Cherubim and Seraphim in the Old Testament

74,662 words
A. J. Carlill
Hilary Term 2013
Cherubim and Seraphim in the Old Testament
For Gill
Preface

The production of a thesis brings with it many challenges, especially when doing it part time over an extended number of years. Consequently there are quite a few people to whom I am indebted. Firstly I must thank my supervisor, Prof. John Day. Initially, after an absence of nearly twenty years from formal academic study, John was one of the three people who was prepared to write me a positive reference for my application to take this course of study. Since then he has been consistently positive and encouraging. I am grateful to him for his attention to detail, wise advice and constant good humour. He has made many, many suggestions that have served to improve what is written here. However, any remaining failings that the reader will find within it are my own.

I have been working as a parish priest in Tilehurst, Berkshire, throughout the period of study, and I must thank the staff team at St. George’s and St. Mary Magdalen’s who have been generous in their support, primarily by allowing me the time to keep going to Oxford and study. The Revd. Duncan White, The Revd. Michael Oke and The Revd. Peter Grosse have all been supportive, along with other members of the team, Lyle Brome, Sister Win Rivers and Len Harris. Sadly Win and Len have not lived to see the fruits of my labours, but I hope that what they are now experiencing of Cherubim and Seraphim will, at least in some small way, concur with what I have written here.

In addition to the team at St. George’s and St. Mary Magdalen’s there are several members of the congregation who have been supportive over the years: Peter and Mair Mayers have helped with transport; Brenda Hunt has shown detailed interest in the subject of the thesis; more recently Daniel Hand, who has also shown similar
interest, has proof read the first draft and made extensive comments which have
served to improve its style. Both congregations more generally have been stimulating
in their response to my Sunday sermons which have been more than a little affected
by what I have been reading. I am not sure if they thought I had lost the plot when I
told them about Asherah and the giant footprints at ’Ain Dara, but if they did, they
were very polite about it.

In addition to the support I have received from people in the parish I shall be
for ever indebted to the members of my clergy support group: The Revd. Paul Hunt,
The Revd. Canon Ruth Oates and The Revd. Dr. Susan Shooter. They have been
spiritual companions throughout this journey, and our twice-yearly residential in
Church Stretton have been a source of great strength and inspiration.

Finally I must thank my family. Without them and their love this whole
exercise would be pointless. My wife’s parents, Les and Ann Murrells, have been
generous in their emotional and financial support. Les’ death last year was an
unexpected blow, but Ann has continued her support since. My parents, Richard and
Val, while living at considerable distance, have listened well to my D.Phil ramblings
and shown real pride in my work. My two children, Harriet and Ranulph, have never
known any life other than the one in which Daddy was in the study too much and
rather grumpy too often from having been burning the candle at both ends. I apologise
for the ill temper and absence that they have endured, and thank them both from the
bottom of my heart. When I started the M.St in preparation for the D.Phil, Ranulph
was only a few weeks old and Harriet had not turned two, and I hope that they will
both be able to read this with some understanding in due course. Lastly, to my wife,
Gill, must go my biggest vote of thanks. She is my emotional rock. Her patience with
me seems to be limitless. Her quiet and practical approach to the complications that
arise from holding down a full time post, studying part time and bringing up two children has been the most powerful antidote to the negative feelings which sometimes have seemed too much to bear. I only hope that, now this is finished, I can repay some of the debt I owe her.

Adam Carlill

Michaelmas Term 2012
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Cherubim and Seraphim in the Old Testament

D.Phil A. J. Carlill, St. Peter’s College Michaelmas Term 2012

Short Abstract

This thesis is the first modern joint study of biblical Cherubim and Seraphim. I begin by setting out the recent history of their interpretation, before taking each of the biblical texts in turn. Chapter 1 looks at the references to Cherubim in Ezekiel. I argue that the Cherubim in Ezek. 1-11 are based upon the two large Cherubim in the sanctuary in Jerusalem. I investigate the different traditions represented by LXX and MT versions of Ezek. 28 and identify a tradition which may account for the MT of this chapter. Chapter 2 covers the other descriptions of living Cherubim in the biblical texts in Gen. 3 and Ps. 18. I argue for a conscious link with the Jerusalem Temple in both texts but for their independence from each other. All the references to Cherubim in the Temple and the Tabernacle are looked at in Chapter 3, and I offer a radical re-imagining of the two large Cherubim in the Solomonic Temple and on the Kapporeth in the Mosaic Tabernacle. In Chapter 4 I question the validity of translating the Cherubim Formula as “enthroned upon the Cherubim”, and offer an alternative translation which makes reference to all the Cherubim mentioned in the text. In Chapter 5, looking at the references to רֹעָש, I follow Joines and others in arguing for a serpentine form for the Seraphim, but argue that this identity was forgotten at an early stage of the textual transmission, and that they were then seen as part of Yhwh’s heavenly host. Finally, I argue that the role of Cherubim and Seraphim is similar, being primarily apotropaic, but that both are associated with theophany and, less frequently, with heavenly worship.
Cherubim and Seraphim in the Old Testament

D.Phil A. J. Carlill, St. Peter's College Michaelmas Term 2012

Long Abstract

This thesis brings together for the first time a study of biblical Cherubim with a study of biblical Seraphim. Cherubim and Seraphim are the only winged heavenly beings in the Bible. I begin by setting out the recent history of their interpretation, pointing out that they have been treated as separate subjects. It is the purpose of this thesis to assess whether this assumption is justified. I argue that the biblical writers did not themselves make any overt connection between them, but that the writer of Ezek. 1 LXX was the earliest writer to do so, subtly altering the text in order to facilitate this identification.

In chapter 1 I look at the references to Cherubim in Ezekiel, including the living creatures of Ezek. 1 which are identified as Cherubim later in the book. I argue that in Ezek. 1 the prophet is in a state of anxiety caused by the fact that Yhwh is no longer dwelling in Jerusalem. I then propose that the first eleven chapters of Ezekiel present Yhwh’s judgement in a series of concentric circles emanating out from the sanctuary in Jerusalem. I interpret the vision complex in Ezek. 8-11 as a series of three visions of the same judgement process, with the Cherubim marking the literary boundaries between each vision. With regard to Ezek. 28 I look at the different traditions represented by the LXX and MT versions of this chapter, arguing for the priority of the former over the latter. However, building on the work of R. R. Wilson, I point out a connection with the tradition that the stones of the high priest’s breastplate were deposited with the Cherubim in The Biblical Antiquities of Pseudo-Philo, and that this is a tradition which may account for the MT of this chapter in
addition to the usual argument of scribal error over the pointing of מֶּנֶּק. I posit the idea that the poem against the King of Tyre was inspired, not only by an Adamic myth, but also by the destruction of the Temple Cherubim and the murder of the High Priest. In chapter 2 I turn to the only other descriptions of living Cherubim in the biblical texts: Gen. 3: 24; Ps. 18: 11 (ET 10). I look in detail at the appearance of Cherubim in the story of the Garden of Eden. I argue for a conscious link in the mind of the writer of Gen. 2-3 between the Garden of Eden and the Jerusalem Temple and that the position of the Cherubim is a reflection of the position of the Cherubim on the doors of the Temple. In Ps. 18 I discuss the differences in the MSS, and how they affect the numbering of the Cherub/Cherubim. I point out the distinction that needs to be made between whether Yhwh is riding a Cherub and whether he is in some sort of chariot behind several Cherubim. I argue that the writer of Ps. 18 and the writer of Gen. 2-3 were probably independent of each other, since their use of Cherubim is so different, but that the Jerusalem Temple lies behind both texts.

In chapter 3 I take each of the references to Cherubim in the Solomonic Temple and the Mosaic Tabernacle in turn. I point out the conscious similarities between them and I offer a new reconstruction of the two large Cherubim in the Solomonic Temple based on the description in 1 Kings. Similarly I offer a new and radical re-imagining of the form of the Kapporeth and its relation to the Ark. Both reconstructions are faithful to the details of the texts in each case in a way that recent reliance on particular artefacts has not been. I argue that the texts do not permit the reader to envisage an empty throne in either the Temple or the Tabernacle. I argue that the descriptions of Cherubim in 1 Kings are designed to be faithful to a historical reality that was known to the writer, but that the Chronicler and the person describing the Mosaic Tabernacle had no first-hand knowledge of the items described. This has
also led me to question whether we should look to objects like the Ahiram sarcophagus in this context.

In the light of the previous chapter, in chapter 4 I question whether the ubiquity of the translation “enthroned upon the Cherubim” in modern translations of the Cherubim Formula is justified. I investigate the three possible variables which the translator needs to address: the meaning of the verb הַנִּחַ הַn

, the use of a preposition in translation. I offer an alternative translation, “enthroned among”, which makes reference to all the Cherubim mentioned in the text and not just the two Cherubim associated with the Holy of Holies and / or the Ark.

Finally, in chapter 5, I turn to the Seraphim. I look in detail at each of the texts which include the word הַנִּחַ (Num. 21: 6, 8; Deut. 8: 15; Isa. 14: 29; 30: 6) before turning to the vision of Isaiah in Isa. 6. I follow Joines and others in arguing for a serpentine form for the Seraphim in all these texts. However, I also argue for a direct and conscious link in the mind of the writer between the Seraphim of Isa. 6: 2 and the Seraph of Isa. 14: 29. While I argue that the original writer was describing winged snakes, based on Nehushtan, I also argue that this identity was forgotten at an early stage of the textual transmission, and that they were seen as part of Yhwh’s heavenly host.

Throughout this thesis I argue that the Jerusalem Temple was central to all the interpretations of both Cherubim and Seraphim, and that the texts exhibit a great deal of unclarity about their actual form. Additionally I argue that the creativity of the writers allowed them to pull the concept of Cherub and Seraph in different and sometimes contradictory directions.

The contention of this thesis that the centrality of the Temple in Jerusalem to both Cherubim and Seraphim in the Bible is their defining context is argued in each
chapter. I argue that in Ezekiel the four creatures of the visions are inspired by the two large Cherubim of the Solomonic Temple and that they serve as the groundwork for Ezekiel’s new theology of a mobile Yhwh who dwells with the exiles. The story of the Garden of Eden has behind it the imagery of the Temple, reflected in the combination of Cherubim and sacred vegetation as well as the apotropaic role of the Cherubim at the entrance to both Eden and the Temple. Psalm 18 and its parallel in 2 Sam. 22 contain an overt reference to the Temple. The descriptions of the Mosaic Tabernacle are based on the Temple in terms of its layout and the position of the Cherubim within it. It is possible that the Cherubim formula had a history that antedates the Jerusalem Temple going back to the sanctuary at Shiloh, but the only other possible context for this formula is the Temple in Jerusalem. Isaiah’s Seraphim are in the Temple, and most likely relate to Nehushtan which was part of the cult there.

The unclarity of the descriptions of both Cherubim and Seraphim is the main interpretative problem. The unclarity of Ezekiel’s visions is part of the tension between a detailed description of theophany and the devotional reticence at describing the divine form. I point out that the tension is greater in Ezek. 1 than in Ezek. 8-11 and that this reflects a change in the theology of the prophet, partly resolving the distress at realising that Yhwh is absent from Jerusalem with the positive note that he is concommitantly present among the exiles. In Gen. 3 the form of the Cherubim is not significant and very little can be read into the text on this point. However, I argue that this should be taken seriously by the reader of the text and that undue speculation about the form of the Cherubim here should be avoided. The same is true of the description in Psalm 18, although I allow that the parallelism with the clouds of the theophany could be an interpretative clue. In the descriptions of the Temple Cherubim
the reader is invited to imagine what they looked like. The dimensions, engineering solutions and decorative details contained in the texts provide us with enough detail to suggest a radical re-imagining of the nature of the two large Cherubim in the Solomonic Temple, and of the Kapporeth on the Ark of the Covenant. I challenge the scholarly status quo that a model throne was envisioned, and envision a shoebox arrangement for the Ark and Kapporeth which may reflect a possible historical reality in the Solomonic Temple. As regards the Chronicler’s descriptions I argue that their unclarity reflects the writer’s temporal distance from the subject, and that this represents one of the earliest surviving attempts to make sense of the text in 1 Kings.

Finally, I argue that the role of Cherubim and Seraphim is similar, being primarily apotropaic, but that there are additional associations with theophany and heavenly worship. At this point it had been my intention to include a section on the history of the interpretation of the Cherubim and Seraphim, in which I investigated how they related to each other in the tradition. However, it became apparent that this task would have to form a second study in its own right.
Abbreviations

2 Bar. 2 Baruch
4 Bar. 4 Baruch
AB Anchor Bible
AJA American Journal of Archaeology
AJSL American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures
AJSR Association for Jewish Studies Review
AJT The American Journal of Theology
Apoc. Abr. Apocalypse of Abraham
Apoc. Mos. Apocalypse of Moses
Assump. Mos. Assumption of Moses
ASTI Annual of the Swedish Theological Institute
ATD Alte Testament Deutsch
BA Biblical Archaeologist
BAR Biblical Archaeology Review
BASOR Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research
BKAT Biblischer Kommentar zum Alten Testament
BW The Biblical World
BWAT Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom Alten Testament
BZ Biblische Zeitschrift
BZAW Beilhefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
CAD Chicago Assyrian Dictionary (Chicago, Ill: Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 1956 - 2010)
CBQ Catholic Biblical Quarterly
CT Cowen Tracts
ET English Translation
FOTL Forms of the Old Testament Literature
HAT Handbuch zum Alten Testament
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<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
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<tr>
<td>HCOT</td>
<td>Historical Commentary on the Old Testament</td>
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<td>HKAT</td>
<td>Handkommentar zum Alten Testament</td>
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<tr>
<td>HTR</td>
<td>Harvard Theological Review</td>
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<tr>
<td>HUCA</td>
<td>Hebrew Union College Annual</td>
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<tr>
<td>ICC</td>
<td>International Critical Commentary</td>
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<td>ITC</td>
<td>International Theological Commentary</td>
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<tr>
<td>JAOS</td>
<td>Journal of the American Oriental Society</td>
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<tr>
<td>JB</td>
<td>Jerusalem Bible</td>
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<tr>
<td>JBL</td>
<td>Journal of Biblical Literature</td>
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<tr>
<td>JJS</td>
<td>Journal of Jewish Studies</td>
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<tr>
<td>JNES</td>
<td>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</td>
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<td>JQR</td>
<td>Jewish Quarterly Review</td>
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<td>JSOT</td>
<td>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</td>
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<td>JSOTSup</td>
<td>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament, Supplement Series</td>
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<tr>
<td>JSS</td>
<td>Journal of Semitic Studies</td>
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<td>JTS</td>
<td>Journal of Theological Studies</td>
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<tr>
<td>KAT</td>
<td>Kommentar zum Alten Testament</td>
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<td>KJV</td>
<td>King James Version</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lad. Jac.</td>
<td>Ladder of Jacob</td>
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<tr>
<td>LAE</td>
<td>Life of Adam and Eve</td>
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<tr>
<td>LHBOTS</td>
<td>Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies</td>
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<td>Luc.</td>
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<td>MS(S)</td>
<td>Manuscript(s)</td>
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<td>New Revised Standard Version</td>
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OTS     Oudtestamentische Studiën
Par. Jer. Paraleipomena of Jeremiah
RB      Revue Biblique
REB     Revised English Bible
RSV     Revised Standard Version
SBL     Society of Biblical Literature
SP      Samaritan Pentateuch
Syr.    Syriac
Test. Isaac Testament of Isaac
TOTC    Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries
Vg.     Vulgate
VT      Vetus Testamentum
VTSup   Supplements to Vetus Testamentum
WBC     Word Biblical Commentary
ZAW     Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
θ       Theodotion
Σ       Symmachus

Ancient Writers

Irenaeus
Adv. Haer. Adversus Haereses
Josephus
Ant. Antiquities of the Jews
War War of the Jews
Origen
Contr. Cel. Contra Celsum
Philo
Leg. Legum Allegoriarum
Agr. De Agricultura
Pseudo Philo
Bib. Ant. The Biblical Antiquities
Introduction

It may seem strange but throughout the modern period of biblical criticism there has never been a study solely devoted to Cherubim and Seraphim as a pair. This is remarkable, given the long history in Christian liturgy in which they appear as a pair of heavenly beings, not least in the Te Deum: “To thee cherubin and seraphin continually do cry.”¹ Alice Wood acknowledged the need for such a study in the conclusion to her thesis on biblical Cherubim,² and it is my intention to address that need here.

Survey of Literature

Although there has been no joint study, as with most biblical subjects there is a huge bibliography relating to Cherubim and Seraphim. In this introduction I will focus on the most influential names in the area. More detailed bibliographical resources will be discussed throughout the thesis.

Albright on Cherubim

William Albright suggested that Cherubim were winged sphinxes,³ based on the ubiquity of their occurrence. The winged sphinx emphasises the Phoenician link with the Solomonic building programme (1 Kgs. 7: 13-14).⁴ Sphinxes are usually considered to be lion-bodied figures with human heads,⁵ but there is evidence that in the Greek world sphinxes were also identified with griffins, and therefore could be

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¹ Book of Common Prayer (1662).
² Wood, 2008: 207.
³ Albright, 1938: 2.
⁴ Dessenne, 1957: 192.
⁵ Dessenne, 1957: 11.
eagle-headed as well.\textsuperscript{6} Sphinxes originated in the third millennium in Egypt and Mesopotamia.\textsuperscript{7}

Although not the closest in form to the Solomonic Temple,\textsuperscript{8} the temple remains from 'Ain Dara, forty kilometres north of Aleppo (Syria), include a series of large stone reliefs depicting lions and winged sphinxes.\textsuperscript{9} Although the temple may be dedicated to Ishtar,\textsuperscript{10} and the dating of the reliefs is not secure (anything between the twelfth and eighth centuries BCE), they reflect Hittite design,\textsuperscript{11} and may have influenced Solomon’s craftsmen.

**Mettinger on Cherubim**

Assuming that Cherubim are winged sphinxes, several depictions of them exist from Syria/Palestine.\textsuperscript{12} Of particular interest is a relief on the stone sarcophagus of Ahiram of Byblos. This 33cm section from the late second millennium BCE depicts “a god or king sitting on a cherubim throne”.\textsuperscript{13} Only one cherub is visible and its outer wing forms the side of the throne while the inner wing presumably supports the seat of the throne or is the seat itself. A similar design is depicted on a 13cm ivory plaque, and on a small ivory model of a cherubim throne, both from Megiddo (1350-1150 BCE).\textsuperscript{14}

Although not alone,\textsuperscript{15} in his book, *The Dethronement of Sabaoth*, Tryggve Mettinger is the clearest exponent of the idea that the Cherubim of the Temple in

\textsuperscript{6} Brown, 1968: 187-188.
\textsuperscript{7} Dessenne, 1957: 175.
\textsuperscript{8} The ninth-century temple at Tell Tainat in Upper Syria is closer in form to Solomon’s three-room Temple (Parrot, 1954: 23).
\textsuperscript{9} Abou-Assaf, 1993: 12 and fig. 15.
\textsuperscript{10} Abou-Assaf, 1993: 13-14.
\textsuperscript{11} Stone and Zimansky, 1999: 3.
\textsuperscript{12} Dessenne, 1957: 194-196.
\textsuperscript{13} Mettinger, 1982b: 21.
\textsuperscript{14} Mettinger, 1982b: 22.
Jerusalem formed a throne in much the same way as the depictions in the Ahiram sarcophagus and the Megiddo ivories. Mettinger argues for the replacement of theology with theology as a direct result of the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple, and in particular of the Ark and Cherubim contained within it. He gives a more detailed argument for the throne form of the Temple Cherubim in his article of the same year, “YHWH SABAOTH - The Heavenly King on the Cherubim Throne.”

