field" which is the cultivable land yielding crops. Because of topographical and climatic changes, cultivated areas alternate with barren or neglected areas, and one crop quickly gives place to another as environmental conditions alter. Thus, the term *sdh* designates both the cultivated area in the sense of an "open field",<sup>738</sup> and also a "definitive portion of ground."<sup>739</sup> The word, *sdh* designates, too, the countryside as opposed to the city.<sup>740</sup> The use of *sdh* in connection with non-domestic animals yields the sense of hunting ground.<sup>741</sup> Another meaning for *sdh* is a territory of a nation or a tribe, such as *sdh 2dwm* (Gen. 32:4; Judg. 5:4); *sdh mw<sup>2</sup>b* (Gen. 36:35; Ruth 1:2, 6, 22); *sdh plšty* (1 Sam. 6:1; 27:7, 11); *sdh 2rm* (Hos. 12: 13); *sdh 2prym* (Ob. 19). *hlqh* denotes a clearly divided portion of cultivable ground. Similar to this term, is the Hebrew word *ygb* denoting a section of arable land.<sup>742</sup> Finally there is the *hapax legomenon mšqh* with the meaning of "well-irrigated land" (Gen. 13:10). Besides the specific words for field and the countryside in general, there is the term *hwš* "the place outside the house, the ground between the houses, the street" (Is. 51:23; Jer. 37:21).

In arid and semi-arid areas abundant winter rains are followed by summer drought, rainfall is scarce during the rest of the year, and limestone is extremely permeable, thereby reducing surface water to a minimum. Thus, in these areas special types of soil have developed under the influence of the prevailing climate: the steppe soil and desert soil. The steppe soil produces various species of grass of sharply restricted seasonal growth; there are no trees in region of true steppe. For a few

<sup>737</sup> Cf. Jer. 12:5; this jungle is also spoken of as a place where lions lurk, Jer. 49:19; 50:44; Zech. 11:3.

<sup>738</sup> Cf. Gen. 2:5; 3:18; 34:5; 31:4; Ez. 9:19, 23; Num. 22:4, 23; 2 K. 4:39; Is. 40:6, 12; Ez. 17:24; Ps. 103:15; Joel 1:10, etc.

<sup>739</sup> Cf. Gen 23:9, 13, 17, 19f; 25:10; 33:19; 39:5; 47:20; 50:13; Lev. 19:9; 23:22; 27:16ff; Josh. 21:12; 2 Sam. 19:30; 2 K. 8:3, 5; 19:30; Jer. 32:7ff.

<sup>740</sup> Cf. Gen. 25:29; 30:16; 37:15; Deut. 21:1; 22:25, 27; 28:3; 1 Sam. 20:24; 30:11; 1 K. 14:11; 2 K. 7:10; Mic. 4:10, etc.

<sup>741</sup> Cf. Gen. 2:19f; 25:27; 27:5, 27; 1 Sam. 27:44; 2 Sam. 2:18; Joel 1:20; 2:22; Ps. 8:8, etc.

<sup>742</sup> Cf. 2 K. 25:12; Jer. 39:10; 52:16.

weeks each year the steppe presents an amazing picture of almost luxuriant vegetation, but with the approach of the summer, only hardier bushes and thorns remain above the ground, and vast expanses of bare earth appear. The steppes are the home of pastoral nomadism. With the approach of the summer season, the herds are driven to the adjoining lands. This idea is retained in the root *ḏbr*, attested in all Semitic languages, in the sense of leading the herd to pasture. This root appears in the noun *mḏbr*, which is usually translated as "wilderness." From what we learn in the biblical texts, the term *mḏbr* also designates the steppe.<sup>743</sup> During the summer months the steppe turns into wilderness without water for either herds or vegetation.<sup>744</sup> Another term for steppe is *nwh*, whose verbal form in Arabic *nawā* denotes "to aim at" and "to abide" (in the reflexive form, VIII); *nawû*, in Akkadian, designates a "steppe, wilderness." The same word in the feminine means a "pasture, meadow." Both terms belong to the elevated style because they are mentioned almost exclusively in the books of the prophets and in the Hagiographa. The word *ṛbh* is used in parallel with: *mḏbr*,<sup>745</sup> *ṛš ṣyh* "arid, desert land,"<sup>746</sup> *šmmh* "devastation, waste" (Jer. 51:43), *mlḥh* "saltiness, barrenness, salt flat" (Job 39: 6). As we have seen above, *ḥṛbh* designates the depression which extends from the Israeli-Lebanon border to the Gulf of Aqabah. There are three terms with the general meaning of "dry land" which may not necessarily refer to a steppe. These are *šm<sup>2</sup>wn* "thirsty ground,"<sup>747</sup> *ṣyh* "dryness, dry land, i.e., desert,"<sup>748</sup> *ṣywn* "dryness, parched ground" (Is. 25:5; 32:2).

The sandy texture of the desert soil presents a slight fraction of organic material in the upper layer very near the surface, which permits a few desert plants, such as thorns, to complete their growing cycle within a few weeks after the end of the winter rains. Despite the scarce plant life in the deserts, the visitor's general impression is one of complete desolation. This is expressed by the terms *šmh* a "waste, horror," which occurs twenty-four times in the book of Jeremiah; a similar term, *mšmh* a "devastation, waste, horror," is employed mainly by Ezekiel; similarly, the word *šmmh* a "devastation,, waste," is frequently used to designate the desert. The root which underlies all these nouns is *šmm* "be desolated, appalled." In desert soils, there may occur a high degree of salinity.

His home I made the wilderness (*ṛbh*),  
His dwelling the salt flats (*mlḥh*).<sup>749</sup>

<sup>743</sup> Cf. Gen. 4:20; 36:24; Ex. 17:1; 19:2; Num. 10:12, 31; 14:33; Is. 25:6; 35:6; 41:19; 50:2; Jer. 9:25; 23:10; Neh. 9:21; Ps. 65:13; 78:52; 107:33, etc.

<sup>744</sup> Cf. 2 Sam. 17:29; Is. 41:18; 64:9; Jer. 2:6; 23:10; Hos. 2:5; 13:5; Joel 1:19f; Mal. 1:3.

<sup>745</sup> Cf. Is. 35:1, 6; 41:19; 51:3; Jer. 2:6; 50:12.

<sup>746</sup> Cf. Is. 35:1; Jer. 2:6; 50:12.

<sup>747</sup> Deut. 8:15; Is. 35:7; Ps. 107:33.

<sup>748</sup> Cf. Is. 35:1; Zeph. 2:13; Job 30:3; Ps. 78:17.

<sup>749</sup> Job 39:6; cf. also Ps. 107:34; *ṛš mlḥh*, Jer. 17:6.

The term *thw* applied to primeval chaos, in Gen. 1:2, is used of the desert.<sup>750</sup> The stone-strewn terrain with vast expanses of bare rock and numerous scattered boulders and scree, suggest the vision of an abandoned city. This type of desert is called *hrbh*,<sup>751</sup> which elsewhere denotes a "desolation, ruin."

Any study of landscapes would include mention of the surface features of the earth. However, in the absence of biblical references to a stratigraphic panorama, we can only list various kinds of rock debris on the earth's surface and the terms for topsoil. The general term for rock is *šwr*, which denotes the rock material and the rocky wall, cliff, as well as a block or stone boulder. Figuratively, God is spoken of as a rock because he provides support and defends his people. The word *šl'* a "crag, cliff" is frequently used as a synonym for *šwr*. There are five references to *hlmyš* "flint."<sup>752</sup> Also there is the term *kp* "rock," attested only in the plural (Jer. 4: 29; Job 30: 6), which is a loan-word from the Aramaic *kyp*<sup>2</sup> of the same meaning. Besides the references to rock, there is a general word for stone, i.e., *bn*. There are two instances of *šrwr* "pebble" (2 Sam. 17: 13; Am. 9: 9) which is etymologically related to *šwr* "rock, cliff" and to *šr* "flint-stone." Equally uncommon is the word *hšš* "gravel" (Prov. 20: 17; Lam. 3: 1). The number of terms referring to the texture of the soil indicates that the ancient Hebrews knew a fairly wide range of soil types. First of all, there is the topsoil, humus (*dmh*). Then, because of the extremes of temperature and strength of the wind, the upper layer of the earth's surface may present itself as *bq* "dust."<sup>753</sup> Also, soils of a markedly sandy texture are those composed of sands of fairly fine consistency (*hwl*) deposited in dunes or accumulated on the sea shore. Finally, there are the layers of clay (*hmr*) and the deposits of silt and clay which may have the form of mud or mire (*tyt*).

In the light of the number of words denoting various elements of the surface of the earth, the ancient Hebrews seemingly distinguished certain surface features, such as humus (*dmh*); various kinds of rock debris: rock (*šwr*), flint-stone (*hlmyš* and *šr*), stone (*bn*), pebble (*šrwr*), gravel (*hšš*); sandy texture (*hwl*); silt and clay deposits (*tyt*); and layers of clay (*hmr*).

The younger sedimentary material accumulated on the earth's crust was laid down either by aeolian deposition or by volcanic deposits or by sedimentation of exfoliated material (stones of various sizes, flint, etc.) resulting from erosion. A study of these geophysical phenomena is now in place.

<sup>750</sup> Cf. Deut. 32:10; Ps. 107:40; Job 6:18; 12:24.

<sup>751</sup> Cf. Lev. 26:31; Is. 44:26; 51:3; 12:9; Jer. 7:34; 22:5; 25:18; 27:17; 44:2; 49:13; Ez. 5:14; 25:4; Dan. 9:9, etc.

<sup>752</sup> Cf. Deut. 8:15; 32:13; Is. 50:7; Ps. 114:8; Job 28:9.

<sup>753</sup> Cf. Ex. 9:9; Deut. 28:24; Is. 5:24; 29:5.

## 2. Geophysical Phenomena

Palestine's geographical conditions marked by a highly diversified nature, with related areas of land and sea, mountains and deserts, the seasonal elevations of the heat of the summer and the cold of the winter, are determinant factors which distinguish it from other countries of the Near East. A comparison of the landscape and climate of Egypt with that of Palestine reveals that none of these extremes is present in the Nile valley. Egypt is warm and balmy, without violent extremes of temperature. Dry and pleasant breezes soften the summer's heat. The luxuriant plant life of the valley is a soft gray-green from the dust never washed away by rains. The arable land, extending along the river and bounded by desert, consists of ribbons of watered land on either bank of the Nile and the fan-shaped delta built up along the Mediterranean coast. The considerable area of Mesopotamia basically resembles Egypt. Two large rivers flow across an extensive plain, whose fertility is renowned for the silt deposited. With almost no diversified terrain, especially with regard to differences in altitude, there are hardly any distinctions in temperature.

If we try to single out some specific features, resulting from the sharp climatic distinctions and the highly diversified nature of the terrain in Palestine, we should perhaps point to the degree to which the biblical authors emphasized erosion, earthquakes, and volcanic eruptions, which are unparalleled in the literatures either of Mesopotamia or Egypt. This particular emphasis would seem to be closely bound up with the geophysical phenomena. Thus, the clouds borne by prevailing winds from the Mediterranean sea to inland deserts, are condensed on the mountain escarpments as very heavy dews and seasonal rains. Heavy winter rains, however, often cause erosion whereby topsoil and porous limestone rock are swept away and carried off by several watercourses, which are for the most part quite dry except for a few days in the rainy season, when they are raging brown torrents. A particularly suggestive passage illustrates the phenomenon of erosion.

Water wears away stone,  
 Torrents sweep away earth's soil  
 And you destroy man's hope.<sup>754</sup>

The phenomenon of erosion in Palestine may assume catastrophic proportions. Then it is called *šṭp* "flood, inundation,"<sup>755</sup> in Arabic *sail*

<sup>754</sup> Job 14:19. The word *spyhyh* should be emended to *shypyh*, on the grounds of a metathesis of *p* with *h*. Cf. footnote 609. Cf. also 2 K. 3:22. The red color of the river flowing through Moabite territory seems to suggest a heavy flood of liquid mud rolling through a quagmire.

<sup>755</sup> Nah. 1:8; Ps. 32:6; Job 38:25; Dan. 9:26; cf. also Prov. 27:4.

"flood, inundation, torrential stream." After a violent thunderstorm swift brown torrents rush down the wadis, sweeping away all in their paths, causing loss of lives and damage to property. The verb *šḥq* "to rub away, pulverize" describes quite effectively how heavy rainfall deteriorates the porous limestone rocks, while the verb *šṭp* "to overflow, wash off" connotes the erosion of topsoil. Linked with erosion are the landslides, frequently associated with a theophany.

O Lord, when you came forth from Seir,  
When you marched from the land of Edom,  
The earth quaked, the heavens also dropped,  
The clouds, too, dripped water,  
The mountains rocked at the presence of the Lord.<sup>756</sup>

But mountains topple and crumble,  
Rock moves (*yṯq*) from its place.<sup>757</sup>

For, lo, the Lord is coming forth from his place,  
And he will descend and tread upon the heights of the earth;  
And the mountains shall melt (*wnmsw*) under him.  
And the valleys be split asunder,  
Like wax before the fire,  
Like water poured down a precipice.<sup>758</sup>

The mountains melt like wax before the Lord,  
Before the Lord of all the earth.<sup>759</sup>

The mountains quake at him,  
And the hills melt.  
The earth is laid waste before him.<sup>760</sup>

To understand the devastating effects of landslides was to understand the cause of these phenomena, to know the range of Yahweh's power. Thus, landslides, which happened to be recurrent events due perhaps to violent rainstorms or earthquakes, were interpreted as one of the concomitant features of a theophany. Landslides are described figuratively as a mass of rocks and earth which is poured like waters down the precipice (*kmym*

<sup>756</sup> Judg. 5:4-5. The verb *nzlw*, in verse 5, should be vocalized as *nāzollū*, as in Is. 63:19; 64:2, derived from the root *zll* "to shake, quake."

<sup>757</sup> Job, 14:18. G. Beer, in *KBH*<sup>13</sup>, emends the expression *nwpl ybwl* to *npwl ypl* "will surely fall." However, Tur-Sinai suggests such a different word division, that a different meaning results: "a lofty mountain turns into a stream" (*hr nwp lybwl*). *nwp*, here connected with *hr*, means the top of a mountain or hill. See Tur-Sinai, *The Book of Job* (Jerusalem: Kiryath Sepher, 1957), p. 240ff, note 18. We do not follow G. Beer's emendation because the parallel verse of the second stich expresses the idea of "removal, transfer."

<sup>758</sup> Mic. 1:3-4. It is difficult, however, to decide whether the imagery here implied refers to a landslide or to a volcanic eruption.

<sup>759</sup> Ps. 97:5.

<sup>760</sup> Nah 1:5. We follow O. Procksch's proposed emendation of *wtšp* for *wtšp*.

*mgwrym bmwrd*). The slipping down of such a mass has suggestively been rendered by the usage of the verbs *mss* "to dissolve, melt," and by *mwg* "to melt," and has been compared with melted wax.

In biblical literature are echoes of noteworthy features of geographical phenomena which, we must recall, were used especially in the nature symbolism of the theophany. Apparently, the biblical authors have failed to define the nature and the effect of these natural physical phenomena with any precision. These authors remained ambiguous about earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, tidal waves, etc. It is surprising however, that the biblical authors were not more precise in their allusions to earthquakes, since "the whole of the Jordan valley is an area of seismic disturbance, and major earthquakes happen on an average four times a century."<sup>761</sup> The only reference to a major earthquake that occurred two years before Amos' appearance is of no assistance in securing a more exact date.<sup>762</sup> From the title page of the book of Amos, added by an editor to the oracles of the prophet, we know that Amos' activity is placed in the reign of Uzziah (786-744 B.C.) and the reign of Jeroboam, the son of Joash (788-747 B.C.). That earthquake must have been of significant magnitude, since it was still remembered in the days of Zechariah, more than two centuries later, as having taken place in the reign of Uzziah (Zech. 14: 5). The attempt to fix a date between 745 and 740 B.C. for the earthquake is unconvincing. Josephus makes mention of one, in 31 B.C., which had caused about ten thousand (A.J. XI. 5, 2) or thirty thousand (W.J. I. 13, 9) deaths. Apart from these historical references to earthquakes, the trembling of the earth is a regular feature in the descriptions which the biblical authors give of past, present and future epiphanies of Yahweh.