Evidence of this idea can be found in modern translations of the Bible in which the Cherubim formula, יָהָא שָׁבוֹת יִשְׂרָאֵל, יִשְׂרָאֵל, is rendered, “the LORD of hosts who is enthroned on the cherubim.” I shall discuss this further in Chapter 4.

**Other Treatments of Sphinxes Relating to Cherubim**

Sphinxes generally appear as guardians of individuals, buildings or trees. As hybrid animals, bringing together elements of humans, lions and sometimes eagles, they are symbols of both mental and physical strength and agility, making them excellent guardians. However, other examples exhibit different characteristics. Some appear as female figures, or in a prone position, worshipping the deity. Helck sees these winged sphinxes from the New Kingdom in Egypt as representations of the wives of Syrian kings because of their particular headgear.

Another variation has been identified by Cleveland. A relief from South Arabia, dating to the second or first century BCE, shows “cherubs” standing either

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16 Mettinger, 1982b.
18 2 Sam. 6: 2. NJB reads “Yahweh Sabaoth, enthroned on the winged creatures,” for the same verse.
21 Cleveland, 1963: 55-60.
22 Cleveland, 1963: 57.
side of a tree. Rather than guarding it, they are eating its fruit.\textsuperscript{23} While this post-dates the period of our enquiry and is not an example of sphinxes in the strict sense, it suggests that sphinxes/Cherubim may not have been simply guardians.

In his discussion of Sumerian door guardians, Douglas Van Buren describes them questioning those who enter the sacred precincts,\textsuperscript{24} guarding a tree,\textsuperscript{25} and appearing in the form of lions\textsuperscript{26} and a winged gate.\textsuperscript{27} He then notes that “the talime (twin guardians) were related to Anu by ties of blood or of hereditary service; they were, in fact, components of the ‘family’ of Anu”.\textsuperscript{28}

Cherubim appear elsewhere in the Temple: on the inner walls, on the doors and on the sides of the stands.\textsuperscript{29} Kapelrud sees the cherubim as the doors themselves, based upon the image of Sumerian winged door deities.\textsuperscript{30} This rather forces the description though since in the biblical text they are described as carved on the doors rather than being the actual doors.

**Wood on Cherubim**

Alice Wood’s study of biblical Cherubim, *Of Wings and Wheels*,\textsuperscript{31} questions the way in which treatments of the Cherubim have been based upon archaeological rather than textual evidence. She is unhappy with the conventional translation of the Cherubim formula as “enthroned” and proposes an alternative translation, “dweller”.\textsuperscript{32} She argues that archaeological evidence should be limited temporally and

\textsuperscript{23} Cleveland, 1963: 56.
\textsuperscript{24} Van Buren, 1947: 314.
\textsuperscript{25} Van Buren, 1947: 322-323.
\textsuperscript{26} Van Buren, 1947: 324-325.
\textsuperscript{27} Van Buren, 1947: 326-328.
\textsuperscript{28} Van Buren, 1947: 322.
\textsuperscript{29} 1 Kgs. 6: 29, 32, 35; 7: 29, 36.
\textsuperscript{30} Kapelrud, 1950: 153.
\textsuperscript{31} Wood, 2008.
\textsuperscript{32} Wood, 2008: 9-14.
geographically to the period and provenance of the texts, although she does not entirely rule out going outside the boundaries of Israel and Judah.\textsuperscript{33}

Despite her reservations about the archaeological input to the discussion, Wood’s conclusion sees the archaeological evidence as illuminating the text, while the concept of the Cherubim is flexible within it.\textsuperscript{34} The main problem with trying to identify plastic evidence for the biblical descriptions is the lack of accurate portrayals. For example, Ezekiel describes the Cherubim of the future Temple as having two faces.\textsuperscript{35} Unger, in a list of fifty-one different types of hybrid-animals from the ancient Near East, only identifies two examples of double-headed creatures.\textsuperscript{36} Landsberger only found one example of a two-headed animal.\textsuperscript{37} None of these correspond to Ezekiel’s description.

The biblical texts are internally inconsistent. The ubiquity of hybrid animals in the archaeological record makes a connection with biblical descriptions likely, but the complexity of the biblical texts make specific identifications impossible. All we can do is look at the texts in their own right and try to understand their conceptual framework. It may be that the biblical writers were less interested in the physical form of the Cherubim than modern interpreters. While Wood has opened up the debate about what the texts themselves say about Cherubim, a more detailed treatment of them in their own right is required, particularly focusing on the point of view of the writers and how they relate to each other.

\textsuperscript{33} Wood, 2008: 161-164.  
\textsuperscript{34} Wood, 2008: 203-204.  
\textsuperscript{35} Ezek. 41: 18-19.  
\textsuperscript{36} Unger, 1927: 198. Cf. Oppenheim, 1931: pl. XXXIII A.  
\textsuperscript{37} Landsberger, 1947: 233, pl. 4.
 Joines, Keel and the Serpentine Seraphim

Turning to Seraphim, the main treatment of them is by Karen Joines in her rare book, *Serpent Symbolism in the Old Testament*.38 In this she argues that the Seraphim of Isaiah’s vision are serpentine. She argues this position from the fact that in other parts of the Old Testament, חַסְרֵפִּים is a snake of some sort. Also she brings together a considerable body of archaeological and literary evidence in support of her thesis. Chapter 3 of her book39 focuses on the vision of Isa. 6 and particularly on the Egyptian archaeological record.40 She then argues in the following chapter that the worship of Nehushtan was a fertility cult.41 Although some of the details of her thesis are open to question, the link between Seraphim and serpents is well made.

Othomar Keel takes a similar line to Joines, but grounds his conclusions in a wider body of evidence. His works, *Jahwe-Visionen und Siegelkunst*,42 *Orte und Landschaften der Bibel*43 and *Göttinnen, Götter und Gottessymbole*44 are invaluable resources for comparing biblical texts with their cultural contexts. There is evidence of belief in desert-dwelling flying serpents. Esarhaddon reports seeing two-headed serpents and flying animals.45 Herodotus describes bones believed to be from flying serpents.46

Although the Seraphim possess faces, hands, and feet,47 and offer human worship, there are examples of snakes with human attributes, including legs, feet,
hands and faces, in Egyptian iconography.\textsuperscript{48} In the Book of the Dead serpents possess feet.\textsuperscript{49} In Babylon images of serpent-headed composite creatures were found at the Ishtar Gate at Babylon dating from the time of Nebuchadnezzar II between 605-562.\textsuperscript{50} Artefacts include various stamp seals.\textsuperscript{51}

There is a Neo-Hittite humanoid six-winged genie from Tell Halaf.\textsuperscript{52} The figure holds what may be serpents or staves.\textsuperscript{53} It is similar to other two-winged figures,\textsuperscript{54} so the number of wings may be incidental. Keel says it is unique,\textsuperscript{55} but there exists another six-winged figure on a seventh- to fifth-century stamp seal from Deve Hüyük.\textsuperscript{56} Either way Keel discounts any influence of the Tell Halaf figure since it is temporally and geographically distant from Isaiah.\textsuperscript{57}

Snakes (uraei) are common in Egyptian literature and iconography.\textsuperscript{58} Derived from the cobra on royal headgear and paraphernalia,\textsuperscript{59} they supposedly protected the Pharaoh by “fire” (poison).\textsuperscript{60} One Egyptian word for the uraeus was “flame”\textsuperscript{61} and Uraei were frequently winged.\textsuperscript{62}

\textsuperscript{48} Keel, 1977: 77-78 for images.\
\textsuperscript{49} Piankoff and Rambova, 1957: Pap. 16, 26. Cf. also an image of a serpent with arms and legs on a ptolemaic papyrus, Brooklyn Museum of Art 47.218.136 (Charlesworth, 2010: 87).\
\textsuperscript{50} \textit{ANE}P 761.\
\textsuperscript{51} Keel, 1993: 313, image 274b. Cf. also Keel, 1977: 77; 2001: 258-259.\
\textsuperscript{52} Oppenheim, 1931: 172, pl. XXXIb; \textit{ANE}P 655.\
\textsuperscript{53} Or streams of water (Van Buren, 1933: 141-2).\
\textsuperscript{54} \textit{ANE}P 654, 656. Oppenheim, 1931: 172 suggests that three pairs of wings are common and are characteristic of female figures.\
\textsuperscript{55} Keel, 1977: 75.\
\textsuperscript{56} Mooney, 1980: 114, ill. 474.\
\textsuperscript{57} Keel, 1977: 75.\
\textsuperscript{58} Joines, 1974: 45-49; Keel, 1977: 85-90 for images.\
\textsuperscript{59} \textit{ANE}P 412-417.\
\textsuperscript{60} In Hebrew also poison is “heat” (\textit{זבָּן}): Deut. 32: 24; 32: 33; Job 6: 4; Ps. 58: 5 (ET 4); 140: 4 (ET 3).\
\textsuperscript{61} Mettinger, 1999: 743.\
\textsuperscript{62} Keel, 1977: 89-90, ill. 48-50.
The Egyptian connection with Temple iconography in Jerusalem is acknowledged, and the uraeus similarly influenced Palestinian iconography on Middle Bronze Age and Iron Age seals. Serpents appear on Palestinian chapel friezes, eighth- to ninth-century in design. These are above the deity, as in Isa. 6: 2, but they are wingless and outside the shrine, while Isaiah’s Seraphim were probably inside the Temple. Some four-winged uraei exist on eighth-century seals. However they use all four wings to fly (contra Isa. 6: 2), so the six-winged Seraphim cannot be an intensification of them.

Attempts to Link or Equate Cherubim and Seraphim

The writers surveyed so far have treated Cherubim and Seraphim separately. There have, however, been three attempts to link the two.

Lacheman

A brief paper by Ernest Lacheman, “The Seraphim of Isaiah 6”, suggested that the Seraphim were the Cherubim in the Temple with the sun shining on them.

This may be simplistic but he attempts to understand how the physical description of

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64 Joines, 1967: 413-414.
66 Keel, 1977: 100, ill. 74-76.
67 Keel, 1977: 98.
68 Keel, 1977: 111-112 cf. also ANEP 675 where entwined serpents are above the deity on an early third-millennium Egyptian cylinder seal, thought to represent fertility, but it should be noted that the serpents are wingless (Mettinger, 1999: 743).
69 Mettinger, 1999: 743.
the Solomonic statues relates to the visionary description of Isaiah. Nevertheless it has received little attention.

**Cherubim and Seraphim as the Embodiment of Cloud and Lightning Respectively**

The idea of personified lightning is not new. Yhwh makes wind and fire his ministers (Ps. 104: 4). In the Songs of Sabbath Sacrifice some of the ministering host are described like lightning and coals of fire. Lightning is part of Yhwh’s storm theophany. More widely, storm theophany is associated with the Temple. In this context the smoke (기) is important. Procksch interpreted the smoke of Isa. 6: 4 as condensed breath, Leupold as a symbol of the wrath of God, Wildberger as incense. However, nowhere is 기 used of incense. Day, following Duhm and others, sees the smoke as emanating from the Seraphim. 기 is used of divine theophany to Abraham and at Sinai. In addition it is part of the storm theophany of

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74 For this idea see Cheyne, 1880: 36-37; Nordell, 1889: 344-345 (citing Cheyne); Skinner, 1896: 44; Murison, 1905: 121; Jacobsthal, 1906: images 9-15; Haupt, 1907: 7; Wade, 1911: 39; Procksch, 1930: 54; Snaithe, 1967: 280; Day, 1979a: 149-151. Widyapranawa, 1990: 31, while accepting the idea that Seraphim originated as sphinxes, sees Seraphim as “fire spirits” and Cherubim as “air spirits”, which is not quite the same idea as lightning and cloud, but still a meteorological pairing. There is no evidence of any images that combine serpent and lightning motives (Keel, 1977: 80-81). Lightning is associated with healing in Bar. 53: 9, “Now that lightning shone exceedingly, so as to illuminate the whole earth, and it healed those regions where the last waters had descended and wrought devastation”, which may suggest a tentative link to the healing properties of the Seraph’s action and that of Moses’ bronze serpent. It is interesting to note that, while there are no plastic images from the ancient Near East which combine serpent and lightning motifs, one group of Sumerian // Akkadian magical texts, not noted in this context before, combine both images in a description of evil spirits (Thompson, R. C. 1903: 33, 35, 51, 53, 89, 91, 155; 1904: 23, 65, 81, 133).
75 4Q403 I. ii. 5-6, Newsom, 1985: 229.
76 Exod. 19: 15 (ET 16); 20: 18; Ps. 77: 19 (ET 18); 97: 4; Rev. 4: 5; 11: 19.
77 1 Kgs. 8: 10-11; 2 Chron. 5: 13-14; 7: 1-2 (cf. Exod. 40: 34-35; Rev. 15: 8); Ps. 18: 7-16 ET 6-15 (// 2 Sam. 22: 7-16); Ps. 29: 9 (Day, 1979a: 143 links this psalm to Baal’s seven thunders). For imagery of Baal and lightning: ANEP 501, 533, 537, 651.
78 Procksch, 1930: 55.
79 Leupold, 1977: 133.
82 Day, 1979a: 149.
83 Gen. 15: 13.
84 Exod. 19: 18; cf. Isa. 4: 5; Joel 3: 3 ET 2: 30.
Ps. 18: 7-16 (ET 6-15).\textsuperscript{85} Yhwh is enveloped in cloud and riding on Cherubim, “on the wings of the wind”. One suggested Hebrew root for קָרָבּ ("Cherub") is by metathesis from דּוֹרָב ("chariot")\textsuperscript{86} in Ps. 104: 3 in which Yhwh’s chariot is created out of the clouds. Foote interprets the wooden Cherubim in the Solomonic Temple as symbolic of the covering cloud.\textsuperscript{87}

The idea that the Cherubim embody the cloud of the storm theophany while the Seraphim represent the lightning is ingenious but is dependent upon several things being true. It implies that there is a conscious connection between the two beings in the minds of the writers, something which would need to be demonstrated in order for this to be more than just speculation. It would also require that Cherubim and Seraphim are distinct and complementary rather than completely dissociated or, at the other end of the scale of interpretation, equated. Again I hope to clarify whether any of these statements are true or not.

**A Joint Semitic Root for Cherubim, Seraphim and Griffin**

A more likely root for קָרָבּ is the Akkadian term *kuribu.*\textsuperscript{88} This is derived from the verb *karābu,* which means “pray, bless, greet (persons), worship (deities and persons), promise or offer sacrifice”,\textsuperscript{89} and is thought to be related to the west Semitic root *brk.* Two derivative nouns from this root are *kāribu* and *kārubi,*\textsuperscript{90} “one who blesses”. These were cultic figures whose primary task was the worship of the deity.\textsuperscript{91} *Kuribu* is a diminutive derivative noun. This is a cult image, which is a “representation

\textsuperscript{85} Day, 1979a: 149.
\textsuperscript{86} Dhorme, E., 1926: 331.
\textsuperscript{87} Foote, 1904: 282.
\textsuperscript{88} Knoskó, 1913: 227-232.
\textsuperscript{89} Freedman and O’Connor, 1995: 308.
\textsuperscript{90} Westermann, 1984: 274.
\textsuperscript{91} Grelot, 1957: 275.
of a protective genius with specific non-human features”.

There is no definite link, though, between this word and אפר. Other suggestions from Sumerian, Old South Arabic, Ethiopic, Classical Arabic, Phoenician and Aramaic are no more helpful.

The Seraph has been related to the Egyptian sfer, and the Akkadian šarāpu, and it is the first of these suggestions that has been resurrected recently by Nick Wyatt. Wyatt makes the point that Egyptian sfer (srrf) is a griffin, as is the Greek word γρυψ and that these could be cognate with אפר and kèvr respectively. The theory that אפר derives from Egyptian is not a new one. However, in order for this theory to be accepted two assumptions have to be made. Firstly, the Seraphim of Isaiah cannot be linked with the other Seraphs mentioned in the Bible. I shall address this issue in Chapter 5. The other assumption is that the etymological direction of travel is from West to East rather than the other way round.

Of the three attempts to link Cherubim and Seraphim this is the most attractive, but it remains unproven and some prior assumptions have to be made for it to work.

Thesis Structure

It is clear from this brief survey that Cherubim and Seraphim are separate subjects. The three attempts to link or equate them have not received widespread support. However, the archaeological record suggests that, even in the ancient world,

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92 CAD, Vol. 8: 559.
94 Cook, S. A., 1925: 54.
there may have been a link between the two. Wood’s comment that a joint treatment is needed makes the assumption that they are separate entities. I want to trace whether such an assumption is justified.

I shall survey the biblical references for both יְרוּעָל and בַּרְחָן, beginning with the latter, since it occurs more often. I shall pay particular attention to the internal logic of the text before introducing any archaeological evidence where appropriate. Recent treatments of the Cherubim and Seraphim have focused too much on trying to reconstruct a mental image of a historical reality. My intention here is to see what mental image of these creatures can be reconstructed from the texts themselves, before taking into consideration any plastic evidence. The probability that several of the biblical writers may not have known what the Cherubim looked like themselves justifies this approach.

I shall begin with the treatment of living Cherubim in Ezekiel (Chapter 1) followed by the other animate Cherubim in Psalm 18 and Genesis 3 (Chapter 2). I shall treat the descriptions of the plastic images of Cherubim in the Mosaic Tabernacle and the Jerusalem Temple together in Chapter 3. The Cherubim formula will be addressed in Chapter 4 and the Seraphim in Chapter 5. Naturally there are inherent links between the first four Chapters since they all deal with Cherubim, as well as some potential confusion about whether the figures are animate or not. However, I will be trying to identify what, if any, are the roots of the different treatments to see if any priority can be assigned. The question of the Seraphim and whether they can be identified with the Cherubim will always be in the background but not specifically addressed until the last chapter.

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98 See below, pp. 186-188.
Chapter 1: Ezekiel’s Cherubim

Introduction

Any presentation of biblical Cherubim has to attempt some reasonable explanation of their description in Ezekiel. These are the most vivid descriptions of them and, if combined with the description of the living creatures in the initial vision of 1: 4-28, they offer more detail than any other references. Unfortunately, these verses present a huge number of problems which have vexed students of the Old Testament for centuries. In this chapter I shall begin by laying out the most fundamental issues. I shall then proceed to look at the different references in more detail, and subsequently offer some suggestions as to how they may be understood in relation to other references to Cherubim elsewhere in the Old Testament. I shall also attempt to shed some light on possible connections with the Seraphim.

Methodological Problems

Textual Difficulties

In 1851, Fairbairn said of the LXX of Ezekiel: “How little confidence can be placed in emendations derived from such a source, no one can need to be told who is in the least degree acquainted with the character of the Septuagint translation generally, and, in particular, with its translation of this book.” He treated MT as the definitive text. In contrast, Cornill based his entire approach to the book on a reconstruction of the Hebrew text from Greek versions. He was closely followed, for

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100 Fairbairn, 1851: 15.
101 Fairbairn, 1851: 15-16.
example, by Bertholet,\textsuperscript{102} but noted the limitations of his approach stating that scholars were unlikely to unearth an original text.\textsuperscript{103} Cooke’s introductory treatment of this question illustrates the complexity of the problem. He makes a detailed list of the differences between MT and LXX.\textsuperscript{104} On some occasions he prefers LXX to MT,\textsuperscript{105} on others MT to LXX.\textsuperscript{106} To complicate matters further he also produces a list of places where he considers LXX to have changed MT.\textsuperscript{107} The fact that 28: 16 occurs in all three of these lists shows just how minute some of these judgements are.