Who moves [*hm<sup>c</sup>tyq*] mountains before one knows it,  
Overturns them [*hpk<sup>m</sup>*] in his anger;  
Who shakes [*hmrgyz*] the earth from its place,  
And her pillars tremble [*ytplšwn*].<sup>763</sup>

The nether world reeled [*wtg<sup>c</sup>š*] and rocked [*wtr<sup>c</sup>š*]  
The foundations of the mountains shuddered [*yrgzw*];  
They reeled when his anger blazed.<sup>764</sup>

You have made the earth quake [*hr<sup>c</sup>št*],  
You have rent it [*pšmth*];  
Heal its wounds; for it staggers [*mth*].<sup>765</sup>

<sup>761</sup> See K. M. Kenyon, *Archaeology in the Holy Land* (New York: F. A. Praeger, Paperback ed., 1960), p. 105.

<sup>762</sup> Cf. Am. 1:1; 9:5.

<sup>763</sup> Job 9:5f.

<sup>764</sup> Ps. 18:8. The balance with the second half-stich "the foundations of the mountains," which are set in the nether world, suggests the translation of *ʔrš* as nether world. See M. Dahood, *op. cit.*, p. 106, note 8.

<sup>765</sup> Ps. 60:4. F. Buhl, in *KBH*<sup>13</sup>, suggests a different word division by taking the

Therefore I will cause the heavens to tremble [ʔrgyz]  
 And the earth will quake [hrʕš] out of its place,  
 Through the wrath of the Lord of hosts,  
 On the day of his fierce anger.<sup>766</sup>

The analysis of the verbs employed to describe the seismic disturbance, caused either by faulting of the rocks or by volcanic shocks, will help discover in these images the precise allusion to an earthquake. The following verbs *nḥk* "to overturn" and *pšm* "to split open," are employed to describe the effect of an earthquake. Besides *ʕtq* "to move, advance," there are certain verbs hardly different in meaning. Literally the idea of trembling, shaking, is expressed by *rʕš* and *gʕš*. In a figurative sense the pillars of the earth are said to shudder (*ytḥwn*). There are, also, the verbs *rgz* "be agitated, quiver, shake" and *mwṭ* "to totter, shake, slip," which connote instability of the structure of the earth at the occasion of an earthquake.

In a number of passages, which seem to reveal the acquaintance of the biblical authors with a geophysical phenomenon of great significance, we discern direct allusions to volcanic eruptions. Samples of different layers of the earth's crust collected in Galilee revealed that the soil is partly volcanic. Traces of both ancient and fairly recent volcanic activity have been found in Bashan, the northernmost of the parts into which the region east of the Jordan was divided.<sup>767</sup> In the district of Hauran, located on the left bank of the river Jordan, north of the Yarmuk river, numerous craters and cones are still visible.<sup>768</sup> The Israelites may have seen one of the craters in activity. M. Schumacher's explorations in the valley of Jezreel, the eastern part of the valley of Esdraelon, have supported the convincing traces of early volcanic eruptions. Of equally compelling interest are the traces of two lava beds crossing the valley of Jezreel. Schumacher's discovery of a vase imbedded in the stone dated, according to him, from the third millennium (but according to other archeologists, from the fifteenth century B.C., because of its striking similarity with Phoenician pottery) would lead to the conclusion that a volcanic eruption could have taken place during the second millennium B.C.<sup>769</sup>

However convincing these archeological data may be, scriptural references contain only general allusions to earthquakes, associated with a theophany.

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final *h* of the verb *hrʕšth* as the definite article of *ʔrš*. The verb *rḥ*, in verse 4b, appears to be variant spelling of *rpʕ* "to heal."

<sup>766</sup> Is. 13:13; cf. also Is. 29:6; Joel 2:10; 4:16; Hag. 2:6f. In this connection we should mention Jeremiah's description of the return of chaos, Jer. 4:23ff.

<sup>767</sup> See I. Benzinger, *Hebräische Archäologie* (Leipzig: E. Pfeiffer, 3rd. ed., 1927), pp. 14f, 18.

<sup>768</sup> See C. McCown's article "Geography of Palestine," in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, III, pp. 626-639, especially p. 629.

<sup>769</sup> See H. Gressmann, *Palästinas Erdgeruch in der israelitischen Religion* (Berlin: K. Curtius, 1909), p. 74f, citing Schumacher.

Who can stand before his wrath?  
 Who can endure his fierce anger?  
 His fury is poured out like fire,  
 And the rocks are burst open by him.<sup>770</sup>

For a fire shall blaze within me,  
 And burn to the very depths of Sheol;  
 So that it shall consume the earth and its produce,  
 And set the bases of the mountains on fire.<sup>771</sup>

He looks at the earth and it quakes;  
 He touches the mountains and they smoke!<sup>772</sup>

These passages neither fully describe nor explain volcanic eruptions. What, then, about other evidence of early Hebrew tradition concerning volcanoes? For example,

Mount Sinai was completely enveloped in smoke, because the Lord had descended upon it in fire; its smoke ascended like the smoke [šn] from a kiln [kbšn], so that all the people trembled violently.<sup>773</sup>

And again,

As he [Abraham] looked down toward Sodom and Gomorrah and the whole area of the Plain, he could see only smoke [qytr] like the fumes [qytr] from a kiln.<sup>774</sup>

Here the biblical author does not employ the term šn, regularly used to designate "smoke," but rather a noun cognate with the term for "incense." Thus, the emphasis is on dense vapors, such as might be caused by the firing of lime or the burning of fat or incense.

As regards the description of Mount Sinai in terms of an active volcano, it is important to notice how its eruption is pictured. The account mentions that "the Lord had descended upon it in fire," whereas in what might be called an eyewitness report it is said that "the mountain flamed up in fire [b<sup>c</sup>r b<sup>s</sup>š] to the very heart of the heavens, shrouded in darkness, cloud, and gloom" (Deut. 4:11). Thus, it would seem, that the author of the former account clearly drew upon traditional material and wove it into his narrative of the Sinai tradition. Hence, it would appear,

<sup>770</sup> Nah. 1:6. O. Procksch, in *KBH*<sup>13</sup>, emends *ntšw* to *nštw* from the root *yst* "to set on fire, kindle." However, we find no compelling reason to adopt this emendation, but derive *ntšw* from the root *ntš* "to break away, burst open."

<sup>771</sup> Deut. 32:22.

<sup>772</sup> Ps. 104:32; cf. also 144:5.

<sup>773</sup> Ex. 19:18.

<sup>774</sup> Gen. 19:28; see also E. A. Speiser's annotation to this passage in *op. cit.* p. 141, note 28.

that we have here a conflation of several traditions, and factors unknown to us have operated in the selection and depiction of whatever traditions were thus utilized. Considerable reservations regarding the accuracy of this account must be made.

Another argument, however, deserves serious consideration. The detail in the description which suggests that Mount Sinai was an active volcano raises doubts about the volcanic eruption itself. Now, as H. Gressmann propounded, no active volcanoes have existed in the traditional Sinaitic peninsula in historical times. There are traces of extinct as well as of active volcanoes in the region along the east coast of the Red Sea, especially in the area between Mecca and Medina, even as far north as to the land of Edom.<sup>775</sup> "It is possible that among the tribes wandering about in southern and eastern Palestine volcanic manifestations which were well known in northwestern Arabia were traditionally thought of as phenomena accompanying theophanies, and that they were mentioned even when the theophany occurred in a place with no volcanoes."<sup>776</sup> If this inference be sound the volcanic manifestations on Mount Sinai may be a literary device employed by the biblical author to stress the awe-inspiring presence of Yahweh. Otherwise, Sinai would have to be located where volcanic eruptions actually occurred in historical times.

Finally, as regards a specific geophysical phenomenon even the sea with its tidal waves challenges the security of the earth.

The one who summons the waters of the sea,  
And pours them out upon the surface of the earth;  
The Lord is his name.<sup>777</sup>

The geophysical phenomena, such as erosion, landslide, earthquake, volcanic eruption, and tidal waves which ensue sufficiently prove that nothing can resist Yahweh's might. For these phenomena challenge the very stability of the universe itself; and we may note, in this connection, that the ancient Hebrews did not feel called on to define the cause and the nature of their effects with any precision. Moreover, the descriptions of all known cataclysms may, in one or another instance, be applied to more than one seismic disturbance. It is admittedly difficult, at times, to discover in these images any precise allusion to specific cosmic disturbances. It would seem, then, that the idea alone is what matters, a God who upsets all that lies in his path is manifesting himself to the Israelites.

<sup>775</sup> See H. Gressmann, *op. cit.*, p. 72.

<sup>776</sup> M. Noth, *The History of Israel* (New York and Evanston: Harper & Row, 2nd. ed., 1960), p. 131.

<sup>777</sup> Am. 5:8; 9:6b; cf. also Ez. 26:19.

### 3. The Navel of the Earth

We have dealt thus far with the ancient Hebrews' conception of the earth as the entire habitable area, as opposed to the regions of heaven and of the underworld, with its topographical and geographical features and as subjected to geophysical phenomena. Although the biblical authors did not seek to provide, from the outset, a general interpretation of cosmic realities, it appears that with the growing notion of Yahweh's universal government the Hebrews achieved a certain detachment from their narrower environment so that they could consider the world as an integrated whole. As the Hebrews became more space-conscious they related all the territories surrounding Israel to one center. An interesting parallel to this line of thought is afforded by a pictorial representation of the earth on a clay tablet from Babylon dated from the Persian period. At the center of the terrestrial disk lies Babylon; towns are indicated by small circles; the area which seems to be the inhabited earth is encircled by an ocean "and finally, still farther outside, the most distant regions are indicated by triangles."<sup>778</sup> The earlier Greek maps must have appeared the same as can be seen from the disparaging comment of Herodotus: "But I smile when I see many persons describing the circumference of the earth, who have no sound reason to guide them; they describe the ocean flowing round the earth, which is made circular as if by a lathe, and make Asia equal to Europe."<sup>779</sup>

In the light of the skeleton map of the earth's surface with Babylon as its center it would seem that the reference to Jerusalem being surrounded by countries — "I have set her [Jerusalem] in the midst of the nations, with lands round about her,"<sup>780</sup> is an Israelite version of the Babylonian conception of the earth. Another passage refers to Jerusalem as *ṭbwr h'rš* "the navel, center of the earth."<sup>781</sup> The same expression occurs elsewhere in context regarding a political conflict between Israelites and Canaanites. When Gaal and his kinsmen, who appear to have been Canaanites, moved to Shechem, Gaal incited the citizens to overthrow the half-Israelite Abimelech and to restore a native Canaanite ruler. Informed by Zebul of the plot and instructed how to marshal his forces, Abimelech gathered his troops during the night and marched against the city of Shechem. When Gaal was informed of those maneuvers, he said: "See, there are people descending from the vicinity of 'the navel of the earth' [*ṭbwr h'rš*]" (Judg. 9:37). The highest mountain in that area is Mount

<sup>778</sup> See G. Contenau, *op. cit.*, p. 225.

<sup>779</sup> *Histories*, IV, 39.

<sup>780</sup> Ez. 5:5.

<sup>781</sup> Ez. 38:12. Ch. 38 is a late raddition to the book of Ezekiel. Jerusalem, more specifically Mount Zion, is explicitly entitled "navel of the earth" in the apocryphal (pseudepigraphal) literature of the OT. Cf. Jub. 8:19; Hen. 26:1.

Gerizim, which stands approximately 2900 feet above the Mediterranean and approximately 700 feet above the narrow valley between it and Mount Ebal. The Samaritans considered Mount Gerizim "the highest part of the earth." In the elaboration of the theories regarding the earth's center, it is interesting to note that, if a mountain was claimed to be the center of the earth, it was associated with an important sanctuary, as illustrated in the following biblical passage:

It shall come to pass in days to come,  
 That the mountain of the Lord's house [*hr byt-yhwh*] will be  
 Established on top of the mountains [*br<sup>2</sup>š hhrym*]  
 And elevated above the hills [*mgb<sup>c</sup>wt*].  
 Peoples will stream unto it,  
 And many nations will come, and say:  
 "Come, let us go up to the mount of the Lord [*hr-yhwh*],  
 To the house of the God of Jacob [*byt <sup>2</sup>lhy y<sup>c</sup>qb*];  
 That he may instruct us in his ways,  
 And that we may walk in his paths;  
 For from Zion goes forth instruction,  
 And the word of the Lord from Jerusalem."<sup>782</sup>

From an analysis of these passages, several details are worth pointing out. The investigation of the expression *ṭbwr h<sup>2</sup>rš* provides an interesting insight into the idea of the Hebrews in particular and of the western Semites in general concerning the navel of the earth. The detail of special interest in the word *ṭbwr*, which is translated "highest part, center," (so *B.D.B.*), perhaps because of its context in Judg. 9:37: *‘m ywrdym m<sup>c</sup>m ṭbwr h<sup>2</sup>rš* "there are people descending from the highest part of the earth." Since etymology is of no help in ascertaining the original meaning of *ṭbwr*, we may compare it with the Aramaic *ṭybwr<sup>2</sup>*, *ṭybwr<sup>3</sup>* "the navel."<sup>783</sup> Another Hebrew term for navel is *šr* (*šrr*).<sup>784</sup>

Before introducing the study of the conception of the navel of the earth in Israelite tradition, we have to distinguish between the passages in the Old Testament which refer to a specific spot considered as the center of the earth and the comparative material from Mesopotamia, Egypt, Arabia, and Greece, where the center of the earth has been interpreted as "the navel of the earth." As shown by the accounts and the pictorial representations from Mesopotamia, this notion was expressed by means of a description of a topographical feature of the landscape (i.e., a mountain), or by naming a city or a sanctuary the center of the earth.

<sup>782</sup> Mic. 4:1-2; cf. also Is. 2:2-3.

<sup>783</sup> In the LXX Cod. B *ṭbwr* is rendered as *omphalos*. The Peshitta has two different words: *tūqānā* (in Judg. 9:37), which Brockelmann lists last after the meanings "creatio, praeparatum, apparatus, opus, cultura, instrumentum, nutrimentum;" and *šūprā* (in Ez. 38:12), with the meaning "pulchritudo, gloria, pars optima [and] *ṭbwr*, ripa, aurora." Cf. C. Brockelmann, *Lexicon Syriacum* (Halis Saxonum: Max Niemeyer, 1928<sup>2</sup>).

<sup>784</sup> Cf. Ez. 16:4; Cant. 7:3.

According to Arab geographers, Babylonia (Iraq) or the Persian empire was called "navel of the earth" because of its location in the center of the seven sectors into which the earth was divided.<sup>785</sup> In the mountain ranges of the eastern highlands of Turkey is located Mount Niphat which, according to Plutarch (Alex. 31), is opposite the Gordyaeon mountains. This mount is further specified in Avestan as *apâm napât* "the waters' navel."<sup>786</sup> However, not only Babylon claimed to be the center of the earth. From a description of Nineveh, we learn that a cosmographer, by name Aethicus Istricus, refers to that city as the navel and marrow of other cities.<sup>787</sup>

The same feature of interest for our purpose is illustrated by a remarkable Meroitic monument from the great temple of Amon at Gebel Barka, which Dr. Reisner discovered in 1915.