It is almost certain that both the MT\textsuperscript{108} and LXX\textsuperscript{109} textual traditions have undergone considerable development prior to their existing form. Indeed, there may be several versions which pre-date the book in its present form.\textsuperscript{110} To make matters worse, scholars are divided over the nature of the LXX text itself.\textsuperscript{111} Interestingly for our subject Turner points out that the evidence for several different translators is greater in the more important chapters such as chapters 1 and 10,\textsuperscript{112} and concludes that the translators showed greater reverence for the text in these places.\textsuperscript{113} One cannot argue that either MT or LXX should automatically take precedence.

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Bertholet, 1936: 12-13.
\item Cornill, 1886: 12.
\item Cooke, 1936: xli-xliv.
\item Ezek. 1: 8, 11, 13-16, 20, 23-25b, 27; 10: 12, 14; 28: 16. In this and the following two references only the verses which concern Cherubim and living creatures are cited.
\item Ezek. 1: 7, 24a; 10: 4, 18a; 28: 16.
\item Cf. Eichrodt on the use of the divine name (Eichrodt: 1959: 9*), but also Zimmerli, 1969: 117* on the Chester-Beatty Pap. 967.
\item David Halperin’s assertion that LXX Ezek. 43: 2-3 is a midrash of Ezek. 1: 24-25 is a good example of the secondary nature of the Greek text, at least in part (Halperin, 1982: 353; cf. also Dijkstra, 1986: 77).
\item Zimmerli, 1969: 116*.
\item Turner, N., 1956: 17-20.
\item Turner, N., 1956: 23.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
Consequently, the reader might legitimately consider MT superior in one place and LXX in another. However, the judgement either way will be made using other criteria.

**What Sort of Material is It?**

Unfortunately, the nature of the content makes the search for such criteria still more difficult. Ezekiel is a book unlike any other. While Keil could point to a uniform system throughout the book, von Orelli emphasised the multiplicity of genres. Skinner said the book was full of free invention, and Davidson considered that “in Ezekiel we have a peculiar mind”, Broome, less flatteringly, that his mind was abnormal. Eichrodt described Ezekiel as an intellectual and multi-faceted poet who introduced surprising new ideas. His vocabulary is unusual and there are many *hapax legomena*. This, in turn, makes any argument about the general nature of Ezekiel’s Hebrew potentially unsafe. Conversely, Stalker notes, while discussing how much the Temple was at the forefront of the writer’s mind, that his style was prosaic with “little of invention or originality”. For the purpose of this discussion,

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114 “Die Anlage und Gliederung der einzelnen Teile nach einem bestimten, überall durchsichtigen Plan und die Einrahmung der Visionen und Gerichts- und Heilsverkündigungen durch Überschriften und Einleitungsformeln ist durch das ganze Buch gleichmäßig durchgeführt.” (Keil, 1882: 5). Zimmerli points to unified style and form in the book but attributes this to an Ezekiel school (Zimmerli, 1969: 35*-38*).


117 Davidson, A. B., 1924: 74.

118 Broome, 1946: 284-286.

119 Eichrodt, 1959: 17*-18*.

120 Eichrodt, 1959: 32*.

121 Zimmerli, 1969: 32*-35*. Freedy acknowledges that some of the glosses which he identified may have been due to Ezekiel’s originality (Freedy, 1970: 130, 148). For further comments on Ezekiel’s originality see Wevers, 1969: 16-22; Brownlee, 1986: xxxiii-xxxv; McKeating, 1995: 13; Block, 1997: 15-17

122 Rooker argues on this line that Ezekiel marks a transition point from early to late biblical Hebrew. Cf. Rooker, 1990: 79, 88, 128, 162-163 with regard to Ezek. 1: 9-11.


however, I accept the majority view, that the material in the book of Ezekiel shows a
great deal of originality, and that this attitude may well have had an effect on the way
in which existing ideas and images about the Cherubim are handled.

If we add to this originality the extra point that chapters 1, 8-11 and 40-48
consist of visionary material there are other potential variables. The significance of
the visionary experience is played down by some,\textsuperscript{125} and seen as crucial by others.\textsuperscript{126}
Daniel Block, in particular, argued that the emotional state of the prophet was the key
to understanding the different textual problems of 1: 4-28.\textsuperscript{127}

Possible Editorial Activity

A further question arises. Does a single hand lie behind the book or a

\textsuperscript{125} Berry, 1937: 116; Matthews, 1939: xxxiii.
\textsuperscript{126} Skinner, 1895: 31; Curtis, E. L., 1899: 125; Cooke, 1936: 8, 28; Wevers, 1969: 12; Zimmerli, 1969:
\textsuperscript{127} Block, 1988: 428-433.
multiplicity of editors and literary processes?\textsuperscript{128} Once more, the scholarly community has been divided. There is little point in rehearsing the history of the debate here.

Duguid provides a useful summary,\textsuperscript{129} although his comment that one should begin with the text “as it stands” before identifying the “tension”,\textsuperscript{130} rather begs the question, “What is the text as it stands?” Joyce similarly describes the futility of using hard and fast rules to dissect the text,\textsuperscript{131} and his quotation from Peter Ackroyd is pertinent: “The complexity of the literature and other problems attaching to the book of Ezekiel is such that any discussion ought ideally to be prefaced by a full-scale

\textsuperscript{128} Toy omitted the reference to the Cherub in 10: 7 (Toy, C. H., 1899: 114) and omitted 10: 14-15 entirely from his translation (Toy, C. H., 1899: 14). Kraetzschar places 10: 4 in parenthesis, as well as 10: 15, with 11: 1-21 interrupting the surrounding material (Kraetzschmar, 1900: 107-118). Karl Marti maintained that the compilation of the whole book could not have been done by Ezekiel because of the abrupt breaking off of the discourse in 3: 15 and 10: 7, in the expansion of the call-vision at 3: 6-21, the lack of order in chapters 4-5 and 44-46 and the purposelessness of the repetition of the cherubim account in chapter 10 (Denio, 1901: 340). Herrmann argued that 1: 6-26 was an insertion (Herrmann, 1924: 14), that 10: 2-6, 8-17 was secondary (Herrmann, 1924: 66-68), as well as the references to the cherubim in 9: 3 and 11: 22-23 (Herrmann, 1924: 69-70). Hölscher saw at least four levels of interpolation (Hölscher, 1924: 77-79). Taylor comments that Hölscher had reversed his opinion about the unity of the book (Taylor, 1969: 17). Cf. also Sprank and Wiese 1926: 55-68, 73. Cooke assigned chapter 1 to the prophet (Cooke, 1936: xxiv), but with a number of glosses (1: 4, 20-21, 23-24), “accidental repetitions” (v. 11 of vv. 8b, 9a; v. 12 of v. 9b, v. 14 of v. 13) and corruptions (Cooke, 1936: 9). He saw 10: 2, 7, 18-20 as original (Cooke, 1936: 111-119). Matthews saw the Cherub references as by a later hand (Matthews, 1939: xxxvi-xxxxii) with a complex editorial process including a Babylonian editor (Matthews, 1939: xlviii). Steinmann removes the reference to the Cherub in 9: 3 as a doublt (Steinmann, 1953: 61), reduces chapter 10 to vv. 2-3, 4-5, 18-19 (Steinmann, 1953: 62) and omits v. 14 from chapter 1 (Steinmann, 1953: 173). Cf. also Fohrer, 1955: x-xii, 7, 9, 11, 13, 53, 56-58; Ellison, 1956: 45; Eichrodt, 1959: 16\textsuperscript{a}, 33\textsuperscript{a}, 1-2, 6. Eichrodt omits all references to the Cherubim in 8-11 (Eichrodt, 1959: 45-54)! Bruno’s textual reconstructions are radical and not based upon a set of rules that can be identified, in addition to his reconstruction of the entire book in metrical form. It is difficult, if not impossible, to justify this approach, especially in the light of textual corruption (Bruno, 1959: 34-46). Howie sees chapter 10 as from an editor with vv. 18-19 as the central theme (Howie, 1962: 31-32). Additionally, cf. Stalker, 1968: 45-49, 94-95; Zimmerli, 1969: 39\textsuperscript{a}, 23-30, 59-70, 237-240; Freedy on the six types of glosses (Freedy, 1970: 129-152); Houk, 1971: 52-54; Garscha, 1974: 250, 254-255; Carley, 1974: 3, Cody, 1984: 26; Hosfeld, 1986: 158-165; Vawter, 1991: 3-5; Biggs, 1996: 4, 30; Seldmeier, 2002: 49-56. Among those who have argued for unified authorship cf. von Orelli, 1896: 9; Redpath, 1907: xiv. Davidson saw the book as a compositional unity (Davidson, A. B., 1924: ix), though acknowledging the possibility that it is a pseudepigraphon (Davidson, A. B., 1924: xxi; cf. Becker, 1986a: 145 for a similar conclusion although arguing for multiple redactions). He preferred to see annotations in chapter 10 rather than excising verses altogether (Davidson, A. B., 1924: 74). Cf. also Taylor, 1969: 20; Blenkinsopp, 1990: 8. For a via media see Allen, 1994: xxiii-xxiv. Block describes how a theme is introduced, dropped and then expanded later (Block, 1997: 20-25).

\textsuperscript{129} Duguid, 1994: 3-8, especially the diagram on p. 4.

\textsuperscript{130} Duguid, 1994: 8-9.

\textsuperscript{131} Joyce, 2008: 8-13. Cf. also Cooke, 1936: 30; Greenberg, 1983: 52.
consideration of the view that is to be adopted.”

The important question, however, concerns the motivation for one approach or another. Those who have attempted to dissect the text have generally sought to make the text more logical, or to make it fit a preconceived set of criteria, such as the impossibility of Josianic reforms being reversed within a generation or two of Ezekiel writing oracles against Jerusalem when he was not there. Recourse to editorial activity is certainly legitimate, but one has to wonder at the competence of the editorial staff whose interventions, according to some, were so manifold that the text ended up bearing hardly any relation to a posited original whatsoever. However, those who have sought to avoid any suggestion of editorial activity leave the impression that some questions are being prejudged. Barr rightly points out that no hard and fast rule can be made about whether to follow a difficult or an easy reading, and Avi Hurvitz provides salutary warning: “In other words, what we need above all is a minimum of expansion and a maximum of concentration; a minimum of axioms and a maximum of facts; a minimum of imagination and a maximum of restraint.” In the light of these textual difficulties my approach to the relationship

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133 It is generally agreed the first serious attempt at this was by Kraetzschmar (1900), but Hengstenberg had already allowed that 10: 3-5, for instance, was in parenthesis (Hengstenberg: 1869: 87, 89).
134 For example, Kraetzschmar wanted to remove the reference to faces at the end of 1: 8 and the beginning of 1: 9, but questioned whether this was an original text, even though it was smoother (Kraetzschmar, 1900: 12). Cf. also Cooke, 1936: 12-15; Wevers, 1969: 40; Zimmerli, 1969: 205-206; Carley, 1974: 63-64.
135 Torrey, 1930: 18-23.
137 Cf. Joyce’s discussion of this issue (Joyce, 2008: 15-16).
138 Barr, 1992b: 216. Barr’s argument is particularly pertinent when approaching something like Fechter’s reconstruction of the relationship between LXX and MT of Ezek. 28: 14 (Fechter, 1992: 166-167), since the rationale for his argument is made insecure.
139 Hurvitz, 1982: 19. Cf. Joyce, 2008: 12 for a similar sentiment: “an important safeguard is to draw upon a broad range of evidence, employing wherever possible different criteria side by side.”
between chapter 1 and chapters 8-11 will be appropriately restrained, and both LXX and MT will be seen as distinct textual traditions in their own right.

The internal narrative of the book of Ezekiel indicates that chapters 8-11 post-date chapter 1. The dating seems to indicate that the one post-dated the other by about fourteen months. 8: 1 dates the vision complex in 8-11 to the fifth day of the sixth month in the sixth year. 1: 2 dates the initial vision to the fifth day of an unnamed month in the fifth year of the exile of King Jehoiachin. 1: 1 dates possibly the initial vision\(^{140}\) to the fifth day of the fourth month of the thirtieth year. Two assumptions can be made, not unreasonably: firstly, that the date in 1: 2 is the same date as 1: 1, being as they are in neighbouring verses, so the month is the fourth month; and secondly, that the sixth year in 8: 2 is also the sixth year of the exile of King Jehoiachin, there being no other suitable candidate to refer to. These two assumptions create a fourteen month gap between the two visions. Internally, 10: 15, 20, 22 also indicate that 1: 4-28 is the root vision.

Early exponents of editorial activity accepted this sequence. Toy harmonises the description on the wheels in 10: 9-22 with that of chapter 1,\(^{141}\) and Kraetzschmar sees 10: 1, 8-17 as a later expansion of the chapter based upon the ground text of chapter 1.\(^{142}\) According to Herrmann, 8-11 explain the meaning of chapter 1.\(^{143}\) However, Hölscher, as part of his radical explanation of the poetic origins of the book, argued that the vision of chapter 1 was secondary, linking the material to the

\(^{140}\) It may of course refer to the final drafting of the whole book, but the change from first person to third person and back again complicates the issue.

\(^{141}\) Toy, C. H., 1899: 115. Harford takes a similar line, arguing that the differences between 10 and 1 are a sign of editorial activity (Harford, 1935: 58).

\(^{142}\) Kraetzschmar, 1900: 104-106.

\(^{143}\) Herrmann, 1924: 19.
theophany of Sinai (Exod. 24: 10)\(^{144}\) and the vision of Isaiah (Isa. 6).\(^{145}\) Also, Sprank and Weise argued that chapter 1 was edited in the light of chapter 10.\(^{146}\)

It is worth noting that some details of Ezekiel’s vision of a new Temple, although not reproduced in 1 Kings, reflect the Solomonic period. The description of the gates (Ezek. 40: 6-16) is very similar to “Solomonic city-gates”\(^{147}\) at Hazor, Gezer (which had been given to Solomon as a dowry\(^ {148}\)) and Megiddo.\(^ {149}\) Some connection with the pre-exilic situation is not unreasonable. Bearing that in mind, and in order to avoid undue speculation about multiple editorial layers, I accept the priority indicated in the narrative, while allowing for possible editorial activity in either place. For the purpose of this exposition I shall treat the basic text of chapter 10 as secondary to the basic text of chapter 1, insofar as the “basics” can be established.

\[The Four Living Creatures of Chapter 1\]

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\(^{144}\) Cf. Greenberg, 1983: 50.


\(^{146}\) Sprank and Wiese, 1926: 34-37. Cf. previously Redpath, 1907: 5-6 for a similar view. These few references represent a fair summary of opinion on this matter. There is insufficient room here to detail others that are essentially of a similar nature.

\(^{147}\) Although the tenth-century origin of these gates has been questioned (e.g. Finkelstein, 1990: 109-114), the dating of stratum V at Tel Rehob to 935-898 BCE (Mazar, 1999: 40-41) means that such questions cannot go unchallenged. Either way this may be evidence for Ezekiel’s knowledge of the first Temple.

\(^{148}\) 1 Kgs. 9: 16.

Ezekiel 1: 4-14
As I looked, a stormy wind came out of the north: a great cloud with brightness around it and fire flashing forth continually, and in the middle of the fire, something like gleaming amber. In the middle of it was something like four living creatures. This was their appearance: they were of human form. Each had four faces, and each of them had four wings. Their legs were straight, and the soles of their feet were like the sole of a calf's foot; and they sparkled like burnished bronze. Under their wings on their four sides they had human hands. And the four had their faces and their wings thus: their wings touched one another; each of them moved straight ahead, without turning as they moved. As for the appearance of their faces: the four had the face of a human being, the face of a lion on the right side, the face of an ox on the left side, and the face of an eagle; such were their faces. Their wings were spread out above; each creature had two wings, each of which touched the wing of another, while two covered their bodies. Each moved straight ahead: wherever the spirit would go, they went, without turning as they went. In the middle of the living creatures there was something that looked like burning coals of fire, like torches moving to and fro among the living creatures; the fire was bright, and lightning issued from the fire. The living creatures darted to and fro, like a flash of lightning.

Ezekiel 1: 22-28
Over the heads of the living creatures there was something like a dome, shining like crystal, spread out above their heads. Under the dome their...
wings were stretched out straight, one toward another; and each of the creatures had two wings covering its body. 24 When they moved, I heard the sound of their wings like the sound of mighty waters, like the thunder of the Almighty, a sound of tumult like the sound of an army; when they stopped, they let down their wings. 25 And there came a voice from above the dome over their heads; when they stopped, they let down their wings. 26 And above the dome over their heads there was something like a throne, in appearance like sapphire; and seated above the likeness of a throne was something that seemed like a human form. 27 Upward from what appeared like the loins I saw something like gleaming amber, something that looked like fire enclosed all around; and downward from what looked like the loins I saw something that looked like fire, and there was a splendor all around. 28 Like the bow in a cloud on a rainy day, such was the appearance of the splendor all around. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. When I saw it, I fell on my face, and I heard the voice of someone speaking.

Is The Vision of Chapter 1 Positive or Negative?

Daniel Block provides a helpful, though not exhaustive, list of the problems that face the reader of MT of 1: 4-28. Block’s thesis that most, if not all, of these problems can be accounted for by the emotional state of the prophet, is a neat explanation.

“We all know from common experience that attempts to describe mental pictures while in a state of high excitement often come out garbled with incomplete sentences, erratic grammar, confused vocabulary, and incoherent structure.”

Block considers the vision in chapter 1 to be garbled because of the emotional state of the recipient, while chapter 10, a year later, is a mature reflection on it.

\[\text{References}\]

151 Block, 1988: 419-425.
152 Block, 1988: 430-431.
While Block provides us with a pretty good explanation for the huge number of linguistic and stylistic difficulties in chapter 1 (and, additionally, for the disappearance of at least some of them in chapter 10), he does not address the issue of why the prophet is in such turmoil. Is his emotional state due to excitement or distress?

Allen addresses this question and concludes, following Kraetzschner and Brownlee and contrary to the scholarly norm, that, for Ezekiel, the vision of chapter 1 is wholly negative. His arguments are persuasive, emphasising the elements in the text which are typical of judgement material. However, the writer’s distress might be for a more specific reason.

The prophet’s anxiety could be caused by the fact that this vision is of Yhwh who should be dwelling in Jerusalem. The departure of Yhwh from the Temple has been caused by the sins of the people there.

**The Concentric Judgement in Chapters 4-11**

In chapters 4-7 there is a series of oracles that picture waves of judgement flowing outwards from the Temple in Jerusalem in concentric circles. The circles represent the actual process of judgement and its effects rather than any literary format of the book. The judgement process begins from the defiled sanctuary in

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155 Kraetzschner, 1900: 21, n.5.
159 Allen, 1993: 153-160. Joyce is aware of this debate and initially hedges his bets (Joyce, 2008: 31) before erring on the positive side (Joyce, 2008: 75).
160 This is why Ezekiel falls on his face (1: 28) and is the subject matter of the material throughout chapters 2-7. Ezekiel is sent to an utterly rebellious house of Israel (2: 1-8; 3: 4-9, 11). The scroll he is given to eat is full of lamentation and woe (2: 9 - 3: 3). The reiteration of the vision (3: 12-13) emphasizes the holiness of Yhwh in the vision that Ezekiel has seen, but there is no sense (yet) of it being in any way a comfort to him. Indeed, his response is complete astonishment and he is dumbfounded for a week (3: 14-15). Ezekiel is reminded of his unpleasant duty (3: 15-21) and again the vision knocks him off his feet (3: 22-23). Furthermore, he is to be bound and silenced (3: 24-27).
Jerusalem, then moves outwards into the city and further outwards into the land and beyond. First Jerusalem itself is depicted in chapter 4 in a prophetic drawing or model, in which the siege of Jerusalem is reenacted. The prophetic theme continues in chapter 5. Jerusalem and its inhabitants suffer under the judgements of famine, pestilence and slaughter (5: 16-17). The key sin of the citizens of Jerusalem, and therefore the centre of the process, is the defilement of the sanctuary (5: 11). The punishments also occur in concentric circles: pestilence and famine in the city, massacre in the surrounding countryside, and exile abroad (5: 12). In the second oracle the circle of judgement moves outwards from Jerusalem to the mountains of Israel (6: 1-3). The sins of the inhabitants are, once again, cultic (6: 3-10), and there is the first note about those who are grieved at what has happened (6: 9). Chapter 7 is also addressed to the mountains of Israel, but the concentric circle has moved outward still further to take in the international form of destruction that will come upon the land.