It is of sandstone and evidently of moderate size. Its conical shape is precisely that of the omphalos at the oracle of Delphi . . . I [Griffith] ventured to identify it with the umbilicus-like figure of the god of the Oasis of Ammon which is recorded only by Quintus Curtius in the following description: — "The thing which is worshipped as a god has not the shape that artificers have usually applied to the gods; its appearance is most likely an umbilicus, and is made of an (?) emerald and gems cemented together [smaragdo et gemmis coagmentatus]." Anyhow the present omphalos is unique from Nubia and is probably to be connected with an oracle of Ammon. Perhaps the imitative Nubians took the idea from Delphi . . . That date of the monument would seem to be round about A.D. I. [sic].<sup>788</sup>

This archeological discovery is of great significance because it bears witness to the description made by Quintus Curtius of a similar monument which Alexander the Great had seen in Lybia.<sup>789</sup> The "omphalos" found in the temple of Amon at Napata is in itself important evidence for the existence in Egypt of the idea of the navel of the earth which apparently was a prominent feature of the Amon cult whose religious center was Thebes.<sup>790</sup>

<sup>785</sup> See A. Jeremias, *Handbuch* . . . , p. 34.

<sup>786</sup> See F. Hommel, *Ethnologie* . . . , p. 208f, n. 4.

<sup>787</sup> See Aethicus Istricus, cap. 107, p. 80, ed. Wuttke, quoted by W. H. Roscher, *Der Omphalosgedanke bei verschiedenen Völkern, besonders den semitischen* (Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1918), p. 11.

<sup>788</sup> F. L. Griffith, "An Omphalos from Napata," in *The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*, III, Part IV, Oct. 1916, p. 255, quoted by W. H. Roscher, *op. cit.*, p. 80f. On the suggestion that the Primordial Hill, equated with the temples of Heliopolis, Hermopolis, Memphis, Thebes, Philae, and alleged to stand upon it, represents the same function as the "navel of the earth," see E. O. James, *The Ancient Gods* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1960), p. 211.

<sup>789</sup> See W. H. Roscher, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

<sup>790</sup> "In Egyptian texts Thebes is commonly referred to simply as *niwt*, 'the City,' but also more explicitly, as *niwt Imn*, 'the Cit of Amon.' The simple designation *niwt*

Greece offers evidence from both literature and pictorial representations on vases and panels that several cities were considered as the navel of the earth. Athens is referred to as *omphalos gēs* (designated *mesomphalia gaiēs* in Hellenistic Greek) since the sixth century B.C. at least. Homer mentions the island of Calypso (i.e., Ogygia) as *omphalos tēs thalassēs* (Od. I, 50). Other Greek cities which claimed for themselves the same privilege were Eleusis, Delphi, Paphos, Delos, Epidaurus. The literary and archeological information for the Greek notion of the *omphalos gēs*, from the classical to the Hellenistic Age, merely shows that the "navel of the earth" had a geographical connotation.<sup>791</sup> This particular idea was carried over to the Roman empire. Rome had its *umbilicus orbis* located next to the golden milestone in the Forum.<sup>792</sup>

In this short sketch of the ancient Hebrews' conception of the center of the earth it must be remembered that only after the Exile is this idea explicitly mentioned. In one of the earliest biblical passages there is a reference to a spot which has the privileged position for a cult-center.

Leaving Beersheba, Jacob set out for Haran. Reaching a certain place, he spent the night there; for the sun had set. He took one of the stones of the place, and using it for a pillow, he lay down in that place. He had a dream in which he saw a staircase [*slm*] set up on the earth, with its top reaching the heaven: and behold the angels of God were ascending and descending on it.<sup>793</sup>

This passage, ascribed to the Elohist strand, represents the bond between heaven and earth as a staircase (*slm*).

And he was awe-struck, and said:

"What an awesome place this is! This is none other but the house of God [*byt ʾlhym*], and this is the gate of heaven [*šʿr hšmym*]." And Jacob rose up early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put for his pillow, and set it up as a pillar [*mšbh*], and poured oil on its top.<sup>794</sup>

The Yahwist writer identifies this spot with Bethel, which was formerly called Luz (Gen. 28:19). Archeology throws some light on the history of

is reflected in the Hebrew transcription *nʾ* while *niwt Imn*, referring to the fact that Thebes was the cult center for the worship of Amon, is echoed in Nah. 3:8 *nʾ ʾmwn*." See T. O. Lambdin's article "Thebes," in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, IV, pp. 615-617, especially p. 615.

<sup>791</sup> The story connected with Delphi's *omphalos gēs* was that Zeus, desiring to find the center of the earth, started two eagles of equal speed at the same moment, one from the eastern edge of the world, one from the western; they met at Delphi. See H. J. Rose, *A Handbook of Greek Mythology* (London: Methuen & Co., 4th ed., 1950), pp. 137-138.

<sup>792</sup> See A. Jeremias, *op. cit.*, p. 34; cf. also W. H. Roscher, *op. cit.*, pp. 61-78.

<sup>793</sup> Gen. 28:10-12.

<sup>794</sup> Gen. 28:17f.

this city. J. L. Kelso remarks that this spot "was apparently already holy ground, as testified by tombs in the general neighborhood. The city itself was founded approximately 2000 B.C., at least a century before Abraham's time. A city wall on the North, . . . was built in the early Hyksos period (approximately 1750-1650)." <sup>795</sup> The great antiquity of this city and the remains discovered at this site suggest that Bethel was a cult-center of the Canaanites before it became Israelite. Hence, it is also possible that the ancient Hebrews retained some traditions connected with that particular place. In the absence of more information it is impossible to say whether the stone which Jacob set up as a pillar after he had used it as a pillow has anything to do with cone shaped pillars representing the navel of the earth. On the other hand, the representation of the "staircase set up on the earth with its top reaching the heaven" may indicate that Bethel was thought to have been a link between heaven and earth.

As already noted above, the passage which refers to Jerusalem located "in the midst of the nations with lands round about her" (Ez. 5:5), seems to imply that Jerusalem was considered the center of the earth. In another passage emphasis is placed quite decidedly upon two specific features of Jerusalem, namely its location on top of a mountain and its importance derived from the sanctuary. <sup>796</sup> Wensinck drew attention to a special significance attributed to mountains in the creation account contained in the book of Proverbs.

When there were no depths was I brought forth,  
 When there were no fountains brimming with water;  
 Before the mountains were sunk,  
 Before the hills was I brought forth,  
 While as yet he had not made the earth and the fields,  
 Nor the first clods of the world. <sup>797</sup>

When he set for the sea its bound,  
 So that the waters should not transgress his command;  
 When he traced the foundations of the earth . . . <sup>798</sup>

"The sequence of the different acts of the creation is consequently this: the Ocean, the mountains being immersed in it, the earth and her ways. So the first solid spots in the Ocean are the mountains; after them the earth is created. The mountains consequently possess the characteristic, belonging to the navel, of being the parts of the earth which have been

<sup>795</sup> See J. L. Kelso's article "Bethel (Sanctuary)," in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, I, pp. 391-393, especially p. 391.

<sup>796</sup> Cf. Mic. 4:1f; Is. 2:2f.

<sup>797</sup> Prov. 8:24-26.

<sup>798</sup> Prov. 8:29.

created before the rest.”<sup>799</sup> A further feature which qualifies a mountain to represent the navel of the earth is having its foundation sunk in the waters of the subterranean ocean, thus establishing a link with the underworld. This idea is still retained in the imagery which represents the mountains as pillars. It would seem that these pillars of the earth<sup>800</sup> connect the underworld with the heaven.<sup>801</sup> Furthermore, there was the general belief held by the ancient Hebrews that the mountains are related to the fertility of the land, because the moisture brought by rain and dew, falling upon the mountains, issues as fountains in the valleys.<sup>802</sup>

From the scanty material available in the Old Testament about the mountain representing the navel of the earth, there can be gathered three characteristic features of the mountains in general: first, they were created before the rest of the world; second, they establish a link between the underworld and the heaven; third, they are related to the fertility of the land.

Our understanding of all the aspects of the navel of the earth thus far mentioned would, however, be incomplete unless they are seen in relationship to a sanctuary. When Ezekiel spoke of Jerusalem's being established in the midst of the nations (Ez. 5:5), what he said was far from conveying merely the idea of its geographical location — it was rather an avowal of the religious significance of that city. The portrait of Jerusalem pictured in Mic. 4:1f shows a mountain surpassing all surrounding elevations and on whose top is built the house of the Lord. Similarly, a passage related in Is. 28:16 offers another interesting example of the prominent position which Jerusalem held in the religious life of the Hebrew nation. In metaphorical language, pure and unadulterated religion is compared with a well-tested stone (*ʿbn bḥn*) laid in Zion as the cornerstone of a building erected by Yahweh himself.<sup>803</sup> Although none of these passages explicitly refers to the temple of Jerusalem as the navel of the earth, they nevertheless have significant implications for the navel-theories as we find them in rabbinic, Syriac, and Arab literatures.<sup>804</sup>

But Jerusalem, and possibly Bethel in earlier times, were not the only cities which the inhabitants of Palestine considered to be the center of the earth. As a matter of fact, the Samaritans attributed special religious significance to Mount Gerizim which, together with Mount Ebal,

<sup>799</sup> See A. J. Wensinck, *The Ideas of the Western Semites concerning the Navel of the Earth* (Amsterdam: Johannes Müller, 1916), p. 2.

<sup>800</sup> Cf. the expression *mšqy hʿrš*, 1 Sam. 2:8; *ʿmwdyh*, Ps. 75:4; Job 9:6; *mwsdy ʿrš*, Prov. 8:29.

<sup>801</sup> Although the mountains are not explicitly referred to either as pillars of the earth or pillars of heaven (*ʿmwdy šmym*, Job 26:11), it appears in Prov. 8:25-29 that these pillars are the mountains.

<sup>802</sup> Cf. Ps. 104:9f, 13; 133:3.

<sup>803</sup> Cf. Is. 28:16. In the poetic books and the prophetic writings, Zion becomes an equivalent of Jerusalem considered as the religious capital of the Hebrew nation.

<sup>804</sup> See A. J. Wensinck, *op. cit.*, pp. 13-15.

formed from of old a pair of sacred mountains.<sup>805</sup> This center gained in cultic and political importance in the postexilic period, when a final separation of the cultic community of Jerusalem from the Samaritan community resulted.

It may be added that the idea of the center of the earth is not restricted to the civilizations of the ancient Near East. This idea lived on finding its way into Islamic tradition. Mecca is referred to in the Koran as "the mother of cities and all around her" (*umm al-qurā wa-man ḥaulahā*).<sup>806</sup> It is interesting to note that Mecca does not derive any religious significance from its location between the two mountains, Abū Qubais and Jabal al-Aḥmar, as is the case of Shechem. A. J. Wensinck remarks that "this phenomenon is perhaps due to... the tendency to efface the pagan reminiscences connected with these places."<sup>807</sup>

We may summarize the analysis of these passages concerning the center of the earth by pointing out that the idea of the navel of the earth is mentioned in Greek *omphalos gēs* "navel of the earth" and in the Hebrew expression *ṭbwr ḥʿrṣ* "the navel of the earth." The significance of this idea may be seen in the function of the navel of the earth which is to establish a link between the heaven and the underworld. Moreover, the navel of the earth is intimately associated with the political and the religious center of a nation. In Israelite tradition there seem to have been two of those centers: Bethel, which was probably recognized as such already by the Canaanites, and Jerusalem, which surpassed it in prominence, from the monarchical period onward. We may notice that certain emphasis is placed on two specific features of Jerusalem: its location on top of a mountain and its religious significance derived from the sanctuary. Moreover, some characteristics of the mountains referred to in biblical passages allow one to assume a relationship between a mountain and the navel of the earth; thus, the mountains were created

<sup>805</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11. Clear references to the religious significance of Mount Gerizim are in Josephus' *Ant.* XVIII, 4, 1, "Mount Gerizim, which is by them [Samaritans] looked upon as the most holy of all the mountains;" *Bel. Jud.* III, 7, 32, "the mountain called Gerizim, which is with them [Samaritans] a holy mountain." In other sources, such as *Siphre Dt.* 56 (87a), Gerizim is called blessed on the basis of the reference in Dt. 11:29; 27:12; and because this mountain was not covered by the flood (*Gen. Rabba* 32 [19d], alluding to Ez. 22:24). *Gen. Rabba* 81 (52a) mentions the presence of idols buried in the mountain as the reason for its being considered as blessed by the Samaritans (in reference to Gen. 35:4). Moreover, this mountain derived special significance from the temple located there; cf. *Ant.* XIII, 3, 4. Juynboll comments "mons Garizim non adeo dictus esse *ṭūr barik* ob fertilitatem, . . . sed maxime, quia benedictiones ibi pronuntiate esse dicuntur (Dt. 27:11-13), et hic locus Samaritanis prae ceteris erat sanctus." (Quoting Silvestre de Sacy, *Notices et Extraits*, p. 185, 3af). See Th. W. J. Juynboll (ed.), *Chronicon Samaritanum, Arabice conscriptum cui titulus est Liber Josuae* (Ludguni Batavorum: S. & J. Luchtmans, 1848), p. 242.

<sup>806</sup> Cf. Sura 42:7; 6:92; we use the following edition of the Koran, *The Holy Qurʾān*, ed by Abdullah Yusuf Ali, (Washington, D.C.: published by Khalil Al-Rawaf, 1946, [from the 3rd edition of 1938]).

<sup>807</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 12.

before the rest of the world, and they are imagined as pillars whose foundation is sunk in the subterranean ocean and whose top supports the sky, thus establishing a link between the underworld and heaven; furthermore, they are related to the fertility of the land. Besides, the religious center of a country was associated with the navel of the earth located in the capital: Babylon - Babylonia, Nineveh - Assyria, Bethel - ancient Palestine and Northern Kingdom, Jerusalem - Judah, Shechem - territory of Samaria, Mecca - Arabia, Rome - Roman Empire; in Greece there were several city-states each having its own *omphalos gēs*: Athens, Eleusis, Delphi, Paphos, Delos, Epidauros. While we have no exact knowledge as to the precise meaning of the expression *ἡ βωρ ἡ ῥῆς* frequently translated "the navel, center of the earth" and "the highest part, center of the earth," we still have grounds for assuming that it denotes the navel of the earth, because it is mentioned in context with Jerusalem (Ez. 5:5), and with Shechem (Judg. 9:37). However, one has to guard against reading later conceptions of the navel of the earth into the relevant texts of the Bible. Nevertheless, it must be admitted that in the biblical records significant indication is given of this idea which only in later literatures was to develop into the theory of the navel of the earth.

## SECTION C: THE SEA, THE STREAMS, AND THE SPRINGS

### 1. Analysis of the Terms for Sea and of Their Context

The study of the second level of the world, namely the earth, would be incomplete, if we were not to include a description of the sea, the streams and the springs. We recalled at the outset that there is no systematic treatment of this subject in the biblical records. Just as the view of the ancient Hebrews about the topographical features of the earth reflects the physical geography of Palestine with occasional references to Egypt and Mesopotamia, as we have observed in the preceding section, so too does their conception of the waters which occupy the seas, or are contained in lagoons, lakes, or swamps, or furrow the terrain in the form of rivers, or emerge on the earth's surface as springs from the subterranean ocean.