There are two things to be noted about this series of oracles. Firstly, the concentric circles move outward from Jerusalem, both in terms of the announcement of judgement and the execution of it. The centre of the circles is the Temple, because of the reference to the defilement of the sanctuary (5: 11). Secondly, no distinction is made between the culpability of the inhabitants of Jerusalem and that of the exiles (5: 12). Judgement is upon both of them and the criterion of salvation is whether individuals in either group are grieved or not (6: 9).

At this point in the narrative of the book, Ezekiel receives his second vision (8-11). The two themes of the concentric judgements in response to cultic sin and the attitude of the individual are brought into clearer focus. The cultic sin in the Temple is described in more detail (8: 1-18). The judgement begins in the Temple and moves
outwards into the city (9: 4-7; 10: 1-7). Those who groan and lament at the cultic practices that are going on are spared (9: 4). While the sins of the elders begin in Jerusalem (11: 6), they will be judged outside it (11: 7, 9), and punished at the border of the country (11: 10). Jerusalem starts as the cauldron of judgement (11: 7), but that is no longer the case (11: 11). The judgement moves to the borders of Israel. Ezekiel interprets the final vision of this outward-moving judgement as including the exiles (11: 13).161 There follows the first positive note about the departure of the glory from Jerusalem (11: 16-21): the exiles were included in the judgement, but for them, as for those marked in 9: 4, there is the possibility of salvation. The departure of the glory of the Lord from the Temple now has a positive spin. Unlike his reponse to the first set of visions (1-3), Ezekiel this time can speak to the exiles straight away, rather than remaining stunned for a week (11: 22-25).

The ripples of judgement circle outwards from the Temple in Jerusalem in chapters 8-11, and 1: 4-28 is the initial crushing presentation of this reality. The whole narrative thread of chapters 1-11 revolves around the announcement of judgement, beginning in the Temple and moving outwards to Jerusalem, the mountains of Israel and on into the exiled community. Ezekiel is paralysed by the process up to the point where he is told that the sanctuary is now mobile (11: 16).162

161 Parunak’s assertion, that the changes from chapter 1 to chapters 8-11 reflect the change of context from Palestine to Mesopotamia, does not take sufficient account of this conflation in the writer’s mind (Parunak, 1980: 66).

162 Mettinger’s assertion that the Kabod does not leave the country (Mettinger, 1982b: 108) fails to take this into consideration. In fact, the dwelling of the Kabod with the exiles could be paralleled with the Tabernacle terminology of the Exodus, a point which Mettinger misses (Mettinger, 1982b: 113-114).
What is the Meaning of “The North”?

However, there is a problem. In 1:4 we are told that the vision comes “from the north”. Scholars have been divided into two camps in their interpretation of this phrase.

Firstly, there are those who see it as a reference to the geographical north. Keil saw the vision as originating in Jerusalem. He is followed by von Orelli, Fohrer, Andrew and Allen. It seems odd, though, that the God of Israel, who could march across the wilderness (Ps. 68: 8, ET 7), should need to follow a caravan route. Toy, on the other hand, rejects the connection with Jerusalem altogether. Some favoured the idea that this was a natural atmospheric phenomenon which came from the north, or that this was something to do with Ezekiel’s ecstatic disposition.

The second body of opinion consists of those who see “the north” as the divine dwelling place, Zaphon. In the days before the discoveries from Ras Shamra, Kraetzschmar saw Ezek. 1: 4 as a reference to the mythic north, as in Isa. 14: 13; Ps. 48: 3 (ET 2); Job 37: 22, but questioned why the glory should depart to the east when the home of Yhwh was in the south. He likens the north to the unknown, as in Ezek. 38: 1ff and Jer 1: 14; 4: 6, but equating the home of God with the home of the

165 Von Orelli, 1896: 11.
166 Fohrer, 1955: 7, 12.
172 Bertholet argues similarly that the home of Yhwh was Sinai (Bertholet, 1936: 3).
forces of evil seems odd,\textsuperscript{173} and this argument cancels out the one about the home of God in the south.\textsuperscript{174} Redpath takes a similar line,\textsuperscript{175} as does Herrmann,\textsuperscript{176} while Davidson tentatively links it to Eden.\textsuperscript{177} Ellison saw the north as the home of the Mesopotamian gods and that if the Cherubim were based on Babylonian statuary “it simply means that not only has Jehovah defeated the gods of Babylon on their own ground, but has also carried off their servants to be His slaves.”\textsuperscript{178}

Despite the fact that nowhere else in Ezekiel is Yhwh pictured as dwelling in the north, mythic or otherwise, in the face of such normative usage it is impossible to argue definitively for יִֽהְוָֽה in anything other than a geographic sense, in which case the reference must be entirely incidental to the central themes of Ezek. 1. However, if the reader suspends judgement for long enough to read the text with Morgenstern’s idea that יִֽהְוָֽה could be the inner sanctuary in Jerusalem,\textsuperscript{179} we find ourselves with a simpler reading of this chapter. Furthermore, if the same sense were applied to a reading of chapters 8 and 9, the force of the cultic sins described in them is intensified, since they would take place, not in some vaguely northern corner of the inner court, but inside the sanctuary itself. This makes the absense of any depiction of

\textsuperscript{173} Fitzpatrick argues (Fitzpatrick, 2004: 107) that the references are deliberately ambiguous, and that the many nations (יִֽהְוָֽהּ הָרִים) are a pun on many waters (יִֽהְוָֽהּ הָרִים), thus referring to Baal’s seaside abode: “It is at first curious that Yhwh would come from Zaphon rather than Sion, his dwelling. It is unlikely that it is suggesting that Yhwh lived on Mt. Zaphon, the site of Baal’s palace. It is not meant to be a conflated reference to Sion-Jerusalem which in fact lies west of Babylon. Rather, the point is that Yhwh can come from any direction he pleases, even that which is supposed to be the home of the storm deity.” (Fitzpatrick, 2004: 115-116)
\textsuperscript{174} Kraetzschmar, 1900: 9.
\textsuperscript{175} Redpath, 1907: 4.
\textsuperscript{176} Herrmann, 1924: 13.
\textsuperscript{177} Davidson, A. B., 1924: 4.
\textsuperscript{178} Ellison, 1956: 22.
\textsuperscript{179} Morgenstern, 1941: 87. Vawter suggests a similar idea for the “inner Temple” of Ezek. 41: 15 (Vawter, 1991: 193).
the inside of the sanctuary in those chapters understandable, since Yhwh is utterly alienated from it, already standing at the entrance to it at the beginning of the vision (8: 3-4). However, it should be noted that references in chapters 8-9 read equally easily with the understanding of הֵרֵד as a compass point. Furthermore in the final vision sequence (40-48) it is impossible to understand הֵרֵד as anything other than “the north”. My suggestion here is a speculative one in the name of a simpler reading which may be attractive to some.

Chapter 1: Initial Conclusions

Chapter 1 is a vision of Yhwh driven from the sanctuary in Jerusalem by the cultic sins of the people. A reading of 1: 4 which equates הֵרֵד with Jerusalem, the divine dwelling place, is plausible, since it simplifies the reading of the chapter, though this is impossible to substantiate beyond reasonable doubt. Ezekiel is described as initially devastated by Yhwh’s unannounced departure from Jerusalem, since the national disaster goes right to the heart of Israel’s religious life: Yhwh has been made homeless.

The Living Creatures of Ezekiel 1 (MT)

Connections to the Temple Cherubim

It would not be surprising to find references to the Temple Cherubim in this description. The connection is not made straight away, but it is there. The wings of the creatures are stretched out like the wings of the Solomonic statues (1: 6). The wings were “spread out upwards” (Mal’ak הַמַּלְאָכִים הַמַּלְאָכִים). The use of מַלְאָכִים is almost

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180 See below, pp. 56-57.
181 Greenberg plays down the connection because it is not made immediately (Greenberg, 1983: 55).
182 Ezek. 1: 11.
exclusively linked to descriptions of the Temple,\textsuperscript{183} the Mosaic sanctuary\textsuperscript{184} and material that is generally associated with P\textsuperscript{185} or from Ezekiel.\textsuperscript{186} Of the two remaining references, Jer. 31: 37 is presumably from a priestly background, which leaves Judg. 8: 13 as the only reference that does not have a priestly background, and gives a slightly different meaning to the word anyway. The wheels, although apparently redundant, are reminiscent of the Temple carts (1 Kgs. 7: 27-37).\textsuperscript{187} The throne above the creatures could be similar to the role of the Temple Cherubim covering the Ark, Yhwh’s footstool.\textsuperscript{188} However, the list of differences from the Temple Cherubim is quite long. There are four of them rather than two. They have four wings rather than two.\textsuperscript{189} They have four faces, although we are never told the number of faces of the Temple Cherubim. If the wheels are connected to the carts, apart from the mention of Cherubim in the decoration, there is nothing else to connect them. Finally, these are living creatures and not statues or frescos. The prophet could be forgiven for not making the connection straight away. We shall need to turn to chapter 10 for a more considered description of the living creatures, but before we do that we need to note an extra tension in the text, and then look at the LXX treatment of this vision.

\textsuperscript{183} 1 Kgs. 7: 25; 8: 7; 2 Chron. 4: 4; 5: 8.
\textsuperscript{184} Exod. 25: 21; 26: 14; 36: 19; 39: 31; 40: 19, 20; Num. 4: 6, 25.
\textsuperscript{185} Gen. 6: 16; 7: 20; Josh. 3: 13, 16.
\textsuperscript{186} Ezek. 1: 11, 22, 26; 10: 19; 11: 22, 37: 8.
\textsuperscript{187} Houk, 1971: 51, who also links the cloud in 10: 3 to the glory filling the Temple in 1 Kgs. 8: 10. Smend points out that the position of the wheels next to the living creatures rather than under them suggests that they do not form a chariot (Smend, 1880: 12-13). Skipwith speculates that there was originally only one wheel representing the wheel of heaven and that Ezekiel introduced another three to make them into the four winds (Skipwith, 1907: 699; cf. Fisch, 1985: 6). Eichrodt takes a different line and relates them to the cart used to carry the Ark during David’s reign (Eichrodt, 1959: 54; cf. 1 Sam. 6: 7; 2 Sam. 6: 3). It is interesting to note that this was an emergency situation and that Yhwh’s action of leaving the Temple might also be described as requiring emergency transport.
\textsuperscript{188} Zimmerli notes, however, that it is never stated that the Cherubim carry the throne (Zimmerli, 1969: 52).
\textsuperscript{189} Zimmerli notes that four is significant elsewhere in the book and attributes some of these changes to Ezekiel’s originality (Zimmerli, 1969: 53-54, 208). Cf. Carley, 1974: 14.
The Wings of the Living Creatures

Block’s list of the textual problems was thorough but not exhaustive. There is tension in the text over the nature of the wings and the way in which they appear static at first and then dynamic later in the chapter. We may assume that the wings were spread anywhere between horizontal, as in the description of the wings of the two Solomonic statues\(^{190}\) to a high angle so that they are “above”. They may even have been vertical, since the normal meaning of הָרָצִים, here translated as “spread” or “stretched”, is “divided, separated”. If this is the case it is possible that the creatures were close together if their wings were touching (חֲבָרִים).\(^{191}\) If the wings are horizontal, then “above” refers to the point where the wings join the body of the animal; in other words, on its back if the body is non-human, and on its shoulders or head if the body is human.\(^{192}\) At this point the description is static.\(^{193}\) It then changes. One pair of wings was loud (1: 24, 25; 3: 13; 10: 5), raised (10: 16, 19; 11: 22) for movement and “let down” (חֲרָצִים) when standing still (1: 24, 25), all of which makes the description of the wings in v. 11 difficult to picture, irrespective of their position. It is difficult to imagine the wings moving while stretching and touching each other. The only other winged creatures which move are the Seraphim in

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190 1 Kgs. 6: 24, 27; 2 Chron. 3: 11-13.
191 Ezek. 1: 11.
192 Davidson concluded, following Kraetzschmar, that the wings formed a rectangle (Davidson, A. B., 1924: 6, 9). Torrey concluded that they covered the bodies “all over” (Torrey, 1939: 69-71).
193 Taylor sees some tension on this issue with vv. 13-14 where the creatures, if they are equated with the coals of fire and lamps, “dart about” (Taylor, 1969: 56). Greenberg applies the static nature of the wings to the legs also (Greenberg, 1983: 44; cf. Allen, 1994: 30-32 who sees the wings as dynamic in v. 11, though). Andrew denies that they are static (Andrew, 1985: 14).
Isaiah.\textsuperscript{194} Could the writer have had them in mind?\textsuperscript{195} Given the list of differences from the Temple Cherubim noted above, such a connection is not impossible, but, as with the Cherubim, the differences from the Seraphim make such a connection, at least initially, insecure.\textsuperscript{196} If nothing else, these creatures have four wings while the creatures in Isa. 6 had six.\textsuperscript{197} Whether referring to the Seraphim or not, this point of tension within the narrative cannot be resolved without recourse to some reworking of the material.

**The Living Creatures of Ezekiel 1 (LXX)**

So far we have only dealt with MT of chapter 1. The first thing to note about the LXX version is how much neater the narrative is. The second thing is the possible references to the Seraphim.

**The Differences from MT**

The substantive differences are as follows. In v. 4 the large cloud is in the approaching fire, and the other references to “fire” (MT) are translated as, or altered

\textsuperscript{194} Cf. Smend, 1880: 10; Cooke 1936: 11-12.

\textsuperscript{195} In both visions Yhwh is enthroned as King above the altar (Skinner, 1895: 33). Cf. also Bertholet, 1936: 12-13. Fohrer sees three sources for the vision: storm theophany, especially Ps. 18: 2; prophetic calling accounts, especially Isa. 6: 3; and the throne chariot tradition (Fohrer, 1955: 8-9). Eichrodt links chapter 1 to the name theology and glory theology of the Ark (Eichrodt, 1959: 22*-23*). Zimmerli believes the Isa. 6 was known to Ezekiel, pointing particularly to the razor imagery which is used in Ezek. 5: 1 and Isa. 7: 20 (Zimmerli, 1969: 128, cf. 67*, 19-21). Cf. also Sedlemeier, 2002: 74.

\textsuperscript{196} Fairbairn argued that they were the Seraphim but in a different form (Fairbairn, 1851: 32). I do not agree with Smend who sees a link to Isa. 6: 8 in the voice of the Lord in Ezek. 1: 28 - 2: 1 (Smend, 1880: 17). Von Orelli rejected a connection with the “schlangenartigen Seraphim” (von Orelli, 1896: 12). Herrmann, on the other hand, argued for a connection based upon his understanding that they and the living creatures were humanoid, and that the wings were stretched out for flying (Herrmann, 1924: 15-16). It is interesting to note that Joyce does not make reference to Isa. 6 in his section on earlier traditions (Joyce, 2008: 33-41) but does acknowledge some connections in his treatment of chapter 1 (Joyce, 2008: 70-73).

\textsuperscript{197} Kraetzschmar suggested that the reduction from six to four was to fit the linking of the throne-chariot to the four major compass points (Kraetzschmar, 1900: 13). Cooke thought that only four were required because they were not worshipping unlike the Seraphim (Cooke, 1936: 15). Taylor concluded that there were only four wings because they did not need to fly (Taylor, 1969: 55-56). This contradicts the movement described elsewhere, though. Job points out that the throne in Isa. 6 is not mobile (Job, 1983: 15). Brownlee suggests that they did not need the extra pair of wings because they were not in the direct sight of God, being underneath the firmament (Brownlee, 1986: 12).
to, “brightness”, φέγγαρος. The final phrase “from the heart of the fire” is rendered καὶ φέγγαρος ἐν αὐτῷ. In v. 7 the feet are feathered,\(^{198}\) πτερωτοὶ οἱ πόδες αὐτῶν, with wings that were small or insignificant, ἐλαφραὶ αἱ πτέρυγες αὐτῶν.\(^{199}\) V. 8 omits the detail that there were four wings as well as four faces. That the wings were joined in pairs is absent in v. 9. The apparently redundant reference to their faces at the beginning of v. 11 is absent, while an additional reference to “the four” is included. MT v. 13 is nonsensical: the living creatures have the appearance of fiery objects which move about between the living creatures. LXX tidies this up so that the fiery objects are never equated with the creatures themselves: καὶ ἐν μέσῳ τῶν ζώων ὄρασις ὡς ἀνθράκων πυρὸς καιομένων ὡς ὄψις λαμπάδων συστρεφομένων ἀνά μέσου τῶν ζώων καὶ φέγγαρος τοῦ πυρὸς καὶ ἐκ τοῦ πυρὸς ἐξεπορεύετο ἀστραπῆ. V. 14, which also implies that the living creatures actually are fiery objects, is entirely absent in LXX.\(^{200}\) In v. 21 LXX omits the first reference to the wheels but this is purely stylistic rather than substantive. V. 22 LXX states that the firmament was above the wings of the living creatures while MT puts it above their heads.\(^{201}\) (V. 25 LXX agrees with MT on this point.) V. 23 is a simpler if less clear version of MT but the sense is fundamentally the same, although there is a reference to the flapping of the wings here which is not present in MT.\(^{202}\) V. 24 omits several of the asyndetic phrases noted by Block, only describing the sound of the wings as being like many waters: ὡς φωνήν

\(^{198}\) Kraetzschmar, 1900: 11.

\(^{199}\) Halperin puts forward this idea (Halperin, 1982: 353-363), tracing its origins to Palestinian R. Abbahu (ca. A.D. 300): “It is written, Seraphim were standing over him, etc. (Isa 6: 2). With two [wings] he would fly-giving praise. With two he would cover his face - that he might not look at the Shechinah. With two he would cover his feet - that they might not be seen before the Shechinah. As it is written, And the soles of their feet were like the sole of a calf’s foot (Ezek 1: 7); and it is written, They made themselves a molten calf (Exod 32: 8)” (Halperin, 1982: 362).

\(^{200}\) Kraetzschmar sees vv. 13 and 14 as representing two different recensions (Kraetzschmar, 1900: 14-15).

\(^{201}\) Cooke, 1936: 19.

\(^{202}\) Cooke, 1936: 19-20.
The second mention of the wings being let down is omitted in v. 25. The pregnant positioning phrase at the beginning of v. 26 is also absent from LXX. The first asyndetic reference to the appearance of fire in v. 27 is absent from LXX.