Keeping the local geographical features of the Near East in mind, we turn to the general exposition of the ancient Hebrews' notion of the sea. First of all it will be necessary to explain the meaning and the usage of certain words. The masculine noun *ym* designates the "sea," to be distinguished from *Ym* the Canaanite god of the sea in an extended sense which includes all lakes, rivers, and other sheets of water, were considered by the ancient Semites to be fed by the upsurging of the subterranean ocean. The word *ym* occurs with the same meaning in

Akkadian as *yamu*, in Ugaritic as *ym*. C. H. Gordon suggests that "probably Akk. *yamu* and possibly Ar. *yamm* are borrowed from NW Semitic."<sup>808</sup> The plural of *ym* occurs thirty times and occurs chiefly in poetic passages. The western boundary of the territory inhabited by the tribes of Zebulun and Asher is confined by the seashore (*lhp ymym*)<sup>809</sup> extending from Acco to the foot of Mount Carmel. A number of expressions with *ym* in the plural are found in the Old Testament: *hwl ymym*.<sup>810</sup> *blb ymym* "in the midst of the sea[s],"<sup>811</sup> *ʔrhwt ymym* "routes of the seas" (Ps. 8:9), *špʿ ymym* "abundance of the seas" (Deut. 33:19), *šʔwn ymym* roar [of the waters] of the seas.<sup>812</sup> The Hebrew word *ym* designates primarily the sea; by widening its scope the same term denotes also a large body of water whose shores are far distant from each other. In accordance with this general idea contained in the word *ym*, it becomes clear that only its context will decide whether *ym* means the sea, a lake or a large river. As a matter of fact, there is no specific word for lake in the Hebrew vocabulary.

To judge from the frequent references to the Mediterranean Sea contained in the Old Testament, the term *ym* denotes, in the first place, this particular sea.<sup>813</sup> The geographical location of the Mediterranean Sea to the west of Palestine supplied the name for the direction towards the west *ymh* [*mym l*], or from the west *mym* and for the expressions *pʔt ym* west side, *gbwl ym* western border, *drk hym* westward, *rwḥ ym* west wind. The Mediterranean Sea is further specified by attributive adjectives: *gdwl* "great, large"<sup>814</sup> and *ʔhrwn* "hinder, [western]."<sup>815</sup> The use of a gentilic term in connection with *ym*: *ym plšty* "sea of the Philistines," and of the name of the city of Joppa [*ypwʔ*],<sup>816</sup> denotes either the coastal waters of Palestine or perhaps the Mediterranean Sea by the figure of speech known as synecdoche.

In addition to the references to the Mediterranean Sea, there is mention of the Dead Sea. It is called *ym hmlḥ* "salt sea" due to the high content of mineral salts in its waters.<sup>817</sup> Although an area now submerged under the waters of the Dead Sea seems quite probably to be the site of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, no indication is offered in the

<sup>808</sup> See C. H. Gordon, *op. cit.*, Glossary, No. 1106.

<sup>809</sup> Cf. Gen. 49:13; Judg. 5:17.

<sup>810</sup> Cf. Jer. 15:8; Ps. 78:27; Job 6:3.

<sup>811</sup> Cf. Ez. 27:4, 25-27; 28:2, 8; this expression is also found as *lb-ym*: Ex. 15:8; Prov. 23:34; 30:19.

<sup>812</sup> Ps. 65:8; cf. also *hmwt ymym*: Is. 17:12.

<sup>813</sup> Cf. Num. 13:29; 34:5; Deut. 1:7; Josh. 5:1; 1 K. 5:23; Jon. 1:4; etc.

<sup>814</sup> The expression *hym hgdwl* occurs fourteen times in the Old Testament.

<sup>815</sup> Cf. Deut. 11:24; 34:2; Joel 2:20; Zech. 14:8.

<sup>816</sup> Cf. Ezr. 3:7; 2 Ch. 2:15.

<sup>817</sup> Cf. the biblical references to *ym hmlḥ*: Gen. 14:3; Num. 34:3, 12; Josh. 18:19, etc. Analysis shows that the content of salt of the Dead Sea water amounts to 25%. At the surface one litre of this water contains 227 to 275 grams of dissolved salts. At the depth of 360 feet, the water is chemically saturated, corresponding to 327 grams.

biblical texts that permits us to establish a link between the destruction of these cities by means of brimstone and fire and the origin of the salt water of that Sea. The location of the Dead Sea in the Jordan rift, called *h<sup>c</sup>rbh*, which extends for 250 miles from the Israeli-Lebanon frontier to the head of the Gulf of Aqabah, qualified it to be used as a compound term with *ym* to designate the Dead Sea as *ym h<sup>c</sup>rbh*.<sup>818</sup> Further, the geographical situation of the Dead Sea lying to the east of the Mediterranean supplied the name *ym hqdmwny* "the eastern sea."<sup>819</sup> In one instance the Dead Sea is simply designated by the term *hym* (Ez. 47:8). In the Jordan Trough is located the Sea of Galilee called *ym knrt*<sup>820</sup> or *ym knrwt* (Josh. 12:3). The Sea of Galilee is thirteen miles long and five to eight miles wide, actually the size of a lake. To the north of the Sea of Galilee lies the extremely shallow Lake Huleh which is not referred to in the biblical records. At the mouth of the Jordan river where it empties into the Dead Sea extends the northern bay *lšwn ym-hmlh špwn*<sup>821</sup> whereas on the southernmost tip of the Dead Sea is the southern bay *hlšwn hpnh ngbh* (Josh. 15:2). As for the bay of the Sea of Egypt, *lšwn ym mšrym* (Is. 11:15), the text itself gives no clue as to its exact location. It may designate either the western tip of the Gulf of Suez or a bay in the delta region of the Nile.

Concerning the much debated question whether the Sea of Reeds, *ym-swp*, designates either the sheets of water in the vicinity of the lower end of the Bitter Lakes, or the lakes of the isthmus (at the southern extension of the present Lake Menzaleh), or the Lake Sirbonis, now called Lake Bardawil; each of these locations has some point in its favor. But since there is no reliable information about the exact location of the Reed Sea in the Old Testament, none of the aforementioned lakes can be identified with *ym-swp* with certainty. Except for the references to the crossing of the Reed Sea, the expression *ym-swp* refers to the Gulf of Aqabah.<sup>822</sup>

There are some passages where *ym* refers to the Nile,<sup>823</sup> usually called *y<sup>r</sup>r* (*y<sup>r</sup>ym*) in Hebrew. If we attempt to discover what prompted the ancient Hebrews to designate the Nile *ym* we may perhaps explain it by referring to the Nile Delta where the river valley below Cairo is about six miles wide, and the river itself about half a mile wide. About one-half of the Delta is still occupied by lakes and swamps, with a few larger sheets of water, covering between them forty-five square miles of territory. This area must have looked like a sea during the annual flooding of the Nile. In addition to the river Nile, the river Euphrates also seems to be called *ym* (Jer. 51:36).

<sup>818</sup> Cf. Deut. 3:17; 4:49; Josh. 3:16; 12:3; 2 K. 14:25.

<sup>819</sup> Cf. Is. 47:18; Joel 2:20; Zech. 14:8.

<sup>820</sup> Cf. Num. 34:11; Josh. 13:27.

<sup>821</sup> Josh. 18:19; 15:5.

<sup>822</sup> Cf. 1 K. 9:26; Ex. 23:31; there are no references to the Gulf of Suez and to the Arabian Gulf, contained in the Bible.

<sup>823</sup> Cf. Is. 18:2; 19:5; Ez. 32:2; Job 41:23.

After dealing with the various waters which the ancient Hebrews designated *ym*, we draw attention to the boundaries of the sea. While the expression *gbwl lym* (Jer. 5:22) refers to the boundary of the sea in general, the mention of *špt ym-swp* "shore of the Reed Sea,"<sup>824</sup> and of *hwp hym* "shore of the Mediterranean Sea,"<sup>825</sup> makes it possible to locate these shores respectively on the Gulf of Aqabah and on the Mediterranean Sea along the coast of Palestine. The coastal plain known as *hbl hym* (Zeph. 2:5,6) and consisting of a belt of sand<sup>826</sup> which is confined to the east by the loess landscape is in a fairly straight line, although marked off by inlets at the mouths of the wadis. Bays are referred to as *mpršy* (cf. Judg. 5:17) by which probably are meant the natural bays at the westernmost parts of Galilee. There the slopes of Mount Carmel reach the sea in a steep incline forming promontories and breakwaters on the shore. When the Israelite tribe Asher is said to dwell *l mpršyw*, it would seem likely that the bays with the breakwaters at their entrance are meant. The harbor of Tyre is called *mbw<sup>2</sup>t ym* (Ez. 27:3). As regards the islands of the Mediterranean Sea (*yy hym* there are the island of Crete (*y kptwr*),<sup>827</sup> the islands of Elishah (*yy lyšh*)<sup>828</sup> and of Cyprus (*yy ktyym*).<sup>829</sup> However, *yyym* primarily denotes "shorelands, distant coastlands."<sup>830</sup>

In the description of the sea the biblical authors are more impressed by the movement of its waters than by its colors. Moreover, one will seek in vain colorful descriptions inspired by the sight of beaches and bays. The writers derive their images from the violence of the roaring sea.<sup>831</sup> The wave breaking into foam as against the shore is called *mšbr* (Ps. 93:4). The general term for waves is *glym*, which is derived from the root *gll* "to roll away."

Finally, in two instances the references to the depth of the sea are used as a figure of speech to represent distance and spatial separation:

You will cast into the depths of the sea (*bmslwt ym*)  
all their sins.<sup>832</sup>

<sup>824</sup> 1 K. 9:26; cf. also Gen. 22:17.

<sup>825</sup> Deut. 1:7; Josh. 9:1; Jer. 47:7; Ez. 25:16; cf. *hwp ymyym*, Gen. 49:13; Judg. 5:17.

<sup>826</sup> Cf. the expression *khwł hym*, Gen. 32:13; 41:49; Is. 10:22; Hos. 2:1; see footnote 810 for *hwł ymyym*.

<sup>827</sup> Jer. 47:4. Crete is called *Kaptara* in Assyrian texts.

<sup>828</sup> Ez. 27:7. The islands of Elishah are commonly associated with Alashia (Ug. *alty*). "It is the opinion of most scholars that Elishah-Alashia refers to some part of Cyprus." See J. E. Greenfield's article "Elishah," in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, I, p. 92.

<sup>829</sup> Jer. 2:10; Ez. 27:6. The term "Kittim" is derived from the Greek name of the city state Kition, present-day Larnaka, on the SE coast of the island. See J. C. Greenfield, "Kittim," in *op. cit.*, III, p. 40f.

<sup>830</sup> Is. 20:6; 23:2, 6; 40:15; 41:1; 42:4, 10; 49:1; 51:5; 59:18; 60:9; 66:19; Jer. 31:10; Ez. 26:15; 27:3, 35; 39:6; Ps. 72:10; 97:10.

<sup>831</sup> Cf. *nšmt-ym*, Is. 5:30; the sea thunders (*r<sup>c</sup>m*), Ps. 96:11; 98:11.

<sup>832</sup> Mic. 7:19b.

The Lord said, "I will bring [them] back from Bashan,  
I will bring [them] back from the depths of the sea..."  
(*mmšlwt ym*).<sup>833</sup>

In the biblical passages where myth and history meet, the episode of the crossing of the Reed Sea is skillfully interwoven in the account of the primeval conflict when Yahweh subdued the monsters which personified chaos. Since "the sea stood for all that is turbulent and chaotic, threatening to reduce the ordered world to the chaos from which it had been screened at the creation,"<sup>834</sup> the pathway through the ocean depths leading from slavery to liberation serves as a pattern for any human situation.

Art thou not the arm that hewed Rahab (*rhb*) in pieces,  
that pierced the sea-monster (*tnyn*)?  
Art thou not the arm that dried up the sea (*ym*),  
the waters of the great deep (*thwm rbh*);  
That made the ocean-depths (*m<sup>c</sup>mgy-ym*) a pathway,  
for the redeemed to pass over?<sup>835</sup>

On the bottom of the sea, *qrq<sup>c</sup> hym* (Am. 9:3) are located channels, *ʔpqym* (2 Sam. 22:16) a term which is otherwise applied to a "riverbed, ravine." In this connection we should note the term used in the following passages:

Have you entered the springs of the sea (*nbky-ym*),  
Walked in the recesses of the deep (*bḥqr thwm*)?<sup>836</sup>  
The sources of the rivers (*mbky nhrwt*) he probes  
Brings hidden things to light.<sup>837</sup>

The closest parallels to *ʔpyqy ym* "channels of the sea," *nbky-ym* "springs of the sea" and *mbky nhrwt* "sources of the rivers" are found in Ugaritic literature, where the expressions *mbk nhrm* "the springs of the (two) rivers" and *apq thmtm* "the channels of the (two) deeps" designate the watery abode of the god El, the head of the Ugaritic pantheon. Visits to El's residence by other gods and goddesses are described by the formula:

<i>idk ltn pnm</i>	Forthwith you/they set face
<i>ʕm il mbk nhrm</i>	Towards El at the springs of the (two) rivers,
<i>qrb apq thmtm</i>	Midst the channels of the (two) deeps.
<i>tgly ḏd il wtbu</i>	Move towards <i>ḏd</i> of El and enter
<i>qrš mlk ab šnm</i>	the abode of the King, Father of <i>šnm</i> . <sup>838</sup>

<sup>833</sup> Ps. 68:23.

<sup>834</sup> See C. R. North, *The Second Isaiah* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), p. 212.

<sup>835</sup> Is. 51:9b-10, translated by C. R. North, in *op. cit.*

<sup>836</sup> Job 38:16.

<sup>837</sup> Job 28:11. The emendation of the verb *hbš* "to bind," to *hps* "to search, probe," is suggested by the sense and is supported by the LXX translation.

<sup>838</sup> See C. H. Gordon, *op. cit.*, text 51:IV:20-24; cf. also 49:I:4-8, etc.; Cf. M. H. Pope's

M. H. Pope maintains the view "that the Ugaritians localized the abode of this important god (El) somewhere within their own geographical horizon."<sup>839</sup> The same author relates the word *mbk* to the ancient names of Hierapolis — namely: Bambyke, Mambuj, Mabbuj. The term *apq* is represented in the place name Aqheq, variant Aphiq; there are perhaps five or six different sites with this name in the Old Testament and at least two called Apqu in Mesopotamia. "In every case where ancient sites named Apheq or Apqu are identified with any degree of certainty, there is a source of water in the vicinity."<sup>840</sup> The particular site which the same author believes to have the features of El's mythological abode, as mentioned in the Ugaritic texts, is Apheq, the modern Khirbet Afqa in Syria, about twenty-three miles northeast of Beirut, midway between Byblos and Baalbeq (Hierapolis). According to popular tradition among the natives of the region the waters of an intermittent lake, Birket el Yammuneh, are the same as those of Mugârat Afqa. The river Afqa on the other side of the mountain some twelve kilometers away is believed to be the outlet of the sink-hole of el Yammuneh and the two are said to be connected by a tunnel.<sup>841</sup> But whatever be the accuracy of the popular traditions about the juncture of the two waters and the suggested location of El's abode, the equivalent Hebrew terms attested in the Bible are merely used as a poetic designation of the bottom of the sea and of the subterranean regions.

The terms *ym* and *nhrwt* are also associated with the expression *mym rbym* "great waters":

The rivers (*nhrwt*) have lifted up, O Lord,  
 The rivers have lifted up their voice;  
 The rivers have lifted up their roar  
 Above the sound of great waters (*mym rbym*).  
 Mightier than the breakers of the sea (*mšbry-ym*),  
 The Lord on high is mighty.<sup>842</sup>

Those who go down to the sea (*ym*) in ships,  
 And do business in the great waters (*mym rbym*),  
 They saw the works of the Lord,  
 And his wonders in the depth (*mšwlh*).<sup>843</sup>

translation of this text, in *El in the Ugaritic Texts* (Leiden: E. J. Brill: 1955), p. 61. (Henceforth abbreviated EUT).

<sup>839</sup> EUT, pp. 72-73.

<sup>840</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 74.

<sup>841</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 75-77.

<sup>842</sup> Ps. 93:3-4. The progressive repetition of the verbal action suggests that the verb *yšw*, in verse 3b, should be translated in the past tense. R. Kittel, in *KBH*<sup>13</sup>, proposed a different word division for *dyrym mšbry*. Thus, the final *m* of *dyrym* should be taken as a particle of the comparative form and be linked with *mšbry*. The adjective *dyr* (in the singular) has the same function as the predicative adjective in the second hemistich.