The differences in vv. 4, 11, 13, 14, 21, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27 can all be accounted for by a desire to tidy up the text, and, in particular, reveal a dislike on the part of the writer(s) or translator(s) (it does not really matter which or how many) for asyndetism. Charged with the task of reproducing the vision at some distance from a previous account, the translators, or Hebrew editors, would, not unreasonably, have tried to make sense of the emotionally charged account that they had before them. Nevertheless, in doing so, they have shown reverence for the existing text. They have reproduced most, if not all, of the comparative nouns and particles which are crucial to the understanding of the text. They have been faithful to the general thrust of the passage when changing the text in vv. 22-27 and they have changed the text of vv. 15-21 very little.

However, there are a number of differences in the description of the living creatures which are substantive. The total number of wings is omitted in LXX v. 8. The number is given in v. 6, but the translator/editor may have had an ulterior motive for not mentioning it a second time. In v. 7 the legs are described as feathered and with a small pair of wings, presumably additional, given the position. The reference to their being small can only be to explain why they were not included in the original total count of wings in v. 6. The omission of the total count in v. 8 would therefore be deliberate, because the reader of LXX now knows that there are in fact six wings.

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203 This interpretation is dependent upon understanding “feet” as the subject of the adjectives and the relative pronoun in the second half of the verse. This is quite possible, given that the masculine plural noun, ζώδων, has not appeared since v. 5.
Two of these six wings cover the bodies, two cover the feet, and two are stretched out, presumably for flight, since the creatures rise up from the earth (v. 19). The LXX translators, or the authors of their Vorlage, appear to have made a direct connection with the Seraphim of Isa. 6: 2, and have adjusted the text accordingly.

**Ezekiel Chapter 1: Conclusions**

Chapter 1 presents us with a figure in a state of high anxiety, seeing a vision of Yhwh who should have been dwelling in Jerusalem. I tentatively propose reading יִתְנַהֲל (1: 4) as a reference to the divine dwelling place in Jerusalem, and possibly even to the sanctuary itself. This idea is not proven, and the reference to the heavens being opened in 1: 1 could imply that the heavenly dwelling place is being referred to.

However, if Yhwh dwells separately from the Temple in heaven at the beginning of the book, this introduces a dichotomy in the mind of the reader which is difficult to explain. At the very least the heavenly dwelling should not be so dissociated from the Jerusalem Temple that questions arise as to why the Temple is so central to the later visions of 8-11.

The description of the living creatures is based on the Cherubim of Solomon’s Temple but at this stage the recipient of the vision, whether real or literary, has not made that connection, mainly because these are living beings rather than cult objects, and because of the substantial differences in form. In view of that, it is unlikely that any connection to Seraphim would have been intended either, something which would

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204 LXX Codex Alexandrinus adds a reference to the wings covering the faces as well as the bodies at v. 23, which makes the reference even clearer (Smend, 1880: 14; Cooke, 1936: 27). Fairbairn argued that 1: 23 shows evidence of six wings (Fairbairn, 1851: 29), but it is not clear to me that there is any reference here to any more than four wings.
be dependent upon a particular understanding of Isaiah’s vision anyway. There is some reworking of the vision in the change from a static presentation of the living creatures’ wings to a dynamic one. This may be in the light of the description of the relative movement of the wings and wheels together or it may reflect a link to the Seraphim. The LXX writers, however, do make the link with the Seraphim. In an otherwise relatively faithful rendition of chapter 1 (apart from the stylistic and logical housekeeping), the LXX represents a conscious reworking of the description of the living creatures to equate them with the Seraphim of Isa. 6: 2.

The Cherubim of Chapters 8-11

Ezekiel 9: 3

Now the glory of the God of Israel had gone up from the cherub on which it rested to the threshold of the house. The LORD called to the man clothed in linen, who had the writing case at his side.

Ezekiel 10: 1-9

Then I looked, and above the dome that was over the heads of the cherubim there appeared above them something like a sapphire, in form resembling a
thrones. 2 Then he said to the man clothed in linen, “Go within the wheelwork underneath the cherubim; fill your hands with burning coals from among the cherubim, and scatter them over the city.” He went in as I looked on. 3 Now the cherubim were standing on the south side of the house when the man went in; and a cloud filled the inner court. 4 Then the glory of the LORD rose up from the cherub to the threshold of the house; the house was filled with the cloud, and the court was full of the brightness of the glory of the LORD. 5 The sound of the wings of the cherubim was heard as far as the outer court, like the voice of God Almighty when he speaks. 6 When he commanded the man clothed in linen, “Take fire from within the wheelwork, from among the cherubim,” he went in and stood beside a wheel. 7 And a cherub stretched out his hand from among the cherubim to the fire that was among the cherubim, took some of it and put it into the hands of the man clothed in linen, who took it and went out. 8 The cherubim appeared to have the form of a human hand under their wings. 9 I looked, and there were four wheels beside the cherubim, one beside each cherub; and the appearance of the wheels was like gleaming beryl.

Ezekiel 10:14-20

Each one had four faces: the first face was that of the cherub, the second face was that of a human being, the third that of a lion, and the fourth that of an eagle. 15 The cherubim rose up. These were the living creatures that I saw by the river Chebar. 16 When the cherubim moved, the wheels moved beside them; and when the cherubim lifted up their wings to rise up from the earth, the wheels at their side did not veer. 17 When they stopped, the others stopped, and when they rose up, the others rose up with them; for the spirit of the living creatures was in them. 18 Then the glory of the LORD went out from the threshold of the house and stopped above the cherubim. 19 The cherubim lifted up their wings and rose up from the earth in my sight as they went out with the wheels beside them. They stopped at the entrance of the east gate of the house of the LORD; and the glory of the God of Israel was above them. 20 These were the living creatures that I saw underneath the God of Israel by the river Chebar; and I knew that they were cherubim.

Ezekiel 11:22

These are the names of the cherubim, to their stages: the first cherub,胸怀以色列和列国；

55
**Ezekiel 11: 22** Then the cherubim lifted up their wings, with the wheels beside them; and the glory of the God of Israel was above them.

There is not room here to go into all the problems of these four chapters. We have to restrict ourselves to those parts which affect the Cherubim.

**Ezekiel 8-11: Some Problems**

**Ezek. 9:3; 10: 1-4**

In 9: 3 the glory of the Lord rises up from a single Cherub to the threshold of the Temple. (LXX has plural Cherubim.)\(^{205}\) At the beginning of chapter 10 the dome is said to be above the head (singular) of the Cherubim (plural). The man dressed in linen is then told to approach a wheel beneath the Cherub (both singular, although not in LXX) and take some fire from between the Cherubim (plural, 10: 2). Once again the glory of the Lord is said to move from the Cherub (singular) to the threshold (10: 4), just as in 9: 3, although the verb “to rise” is different.

**Ezek. 10:5-8**

In v. 5 the plural Cherubim at this point may still be seen as separate from both the singular Cherub and the glory of the Lord. Vv. 6-7 confuse the issue, though. In v. 6 the man is again told to approach a wheel, only this time it is between the Cherubim (plural) rather than beneath a single Cherub as in v. 2.

In v. 7 a single Cherub stretches out its hand from between the Cherubim to the fire in between the Cherubim and gives it to the man. The reader no longer knows whether the singular Cherub is separate from the plural Cherubim or one of them.\(^{206}\)

\(^{205}\) For those who see the singular Cherub as distributive cf. Keil, 1882: 101; Kraetzschnar, 1900: 100.

\(^{206}\) Dijkstra argues that if all the references to Cherubim in 10: 2, 6, 7 were genuine there would be a multiplicity of them and he argues for a complex redactional process which introduced them bit by bit (Dijkstra, 1986: 67-76). Abrams traces the more esoteric tradition which identifies the figure on the throne as yet another chief Cherub (Abrams, 1994: 306-316). Strong similarly sees the single Cherub as additional to the four (Strong, J. T., 2000: 87-88). Sedmeier sees the additional “Cherub” as the throne (Sedmeier, 2002: 152).
The LXX translator understandably has a completely different reading of the whole verse, making the man the one who takes the fire and not an unidentified Cherub. Unfortunately, the man then appears to give the fire to himself, which is odd, unless God is the subject of vv. 6-7.  

In v. 8 MT then notes that the hand of v. 7 was underneath the wings of the Cherubim. This makes the assumption that the Cherub (singular) of v. 7 is being equated with one of the Cherubim. LXX at this point also refers to the Cherubim in the plural but dissociates this note from the previous verse by making the hand plural so that it cannot be connected with the hand of the man dressed in linen, who according to this version is the subject of the previous verse.

**Ezek. 10: 8-9, 14-20; 11: 22**

The rest of chapter 10 and 11: 22 are easier to deal with. The Cherubim are consistently plural again. The singular forms are either distributive (10: 9) or refer to one of the four faces (10: 14). The only sting in the tail is the use of the singular phrase יְהוָה יִתְנַהַץ at vv. 15, 20. However, this can be explained in the same way as the singular forms in chapter 1.

**Ezekiel 8-11 and the Vision of Chapter 1**

**Yhwh Has Already Been Driven From the Sanctuary**

Clearly the LXX translator has glossed over the problems by treating all the singular Cherubs as representative of all of them or as one of them. Only in 10: 9 does the singular form remain, but there, as we have noted, it is distributive. In doing so, the assumption is made that the singular Cherub is always one of the four. However,  

207 Both translations in Olley (Olley, 2009: 89) and NETS appear to take the second of these options. Olley notes the problem (Olley, 2009: 293) and that later LXX MSS follow MT and insert a Cherub as the subject.
there is some narrative tension here, because the glory of the Lord moves from the
Cherubim to the threshold (9: 3; 10: 4) and then back from the threshold to the
Cherubim again (10: 19). In between, the Cherubim rise up without the glory of the
Lord on their backs (10: 15). The only possible way to explain the narrative of events
here is that the glory of the Lord is independent of the Cherubim, but then we are left
with the feeling that the Cherubim are purely for show and essentially redundant.\textsuperscript{208}
An alternative interpretation is to view the references to the Cherub in 9: 3 and 10: 4
as to at least one of the Solomonic statues in the Temple.\textsuperscript{209} This fits the logic of the
vision, in which Yhwh is being driven out of the Temple and the living Cherubim
provide his royal transport. The problem with this interpretation is that the glory of the
Lord is already outside the sanctuary in 8: 4, in the inner court, and the most natural
interpretation of 9: 3 is that the glory moved from the inner court, in which case it
would have been nowhere near the Solomonic statues. In fact the reader of chapters 8-
11 is never taken inside the sanctuary at all, although it is mentioned enough (8: 6; 9:
6 - מִשְׁכָּב; 8: 16 – הָרֶכֶל). All the action takes place in the courts outside the sanctuary,
and the surrounding buildings. These outer buildings are called the house (8: 14, 16;
9: 3, 6, 7; 10: 3, 4, 18, 19; 11: 1).\textsuperscript{210} There is one confusing reference, 9: 6. This is to
the twenty-five elders standing in front of the Temple facing the rising sun. In 8: 16 it
is said that they have their backs to the הָרֶכֶל. However, in 9: 6 they are between the
porch and the altar in front of the house (קְהַנִּים אֲשֶׁר לְפָנֵי הָבֵית). It appears that on

\textsuperscript{208} Renz sees this point as undermining any link to the Cherubim formula “enthroned upon
the Cherubim” (Renz, 1999: 63).
\textsuperscript{209} This rabbinic view (Rosh Hashanah 31a) was rehearsed in the modern period by Breuer (Breuer,
151; Block, 1997: 305-306, 319-320). Breuer also omitted any translation of the Merkabah sections of
the visions in line with the rabbinic prohibition on the discussion of these details (Breuer, 1921: 5-7,
60-61). For those who identify 9: 3 with the chariot see Smend, 1880: 56.
\textsuperscript{210} Cf. Block, 1997: 326.
this occasion הושע might be הושע. However, if we equate the twenty-five elders of 8: 16 with the twenty-five elders of 11: 1 (see below), their position has moved further away from the sanctuary, and the reference to the house holds good. Throughout this extended vision, Yhwh is not in the sanctuary.\(^\text{211}\) The vision reiterates the basic fact from chapter 1: there was no way that the glory of Yhwh could be present in the defiled sanctuary (5: 11). The command now is that the defilement of Jerusalem should begin at the entrance to the sanctuary. The inner and outer courts are to be defiled next (9: 7; 10: 2-3, 7; 11: 1, 7-13), the judgement spilling out into the city and beyond.

**A Triple Vision of Judgement**

But what of the movement of the glory of Yhwh independently of the Cherubim? This makes narrative sense if we see the glory moving out of the way of the man in linen, so that he can perform the task of collecting the coals from between the Cherubim and beneath the throne.\(^\text{212}\) That solution is simple enough, but how do we account for the fact that the glory rises twice?\(^\text{213}\) The simplest way of solving this problem is to read the vision complex of chapters 8-11 as several presentations of the same event, namely, cultic sins leading to judgement and the departure of Yhwh.\(^\text{214}\) Once taken to Jerusalem, the prophet sees the glory somewhere in the inner court (8:

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\(^{211}\) Strong interprets the vision in a similar way, though he distinguishes between Yhwh and the glory, stating that it is the glory that is the hypostasis sent out on his behalf to administer judgement, while Yhwh himself remains in the throne room (Strong, J. T., 2000: 86-87).


\(^{213}\) For the view that these are two separate incidents see Keil, 1882: 105. Alternatively, that these verses represent the same event see Toy, C. H., 1899: 114. Bertholet (Bertholet, 1936: 52) reconstructed 10: 4, suggesting that the verb למדת should be read as למדת, “south”. Certainly, this unusual word occurs frequently enough in Ezekiel (20: 46; 40: 24, 27-28, 44-45; 41: 11; 42: 12-13, 18).

\(^{214}\) Not dissimilar to the note about the doubling of Pharaoh’s dream, Gen. 41: 32.
and is shown a series of cultic sins (8: 5-18). The exact position of these
things is not clear, but if we move out of the inner court at all, it is not very far, and
we end up back in the inner court by the end of the series. Six agents of destruction
appear and stand in the inner court (9: 1-2).

There follow three accounts of the judgement process: 9: 3-11; 10: 1-7; 11: 1-13, which prefigure the actual fall of Jerusalem. In the first two the judgement
is initiated by Yhwh giving an order to the linen-clad figure, having risen up from the
Cherubim on both occasions (9: 3-4; 10: 2-4). This links the first and second
accounts. The first and third accounts are linked by the twenty-five elders (9: 6-7;
11: 1-13) and Ezekiel’s desperate plea for mercy (9: 8; 11: 13). Ezekiel is seeing the
same process of judgement three times. The fact that Ezekiel does not limit his
understanding of the visions to the people of Jerusalem, but extends it to include the
exiles, shows that he is not recounting a historical narrative. The whole complex is
nightmarish and the repetition is rubbing it in. The references to the Cherubim and the
movement of the glory of Yhwh are the glue that holds it all together. The extended
description of the wheels and Cherubim (10: 8-22) serves merely to link the whole
vision to the first one (1: 4-28).

215 Sprank and Wiese, 1926: 6, 8, 18.
216 There is some confusion about the nature of the hole and the entrance in 8: 8-9, but, whatever is
going on here, it is not in the Temple itself since it is in secret.
217 This fits with Parunak’s double chiasm, 10: 1-7 and 10: 8-22 (Parunak, 1980: 68-69).
218 Block sees the third episode, not as a repeat of, but as a resumption of the first (Block, 1997: 357).
221 Horst also makes this connection. He sees 9: 1-11; 10: 2, 6, 7 as a criminal court sitting in Jerusalem
(Horst, 1953: 346-350). 10: 3-5, 18-19a; 11: 22-23 describe the departure of the glory of Yhwh (Horst,
1953: 350-352), while the account is enriched by 8: 2-3a; 10: 1, 8-17, 20-22 (Horst, 1953: 352-354)
and framed by 8: 1, 3b; 11: 24 (Horst, 1953: 354-357). Andrew, however, sees the commands as
distinct, a massacre followed by a conflagration (Andrew, 1985: 52). This argument is weakened,
however, by the fact that the conflagration is never described. Klein also sees 11: 1-13 as a second
judgement (Klein, 1988: 63-65).
222 Lind, 1996: 75.
223 Joyce sees the pedantic link in 10: 13, 15, 20 as by the hand of a glossator (Joyce, 2008: 107).
In fact, the three accounts of judgement that we have are really the second, third and fourth in a series of four, the first being the initial vision in chapter 1. Ezekiel’s response, as in chapters 1-3, is one of terror and shock (9: 8; 11: 13), but now he understands that Yhwh’s mobility enables him to act outside the borders of the land. Yhwh may have left the building and be giving orders in the car park where his sentient throne chariot patiently waits for him, but once he has left the country he can regroup among the exiles and prepare a people to cleanse and bring back in due course. They will build a new Temple in which the new Cherubs will be depicted on the walls (41: 18, 20, 25).

This interpretation hinges on reading the singular Cherub references in MT as distributive,\(^\text{224}\) except for 10: 7. This would fit with the way in which singular and plurals are used in chapter 1. It means that LXX’s use of the plural in these places is a tidying up exercise and consistent with the intention of MT and therefore respectful of it. The one point where LXX seems to have altered the sense of the text is in 10: 7.\(^\text{225}\)

**The Form of the Cherubim in Ezekiel 8-11**

**Mesopotamia versus Phoenicia**

Various writers have speculated that Ezekiel is influenced by Mesopotamian cultic statuary.\(^\text{226}\) If he is, it is purely incidental.\(^\text{227}\) While there may be echoes of *kuribi*, there is enough unclarity in the written descriptions for any connection to be no stronger than speculation. A greater case could be made for Egyptian or

\(^{224}\) Cf. e.g. Becker, 1986a: 144.

\(^{225}\) Yoma 77a says that the cherub hands the coal to the man in order to reduce the effects of the destruction on Jerusalem (Fisch, 1985: 51).


\(^{227}\) Allen distinguishes three relevant types of artefact: a pair of creatures carrying a throne, winged men as sky-bearers, two-faced humanoid figures both from Mesopotamia and Megiddo. None fit the description in its totality (Allen, 1994: 27-30, 152-154).
Phoenician artistic influence through the Cherubim of the Solomonic Temple,\(^{228}\) but, again, the description of chapter 1 is enough unlike the Temple Cherubim for the connection not to have been made straight away.\(^{229}\) The main driving force behind the descriptions is a cautious,\(^{230}\) but faithful, attempt to describe an emotionally charged and terrifying pair of visions. The root vision in chapter 1 makes no mention of Cherubim, and it is only upon reflection that this connection is made in chapters 8-10.\(^{231}\)

**Reflections from Chapter 1**

So how has the writer of MT adapted the description of the Cherubim in chapter 10? The equivalent verses are as follows: 10: 1 // 1: 26; 10: 5 // 1: 24; 10: 8 // 1: 8; 10: 14 // 1: 6, 10; 10: 21 // 1: 6, 8; 10: 22b // 1: 9b.\(^{232}\) 10: 1 is substantively the same, but without any mention of the figure on the throne, and the constructions read more easily. In 10: 5 the noise of the movement of the wings is described using only one simile. This is similar to the treatment of the first vision in LXX. 10: 8 tells us

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\(^{228}\) Keil links Ezekiel’s vision to both Mesopotamian and Egyptian statuary, but sees the main image behind the vision as the Ark of the Covenant (Keil, 1882: 42). Von Orelli disagrees, rejecting any connection with the sphinx or griffin (von Orelli, 1896: 12). Toy links the imagery to a variety of cultic imagery through the prophet’s imagination, but does not discuss the differences and why they should be there (Toy, C. H., 1899: 95-96). Redpath sees inspiration in the Ark and Babylonian *kuribi* as well as linking to the griffin (Redpath, 1907: 3, 44-45). Cf. also Hines, 1923: 64; Herrmann, 1924: 16. Davidson argues for an Akkadian root for the word Cherub, but considers it to have had an independent history in Hebrew culture (Davidson, A. B., 1924: 74). Cooke saw the four faces as Mesopotamian and the eyes covering the wheels as Egyptian (Pfeiffer, 1938: 156). Brunner says that the vision of Ezekiel is God’s action to communicate with Ezekiel following the loss of the Temple and using Babylonian imagery (Brunner, 1944: 19-25). Steinmann suggests that Ezekiel coins Cherubim as a new name for the Seraphim based on the *kuribi* that he saw in Mesopotamia (Steinmann, 1953: 175, n.9). Eichrodt links to Phoenician throne imagery and a throne interpretation of the Cherubim formula as well as Ps. 18 and Gen. 3: 24 (Eichrodt, 1959: 6-7). Cf. also Taylor, 1969: 55. Sedmeier argues for a link to ancient Israelite traditions of storm theophany and in particular the storm imagery in Genesis rather than Mesopotamian imagery, (Sedmeier, 2002: 80, 82-83, 86-88).