<sup>843</sup> Ps. 107:23-24.

Taken together, the two passages just given refer to large sheets of water. The expression *mym rbym* represents the unruly waters of the deep and elsewhere these waters are a symbol of threatening danger.<sup>844</sup> This undoubtedly was the reason why the ocean was associated with the nether world as will become clear in the following section.

In passing we mention the molten sea, *ym mwšq* (1 K. 7:23; 2 Ch. 4:2) known too as the bronze sea, *ym nḥšt*,<sup>845</sup> or simply as the sea, *hym* (1 K. 7:24; 2 K. 16:17), which probably was located at the entrance of the temple of Jerusalem and before the altar. Apart from its purpose as a laver it has been suggested that this "sea" had cosmic significance of some kind.<sup>846</sup>

In this context the following expression is an example of apposition in a wider sense, *mqwh mym* "gathered waters," applied to all the waters of Egypt, including *nhrwtm* "their rivers," *y<sup>o</sup>ryhm* "their Niles" (i.e. the main distributaries together with an infinity of smaller streams of the delta region), *gmyhm* "their swamps, marshes" (Ex. 7:19). In another instance *mqwh mym* represents the opposite of *ybšh* "terra firma."<sup>847</sup>

Lastly, in connection with the study of the terms for standing waters, we must discuss the word *gm*. Its cognate in Akkadian *agammu* denotes a "swamp." The related expression in Arabic *mā' ajam* designates a "pool full of reeds." The term *gm* is paralleled with *nhr* "river,"<sup>848</sup> *y<sup>o</sup>r* "Nile" (Ex. 7:19; 8:1), *mbw<sup>e</sup>y mym* "springs of water" (Is. 35:7), *mwš<sup>o</sup>y mym* "issues [springs] of water" (Is. 41:18; Ps. 107:35), *m<sup>e</sup>yn* "fountain" (Is. 41:18; Ps. 114:8). In the passages where *gm* [*gmym*] occurs it may be translated either as "reedy pool," or as "swamp."<sup>849</sup> However, in Jer. 51:52 as well as in a number of Talmudic passages the term *gmym* designates "reeds."

We conclude this section by drawing attention to the frequent allusions to the sea in the Old Testament, as we have seen above, whereas the terms for other sheets of water are less common. There is no specific term for lake found in the biblical texts.

<sup>844</sup> Cf. 2 Sam. 22:17; Is. 17:13; Jer. 51:55; Ez. 31:15; Hab. 3:15; Ps. 18:17; 29:3; 32:6; 77:20; 144:7. Cf. also H. G. May "Some Cosmic Connotations of *Mayim Rabbim*, 'Many Waters,'" in *JBL* 74 (1955), pp. 9-21. However, we prefer to translate *mym rbym* as "great waters," on account of the insurgent-waters symbolism designated by this expression which reflects Ugaritic background. Ug. *rb*, when used as an adjective, means "great."

<sup>845</sup> 2 K. 25:13; Jer 52:17; 1 Ch. 18:8.

<sup>846</sup> See W. F. Albright, *Archaeology and the Religion of Israel* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 2nd rev., 1946), pp. 149-150.

<sup>847</sup> Gen. 1:10; cf. also Lev. 11:36. The word *mqwh*, in Is. 22:11, signifies a "reservoir."

<sup>848</sup> Cf. Ex. 7:19; 8:1; Is. 41:18; 42:15.

<sup>849</sup> Cf. Ex. 7:19; 8:1; Is. 14:23; 35:7; 41:18; 42:15; Ps. 107:35; 114:8.

## 2. Analysis of the Terms for Stream and Spring and of Their Context

In this section we shall first study the various terms designating a course of water flowing on the earth, and second we shall analyze the words for spring.

The Hebraic concept of a permanent watercourse is expressed by the term *nhr* with its cognate in Ugaritic as *nhr*, in Akkadian as *nāru*, in Arabic *nahr*. The term *nhr* is derived from the root of identical spelling which, like the Arabic verb *nahara* designates "to flow." The plural of *nhr* occurs both as *nhrym* and, more frequently, as *nhrwt*, the noun being masculine in any case.

We restrict our study to those rivers which are explicitly designated by the term *nhr*. It is interesting to note that none of the rivers of Palestine is referred to as a *nhr*. Instead, there is mention of the rivers of Mesopotamia, Egypt and Syria. The rivers of Paradise, located in the general area to the east of Palestine, have been identified by E. A. Speiser, with a good chance of probability, as some sizable and perennial rivers at the head of the Persian Gulf.

A river (*nhr*) rises in Eden to water the garden; outside it forms four separate branch streams (*l'rb<sup>c</sup>h r<sup>2</sup>šym*).

The name of the first is Pishon (*pyšwn*); it is the one that winds (*hsbb*) through the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold.

The name of the second river is Gihon (*gyhwn*); it is the one that winds through all of the land of Cush.

The name of the third river is Hiddeqel (*hdql*); it is the one that flows east of Asshur.

The fourth river is the Euphrates (*prt*).<sup>850</sup>

According to E. A. Speiser, Pishon would be the Kerkha, a river that comes down from the Central Zagros. The second river, Gihon, would be Diyala, which meanders through the territory of the Kassites, in Akkadian *Kaššû*, its Nuzi form is *Kuššu*.<sup>851</sup> The third river, Hiddeqel in Hebrew with its Akkadian cognate *Idiqlat*, *Deqlat* in Aramaic and *Dijla* in Arabic, is the Tigris. The fourth river is the Euphrates, also called *hnhr hgdwl* "the great river" (Gen. 15: 18; Deut. 1: 7, etc.) or simply *hnhr*.<sup>852</sup> The river Habor, *hbwr* (Assyrian *habur*), mentioned in 2 K. 17: 6, is a tributary of the Euphrates.

<sup>850</sup> Gen. 2:10-14.

<sup>851</sup> See E. A. Speiser's essay, "The Rivers of Paradise," in *Festschrift Johannes Friedrich* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1959), pp. 473-485.

<sup>852</sup> Cf. Gen. 31:21; Ex. 23:21 (20 times in all).

The Nile, usually designated  $y^2r$ , occurs once as *nhr* (Is. 19: 5), whereas its smaller streams in the delta region are known as *nhrwt*<sup>853</sup>. The term  $y^2r$ , which occurs forty times in the biblical texts, a loanword from the Egyptian *jr*w "watercourse" (thus since the 18th dynasty for older *jtrw*), signifies primarily the streams of the Nile. In the postexilic literature the word  $y^2r$  is used to designate the Tigris (Dan. 12: 5-7). In one instance the term  $y^2rym$  seems to be employed either for mine shafts or drainage channels:

In the rocks he hews out channels ( $y^2rym$ ),  
His eye sees every precious thing.<sup>854</sup>

Apart from the references to the Nile, the Euphrates and the Tigris, there are a few streams designated by the term *nhr*, none of which is located in Palestine. Nowhere in the Bible is the Jordan mentioned as a river (*nhr*). Yet the Jordan, *yrdn*, is the largest of all the rivers in Palestine. The four sources: Nahr Banias, Nahr el-Leddan, Nahr Hasbani, Nahr Bareighit, that unite to form the Jordan all rise on Mount Hermon. Two somewhat larger streams, the Yarmuk and the Jabbok, *ybq*, now called Zerka, empty into the Jordan.

A number of smaller rivers are mentioned in the Old Testament. The river Abana,  $^2bnh$  (2 K. 5: 12), today's Barada, flows down from Anti-Lebanon range through Damascus. In the same area is the Pharpar river, *prpr*, which perhaps is identical with Nahr el- $^2A^c$ waj or with Nahr Taura, an arm of the river Barada. The name Ahava,  $^2hw^2$  (Ezr. 8: 15, 21, 31), is applied both to a town in Babylonia and to the river on whose banks it was situated. As for the rivers of the territory of Cush, *kwš* (Is. 18: 1; Zeph. 3: 10), and of the country of the Ammonites (Num. 22: 5), there is more speculation than certainty about their identification.

In addition to the meaning of *nhr* as a "stream, river," we should mention the particular usage of *nhr* (*nhrwt*) as [ocean] current.<sup>855</sup> Three more terms to be included in this section are the less frequently used words for watercourses: *ybl* "river" (Is. 30: 25; 44: 4), with its cognate in Egyptian *jbr*, which possibly means a "river"; the term *šblt* denoting a "flowing stream, flood";<sup>856</sup> and finally the noun *nzlym* "floods, streams",<sup>857</sup> which is derived from the root *nzl* "to descend, trickle, flow." As regards the word *nhl* which signifies a narrow valley and the stream which flows through it, we refer to our previous analysis above (see p. 136).

<sup>853</sup> Cf. Ex. 7:19; 8:1; Is. 19:6.

<sup>854</sup> Job 28:10.

<sup>855</sup> Cf. Is. 44:27; Jon. 2:4; Ps. 24:2; 46:5; 89:26.

<sup>856</sup> Cf. Is. 27:12; Ps. 69:3, 16. E. A. Speiser derives the homonyms *šblt* for "ear of corn" and "flood," from an Arabic root *sabala* "to hang down." See E. A. Speiser, "The Shibboleth Incident (Judges 12:6)," in *BASOR*, 85 (1942), pp. 10-13.

<sup>857</sup> Cf. Ex. 15:8; Is. 44:3; Ps. 78:16, 44; Prov. 5:15; Cant. 4:15.

Another important feature of physical geography are the springs welling up in the valleys or flowing from an opening in a hillside. The occurrence of a complex of impermeable rocks underlying cap-rocks of porous limestone is a prominent factor for the accumulation of underground water. At the junction of the two rock formations occur springs of water, where rainfall that has been absorbed in the porous rocks is forced to the surface. In a land such as Palestine, which has the strongly marked Mediterranean rhythm of summer drought and winter rain, the springs were important as a source of water supply, and their presence often determined the location of a village. The names of some settlements still retain an element, i.e., *yn*, which indicates the importance of the spring for their location. The prefixed *yn* "spring," common in all Semitic languages, is identical with *yn* "eye" which is the primary meaning. The characteristic feature common to both is the idea of "flowing."<sup>858</sup> The term *yn* occurs nineteen times in the Old Testament with the meaning "spring." Another common word for spring is *m<sup>c</sup>yn*, etymologically related to *yn*, of which it is a denominative noun. Its twenty-three occurrences are extant in biblical texts dating almost exclusively from the exilic and postexilic period. An archaic form for fountain is *mqwr*, which is derived from the root *qwr* "to bore, dig" (cf. Arabic *qawwar* "to cut a round hole in, scoop out"). In Ugaritic *mqr* and *qr* denote a "spring, well." The term *mqwr* is seldom used in the literal sense as the "place of a spring, well"<sup>859</sup> but is rather common in figurative language to indicate the eye as a fountain of tears (Jer. 8:23), to symbolize "life, source of life,"<sup>860</sup> and to designate metaphorically a "wife."<sup>861</sup> We should also mention two rare words for "fountain, spring": *mbw<sup>c</sup>*,<sup>862</sup> derived from the root *nb<sup>c</sup>* "to well up, bubble, flow," and *nbk* (which occurs only in pl. cstr.).<sup>863</sup> Finally, the term *mwš<sup>c</sup>* a "place or act of going forth, issue, export, source, spring" is employed to designate either a place where water issues, i.e., a spring (2 K. 2:21; 2 Ch. 32:30), or a region provided with springs.<sup>864</sup>

Up to this point we have been considering the terms for fountain, spring. We also have pointed out that in a number of place names the

<sup>858</sup> É. Dhorme remarks, "La propriété de la source comme de l'oeil est de 'couler.' C'est ce qu'exprime l'idéogramme de l'oeil, *igi* [listed as an archaic form in Thureau-Dangin, 'Recherches.' Nr. 238], qui représente l'oeil en train de couler. L'idée commune à l'oeil et à la source est poétiquement rendue dans Jer. 8:23." (O that my head were waters and my eyes a fountain of tears [*w<sup>c</sup>yny mqwr dm<sup>c</sup>h*]). Cf. also Lam. 1:16; 3:48; Ps. 119:136. See É. Dhorme, *L'emploi métaphorique des noms de parties du corps en hébreu et en akkadien* (Paris: Paul Geuthner, 1923), pp. 75-76.

<sup>859</sup> Jer. 2:13; 51:36; Hos. 13:15; Zech. 13:1; Prov. 25:26.

<sup>860</sup> Cf. Prov. 10:11; 13:14; 14:27; 16:22; cf. also the expression *mqwr ḥkmh* "source of wisdom," Prov. 18:4.

<sup>861</sup> Cf. Prov. 5:18. Another expression may be mentioned in this context: *mqwr dmyh* "source of her [menstrual] blood" (Lev. 12:7; 20:18).

<sup>862</sup> Cf. Is. 35:7; 49:10; Eccl. 12:6.

<sup>863</sup> Cf. Job 38:16; cf. also Job 28:11; Prov. 8:24.

<sup>864</sup> Cf. Is. 41:18; 58:11; Ps. 107:33, 35.

element *ʿyn* is contained. The reason for this association is not hard to fathom: these settlements owe their location to a spring found at the very same spot or in its neighborhood. There is still another aspect of the springs to which attention must be directed. In two passages, one ascribed to the Yahwistic strand (Gen. 16:7), the other (Gen. 24:42), showing an intermixture with the Elohist strand — both, however, belonging to a very ancient tradition — we see that springs were not only important sources of water, but also places of theophanies.

The connection between the temple of Jerusalem and the spring located in its midst is brought out especially by the fact that the water issuing from it was considered (a) as a source of fertility of the land and (b) as a symbol of purification.

- (a) Then he brought me back to the door of the House [i.e., the temple]; and lo! there was water flowing from under the threshold of the House eastward — for the front of the House was eastward — and the water came down on the south side of the House, south of the altar . . .

On the bank of the stream, along both sides of it, there shall grow all sorts of trees for food, the leaves shall not wither, nor their fruit fail, but they shall bear fresh fruit every month, because the water that feeds them flows from the sanctuary; and their fruit shall serve for food, and their leaves for healing.<sup>865</sup>

- (b) On that day a well (*mqwr*) shall be opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem for [the cleansing of] sin and uncleanness.<sup>866</sup>

The dominant motive of the two passages seems to be the theme of restoration of the Chosen People through Yahweh's power represented by the water issuing from the temple. The well of purification from sin, permanently opened in Jerusalem, is the source of spiritual as well as material blessings which Yahweh will pour upon the restored nation.

As we have seen above, the springs are of prime importance for the supply of water which made possible some settlements in arid areas. The springs were also considered as the locale of theophanies. This particular idea may be related to the belief of primitive peoples who thought that springs were inhabited by spirits.<sup>867</sup> In the postexilic period springs were mentioned as a symbol of spiritual purification and as a source of material blessings.

<sup>865</sup> Ez. 47:1, 12; cf. also Zech. 14:8-11; Joel 4:18.

<sup>866</sup> Zech. 13:1.

<sup>867</sup> See T. Canaan's essay "Mohammedan Saints and Sanctuaries in Palestine," in *JPOS* 4 (1924), pp. 1-84. In ch. 4 entitled "A watercourse (spring or cistern)," he remarks "that nearly all the springs of Palestine are thought to be haunted by spirits." Cf. especially p. 63.

## SECTION D: UNDERWORLD

## 1. Analysis of the Terms for Underworld and of Their Context

The numerous Old Testament references to the underworld, the third level of the universe, are generally linked with the ideas of death and afterlife. Death was not conceived of as the absolute end of life by the ancient Hebrews but was considered as a departure from the land of the living to the realm of the dead. No doubt, after a study of all the pertinent texts, the most striking features which will emerge are their incohesiveness and inconsistencies. The most conspicuous example of inconsistency is to be found in the way that the term  $\text{š}^{\text{w}}l$  was used by the biblical authors to denote the realm of the dead, which in some instances means the abode of the dead, the grave, the state or condition of death, the brink of death and the like. Moreover, the ancient Hebrews' conception concerning the place of the dead and their beliefs in afterlife followed the pattern of growth of their tribal community itself. The tribes, each of which had enjoyed autonomy during its earlier years and possessed its own set of traditions, merged into an amphictyony so that the individual traditions were brought into contact with one another, with the inevitable process of give and take. Thus, we must realize that these traditions were on the one hand bound to match the general outlook of the Yahwistic religion, which imposed a kind of unity upon them, and on the other to modify some of their own views, which led to inconsistencies and differences of detail. It should be recognized that many of the details of the Hebrews' concept of underworld, which they preserved alongside their own religious ideas, may well have been Mesopotamian in origin. The natural consequence of all this is that the concept of Sheol should be placed against the wider background of the ancient Near East. As will appear in our study, however, the ancient Hebrews' conception of the abode of the dead was in some respects quite similar, while in others it was opposed to that of the Mesopotamians. It would seem, then, that the basic idea of the underworld was probably native to the Hebrews, as it was to most ancient peoples.

In ascertaining the etymology and the meaning of the term  $\text{š}^{\text{w}}l$ , a feminine noun which never occurs with an article, we must distinguish between the attempts of those who derive it from a Hebrew root and of those who consider it as a loan word from Babylonian. L. Koehler, for example, describes the word  $\text{š}^{\text{w}}l$  as a pure Hebrew word, derived from the hypothetical root  $\text{š}^{\text{w}}$ , to which he adds the epenthetic final consonant *l*. Since this root is nowhere attested, he suggests that  $\text{š}^{\text{w}}l$  may be derived from the root  $\text{š}^{\text{h}}$ . From this root come the nouns  $\text{š}^{\text{w}}n$ ,  $\text{š}^{\text{y}}h$ , and  $\text{š}^{\text{t}}$ . All of these, and also the verb itself, indicate that  $\text{š}^{\text{w}}l$  is some-

thing desolate, or devastated. The verb itself, however, if we note its use, must have had the more specific sense of a district or domain, which is called the desolate, waste-lying place. This is best expressed by "no-land (Unland). It means the world (below our world) where are found shadowiness, decay, remoteness from God: Nothingness."<sup>868</sup> L. Koehler, however, instead of explaining the noun formation of *š<sup>2</sup>wl* from the roots *š<sup>2</sup>w* and *š<sup>2</sup>h*, assumes that the word under consideration means "No-land." On this basis he selects one of three roots with identical spelling and regards *š<sup>2</sup>h* as the root of *š<sup>2</sup>wl*.

Another attempt at explaining the origin of *š<sup>2</sup>wl* is set forth by O. Rössler who relates it to Proto-Semitic \**šuwāl* and compares it with *šwl* "skirts of a garment, lower part of the body, bottom, rim at the bottom of a vessel." The Arabic cognates basically denote the lowermost part, e.g. *sawla* "flaccidity, sagging belly," and *ʿaswal* "lax, flaccid, hanging down, sagging (of belly)."<sup>869</sup> If this derivation is correct, *š<sup>2</sup>wl* means the lowermost part (of the world, i.e. the underworld).

The derivation of the word *š<sup>2</sup>wl* from Akk. *šu<sup>2</sup>āra* "the abode of Tammuz in the nether world," as advanced by W. F. Albright and later by W. Baumgartner, has been opposed by many scholars. According to Albright the term *š<sup>2</sup>wl* was borrowed from Babylonian where the change from *r* to *l* may have taken place before its adoption into the Hebrew language.<sup>870</sup>

The analysis of biblical texts where *š<sup>2</sup>wl* occurs unfolds a picture so different from the Babylonian that the resulting interpretation of the entire territorial description may not be understood geographically. The Mesopotamians pictured the nether world, which coincides with the realm of the dead, either as a great city (Sum. *Urugal*), or the great place below (Sum. *Kigal*), or the dwelling of the chthonic deities (e.g. *mūšab irkalla*, etc.), or the land-of-no-return (*eršet lā tārī*) or as a mountain house (*ekurru*).

The underworld, according to the Hebrew conception, is constituted by the abode of the dead (or nether world) and the subterranean ocean, in which the earth's pillars are sunk.<sup>871</sup> In some instances the dead have to pass this ocean in order to reach the nether world. The term *š<sup>2</sup>wl*,

<sup>868</sup> L. Koehler, "Problems in the Study of the Language of the Old Testament," in *JSS* 1 (1956), pp. 3-24, especially p. 20.

<sup>869</sup> Cf. O. Rössler cited by F. Stier, *Das Buch Ijob Hebräisch und Deutsch* (München: Kösel Verlag, 1954), p. 233.

<sup>870</sup> See W. F. Albright, "Mesopotamian Elements in Canaanite Eschatology," in *Haupt Anniversary Volume* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1926), pp. 143-158, esp. pp. 151f. See also W. Baumgartner's comment on *schu<sup>2</sup>a(-a)-ra* (*Enūma eliš* I, 24) in his study "Zur Etymologie von *sche<sup>2</sup>ōl*," in *TZ* II (1946), pp. 233-235.

<sup>871</sup> Cf. Ps. 24:2. See also the Babylonian creation myth according to which Marduk took one half of Tiāmat's body and made a great structure in the shape of a vault. This structure was placed over the sea, upon which the Babylonians imagined the earth to rest. Cf. *Enūma eliš*, Tablets IV: 143-145; VII: 135.

usually translated "the realm of the dead," denotes the underground world "inhabited" by  $\text{w}b$  "spirit of the dead,"<sup>872</sup>  $mtym$ , "defuncti," used mainly from the time of the Exile onwards,<sup>873</sup> and  $rp^{\text{y}}m$  "ghosts of the dead," which occurs almost exclusively in the Wisdom literature.<sup>874</sup>

As regards other terms for nether world, an examination of the word  $\text{r}\text{s}$  and a comparison of examples from Akkadian and Ugaritic literatures shows quite clearly that it sometimes denotes the nether world.<sup>875</sup> Certain compound expressions explicitly refer to the lowest level of the structure of the world:  $\text{r}\text{s } \text{t}\text{h}\text{t}\text{y}\text{w}\text{t}$  "the land of the lowest parts" (Ez. 26:20; 32:18,24),  $\text{r}\text{s } \text{t}\text{h}\text{t}\text{y}\text{t}$  "lower, lowest earth" (Ez. 31:14,16,18), and  $\text{t}\text{h}\text{t}\text{y}\text{w}\text{t } \text{r}\text{s}$  "lowest parts of the earth";<sup>876</sup> this last example is equivalent to Akkadian  $er\text{setu } \text{s}\text{a}\text{p}\text{l}\text{i}\text{tu}$  "lower earth," i.e., the nether world, (cf. also  $\text{s}\text{a}\text{p}\text{l}\text{i}\text{ti}$  "the lower [domains]").<sup>877</sup> In this connection Ridderbos recalls with great interest, especially in view of certain passages with  $\text{c}\text{pr}$ ,<sup>878</sup>  $\text{l}^{\text{c}}\text{pr}$ ,<sup>879</sup> and  $\text{s}\text{kny } \text{c}\text{pr}$  (Is. 26:19; cf. also Ps. 7:6), Gunkel's insight that the term  $\text{c}\text{pr}$  "dry, fine crumbs of earth (dust)," is a poetic synonym for nether world.<sup>880</sup> Another common synonym for nether world is  $b\text{wr}$  "pit, cistern,"<sup>881</sup> which is further specified as  $\text{y}\text{r}\text{k}\text{t}\text{y } b\text{wr}$  "recesses of the pit" (Is. 14:15),  $b\text{wr } \text{t}\text{h}\text{t}\text{y}\text{w}\text{t}$  "pit of the lower, lowest parts" (Ps. 88:7; Lam. 3:55),  $b\text{wr } \text{s}\text{w}\text{n}$  "pit of Destruction" (Ps. 40:3). When used poetically, the term  $b\text{wr}$  occurs without the article, and thus assumes the character of a proper name. Similar imagery underlies the term  $\text{s}\text{h}\text{t}$  "pit, pitfall," applied to

<sup>872</sup> Is. 29:4. Cf. also the reference to  $\text{t}\text{h}\text{y}\text{m}$ , used once (1 Sam. 28:13, and possibly Is. 8:19) in connection with the shade of Samuel.

<sup>873</sup> Cf. Ps. 88:11; 115:17; Lam. 9:3, 5; Is. 26:14, 19.

<sup>874</sup> Cf. Is. 14:9; 26:14, 19; Ps. 88:11; Job 26:5; Prov. 2:18; 9:18; 21:16; The term  $rp^{\text{y}}m$  is derived from the root  $rp^{\text{y}}$  "to heal," hence, "healers," as proposed by M. J. Lagrange, *op. cit.*, p. 318. This noun should be distinguished from the word of identical spelling which designates the legendary pre-Israelite dwellers of Palestine.

If we were to derive the word  $rp^{\text{y}}m$  from the root  $rph$  "to sink, relax," its meaning would be the "weak ones, flaccid ones" a hypothesis favored by E. Dhorme, "L'idée de l'au-delà dans la religion hébraïque," in *Recueil Edouard Dhorme*, Paris, 1951, p. 660. For further information we refer to A. Caquot's article "Les Rephaim Ougaritiques," in *Syria* 37 (1950), pp. 75-93.

<sup>875</sup> Cf. Gen. 2:6; Ex. 15:12; 1 Sam. 28:11-13; Is. 26:19; 29:4; 44:23; Jer. 15:7; 17:13; Jon. 2:7; Ps. 7:6; 18:8; 22:30; 41:3; 61:3, 10; 71:20; 95:4; 106:17; 141:7; 143:3; 147:6; 148:7; Job 10:21; 12:8; 15:29; Prov. 25:3.

For Ugaritic see text  $\text{c}\text{nt}$ : II:21-22, the chiasmic order followed in this passage:  $\text{t}\text{a}\text{n}\text{t } \text{s}\text{m}\text{m } \text{c}\text{m } \text{a}\text{r}\text{s}\text{h } \text{t}\text{h}\text{m}\text{t } \text{c}\text{m}\text{n } \text{k}\text{b}\text{k}\text{b}\text{m}$ , shows that  $\text{a}\text{r}\text{s}\text{h}$  means the nether world. Several examples from Babylonian literature may be adduced where  $er\text{setu}$  occurs in the sense of nether world; cf. especially the Gilgamesh epic (Tablet XII).

<sup>876</sup> Is. 44:23; Ps. 63:10; 139:15.

<sup>877</sup> See Knut Tallqvist, "Sumerisch-akkadische Namen der Totenwelt," in *Studia Orientalia* V Part 4, 1934, pp. 1-46, especially pp. 11-13.

<sup>878</sup> Cf. Ps. 22:30; 30:11; Dan. 12:2.

<sup>879</sup> Job 17:16; 19:25; 20:11; 21:26; 41:25; cf. also the expression  $\text{t}\text{m}\text{m}\text{m } b^{\text{c}}\text{pr } \text{y}\text{h}\text{d}$  "bury them  $b^{\text{c}}\text{pr}$  together," Job 40:13.

<sup>880</sup> See N. H. Ridderbos, " $\text{c}\text{pr}$  als Staub des Totenortes," in *Oudtestamentische Studiën* V (1948), pp. 174-178.

<sup>881</sup> Cf. Is. 38:18; Ez. 26:20; 31:14, 16; 32:18, 24, 25, 29, 30; Ps. 28:1; 30:4; 88:5; 143:7; Prov. 1:12.

the nether world.<sup>882</sup> One reason for the variety of terms for nether world is the tendency of the biblical authors either to use euphemisms or to describe the realm of the dead with words intimately linked to their belief in death and its consequences. Thus, the use of the term *ʔbdwn* "[place of] destruction"<sup>883</sup> rather than "annihilation," may either reflect their idea of the fate of man after death or their observation of the decay of the corpse in the grave with which the word *ʔbdwn* occurs in parallelism in Ps. 88:12.

Of interest for the literary history of the nether world for the concepts of the Mesopotamians and Canaanites, and for the ancient Hebrews' acquaintance with those concepts are the texts in which *šʔwl* is personified. Sheol has a belly, *bʔn* (Jon. 2:3); a womb, *rḥm* (Prov. 30:16); a mouth, *py* (Ps. 141:7; cf. also 69:16); it swallows, *blʕ* (Prov. 1:12) and yet it is never full;<sup>884</sup> it ensnares people.<sup>885</sup> Death is intimately associated with Sheol, and both are related to all that is evil. Wicked men, who scoffed at God and mistreated his people, are said to have made a pact with Death and Sheol, *bryt ʔt mwt wʕm-šʔwl* (Is. 28:15; cf. also 28:18). These men especially are the victims of Sheol.<sup>886</sup> These personifications are apparently mere poetic imagery. Although the name "Death" brings to mind *Môt*, the Canaanite god of the nether world, there is not sufficient evidence for asserting that *mwt* in Hebrew was considered the god of the nether world. Yet it may very well be a poetic borrowing from this Canaanite concept of the lord reigning over the realm of the dead. In a few instances *mwt* connotes the realm of the dead.<sup>887</sup> Although it is generally agreed upon that there is no well-defined pantheon contained in the Old Testament, an examination of certain passages hints at allusions to a nether world deity which suggests a kinship with other traditions of the ancient Near East. Comparison of the name Methušälāḥ, *mtwšlḥ*,<sup>888</sup> with the Phoenician name(s) *ʔršlḥ* (and *ʔbšlḥ*) and with the references to *šlḥ*<sup>889</sup> has led M. Tsevat to identify Šälāḥ as god of the nether world. The preformative *mtw* of the name *mtwšlḥ*, equivalent to the Hebrew *mt*, which occurs almost exclusively in the plural cstr.,<sup>890</sup> has its cognate in Ugaritic

<sup>882</sup> Cf. Is. 38:17; 51:14; Ez. 28:8; Jon. 2:7; Ps. 16:10; 30:10; 49:10; 55:24; 103:4; Job 18:30; 33:22, 24.

<sup>883</sup> Cf. Ps. 88:12; Job 26:6; 28:22 [*ʔbdwn* here is personified]; 31:12; Prov. 15:11; 27:20. In the last mentioned examples *ʔbdwn* and *šʔwl* express the same idea in the form of a figure of speech known as hendiadys.

<sup>884</sup> Cf. Prov. 27:20. The reason of Sheol's insatiability is nowhere mentioned nor is there anything explicitly said why it is never full, namely, its vastness; cf. Is. 5:14; Hab. 2:5.

<sup>885</sup> Cf. the expression *ḥbly šʔwl* in 2 Sam. 22:5; Ps. 18:6-7.

<sup>886</sup> Cf. Ps. 9:18; 49:14-15; Job 18:5-13.

<sup>887</sup> Cf. Job 28:22; 30:23; Prov. 5:5; 7:27.

<sup>888</sup> Gen. 5:21-22; 25:27; 1 Ch. 1:3.

<sup>889</sup> Cf. Job 33:18; Neh. 3:15; cf. also the expressions *my ḥšlḥ* "the water of Shiloah" (Is. 8:6), and *šlḥyk* "your water-conduits" (Cant. 4:13).

<sup>890</sup> Cf. the expression *mty mspr* "men to be numbered, few in number," Gen. 34:30; Deut. 4:27; Jer. 44:28; Ps. 105:12; 1 Ch. 16:19; *mty šwʔ* "false people," Ps. 26:4; Job 11:11; etc.