\(^{229}\) Davidson, A. B., 1924: 73-74.

\(^{230}\) Brownlee emphasises this aspect of the description with the excessive use of comparitors (Brownlee, 1986: 10), as does Davis (Davis, E. F., 1989: 84-85).

\(^{231}\) For a similar view see Zimmerli, 1969: 108*.

\(^{232}\) Zimmerli, 1979: 231. This list does not include the equivalent descriptions of the wheels.
that there was a hand under the wings of the Cherubim. In MT this is the hand that
gives the coals to the man (10: 7), but in 1: 8 the reading is confused between one
hand (ketibhah) or many hands (qere). So far these changes are fairly straight forward.
In chapter 10 the writer is calmly cleaning up the hasty description of the first
chapter. 233

Things then get complicated. 10: 14 begins with the exact wording of 1: 6, and
then describes the faces. The description is tidier with each face numbered: first,
second, third and fourth. This solves the problem of the positioning of the faces in 1:
10 where only the position of the lion (on the right) and the ox (on the left) are noted.
It is possible that in 1: 10 the construction means that there are a pair of faces on each
side, 234 but while this might work for the first two faces (the man and the lion) the
other two are clearly distinguished by the use of a conjunction and the phrase
This could be another example of the hasty nature of the description in
chapter 1 which the writer has tidied up upon reflection. However, there are yet more
problems that the reader faces. The face of the ox has been replaced with that of a
“Cherub”. Writers for centuries have taken this as a sign that Cherubim were
bovine, 236 and that Ezekiel’s visions were introducing a hitherto unknown form for the
Cherubim, namely, three extra faces. Consequently, this verse would be the one point
so far in which there was a reference to pre-existing forms. There is still another
problem, though. The subject at the end of the preceding verse is the wheels. The

233 This is contrary to Smend who argues that the confusions in chapter 10 are due to the ecstatic nature
of that vision (Smend, 1880: 48).
234 Cf. Hutchinson, 1737: 373. Hutchinson’s writings come with a serious health warning since his
philological position is fanciful.
235 Cf. also Fairbairn, 1851: 102; Davidson, A. B., 1924: 72; Brownlee, 1986: 151; Block, 1997: 325
for discussions about the relative position of the prophet.
236 In the modern period see Skipwith, 1907: 697; Redpath, 1907: 44-45. Bertholet saw it as a gloss
referring back to the Cherub of 10: 7 (Bertholet, 1936: 57). Cooke that it was an accident (Cooke,
1936: 117). Block is unwilling to speculate (Block, 1997: 324).
subject of the following verse is the Cherubim. Halperin has suggested that these faces are not in fact the faces of the Cherubim, but those of the wheels which are the earliest description of them as animate beings in what became a standard part of Jewish angelology.\textsuperscript{237} Such an introduction at this point would seem unlikely. No other new elements are introduced in the description of this chapter, and the writer points out that the vision is the same as chapter 1. Consequently, although a little awkward, it seems most likely that the faces are those of the Cherubim. The description of the wheels in 10: 9 is always subordinate in the narrative to the Cherubim.\textsuperscript{238} Their description interrupts that of the Cherubim and it is made clear in vv. 11, 16, 17 that the wheels were subject to the Cherubim. In the light of this discussion, it is not unreasonable to assume that the writer of 10: 14 believed the Temple Cherubim to have been bovine in at least facial form.\textsuperscript{239}

Moving on with the description, 10: 21 informs us that there are four faces and four wings to each creature along with human hands (plural) under the wings. This does not necessarily contradict 10: 8 where the singular hand refers back to the agent of movement in 10: 7. However, it may account for the confusion of form in 1: 8 noted above, should that complication have arisen at an editorial stage of chapter 1. Chapter 10 finishes on the note that the Cherubim moved straight forward. This has repeatedly been pointed out (1: 9, 12, 17, 19, 20, 21; 10: 11, 16, 22). The only reason I can think of why this aspect of the Cherubim is so important to the writer is that it reflects the ability of Yhwh to move around anywhere, which underpins the positive

\textsuperscript{238} Additionally Eichrodt notes, of course, that the Cherubim are subject to the Spirit (Eichrodt, 1959: 7).
\textsuperscript{239} Harper saw the same change in faces as evidence that the vision was based upon Assyrian statuary (Harper, 1894: 186-187).
note struck towards the end of the vision complex. In any case, whatever the reason for it, there is continuity between the two chapters. The writer has ironed out some of the confusing verbal expressions, as well as the confusions of gender and number. It is interesting that this desire to neaten the text is shared with that of the LXX, which may indicate a relatively close connection between them.

**The Form of the Cherubim in 8-11, Conclusion**

Apart from the desire to tidy up the description, the following points about the presentation of the Cherubim in chapters 8-11 should be noted. They are mobile and dynamic. This reflects the development that has already been noted in chapter 1, only here it is consistent throughout the vision while in the first chapter they were initially static. This dynamism is reminiscent of the Seraphim, but still there is no reason to suppose that the writer had in mind Isaiah’s description, anymore than he would have been subject to the artistic influence of cultic imagery from Mesopotamia or elsewhere.

The main conscious reference in these chapters is to the Cherubim of Solomon’s Temple, and the replacement of the ox face with the Cherub face in 10: 14 is potential evidence of that influence. While we cannot rule out the influence of Mesopotamian cultic imagery, the emotional impact of the Temple in Jerusalem on the writer would be far greater.

In chapter 1 it was not clear whether the glory of Yhwh referred to the whole

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240 Skipwith suggested that it is because they represent the wind which cannot change direction (Skipwith, 1907: 696), Bernheimer that spirits could not go round corners (Bernheimer, 1939: 650, n. 1). In a related interpretation Eichrodt interprets the dome as the firmament of heaven cf. Gen. 1:6 (Eichrodt, 1959: 7-8). Cook takes this further and views the Cherubim as an expression a Jungian archetype, the “quaternity” (Cook, S. L., 2004: 180-182). In chapter 10 they represent the structured universe with God above them and the coals beneath them. They mark the borders around the coals and represent action in a horizontal plane (Cook, S. L., 2004: 182-190). Isaiah’s Seraphim, he says, are different because God is in heaven and they are above him (Cook, S. L., 2004: 186).

vision or just the figure on the throne. This matter is cleared up, since the
independence of the glory makes the former interpretation impossible.\textsuperscript{242} Adopting the
former standpoint for chapter 1 would necessitate finding a reason for that change of
meaning. It is simpler\textsuperscript{243} to adopt an understanding which minimises the number of
potential editorial strata.

While it is interesting that this desire to neaten the text and remove such
confusions is shared with that of the LXX, the desire in LXX to harmonise with the
description of the Seraphim apparently is not. Furthermore there is no evidence in the
LXX version that the link with Seraphim was conscious in chapter 10. Indeed, the one
point where the LXX might have exploited the link, the hand reaching to get the coals
of fire (10: 7),\textsuperscript{244} is the one point where LXX departs substantially from MT thus
making the link less likely. From this it follows, either that the writer of LXX 8-11 did
not have the same agenda as the writer of LXX 1, or that it was not of sufficient
importance to affect the version at this point.

\textit{The Prince of Tyre and the Cherub of Paradise}

\textbf{Introduction}

Among the oracles against the nations (Ezek. 25-32) there is a collection of
poems about Tyre. Chapter 25 contains a group of short oracles against Ammon,
Moab, Edom and Philistia, all Judah’s immediate neighbours. The rest of the series
comprises two large collections of oracles. The first collection is against Tyre (Ezek.

\textsuperscript{242} Mettinger sees a development here in the meaning of Kabod theology (Mettinger, 1982b: 107-108,
122-123).
\textsuperscript{243} \textit{Contra} Houk, 1971: 45.
\textsuperscript{244} Smend, 1880: 59; Bertholet, 1936: 55-56; Taylor, 1969: 106.
26: 1 – 28: 19)\textsuperscript{245} and the second against Egypt (Ezek. 29: 1 – 32: 32). The Tyre
collection contains four poems: an oracle of judgement against Tyre (Ezek. 26)
followed by a lamentation (Ezek. 27), and then another oracle of judgement against
the Prince of Tyre (Ezek. 28: 1-10) similarly with a lamentation for him (Ezek. 28:
11-19).

It is this second lamentation that contains references to a Cherub. In the poem
the Prince of Tyre is pictured, like Adam, living in the Garden of Eden before being
expelled for hubris. The poem either equates the Prince with a Cherub (MT) or places
him with the Cherub in the garden (LXX). Whatever reading we follow, the main
question is whether this Cherub has anything to do with the Cherubim already
described earlier in the book.

The Prince of Tyre: The Texts

\textbf{Ezekiel 28: 14}

\begin{quote}
אֲלֹהִים וַיִּבָּטְחוּ אֲבָנָיָן הַחֶרֶב

Ezekiel 28:14 You were a towering cherub which covers;\textsuperscript{246} I established you; You
were on the holy mountain of God; You walked back and forth in the midst of fiery
stones.

\textbf{Ezekiel 28: 13-14} ἐὰν ὡς ἡμέρας ἐκτίσθης σὺ μετὰ τοῦ χερουβ ἐθηκά σε ἐν ὅρει
ἀγίῳ θεοῦ ἐγενήθης ἐν μέσῳ λίθων πυρίνων

Ezekiel 28:14 From the day you were created, I placed you with the cherub in a
holy, divine mountain; you were born in the midst of fiery stones.\textsuperscript{247}

\begin{quote}

\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{245} Ezek. 28: 20-23 is a short oracle against Sidon, appropriately placed with the Tyre oracles since the
two places were often paired. Ezek. 28: 24-26 is a short editorial addition about the restoration of
Israel.

\textsuperscript{246} My translation, cf. n. 250 below. The rest of the verse is NKJV. NKJV is one of the few modern
translations to favour MT.

\textsuperscript{247} NETS.
Ezekiel 28:16 By the abundance of your trading You became filled with violence within, And you sinned; Therefore I cast you as a profane thing Out of the mountain of God; And I destroyed you, O covering cherub, From the midst of the fiery stones.\(^{248}\)

Ezekiel 28:16 ἀπὸ πλήθους τῆς ἐμπορίας σου ἔπλησας τὰ ταμίειά σου ἁπάντας καὶ ἵμαρτες καὶ έτραμματίσθης ἀπὸ ὀροῦ τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ ἤγαγέν σε τὸ χεροῦ ἐκ μέσου λίθων πυρίνων

Ezekiel 28:16 From the abundance of your commerce you filled your storehouses with lawlessness, and you sinned and were wounded from God’s mountain, and the cherub drove you from the midst of the fiery stones.\(^{249}\)

The text of Ezek. 28: 14, 16 is difficult.\(^{250}\) The first problem is the feminine pronoun at the beginning of v. 14.\(^{251}\) The pronominal suffixes in the verses surrounding it are masculine, as is the second person pronoun in v. 15.\(^{252}\) The LXX reads instead a preposition: μετά τοῦ χεροῦ. This can easily be produced by repointing מָתָ to מָתִי,\(^{253}\) and the use of a preposition at the beginning of a verse or phrase fits very nicely with v. 13 (מְעָ), v. 14b (מְעָ), v. 14c (מְעָ), v. 16 (מְעָ), v. 18 (מְעָ).\(^{254}\) LXX then has no equivalent of the waw before מְעָ. It seems that this reading could represent Hebrew Vorlage without the waw. If there had been a waw at this point, we would have expect a waw consecutive, there being no other simple

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\(^{248}\) NKJV.

\(^{249}\) NETS.

\(^{250}\) Yaron sees Widengren’s translation (The Ascension of the Apostle and the Heavenly Book, Uppsala: Lundsqueitska Bokhandeln, 1950 – this book was unavailable to me) as the only one which leaves the MT intact: “Thou wast a cherub, oh, what an anointed of the Shadower, and I placed thee on the holy mountain. A god thou wast, in the midst of stones of fire thou walked.” He rejects this on the basis that Ezekiel would not have called the King of Tyre a god and argues that in no other place are gods in the singular. He further argues in favour of reading with LXX but does not explain how MT came to be created (Yaron, 1964: 29-31).

\(^{251}\) Breuer suggests that the feminine form is because the city is female, although he does refer to the other two masculine usages of this form (Breuer, 1921: 228). Stalker proposes keeping the preposition form and making it the indirect object of the final verb of v. 13 and the Cherub the direct object: “to thee I joined the guardian Cherub” (Stalker, 1968: 219). The NEB translation “I set you with a towering Cherub” seems to take a similar line, although making use of both מָתִי and מָתָ at the same time!

\(^{252}\) Fechter, 1992: 166.

\(^{253}\) The earliest reference to this solution which I can find is Sharp, 1755: 187.

waws in this or the surrounding chapters.\textsuperscript{255} יִישְׁמָה is a \textit{hapax legomenon} and has no equivalent in LXX. Neither does the rest of the phrase, הַלְּשָׁנָה.\textsuperscript{256}

LXX offers a different reading of the vocative phrase “O covering Cherub” (כְּרֻב הַלְּשָׁנָה) from v. 16, making the Cherub the one who casts the Prince out from the stones of fire instead of God being the agent of judgement: ημαν ὑπὲρ τὸ χερουμ ἐκ μέσου λίθων πυρίνων. The form of יִישְׁמָה is unusual,\textsuperscript{257} and it is very simple to repoint this form so that the Cherub becomes the subject, יִישְׁמָה.\textsuperscript{258} However, this would lead again to an anomalous simple waw. Also the Cherub as the agent of judgement sits awkwardly, though not impossibly, with the subsequent first person verbs of judgement in vv. 17-18: יִישְׁמָה, יִישְׁמָה, יִישְׁמָה and יִישְׁמָה.

The conundrum is further complicated by the second person singular aorist passive verb, ἐτραυματίσθης, “you were wounded,” (28: 16) which treats the verb יִישְׁמָה as from הָלֶל I, “bore, pierce,” instead of the root הָלֶל III, “pollute, defile, profane”.

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\textsuperscript{255} Although they do occur elsewhere: Ezek. 22; 29; 25: 12; 37: 10; 40: 24 (Johnson, B., 1979: 78-81).

\textsuperscript{256} Keil sees them as stative constructs (Keil, 1882: 278). While following Toyn in seeing the “covering” as a reference to the Solomonic statues, Foote also suggests that there may be other references to this attitude elsewhere but which do not actually mention the Cherubim by name: Ruth 2: 12; Ps. 17: 8; 36: 7; 60: 7 (Foote, 1904: 282-283). Day, 2007: 75-76 disagrees. Bramley-Moore refers to the anointing of kings (Bramley-Moore, 1906: 166). It is interesting to note that Bramley-Moore is familiar with the works of Jane Lead (Bramley-Moore, 1906: 8-9, 197) whose treatments of Cherubim and Seraphim at the end of the seventeenth century were, like his, particularly esoteric. Redpath suggests reading the two words as “extended” and “anointed” and referring to the Mercy Seat (Redpath, 1907: 153). For an explanation of the Akkadian \textit{mašābu}, (also Aramaic המש) “measure” for יִישְׁמָה see Smith, J., 1931: 107; Greenberg, 1997: 583 (cf. BDB 603; G-K 423). This may explain Σ (καταμετρήμενος), Vg. \textit{(extensus)} and NEB “towering”. Alternatively, if יִישְׁמָה derives from the Hebrew root, יִישְׁמָה, this explains Θ (κερυομένου) and Syr. (e.g. Cooke, 1936: 317, 323; Allen, 1990: 91). Wevers says the article on יִישְׁמָה is deictic, (Wevers, 1969: 217), suggesting that יִישְׁמָה is a gloss on יִישְׁמָה, from יִישְׁמָה, “anoint”.

\textsuperscript{257} \textit{Piel} imperfect 1\textsuperscript{st} singular with elided \textsc{N}.

\textsuperscript{258} \textit{Piel} perfect 3\textsuperscript{rd} singular.
There are two possible reasons for the differences between MT and LXX.

Either the problems of MT baffled the LXX translator and he reconstructed the entire section as best he could, changing the identity of the Cherub in the process, or the LXX is based upon an independent form of the text which it reflects more accurately.\(^{259}\) The early textual history of either possibility cannot be determined.\(^{260}\)

Either way, both the LXX and MT texts are important enough in the tradition for us to take seriously both witnesses. The LXX reads more easily, but MT includes the important, if opaque, phrase, מְלֶאכֶת הַכּוֹכָבֹן.\(^{261}\) If following MT, however, the reader needs to explain how the Prince of Tyre can be identified with the Cherub in this context, without resorting to the lazy strategem of treating the whole thing as an extended metaphor!\(^{262}\)

\(^{259}\) Few modern scholars follow MT (Fairbairn, 1851: 311-312; Hengstenberg, 1869: 242-244; Keil, 1882: 278). Barr is the most persuasive (Barr, 1992b: 215-219; cf. also Mettinger, 2007: 87) noting that in MT there are five places where the ketubh has כִּי but that the gere restates it as the normal כִּי (BDB 61b: 1 Sam. 24: 19, ET 18; Ps. 6: 4, ET 3; Job 1: 10; Eccles. 7: 22; Neh. 9: 6) in addition to the two other places where כִּי is masculine (Num. 11: 15; Deut. 5: 27[24]). Barr argues that the strength of the textual tradition in MT and the provenance of unusual forms in this passage bolster the case for MT over LXX, and that, as a result, Tyre is the Cherub and not the first man. Unsurprisingly, Cornill follows LXX (Cornill, 1886: 361-363) Presumably the justification for this is the gere readings just noted. Irwin replaces the feminine form of the pronoun with a masculine form (Irwin, 1943: 218). Others who follow LXX include Skinner, 1895: 257-258; Toy, C. H., 1899: 48, 155; Kraetzschmar, 1900: 217; Herrmann, 1924: 183; Davidson, A. B., 1924: 225; Cooke, 1936: 317-318; Eichrodt, 1959: 389-390; Howie, 1962: 62; Craigie, 1983a: 206-207; Fuhs, 1984: 153; Andrew, 1985: 136; Blenkinsopp, 1990: 124; Allen, 1990: 91; Pohlmann, 1996: 390 and Day, 2000: 176-177. Bertholet, while amending the MT to fit LXX, offers a bizarre reconstruction of the text, which is quite unjustified: מְלֶאכֶת הַכּוֹכָבֹן (Bertholet, 1936: 149-150). Those who fail to come down one way or the other are Redpath, 1907: 153; Carley, 1974: 190-192; Garscha, 1974: 162-164; Lind, 1996: 237. Hölscher sees 28: 11-19 as one of the few genuine Ezekiel poems, but avoids the complications of the Cherub entirely by translating it as ‘Greif’ v. 14 and ‘Greifen’ v. 16 (Hölscher, 1924: 140-141). Bruno follows the MT for the pointing of the preposition but omits the difficult forms, מְלֶאכֶת הַכּוֹכָבֹן and מְלֶאכֶת הַכּוֹכָבֹן (Bruno, 1959: 126).

\(^{260}\) Patmore comes to a similar conclusion. He favours the idea of a Hebrew text which differed from MT, but accepts the impossibility of identifying what that text was like prior to the second century BCE (Patmore, 2012: 9-14, 169-177, 208-210).

\(^{261}\) Greenberg asserts that LXX has misunderstood the complexity of the poem (Greenberg, 1997: 590-591).

\(^{262}\) Keil, 1882: 44. Smend gives some justification for this line of thought by treating the metaphor as sarcastic (Smend, 1880: 220-221; cf. Ellison, 1956: 110-111), a possibility noted above with regard to my translation of 28: 14 MT. Fohrer follows the LXX reading but translates as “Als Kerub” (Fohrer, 1955: 161). Fisch, 1985: 192 translates as “you are a Cherub” but the commentary treats it as “you are compared to a Cherub”.

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While there are those who see the text as heavily edited, there taking the cautious approach which I adopted earlier, I shall treat both texts as a unity, with any anomalies being accounted for by the unique nature of Ezekiel’s writing.

**The Prince of Tyre: Mythical and Literary Background**

**An Adamic Myth**

There have been a number of different approaches to the mythical background of this passage. Some link it to Gen. 2-3 because of the Garden of Eden. There are obvious thematic connections with Gen. 2-3: the primeval man in the Garden of Eden is cast out, the man acquires knowledge which has sinful consequences, the man presumes to overstep the boundary between mortal and divine, and there is a Cherub present. For some the Prince of Tyre is the primeval man and not a Cherub. Davidson is unhappy that a Cherub, a divine figure, should be created, suggesting that it is one of the sons of God who were there at creation (Job 38: 7).

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263 Thackeray argued that the two different translations for Tyre was a sign of different hands (Thackeray, 1903: 400): Σωρ - 26: 2-4, 7, 15; 27: 2-3, 8; Τύρου - 28: 2, 12, 18. However, the translation is consistent within chapter 28. Similarly, Zimmerli’s attempts to shoehorn the text into a preconceived lament form does not help, since he fails to answer why the editors would feel free to depart from the “standard” form when the original author did not (Zimmerli, 1969: 676-680).


265 Skinner relates it to the Babylonian home of the gods (Skinner, 1895: 257-258).

266 McKenzie, J. L., 1956: 326-327; Block, 1998: 113-114. Cf. May, 1962: 168 who also relates it to Prov. 8. James sees the Cherub as a guardian as in Gen. 3, but of the “magic stones” (James, E. O., 1968: 243). Callender argues that the connection to Gen. 3 makes LXX the original text (Callender, 2000: 178, n. 8), Day that the theme of the originally perfect figure (cf. also Job 15: 7-8 for the surpassing wisdom of the first man) and the presence of the Cherub amounts to conclusive evidence for linking the two passages. He further argues that the expulsion of a Cherub is unique in Jewish thought (Day, 2000: 176).

267 Ezek. 28: 3-5. While many scholars view these verses as secondary (cf. Mettinger, 2007: 90-91), should they be original this would weaken the link between Ezek. 28 and Gen. 2-3.

268 For a recent discussion of the connections between these passages see Mettinger, 2007: 85-98.


270 Davidson, A. B., 1924: 226.
Some link the passage to the Mount of Assembly, Zaphon. Some have focused on the “stones of fire”. They are part of Baal’s abode, astral deities or lightning. Some have seen combinations of references, such as Bevan, who links it to the worship of the temple at Tyre, and, through that, to Solomon’s Temple.

The LXX reading of Ezek. 28: 14, 16 makes a stronger connection between this passage and Gen. 2-3 in that the Cherubim there are, if not the actual agents of the expulsion of Adam, at least bound up with it. There are still quite a few differences, though. In Gen. 2-3 the Cherubim are a preventative measure once the expulsion has taken place; in Ezek. 28 (LXX) the Cherub is the one who carries out the sentence. Furthermore, in Ezek 28 (LXX and MT) there is no suggestion that the Prince would ever consider the possibility of trying to get back in again. Other differences in Gen. 2-3 include the lack of a mountain location, the extra characters (Eve, the animals, God appearing in the garden) and the process by which the characters acquire knowledge, as well as the emphasis on disobedience and its consequences. If the writer of the MT version of Ezek. 28 knew Gen. 2-3, or an underlying myth, he made some substantive changes. The stronger connections of Ezek. 28 (LXX) with Gen 2-3 might be accounted for by the harmonising agenda, that we have already identified in the first vision of chapter 1.

271 A good example of this is Yaron who links Eden to the Temple, and the sanctuary to Mt. Zaphon, as well as the Temple Cherubim to the Cherub of Ezek. 28, but denies that 1:4 refers to the mountain (Yaron, 1964: 41-45).
273 E.g. Steinmann, 1953: 146-147. Steinmann’s following of LXX reading (Steinmann, 1953: 312) leads him to the conclusion that the Cherubim are the “sons of fire”. Also Eichrodt, 1959: 393; Hanson, 1977: 209. May argued against this interpretation on the grounds of the ubiquity of references to precious stones (May, 1962: 170).
275 Bevan, 1903: 500-505. Cf. also Morgenstern, 1960: 152 for a Tyrian King-God cult. Taylor notes the link to Gen. 2-3 but that there are other references as well (Taylor, 1969: 197). Greenberg sees the debate as inconclusive (Greenberg, 1997: 592).
276 See Mettinger, 2007: 94-97 for a more detailed description of this list.
The High Priest

There are clearly links with some sort of Adamic myth. However, we need also to bear in mind the case for identifying the Prince with the High Priest since, of all the allusions, this seems to be the most detailed.\(^{277}\) We turn to Wilson for a statement of this case. He begins by arguing that vv. 16, 18a, 19 present the Prince as the representative of the city.\(^{278}\) Having discounted other mythical reconstructions as tentative at best, he maintains that Pope's application of the Ugaritic myths about Baal deposing El, even though it is more substantive than the others, does not account for all the details of the poems or for their structure.\(^{279}\) In particular, he points out that the Cherub motif is not found in Ugaritic literature, and the figure seems more human than divine.\(^{280}\) He notes that the list of stones in v. 13 is closely linked to Exod. 28: 17-20; 39: 10-13 (LXX makes the list exactly the same),\(^{281}\) and that מַשְׁפִּי refers to the position of the stones in the breastplate of the high priest.\(^{282}\) In v. 12 he links מַשְׁפִּי to the seals of Exod. 28: 11, 21, 36; 39: 6, 14, 30. The garden is the Temple in Jerusalem and the Cherub is one of the Cherubim of the Temple.\(^{283}\) He posits that the poem was originally nothing to do with the Prince of Tyre, but was then attached to a genuine anti-Tyre oracle 28: 1-10. He acknowledges that there is a problem with his thesis, in that the High Priest is not mentioned elsewhere in Ezekiel

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\(^{278}\) Wilson, 1987: 212.

\(^{279}\) It should be noted that the speculative nature of Pope’s reconstruction of the Baal epic has led to his position about this falling into disfavour. There is no internal evidence from Ugaritic literature to suggest that Baal deposed El (L’Heureux, 1979: 4-7).


\(^{281}\) Even though the list in MT is not exactly the same, the form of each logion is. Furthermore the combinations of logions (יִשְׁמַר + מַשְׁפִּי, וַיֶּאַסֶּר + מַשְׁפִּי, יֶשֶׁר + מַשְׁפִּי) exactly reproduce what is written in Exod. 28: 17-20; 39: 10-13, with the exception of the omission of one copulative וְ. The most likely explanation for these forms is textual corruption of an originally exact quotation.

\(^{282}\) Wilson, 1987: 214.

\(^{283}\) Wilson, 1987: 215. It is interesting to note that Mettinger sees traces of Zion-Sabaoth theology in Ezek. 28: 2, 13-14 and the use of בַּל and בַּל (Mettinger, 1982b: 27).
and it is not one of his themes. 284 If Wilson is correct, the Prince of Tyre is being equated with the High Priest in the Jerusalem Temple, wearing the breastplate with the twelve stones on it and ministering before God. Despite Wilson’s reservation about the lack of a High Priest in Ezekiel, the simplest solution is to follow LXX, and see the Cherub as part of the surrounding cultic paraphernalia, one of the gold statues that cover the Ark of the Covenant. 285 It should also be noted that the connection to the Temple in Jerusalem in no way precludes a link to an Adamic myth as noted above. The Temple decorations of palm trees and Cherubim provide enough evidence that the Temple itself was seen as an ideal garden. 286

This all works with the LXX reading, but not so well with the MT reading. How can a Cherub in the Temple be adorned with the twelve stones from the High Priest’s breastplate? There is one text from late antique Judaism which might fit with the MT reading. A first-century CE 287 Palestinian 288 document, The Biblical Antiquities of Pseudo-Philo, described by Goodenough as “inherently dull”, 289 retells

286 One might also point to the Syrian tradition that identified the Jerusalem Temple Mount as the site of Eden, but this is a much later (Budge, 1927).
287 Most scholars date this work to the first century CE (Cohn, L., 1898: 326-327; James, M. R., 1917: 31-33; Kisch, 1949: 15-19; Dietzfelbinger, 1975: 95-96; Bogaert, Harrington, and Perrot, 1976: 66-74; Harrington, D. J., 1983: 299; Murphy, 1988: 275, 285; 1993: 6, 263). The reference to the destruction of the “place where they will serve me” (19: 7) may be a reference to 70 CE because of its apparent agreement with the date of the conquest of Jerusalem by Titus according to the Talmud (Taanith 4: 6; cf. Cohn, L., 1898: 327). The lack of any other reference to the catastrophe of that year implies an earlier date. 32: 3 appears to presuppose familiarity with an active sacrificial cult. Similarly 22: 8 describes the existence of a sacrificial cult “unto this day”. Cohn, however, argued that the lack of detailed references to the cult suggested only historical interest in it (Cohn, L., 1898: 325-326). The methodological problems of identifying a particular text with a particular first-century Jewish setting are described by Hadot (Hadot, 1985: 154-159), who plumps for a connection with the Essenes (Hadot, 1985: 159-171). The terminus a quo for the book is 135 BCE if the identification of Getal (39: 8) with “Zenon, surnamed Cotylas” (Josephus, Ant. 13: 8. 1; War 1: 2. 4) is accepted. Levison makes a case for a first-century CE date based on a comparison of the presentation of inspiration in Bib. Ant. and first-century Greek and Latin literature (Levison, 1995: 297-329).
288 Harrington, D. J., 1971: 1-17. Harrington’s argument is that the text appears to be closer to Lucianic or Proto-Lucianic texts than to MT (Babylonian provenance) or LXX (Egyptian provenance), and is therefore, by a process of elimination, Palestinian. If Harrington is correct, then this text would have been suppressed around 100 CE. Cf. also Dietzfelbinger, 1975: 96.
the biblical story from Adam to David, and, in the section about Kenaz,\textsuperscript{290} there is a passing reference to the two Cherubim of the Temple.

And God said to Kenaz, ‘Take those stones and put them in the ark of the covenant of the Lord\textsuperscript{291} along with the tablets of the covenant that I gave to Moses on Horeb; and they will stay there until Jahel,\textsuperscript{292} who will build a house in my name, will arise, and then he will set them before me upon the two cherubim, and they will be before me as a memorial for the house of Israel.’\textsuperscript{293}

The twelve stones mentioned are miraculously produced by God and are the stones of the High Priest’s breastplate.\textsuperscript{294} In this passage Cherubim are given the role of bearing the twelve stones. This tradition is independent of the Aaronite priesthood. In the absence of the High Priest the Cherubim are adorned with the twelve stones. This reference to the Cherubim having this role is unique, but it does raise the interesting question about what was important at a time when there was no High Priest.

Wilson’s reservation about the lack of a High Priest in Ezekiel can be understood if we accept the dating of the Tyre oracles. They are dated to the year after

\textsuperscript{290} Chapters 25-28; cf. Judg. 3: 9-11 for the biblical background to Kenaz.
\textsuperscript{291} Strangely, Harrington renders the divine name in upper case, as if reading Ylwh in Hebrew. However, since the Latin, \textit{Domini}, (Bogaert, Harrington, and Perrot, 1976: 212) does not render it in upper case, it seems reasonable not to do so in English either.
\textsuperscript{292} Although this should be Solomon, Harrington suggests that this might be the angel Jaol from \textit{Apoc. Abr.} 10: 4, 9. If it refers to Jael the Kenite of Judg. 4-5, then this is a completely unknown temple, in which case the Cherubim are presumably those on top of the Ark of the Covenant.
\textsuperscript{293} \textit{Bib. Ant.} 26: 12, Harrington, D. J., 1983: 338.
\textsuperscript{294} Exod. 28: 17-21, 29. For other parallels of the hiding of the stones cf. 2 Bar. 6: 4-10; 4 Bar. 3: 7-14; \textit{Assump. Mos.} 1: 17; \textit{Ant.} 18: 4. 1; 2 Macc. 2: 4-8 (Murphy, 1993: 124, n. 21).
the fall of Jerusalem (26: 1), \(^{295}\) when the High Priest had been murdered by the Babylonians (2 Kgs. 25: 18, 21). The vessels of the Temple were removed to Babylon, but no mention is made of the High Priest’s vestments. Not everything went to Babylon. There is some doubt over what happened to the Ark (Jer. 3: 16), \(^{296}\) and neither the Cherubim themselves nor the High Priest’s regalia are specifically listed among the things removed by Nebuchadnezzar. \(^{297}\) Presumably they were destroyed. In *The Biblical Antiquities* we have, at the very least, an example from late antiquity of the Cherubim having the twelve stones of the High Priest’s breastplate on them. While *The Biblical Antiquities* is most likely to be dependent on MT of Ezekiel on this point, it can be cited as evidence that this interpretation was accepted in antiquity by at least some. This makes it possible to identify the Prince of Tyre, not necessarily with the High Priest (LXX), but with one of the Cherubim (MT). Additionally, if we accept that the Solomonic Cherubim were among those objects destroyed by the Babylonian army, this unique presentation of a Cherub cast out of paradise is justified. Solomon’s Cherubim were cast out of the Temple, never to be returned, just as the Prince/Cheerub was evicted from Eden, never to go back; only the frescos of Cherubim are restored in Ezekiel’s vision of the reconstructed Temple. It is reasonable to assume that the olive wood statues could have been part of that vision, if they had been seen as sacred or necessary. The writer of Ezek. 28 MT seems to have

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\(^{295}\) Two years after the fall if we follow the dating of LXX A.
\(^{296}\) Cooke notes its complete absence from Ezekiel’s vision of the Temple (Cooke, 1936: 114). This may well be because in the vision the inside of the sanctuary is never seen. In which case, I can still concur with Day’s conclusion that the most likely explanation for the disappearance of the Ark is that it was destroyed by the Babylonians when they sacked Jerusalem (Day, 2005: 261-265), since the vision of the Temple is dated before Jerusalem’s destruction, whereas the poems of Ezek. 28 were delivered after it. Mettinger suggests that because the Cherubim were stripped of their gold in 597 and were effectively profaned, they amounted to uninteresting spoil in 586 (Mettinger, 1982b: 61).
\(^{297}\) *Yoma* 21b notes five things that disappeared at this time. The Cherubim were one of the five. The last of the list was the Urim and Thummim, which were kept in the High Priest’s breastplate (Exod. 28: 30). The breastplate itself is not mentioned, but as the container for the Urim and Thummim it is not unreasonable to think that it is included with them.
desanctified them and paralleled their fate in a unique depiction of a fallen Cherub in his oracle against the Prince of Tyre.

**The Prince of Tyre and the Cherub of Paradise, Conclusion**

While the Cherub of this poem derives from both Eden and the Temple, there does not appear to be any direct connection with the living Cherubim of the vision complex. The Cherubim of chapters 8-11 and the Cherub of chapter 28 are two separate lines of interpretation which have the Temple as their source, but there is little or no interaction between them.

**Conclusion**

It seems, through a cloak of textual issues, that the dominant conceptual image behind the treatment of the Cherubim in Ezekiel is the Jerusalem Temple. Yhwh’s absence from that Temple is what drives at least the first eleven chapters of the book. The Temple in Jerusalem is the mythical dwelling place of God and primeval garden paradise which underlies both the visions of 1, 8-11, and the lament over Tyre in 28: 11-19. Ezekiel’s Cherubim are Jerusalem Cherubim, but with a twist. His prophetic originality has introduced hitherto unknown features. That the Cherubim were winged, that they were partly bovine, that they possible formed some sort of throne, was nothing new. Now they have multiple faces, inanimate cult objects have become animate beings, and they are associated with a hubris/nemesis myth of a fallen god, something not unknown in Hebrew literature (Gen. 6: 1-4; Ps. 82; Isa. 14: 12-15). That they are associated with storm theophany and the garden of Eden is also...

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298 Farquhar demythologises this theme by seeing the Cherub as a representation of humanity’s fallen nature (Farquhar, 1878: 41).


300 Bertholet, 1936: 55 re. 10: 5.
attested elsewhere, but these references, if known to Ezekiel, would be incidental.\(^\text{301}\) It is Yhwh’s departure from the Temple in Jerusalem which leads to his entire prophetic ministry, and it is the cult images within that Temple, in particular the Solomonic statues in the sanctuary, that lie behind his living creatures. Their destruction at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar’s army may also have been the inspiration for the description of the fallen Cherub in Ezek. 28 MT. Fundamental to this interpretation is the possibility that cult images can lead to visionary and poetic material about live creatures. This process may account for both similarities and differences, but in the discussion of the other biblical texts and their interrelations, the nature of this process is significant. For the author of the early chapters of this book, the transition from physical objects to living beings was hammered out in a traumatic experience. The Babylonian attack and subsequent disaster elicited both vision and poetry.

There is one further point, though. Cherubim are closely associated with coals of fire, נִזְרָא (Ps. 18: 13, 14 ET 18: 8, 12, 13 // 2 Sam. 22: 14 ET 13; Ezek. 1: 13; 10: 2-7)\(^\text{302}\) and stones of fire, אַפִּיָּהּ (Ezek. 28: 14, 16).\(^\text{303}\) Whether these are judgemental or purgatorial is a matter of debate,\(^\text{304}\) but not a discussion which is significant for us here, since it is possible for these two ideas to coexist. However, the

\(^{301}\) Cf. Smend, 1880: 2-4.

\(^{302}\) Cf. נִזְרָא (Ps. 18: 9 // 2 Sam. 22: 9). Vawter’s point that the coals serve no purpose in Ezek. 1 (Vawter, 1991: 26-27) may strengthen the case for a link between the vision and the altar in the Temple. Why else would the writer introduce an otherwise pointless image? However, he later suggests that the wheels formed some sort of portable altar of incense, and that a redactor decided to fit the vision of the glory of the Lord to the Ark of the Covenant (Vawter, 1991: 72). Block argues that the coals of fire in 10:7 could not be the altar of incense, because the narrative does not allow that identification (Block, 1997: 322), but it is possible to argue that Ezekiel is seeing some sort of theophanic equivalent of them, much as he is seeing a living equivalent of the Temple Cherubim.