*mt* "man, husband." Gesenius regards the *w* in *mtw* as a survival of the old nominative ending.<sup>891</sup> On the strength of comparative Semitic philology M. Tsevat relates the element *mtw* to Akkadian *mutu* (or *mut*) which occurs in personal names from Mari and Amarna with the meaning "man, follower, worshipper of" + divine name. *šlh* is a god of the nether world, whose primary meaning is the underworld river. By metonymy it became the name of the deity itself inhabiting that river in the Phoenician word *šršlh* (*šr* is a Phoenician spelling of Egyptian Osiris), which means "Osiris is *Shālah*." Osiris, identified by the Greeks with several of their own gods, but principally with Dionysos and Hades, was worshipped throughout Egypt as god of the dead and, in this capacity, became the most important god in the Egyptian pantheon. The Hebrew name *mtw-šlh* which is interpreted to mean a "man [worshipper] of [the deity] *Shālah*" represents an element of pre-Yahwistic belief in a nether world deity to whom the sacrifice specified in Deut. 21:1-9 was offered.<sup>892</sup>

Since traces of mythology are few and no concept of a well-defined pantheon appears in the biblical texts, it is most unlikely that *šwl* originally was the name of an underworld deity, which later became a general term for the realm of the dead itself.

## 2. Location and Description of Sheol

Hitherto we have considered the etymology of the term *šwl* and its various synonyms. Now we must both analyze the passages which refer to its location within the underworld and study the biblical texts which provide the elements for a description of the nether world. Although *šwl* is nowhere mentioned as a place created by God, its presence in the universe was taken for granted. It is often mentioned in connection with the heavens to designate the uttermost limits of the universe.<sup>893</sup> While it can be misleading to be specific about the exact location of *šwl* in the underworld, the allusions to its depth<sup>894</sup> and its syntactical relationship to the mountains (cf. Deut. 32:22; Jon. 2:3-7) suggest some general observations. Typical of the passages dealing with the nether world is the frequent occurrence of the verb *yrd* "to go down": one "goes down" to reach *šwl*.<sup>895</sup> Although the account of the descent of Korah's clan into

<sup>891</sup> See Gesenius' *Hebrew Grammar*, § 90k.

<sup>892</sup> See M. Tsevat, "The Canaanite God *Šālah*," in *VT* IV (1954), pp. 41-49.

<sup>893</sup> Cf. Am. 9:2; Ps. 139:8; cf. also Is. 14:13-15.

<sup>894</sup> Cf. Is. 7:11; Prov. 9:18; cf. also the expression *šwl mtht* "Sheol beneath," Is. 14:9.

<sup>895</sup> Cf. Gen. 37:35; 42:38; 44:29, 31; Num. 16:30, 33; Deut. 32:22; 1 Sam. 2:6; 1 K. 2:9; Is. 14:11, 15; Ez. 31:15-17; 32:27; Ps. 49:15; 55:16; Job 7:9; 17:16; 21:13. Cf. the expression *ywrđy bwr* "those who go down into the pit," Is. 38:18; Ez. 26:20; 31:14, 16; 32:18, 24, 25, 29, 30; Ps. 28:1; 30:4; 88:5; 143:7; Prov. 1:12.

Sheol (Num. 16; Ex. 15:12) is a new and unprecedented way to enter the nether world — for nowhere is it mentioned in such concrete manner that the whole person is delivered alive to Sheol<sup>896</sup> — nevertheless close parallel between the description of the parting asunder of the earth swallowing up the men of Korah and the comparison of Sheol with the abyss<sup>897</sup> certainly indicates that Sheol was generally situated within the earth, namely, deep beneath the surface of the earth. Expressions like *š<sup>2</sup>wl thtyt* “the lower, lowest Sheol”<sup>898</sup> and *‘mqy š<sup>2</sup>wl* “the depths of Sheol” (Prov. 9:18) can hardly be taken in the sense of a geographical description of the nether world. The association of the deep with the nether world has led to the conception of *š<sup>2</sup>wl* as a watery abyss.<sup>899</sup> However, the terms *š<sup>2</sup>wl* and *thwm* are not fully synonymous. Also, there is no direct evidence to support the assertion that the ancient Hebrews conceived of passages or tunnels connecting *š<sup>2</sup>wl* and *thwm*.

To an extent which cannot exactly be determined, a connection persisted between the nether world and the individual graves. J. Pedersen points out that the grave stands for the whole realm of the dead as *pars pro toto*: “Sheol is the entirety into which all graves are merged; but no more than the other entireties which fill the Israelitic world of ideas, it is the result of a summing of all the single parts, so that Sheol should be the sum of all the graves. All graves have certain common characteristics constituting the nature of the grave, and that is Sheol. The “Ur”-grave we might call Sheol; it belongs deep down under the earth, but it manifests itself in every single grave, as *mw<sup>2</sup>b* manifests itself in every single Moabite. Where there is grave, there is Sheol, and where there is Sheol, there is grave.”<sup>900</sup> In appraisal of J. Pedersen’s opinion it may be observed that the terms *š<sup>2</sup>wl* and *qbr* are not synonymous despite all their characteristics being applicable both to the tomb and to the nether world. The biblical authors felt a need neither to join these conceptions nor to explain how the dead could be present in the grave and at the same time inhabit the nether world. There are instances where Sheol, in some of its aspects, is described as a place where life either is totally absent or is threatened

<sup>896</sup> Cf. also Ps. 55:16; 124:3; Prov. 1:12.

<sup>897</sup> Cf. Ps. 71:20; the passage in Jon. 2:1-6, gives the impression that to be in the deep is the same as being in “the belly of Sheol” *bṭn š<sup>2</sup>wl*, and Ps. 69:6 contains a plea, “Let not the flood of water overwhelm me;

Let not the depth swallow me up;

And let not the pit close its mouth upon me.”

<sup>898</sup> Deut. 32:22; cf. also the expression *š<sup>2</sup>wl thtyh*, Ps. 86:13.

<sup>899</sup> Cf. 2 Sam. 22:5; Jon. 2:1-6; Ps. 18:5-6; 42:7-8; 88:3-7; Job 26:5-6. See M. Dahood’s comment on Ps. 42, in *op. cit.*, p. 258, note 7. He renders *‘rṣ yrdn* with “the land of descent,” a poetic name for the nether world. In support of this translation he remarks: “D. N. Freedman finds a connection between the geographical name Jordan and the noun here postulated as the name of the nether world. After all, the Jordan makes a precipitous descent to the lowest point in the world, a region that must have provided some of the imagery associated with the nether regions.”

<sup>900</sup> J. Pedersen, *op. cit.*, p. 462.

with extinction, e.g., the resting-place of man's mortal remains, the ocean with its unruly waters and the inhospitable desert areas [though less explicitly]. Accordingly, the impression left by the observation of these areas inspired the idea of the onset of the prevailing order in the world. J. Pedersen speaks of them as "the three non-worlds" because of their "concentration of evil."<sup>901</sup>

From the general consideration of the location of the nether world we turn to the characteristics of Sheol. The description of the nether world illustrates the ancient Hebrews' outlook on the condition of the dead. *š<sup>w</sup>l* is the land-of-no-return (Akk. *eršet lā târi*).

He that goes down to Sheol does not come up [*y<sup>l</sup>h*],  
He returns to his house no more [*l<sup>p</sup> yšwb<sup>c</sup>wd*],  
His home never sees him again.<sup>902</sup>

But man dies and is helpless;  
A human expires and where is he?  
Water fails from a lake [*ym*],  
A river parches and dries up,  
A man lies down and never rises up,  
They wake not till the heavens decay;  
They rouse not from their sleep.<sup>903</sup>

For her [adulteress] house tilts towards death,  
And her tracks descend to the shades [*rp<sup>2</sup>ym*];  
None who go to her come back again [*yšwbwn*],  
Or reach the paths of life [*r<sup>2</sup>hwt hyym*].<sup>904</sup>

Those who depart from the land of the living to the nether world are deprived of their freedom. This particular idea finds expression in the description of Sheol as a city with gates and as a place where the dead are bound with ropes.

I said: "I must go hence  
in the noontide of my days,  
And be consigned to the gates of Sheol [*š<sup>c</sup>ry š<sup>w</sup>l*]  
for the rest of my years."  
I said: "I shall no more see the Lord  
in the land of the living;  
I shall no more look upon man  
among the inhabitants of the world."<sup>905</sup>

<sup>901</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 464-467.

<sup>902</sup> Job 7:9a-10c, as translated by M. H. Pope; cf. also Ps. 49:20.

<sup>903</sup> Job 14:10-12; M. H. Pope's translation.

<sup>904</sup> Prov. 2:18-19.

<sup>905</sup> Is. 38:10-11. For *hdl*, in verse 11b, we read *hld* as proposed by R. Kittel, in *KBH*<sup>13</sup>. Cf. the expression *š<sup>c</sup>ry h<sup>2</sup>rš* "the gates of the nether world" [*rš* denotes the nether world as mentioned on p. 128].

Have death's gates [*š<sup>c</sup>ry-mwt*] been revealed to you,  
Have you seen the dark portals [*š<sup>c</sup>ry šlmwt*]?<sup>906</sup>

The cords of Sheol [*hbly š<sup>2</sup>wl*] surrounded me,  
The traps of death [*mwqšy mwt*] confronted me.<sup>907</sup>

The cords of death [*hbly-mwt*] encircled me;  
And the anguish of Sheol [*mšry š<sup>2</sup>wl*] found me;  
I found trouble and sorrow.<sup>908</sup>

Your wrath rests upon me,  
And you press down upon me all your breakers [*mšbryk*];  
You have removed my acquaintances far from me;  
You have made me a horror to them;  
I am shut in and cannot go out.<sup>909</sup>

A suitable image for isolation and for the disconcertedness which presumably befalls the dead is the dark night denoting the deepest shade of blackness applied to Sheol.

Hold off, let me smile awhile  
Before I go, never to return  
To a land of darkness and blackness [*hšk šlmwt*],  
A land of gloom [*pth*] like darkness [*pl*],  
Of blackness without order,  
Which shines like darkness.<sup>910</sup>

You have put me in the deepest pit,  
In darkest regions, in the depths.<sup>911</sup>

If I await Sheol as my home [*byty*],  
Spread my couch in darkness . . .<sup>912</sup>

Driven from light into darkness,  
Chased out from the world.<sup>913</sup>

Besides being a place shrouded in darkness, the nether world is the land of oblivion, *ṛš nšyh* (Ps. 88: 13). The dead are not only separated from the land of the living but also are oblivious of their own past. They are

<sup>906</sup> Job 38:17. The expression *š<sup>c</sup>ry-mwt* also occurs in Ps. 9:14; 107:18.

<sup>907</sup> Ps. 18:6, as translated by M. Dahood.

<sup>908</sup> Ps. 116:3.

<sup>909</sup> Ps. 88:8-9.

<sup>910</sup> Job 10:20b-22, translation mine.

<sup>911</sup> Ps. 88:7.

<sup>912</sup> Job 17:13. The comparison of Sheol with a house also occurs in 30:23. In another instance the nether world is designated *hdry-mwt* "the chambers of death," Prov. 7:27.

<sup>913</sup> Job 18:18; M. H. Pope's translation.

thus isolated from their former environment and banished to Sheol whose entire domain is pervaded by the attributes of the dead.

His memory perishes from the earth,  
He has no name abroad.<sup>914</sup>

You overwhelm him forever and he passes;  
You change his visage and send him away.  
His sons achieve honor, but he never knows;  
They are disgraced, but he perceives not.<sup>915</sup>

Death's domain reached farther into the realm of the departed. At the moment of the extinction of physical life the deceased is incapable of communicating not only with those whom he left behind but also with those who lie at rest with him. Israelites were confronted with the torturing thought that in Sheol their lips will be sealed. The dead were thus excluded from the community and stood outside the orbit of the worship of Yahweh. Hence the nether world was simply called "Silence" *dwmh* by metonymy.

For no one in death remembers you,  
in Sheol, who praises you?<sup>916</sup>

What gain is there in my tears,  
in my descent to the Pit?  
Will the slime [*pr*] praise you,  
or publish abroad your fidelity?<sup>917</sup>

Is it for the dead that you will do wonders?  
Will the ghosts of the dead [*rp<sup>2</sup>ym*] arise to praise you?  
Will your kindness be recounted in the grave?  
Or your faithfulness in Destruction [*bdwn*]?  
Will your wonders be made known in the darkness?  
And your righteousness in the land of oblivion?<sup>918</sup>

The dead do not praise the Lord,  
Neither any that go down into Silence.<sup>919</sup>

Sheol cannot thank you, death cannot praise you;  
Those who go down to the Pit cannot hope for your faithfulness.<sup>920</sup>

<sup>914</sup> Job 18:17, as translated by M. H. Pope.

<sup>915</sup> Job 14:20-21, as translated by M. H. Pope.

<sup>916</sup> Ps. 6:6.

<sup>917</sup> Ps. 30:10. Translated by M. Dahood, *op. cit.*, p. 181. The translation of *pr* with "slime" falls in better with Northwest Semitic motifs which describe the nether world as a place of mud and filth." *Ibid.*, p. 184, note 10.

<sup>918</sup> Ps. 88:11-13.

<sup>919</sup> Ps. 115:17; cf. also 94:17.

<sup>920</sup> Is. 38:18.

If Sheol is said to be thrilled by the arrival of the newcomers (Is. 14:9-11), this does not imply that the nether world is a place where happy reunions occur. As a matter of fact, the shades draw no comfort from meeting each other.

All of them [shades] will answer,  
 and will say to you,  
 "So you too have become weak as we are,  
 have been made like us!"  
 Brought down to Sheol is your pomp,  
 the noise of your harps;  
 Beneath you maggots are spread,  
 worms are your covering.<sup>921</sup>

Even the thought that social class distinctions will cease to exist in the nether world could not mitigate the terror and abhorrence felt by the Israelites of having to go down to Sheol with the uncircumcised and to share their resting-place with them.

I would be asleep and at rest,  
 With kings and counselors of the earth  
 Who built themselves ruins,  
 Or with princes who had gold,  
 Who filled their houses with silver  
 There where knaves cease strife,  
 Where the weary are at rest,  
 Where prisoners take ease together,  
 Heedless of the slave driver's shout.  
 Small and great alike are there,  
 And slave is free from master.<sup>922</sup>

A single passage from the book of Ezekiel illustrates the nether world as a huge necropolis where Egypt, Assyria, Elam, Meshech, Tubal and Edom have their places assigned in Sheol and are surrounded by those who have died both a natural and a violent death. "There are all the princes of the north, all the Sidonians, who have gone down with the slain, in shame, for all the terror of their might, and lie uncircumcised with those who are slain by the sword, and bear the burden of their shame with those who go down to the Pit."<sup>923</sup>

Since the biblical texts containing units of tradition originated in very different periods and in very varied circles, it is not surprising that

<sup>921</sup> Is. 14:10-11.

<sup>922</sup> Job 3:13b-19. Translated by M. H. Pope, *op. cit.*, p. 27. Verse 16 is omitted because it "fits better between vss. 11 and 12 than in its present position." *Ibid.*, p. 31, note 16.

<sup>923</sup> Ez. 32:30; cf. also 32:17-32.

we do not find in them a unified and consistent view of the nether world. Moreover, there are even divergent opinions among the ancient Hebrews concerning Yahweh's relationship with the dead. If we attempt to comprehend the different traditions in the light of their oldest parts, proceeding backwards and forwards along the road corresponding to the process of the growth of the tradition, we may safely assume that the idea of Yahweh's control over the nether world appears later when He came to be known as God of the universe. A few examples will illustrate God's universality:

Can you fathom the depth of God,  
Find the boundary of Shaddai?  
Higher than heaven, what can you do?  
Deeper than Sheol, how can you know?  
Longer than earth in measure,  
Broader than the sea.<sup>924</sup>

The shades beneath writhe,  
The waters and their inhabitants,  
Naked is Sheol before him,  
Destruction [<sup>ʔ</sup>*bdwn*] has no cover.<sup>925</sup>

Sheol and Destruction [<sup>ʔ</sup>*bdwn*] are before the Lord.  
How much more then the hearts of the sons of man!<sup>926</sup>

Yet, in a number of passages we find the idea expressed that the mysterious world of the dead is a province lying outside the domain of God, e.g.,

The heavens are the heavens of the Lord,  
But the earth he has given to the sons of man.  
The dead will not praise the Lord,  
Nor any who go down into silence [*dwmh*].<sup>927</sup>

Sheol cannot thank you, death cannot praise you;  
Those who go down to the Pit cannot hope for your faithfulness.  
The living, the living man thanks you, as I do this day.  
The father to the children makes known your faithfulness.<sup>928</sup>

<sup>924</sup> Job 11:7-9. Cf. M. H. Pope's translation in *op. cit.*, p. 80; cf. also his notes on vss. 7 and 8. "The word *hhqr* is not the adverbial case, but stands in construct relation with the following word." The term *tklyt* should be taken in the sense of "boundary, limit" rather than "perfection." We read with G. Beer, in *KBH*<sup>13</sup>, *gbhy mšmym* "higher than heaven" instead of MT *gbhy šmym* "heights of heaven" to make this line conform to the second hemistich: "*mqh mšʔwl* "deeper than Sheol."

<sup>925</sup> Job 26:5-6.

<sup>926</sup> Prov. 15:11; cf. also Am. 9:2.

<sup>927</sup> Ps. 115:16-17; cf. also 6:5; 30:10; 88:11-13.

<sup>928</sup> Is. 38:18-19.

Since the worship of Yahweh is an essential function of the living, by which they move into a specific relationship with God, the dead have no participation in the cult and, therefore, forfeit this relationship. It would seem, however, that Yahweh exercises his power over the nether world indirectly, in that he controls the issues of life and death, e.g.,

The Lord slays and makes alive,  
He brings to Sheol and raises up.<sup>929</sup>

O Yahweh, you lifted me from Sheol,  
you restored me to life,  
as I was descending the Pit.<sup>930</sup>

In conclusion, we may add that the vagueness of the ancient Hebrews' ideas about Yahweh's relationship with Sheol is perhaps due to their incapacity to objectify their concept of the mode of existence of the dead. As regards their reflections on the nether world, Sheol was a vague middle region lying somewhere between Yahweh and his creation. Since the nether world needs more precise definition if its distinction from Yahweh and the whole creation is to be apparent, we leave the problem open.

<sup>929</sup> 1 Sam. 2:6.

<sup>930</sup> Ps. 30:4. We read with M. Dahood, *op. cit.*, p. 181f, *hytnym* (enclitic *m*). He explains the term *yâredî* as a probable dialectal form. "The final *i* is paragogic, as frequently with participles." Cf. also Prov. 23:14; Hos. 13:14.

## CONCLUSION

The picture of the created world presented in the pages of the Old Testament not merely offers clues to the ancient Hebrews' world view but also suggests their notions of the physical geography of the ancient Near East. Because the biblical authors had none of the philosophical interest of the Greeks, a full and balanced view may be attained only by combining in a single account the insights gathered from several accounts and illustrations of the world as contained in the Bible. The definite vision of the universe that emerges lies beyond mere sense data or empirical evidence. Such information presents only a superficial picture. The whole vision of the world and of physical phenomena is colored by the ancient Hebrews' conviction that God is creator and preserver of the natural order. Hence, God is the pivotal point of the Hebrews' universe, and to this fact the biblical authors submitted their understanding of the structure and purpose of the world.

In order to unfold the ancient Hebrews' concept of the world, we were required to explore the three levels of the universe. The notion of the unity of the world was known to the ancient Hebrews who regarded the universe as a sum of separate entities related to one another in a structural relationship, a structure composed of three layers: the heavens above, the earth and the sea in the middle, and the underworld beneath. The biblical authors did not feel the need of a specific term for world, but used a general term, *hkl*, with the meaning of "the whole, all, the totality of all things," and the expression *hšmym wh²rš*.

Our search for that factor which most likely furnished the ancient Hebrews with their notion of the beginning of the world as due to God's creative activity revealed that their concept of creation originated with speculation about the beginning of their nation. In that historical context the beginning of mankind is connected with the beginning of the world. Moreover, when the biblical authors consider the expanse of the sky, the beauty and order of nature around them, they do not regard the material world as a proof, by its orderliness, of the existence of a divine designer. They already are believers. They make no attempt to prove the existence of God who created the world. For just as Yahweh is a fact in their own history, so is his creative power in the universe.

The account of the creation is found variously in the Old Testament, with notable differences in general outlook and specific details. The

creation account assigned to the Priestly source was made primarily in the context of the history and worship of the Chosen People and was concerned with the transcendent and incomprehensible "word" of God which caused the world to come into being. The Yahwist writers spoke of creation itself in the language of the ancient myths. This mythological imagery was expanded in the prophetic and Wisdom literature in general, and in the psalms in particular, where the description of a primeval struggle was modelled on the pattern of the cosmogonic traditions of Israel's neighbors. The hymn-like language of Second Isaiah was intended to call forth praise for the creator of the world and the Lord of history, to emphasize the insignificance of man in comparison with him, and to reassure and comfort his people. The creation narrative in the book of Job provides an insight into God's transcendence and into the problems confronting man as he seeks to understand his role in the processes of nature. Psalm 104, with its emphasis on God the creator and on the majesty of his creative act, discloses the heights which the creation-faith attained in biblical literature. With the emergence of the Wisdom literature there appears a change in man's attitude towards nature. Man's concept of a world begun through "wisdom" provides, for the first time, the possibility of relating the whole of man's intellectual curiosity about the world to the Israelite belief in the supreme lordship of Yahweh. For that "wisdom" which, through education, is available to those who are willing to learn and to fear Yahweh is essentially the same as the "wisdom" through which the world was originally created, and that is a gift from Yahweh himself.

Although some of the cosmogonic accounts contained in the Bible agree with the Mesopotamian cosmogonies in scope and in general content, they fundamentally differ in one particular aspect: the idea of some primordial monster, coexistent with Yahweh from the beginning, was undoubtedly felt to be incompatible with the monotheistic outlook. When the biblical writers use mythological imagery to depict Yahweh's struggle with the monsters of primeval chaos, they are careful not to suggest a cosmic dualism but regard the primeval chaos as devoid of any power of resistance as soon as the creator-god overcomes it.

Parallel to the Mesopotamian cosmological view is the conception of the universe as a three-leveled structure. However, the biblical authors refrained from following the Mesopotamian cosmographers who explained the three layers as fashioned out of *Tiāmat's* body split apart. In the cosmogonic accounts of the Bible we notice an advance in conceptual thought, in that creation is accomplished by the pronouncement of the divine *fiat*. The biblical creation narratives contrast even more sharply with those of Mesopotamia and Egypt in the purpose which motivates them. Whereas the earliest cosmogonies of Israel's neighbors were conditioned by the physical features of the areas in which they lived and were

motivated by the cosmographers' interest in biological origins, the authors of the Old Testament never evoked the creation for its own sake independently of the covenant which Yahweh had concluded with his people.

The contemplation of the cosmic panorama made the ancient Hebrews aware of the active presence of the Creator who himself insists on remaining concealed. Hence, they became interested in the signs of the heavens, in the movements of the sun and the moon, in the orbits of the planets, and in the configurations of the stars and constellations. The regular rising and setting of the sun and its yearly movement inspired the notion of regularity which characterizes all abiding life of nature and man. If the ancient Hebrews did not represent the universal world law by the regularity of the sun's course, like the Babylonians and the Egyptians, they were impressed nevertheless by the apparent unchangeableness of the sun, which suggested it as symbol of eternal duration. The prevailing thought which the contemplation of the luminaries evoked in man from the most ancient times calls forth their five functions: to divide day from night, to be signs, to be indicators for seasons, to be measurements for days, and to be constituents for years. As for the vestiges of sun cult found in the Old Testament, we noted certain place names which still retain an element of solar cult, the biblical passages which warn against it, and the solar features both in the temple of Jerusalem and in the cultic rituals in vogue during the time of Solomon.

As for the traces of moon worship, it is difficult to establish with certainty the details of this cult, since this cult is always referred to in the Bible in context with other forms of astral cult. Traces of moon cult can still be detected here and there in brief passages alluding to certain practices which were part of lunar feasts. Specific cultic objects found on Palestinian soil offer some evidence of the existence of moon worship.

Although there is insufficient evidence to support the assertion that the planets were designated by a general term, we are inclined to consider the word *mzlwt* as an inclusive term for planets. Two planets can be identified with certainty: *kywn* "Saturn," and *hyll* "Venus." The deity associated with the planet Saturn was known as Shalim, which appears in Hebrew compound names, designating either places or persons. As for the existence of a Saturn cult in ancient Israel, the Bible lacks evidence which would determine to what extent it was practiced by the ancient Hebrews. The planet Venus was associated with the goddess Astarte, known, too, as the queen of heaven, whose cult was connected with fertility rites.

The references to stars and constellations contained in the biblical records are too scanty to support a demonstration of biblical astronomy. Moreover, it would seem that astronomy was never grasped or pursued as a science in ancient Israel. The constellations referred to as *ksyl* and

*kymh* are, respectively, Orion and the Pleiades. In the absence of more information from the biblical records on this subject it is impossible to get a clear picture of the map of the heaven.

All these luminaries are said to be located in the expanse of the "firmament," which seems to be included in the general concept of "heaven." The term *šmym* (heaven) designates the space above the earth, including the atmosphere, the region of the clouds, the heavenly vault, the firmament, and that which exists above the firmament. The horizon represents the boundary between heaven and earth and serves to hold the sky and the earth firmly together, thus preventing the world from being flooded by the encompassing waters. To the Hebrew, thinking in terms of his own environmental experience, the conception of an architect designing and proportioning the structure of a building would represent the picture of the heaven in the concrete features of a building. Thus, according to one view, the heaven was the site where God's abode is erected. According to another view, Yahweh built his royal palace on firm pillars in the rolling waters of the celestial sea above the canopy of heaven. In the sky are located the storehouses containing winds, snow, and hail. Among the architectural features of the sky are the columns which support the heavenly dome. Through the observation of the phenomenon of rainfall the ancient Hebrews came to believe that there were grills or sluices in the firmament which were opened at intervals to let the waters of the celestial ocean pass through and fall to the earth. Besides the conception of the heaven as a solid structure there appears the view which regards the sky as a tent, or a garment, or cloth.

In the concept *rqy<sup>c</sup>*, used to describe the firmament, the function and the shape of the heavenly dome are essentially related. This solid vault of the sky has the function of holding back the encompassing waters as well as of serving as pavement for Yahweh's throne. In the absence of any explicit mention of the shape of the firmament in the biblical texts, it would seem that the basic idea of *rqy<sup>c</sup>* as something beaten out suggested the imagery of the firmament as a beaten out hemispheric dome.

If the distant sky prompted the idea of God's transcendence, the meteorological and geophysical phenomena suggested to the ancient Hebrews Yahweh's capacity to act everywhere. The notion of God's mobility in action receives concrete form in the wind or the scudding clouds. The rising of the clouds in the sky and their relation to the rain manifest their bivalent function of revealing and concealing God and of bringing rain. The abundant references to wind and storm show that these phenomena were a common climatic feature in Palestine (as indeed they still are) because of the highly diversified nature of its terrain and its geographical location. Another familiar atmospheric phenomenon, the rainbow, symbolically represented the covenant between Yahweh and the

human race. Thunder and lightning were counted among the more awe-inspiring and dangerous meteorological phenomena.

But none of those phenomena brings out more clearly the contrast between Yahweh and the weather-gods venerated by the peoples of the ancient Near East, than the biblical descriptions of rainfall and other precipitation. The striking difference between Yahweh and the weather-gods appears in the function of each in relation to rain: the weather-gods personify the atmospheric phenomena, Yahweh controls them. As regards the origin of rain, dew, hail, hoarfrost, and snow, the ancient Hebrews conceived of an immense ocean located above the firmament supplying water for precipitation. The conception of storehouses for snow and hail does not differ fundamentally from the view of a celestial ocean. Hence, the periodic rainfall was related to windows and doors in the firmament which were opened at intervals to let the waters pass through. Another form of opening in the sky is represented as a water channel, like an irrigation canal, which allowed the rain to flow down from all parts of heaven.

The geophysical phenomena, such as landslides, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, and the tidal waves which ensue, are employed to prove that nothing can resist Yahweh's might, for these phenomena challenge the very stability of the universe itself. And yet, when confronted with the violent explosions of the forces of nature, the ancient Hebrews never appeared to regard them as spectacles whose physical causes needed defining. They were more interested in rediscovering, even in the world of nature around them, the broad outline of the plan to which their own destiny was to conform. From the outset they recognized that what mattered was the promised land and, therefore, they did not seek to provide a general interpretation of cosmic realities. In the pages of the Old Testament there is simply given a schematic view of the three-leveled structure of the universe, whose constitutive elements are related to each other in a structural relationship. This accords with what we have seen in this study of the foundations of the earth laid in the underworld. Just as the earth, resting upon its pillars, is linked with the underworld, so are the heavens established on the extreme parts of the earth.

From the number of terms used to designate "earth" we have an indication of the view held by the ancient Hebrews regarding the spatio-physical world. Their notion of the world starts from the concrete sphere of their land, which is extended only very gradually by widening its scope toward the concept of the inhabited world as a whole.

The very fact of the division of the world into four sections is characteristic of the conception of space held by the Hebrews. As appeared in the analysis of the cardinal points, they were never conceived as mere functional reality, devoid of all content and mere expressions of ideal

relations. But the cardinal points were associated either with the position of an observer, or with the sun's daily course, or with topographical features of Palestine. Hence, the ancient Hebrews could not conceive of those four directions in terms of a purely functional relation, and likewise they did not know the concept of infinity; from the very outset their world is confined within certain spatial limits imposed by their sense perception. As the different countries were in some way distributed among the diverse cardinal points and were differentiated accordingly, so the whole world was included in this classification. Thus, the spatial world became intelligible to the Hebrews to the degree that they were able to describe it in terms of concrete images.

If Israel's thinking about the boundaries of the earth was either motivated by the interest in cosmological speculations or developed along the line of the growing concept of the universality of the rule of Yahweh, it needs to be said that the ancient Hebrews' ideas of the shape of the earth were formed under the influence both of regional geography, with well-defined topographical contrasts, and of their contact with other peoples of the ancient Near East, all of which contributed to the Hebrew world view. With the progressive notion on the inhabited earth as a whole the Hebrews reached such a degree of space consciousness as to relate all sectors of the earth to one center, called "the navel of the earth."

While the varied presentation of the meteorological phenomena and the description of the world is indicative of a sympathetic view towards nature where man and his physical environment are united in a common enterprise of conquest and development, the references to the ocean and the rivers indicate traces of an antagonistic element which threatens to reduce the ordered world to the chaos from which it had been screened at creation. The threat of the deep is imminent in the world and in the destiny of the individuals, who become aware of this threat particularly in a crisis of sickness or at the approach of death. This fear eventually led to a visual description of the realm of the dead as a place where life either is totally absent or is threatened with extinction, as, for example, the grave, the ocean and the desert.

Consideration of Israel's ideas about the nether world has shown that certain specific expressions were influenced by the belief about death and afterlife on which they directly depended: Sheol is a land-of-no-return; a city with gates wherein the dead are held in bondage; a land of darkness, oblivion and silence; a place of mud and filth. Yahweh seems to exercise his power over the nether world indirectly in that he controls the issues of life and death.

Yet we do the ancient Hebrews' world view but half justice if we fail to see their basic understanding of the natural order and the manner in which they reacted to the universe following the principles of their

religious life. They testify to a profound conviction that nature is created by God and, as such, is visible evidence of his reality and his omnipotence, and of his participation in the affairs of the world. Their attitude towards it is revealed in the routine of daily life as much as in moments of crisis. In fact, as their existence as a nation is regarded as an open adventure, and as their own destiny is regarded as that of a Chosen People fitting into a transcendent pattern, so their physical environment derives its significance from its relationship to the people, as the stage on which the historical drama of the nation is performed.



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