\(^{304}\) Block, 1997: 322. Wong (Wong, 2001: 157-179) argues that chapters 8-11 depict a purification process rather than a retributive one, linking the chapters to the purgation of the prophet Isaiah (Isa. 6: 6-7).
coals of fire could link the Cherubim of the sanctuary to the Seraphim of Isaiah.\footnote{Kraetzschmar, 1900: 14; Bertholet, 1936: 7, 54; Fisch, 1985: 51. (Bertholet also sees a link between 1: 13-14 and Gen. 3: 24. Certainly the fiery sword and the use of the Hithpael of הָעַל would indicate a possible link, but conceptually it is a different idea from the altar coals.)}
The Seraphim are ministers of holy fire, הָעַל (Isa. 6: 6),\footnote{It should be noted that the use of הָעַל here is unique. Elsewhere it means some sort of paving stone (2 Chron. 7: 3; Est. 1: 6; Ezek. 40: 17, 18; 42: 3).} which is taken from the altar just as the הָעַל are by the High Priest (Lev. 16: 12). Any conscious link between Ezekiel’s Cherubim and the Seraphim is unlikely,\footnote{Joyce’s suggestion that the bronze of 1: 7 may suggest Nehushtan (Joyce, 2008: 70) is tempting. It should further be noted that there is a paraphrased citation of Jer. 5: 21 at Ezek. 12: 2 concerning people who have eyes but cannot see and have ears but cannot hear, which itself could be a conscious reference to Isa. 6: 10 (cf. 32: 3 also), but while this may be used as evidence that the writer of Ezekiel was familiar with the Isa. 6 passage, it cannot be used as proof that he identified the Cherubim with the Seraphim.} but the holy fire that links them thematically could be one of the reasons why the LXX translators, or the writers of their Vorlage, made the identification later on. Ezekiel’s Cherubim are animate beings seen in a prophetic vision which are probably based on cult artifacts. The possibility that this is also the case for Seraphim is a serious one which will need to be considered in Chapter 5.

\footnote{Kraetzschmar, 1900: 14; Bertholet, 1936: 7, 54; Fisch, 1985: 51. (Bertholet also sees a link between 1: 13-14 and Gen. 3: 24. Certainly the fiery sword and the use of the Hithpael of הָעַל would indicate a possible link, but conceptually it is a different idea from the altar coals.)}

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Chapter 2: Living Cherubim in Genesis 3 and Psalm 18

Introduction

Turning to two passing references to Cherubim in Gen. 3 and Ps. 18 (2 Sam. 22), these are treated together in this chapter because, outside Ezekiel, they are the only texts which treat Cherubim as living beings. No assumptions about whether the texts are linked to each other or not is being made, and so I will treat the texts separately before suggesting any possible links between them.

The Cherubim of Gen. 3: 24

When Adam and Eve are ejected from the Garden of Eden, God bars their way to the tree of life with mysterious guardians: Cherubim and some sort of flaming sword. In terms of the biblical narrative this is the earliest reference to Cherubim, and traditionally was understood as the root of the concept in the mind of the Mosaic author. Modern critical scholarship reads the verse differently.

Genesis 3: 24 He drove out the man; and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim, and a sword flaming and turning to guard the way to the tree of life.

308 This traditional reading has even led to speculations about how long the Cherubim stayed where they were (Young, 1966: 163).
The Versions

In MT and LXX of Gen. 3: 24 there are two variant readings. There are minor variations in the versions: some LXX MSS omit the definite article;\textsuperscript{309} in the Vulgate it is not clear whether “cherubin” is plural or singular, definite or indefinite; at least one Ethiopian MS mentions Seraphim alongside Cherubim.\textsuperscript{310} All of these can be attributed to the nature of the translation or to later interpretations of the text. However, LXX represents a different and possibly independent reading.

καὶ ἐξεβαλεν τὸν Ἀδὰμ καὶ κατόψιεν αὐτὸν ἀπέναντι τοῦ παραδείσου τῆς τρυφῆς καὶ ἔταξεν τὰ χερουβὶ καὶ τὴν φλογίνην ῥομφαίαν τὴν στρεφομένην φυλάσσειν τὴν ὀδὸν τοῦ ξύλου τῆς ζωῆς (LXX)

And he cast out Adam and caused him to dwell over against the garden of Delight, and stationed the cherubs and the fiery sword that turns about to keep the way of the tree of life. (Brenton, 1851)

In the MT reading the objects of the Hiphil verb, יְרַבְשֵׁת, are the Cherubim and the tree of life יְרֶצֶם. LXX has translated this verb κατόψιεν with Adam as the object.

There is then another verb, ἔταξεν, of which the Cherubim and the φλογίνην ῥομφαίαν are the objects. Most commentators favour the MT reading,\textsuperscript{311} and the note about the positioning of Adam raises two issues. The first is that the Cherubim’s position in relation to the garden is unknown. The second is that the meaning of יְרַבְשֵׁת is given a

\textsuperscript{309} Wevers, 1974: 95.
\textsuperscript{310} Bodius, 1755: 8, “Et exire Adamum, ac habitare fecit eum ante hortum laetitiae, et praecepit Seraphim ac Cherubim, gladio ignis versatili ut custodirent viam arboris vitae.”
\textsuperscript{311} E.g. Cassuto, 1961: 174.
particular sense: “stationed”. For the purpose of the discussion here I shall concentrate on the MT reading, because the assumption that the position of the Cherubim was known affects how to read this verse in relation to other texts. Also, the MT reading opens up other possibilities for the sense of רַבָּא, although the interpretation given in LXX cannot be ruled out. In the event that LXX represents an earlier reading, it limits the hermeneutical possibilities of Cherubim rather than enhances them, so MT gives the reader, if nothing else, more to talk about.

The Place of the Cherubim in the Narrative

One of the important elements to notice about the Cherubim in this text is their insignificance. Many commentators ignore them altogether.\(^{312}\) It is particularly extraordinary that Mettinger ignores them.\(^{313}\) He does not even place them in his list of named characters.\(^{314}\) Others simply refer the reader to other biblical references\(^{315}\) or

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\(^{312}\) Dods, 1888: 15-27; Chambers, 1957: 6-9; Renckens, 1959; Westermann, 1971; Todd, 1978: 45-46; Cundall, 1981: 12; Brueggemann, 1982: 40-54; Toy, J., 1989: 16; Baruk, 1990: 16; Armstrong, 1997: 32; Brodie, 2001; Bouter, 2004: 26. It may be argued that many of these commentaries are non-technical and so would be bound to skim over some subjects, but in recent years scholarly commentaries also have ignored the Cherubim: Berrigan, 2006: 57-59; McKeown, 2008: 36-39; Arnold, 2009: 52-75; Reno, 2010: 96-97.

\(^{313}\) Mettinger, 2007: 5-11 surveys approaches to the different trees in the story, but does not mention the Cherubim, while going into some detail about the tree of life. Apart from a passing reference to the textual debate over Cherub in Ezek. 28 (Mettinger, 2007: 87) Cherubim do not form part of Mettinger's discussion. It is possible that this is due to his stance with regard to Cherubim in The Dethronement of Sabaoth (Mettinger, 1982b). He distinguishes between the apotropaic role of the Cherubim in the Garden and their role as throne bearers (Mettinger, 1982b: 21), seeing the change from the latter to the former as part of the overall change from throne theology to מַלְנוּיָה and בַּעַל theology (Mettinger, 1982b: 51, 87).

\(^{314}\) Mettinger, 2007: 29-32.

\(^{315}\) Gunkel’s preferred link is with Ezekiel and, through him, to the Temple and Tabernacle (Gunkel, 1901: 20-21). Skinner begins from the idea of the personification of cloud, followed by the link to the tree of life, which in turn leads to the Cherubim’s appearance in cult centres and then to the Ezekiel material (Skinner, 1912: 90). Banister’s descriptions are wholly dependent on the descriptions of the Ark and the Ezekiel passages (Banister, 1924: 128-132). Alter’s reading (Alter, 1996: 15) is even narrower, being solely dependent on Ps. 18: 11 (ET 10) Cf. also Ryle, 1914: 59; Forrester-Brown, 1920: 245-246; Sarna, 1989: 375; Turner, L. A., 2000: 20-24.
general theories about Cherubim\textsuperscript{316} with little attempt to explain why Cherubim are mentioned specifically here. Consequently, much of the ink that has been spilt in commentaries on this verse is not relevant to this discussion, consisting as it does of more general comments about Cherubim in other parts of the Bible. Furthermore, suggestions about possible links to archaeological data frequently do not assist in interpreting the Cherubim in this context, with the exception of the connection to the tree of life, which I shall discuss below. Nothing can be derived from this verse about whether the Cherubim were in the form of humans (partly\textsuperscript{317} or otherwise), sphinxes\textsuperscript{318} or griffins,\textsuperscript{319} or whether they are angels,\textsuperscript{320} genies\textsuperscript{321} or the highest form of creation. Etymological comments similarly are imposed upon the reading rather than derived from it.\textsuperscript{322} Allegorical interpretation persists into the modern period but does not have a part to play in this thesis.\textsuperscript{323} Likewise Kraemer’s psychological reading is interesting,\textsuperscript{324} but takes us too far away from the matter in hand, namely trying to assess how this text relates to Cherubim and Seraphim in other parts of the

\textsuperscript{316} König, while acknowledging Assyrian etymology and storm imagery, in the end resorts to the allegory of “der Weltgegenwart Gottes” (König, 1925: 259-260). For general theories that do not specifically touch on Gen. 3: 24 cf. Maher, 1991: 48.

\textsuperscript{317} Fritsch, 1960: 34; Gibson, 1981: 140 (who describes them as half human, half bird)

\textsuperscript{318} Richardson 1953: 78; Knight, 1981: 48; Fox, 1983: 17

\textsuperscript{319} Delitzsch, 1887: 114; Dillmann, 1887: 170; Heinisch, 1930: 133.

\textsuperscript{320} E.g. Morgenstern, 1965: 60; Davies, J. D., 1971: 252-254 (this is an essay on angels generally hung on the reference to Cherubim rather than discussing what is distinctive about them).

\textsuperscript{321} Chaine (Chaine, 1949: 52-53) confidently asserts that the Cherubim are higher types of genies and that there are two of them, one to the right and one to the left of the entrance of the garden.

\textsuperscript{322} Dillmann, 1887: 171. Leopold’s suggestion that the Cherub derives from a word meaning “brilliant appearance” (Glanzerscheinung) is unusual, but sadly unsupported by any evidence (Leupold, 1942: 183-184). Dockx, unconvincingly, links it to יִֽב יְֽס by metathesis (Dockx, 1981: 105). For those who link this verse to Akkadian cf. Speiser, 1964: 24; Davidson, R., 1973: 48; Hamilton, 1990: 210. To be fair to the commentators, though, if one of the tasks of a commentator is to provide background information for the reader, the writers referred to here have done their job admirably.

\textsuperscript{323} Hand in hand with allegory I have also ignored the more negative comments of those who wish to dismiss Cherubim as mere human invention (Knight, 1981: 48) or wholly invaluable.

\textsuperscript{324} For him the Cherubim are the pictorial embodiment of the actions of the divine court (Kraemer, 1931: 146).
Old Testament. Ancient interpretation, while touched on by some,\(^{325}\) and followed by others,\(^{326}\) is outside the scope of this thesis but a subject I hope to return to at a later date.

So what are the issues that are relevant? There are a number of questions which affect how to read this verse. How and why are the Cherubim linked to the tree of life? What is the nature of their task? How do the Cherubim relate to the sword? How do the Cherubim relate to the serpent? What is the meaning of לְמַעְרוֹן? What is the meaning of מַעְרוֹן? How does the verse (and indeed Gen. 2-3 in its entirety) relate to Ezek. 28?

**Guardians of the Tree of Life**

There are two trees mentioned in Gen. 2-3, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and the tree of life. The two trees could be equated if it were not for Gen. 2:9 and 3:22. In Gen. 2:9 the tree of life is described as the tree in the middle of the garden, and therefore the same as the tree of knowledge, but there is an additional clause which sees the tree of knowledge as a separate tree. In Gen. 3:22 the tree of life appears to be distinguished from the tree from which the man and woman have eaten, apparently contradicting part of Gen. 2:9. In the former verse Barr maintains, following Humbert, that לְמַעְרוֹן could not include any idea of continuity: “And now, lest he continue to reach out …”\(^{327}\) This has been challenged by Stordalen, who cites

\(^{325}\) Cohn, L., 1892: 29-30; Harl, 1986: 111-112; Basser, 1987: 29. Braude refers to the interesting Rabbinic interpretation that the Cherubim were placed at the garden by God to protect himself from Adam’s blasphemy (Braude, 1962: 269): “R. Tanhuma cites Resh Lakish an Amora of the 2nd century who asserts that even as in Hezekiah’s prayer the God who sits upon the cherubim was invoked by Hezekiah because of Sennacherib’s revilings and blasphemies, so here cherubim had to be placed east of Eden because of Adam’s revilings and blasphemies.” Jervis’ (Jervis, 1993: 243) suggestion that the Cherubim of Gen. 3:24 are the angels of 1 Cor. 11:10, because they are referred to as angels in *Apoc. Mos.* 27:1-2, is speculative.

\(^{326}\) Blocher, 1979: 188-189.

Gen. 45: 11; Exod. 1: 9-10; 33: 3; 1 Sam. 13: 19; 2 Sam. 12: 27-28 as examples of this very phenomenon. Should Stordalen be correct, the possibility remains that the tree of life and the tree of knowledge of good and evil are one and the same. However, on closer inspection, some of his examples do not sustain his thesis. There is no sense of continuity in Gen. 45: 11. The Niphal verb, שׂאָלָה, which is linked to פִּילָה, has not occurred before in Genesis and there is no sense in the narrative before this point that Jacob and his sons were already dispossessed. On the contrary, Jacob goes down to Egypt with all that he had, יִפְלָה אָשָׁר בַּלָּה (Gen. 46: 1). The four other occasions of this phrase in Genesis (Gen. 12: 20; 24: 36; 25: 5; 39: 6) all imply a substantial amount of inheritance. Joseph’s comment in Gen. 45: 11 is really anticipating the dispossession of the entire Egyptian population (Gen. 47: 13-26), and is intended to show that his family would be protected from this. Similarly the phrase פָּרַע אָלָד (Exod. 33: 3) is hardly continuous either. At no point in the Exodus narrative has God actually “consumed” the people of Israel, although he has threatened to do so and, significantly, been placated by Moses (Exod. 32: 10-12). Joab’s comment to David that he was about to capture Rabbah of the Ammonites (רַבֹּת אֲמוֹנִים) is not continuous either since it refers to a decisive moment in the battle rather than the on-going siege. The two examples that do imply the prevention of a continuous action are Exod. 1: 9-10 and 1 Sam. 13: 19. However, out of a total of over 130 examples of this construction, this number is slim, and while the possibility of a continuous reading of Gen. 3: 22 is theoretically possible, it is not generally accepted and statistically unlikely. The logic of the story also suggests that Adam and Eve had not already eaten

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328 Stordalen, 2000: 231.
of the tree of life, since then they would have been immortal, and presumably immune to God’s curse.

**Cherubim and Sacred Vegetation**

Whether there are one or two trees,\(^{329}\) though, does not really affect the Cherubim. They are linked to the tree of life, and this has been enough to get archaeologists excited. Winged sphinxes and other animals appearing with vegetation occur quite frequently in the physical record.\(^{330}\) Wood correctly points out that the expression “tree of life” does not occur outside Genesis and Proverbs.\(^{331}\) Nevertheless, the imagery of sacred vegetation is ubiquitous in the ancient Near East and could easily have informed the narrative. Particular note should be made of connections with the Gilgamesh Epic, in which Gilgamesh seeks a plant that gives immortality, but is prevented from getting it by a serpent.\(^{332}\) However, even though Akkadian literature was known in ancient Israel, the writer of Gen. 2-3 was essentially creating a completely new work.\(^{333}\)

A more reliable tool is to link this passage to other references to Cherubim that also mention vegetation of some sort. Of these there are the following references: 1 Kgs. 6: 29, 32, 35; 7: 36; Ezek. 41: 18, 20, 25. These all refer to the Temple in

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\(^{329}\) Mettinger notes that the existence of two trees, one giving life and the other giving wisdom, fits with the themes in the Adapa Epic. In this epic Adapa receives wisdom but not eternal life, just as Adam and Eve receive one and not the other (Mettinger, 2007: 100-108).

\(^{330}\) E.g. Vawter, 1957: 54, 71. Petit sees the origins of the Asiatic sphinx in Egypt (Petit, 2011: 19-21) and provides an extensive catalogue of their appearance in association with stylised trees (Petit, 2011: 22-29). He is also the latest scholar to see the imagery of the Garden of Eden and the Temple as a literary equivalent of these (Petit, 2011: 36).


\(^{333}\) Those commentators who have concluded that this verse has specific links with Canaanite or Mesopotamian art and literature include Fripp, 1892: 663; Dillmann, 1887: 170; Holzinger, 1898: 37-39; Albright, 1922: 27; Kraeling, 1947: 289; Richardson 1953: 78; Morgenstern, 1965: 60; Harrington, W. J. 1976: 60; Wenham, 1987: 86. Westermann is reticent to derive the Cherubim of Gen. 3: 24 from Akkadian words (Westermann, 1984: 274).
Jerusalem, either Solomon’s or the one from Ezekiel’s vision. They all refer to wall reliefs on the inside of the Temple and to the carvings on the doors, apart from 1 Kgs. 7: 36 which refers to the decoration of the bronze stands. It is worth noting what is not mentioned in connection with vegetation: the Ark, the Tabernacle, the Mercy Seat and the two olive wood Cherubim of the Jerusalem Temple. Even though in the Temple there are several Cherubim in the reliefs and carvings combined with several trees as well, the descriptions of the wall and door reliefs are the closest contextual references to Gen. 3: 24, in that the Cherubim are paired up with vegetation of one sort or another, usually palm trees. It would not be unreasonable, therefore, to posit some connection between the Genesis story and the Jerusalem Temple.\(^33^4\)

Concerning Ezek. 28 it is worth noting that, although the Cherub of Ezek. 28: 14 is linked to Eden, the garden of God (Ezek. 28: 12), no trees are mentioned, while gems and precious metal play a more significant role. Trees are mentioned repeatedly in Ezek. 31, and in connection with the Garden of God (vv. 8-9), but it appears that the poet has ignored them in chapter 28. The description of the Eden of the King of Tyre, the mountain of God,\(^33^5\) has more in common with the mining industry than Sherwood Forest. In respect of the tree of life, the texts that most directly inform our reading of the Cherubim of Gen. 3: 24 are the descriptions of the Jerusalem Temple.

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\(^33^4\) For those who have formerly followed this idea see Anon., 1903: 393. Wenham’s comment that the Cherubim have cultic overtones does not acknowledge the relative strength of the connection to the Temple over against the connection to the Tabernacle (Wenham, 1987: 86), but he had previously made a strong case for seeing the Garden of Eden as a sanctuary (Wenham, 1985: 19-25). Amos’ simple summary of Cherubim as “fierce winged beasts whose statues originally guarded temples” (Amos, 2004: 26) reflects this conclusion but also must be numbered among the cursory treatments noted above.

\(^33^5\) Mettinger, 2007: 16 suggests that the flowing rivers of Gen. 2: 10-14 show that Eden was on a mountain. Four “head waters” (Gen. 2: 10) divided from an original source would certainly imply mountain streams, possibly at the western end of the Tigris in the mountains of Armenia.
Cherubim as Boundary Markers

But what is the nature of the Cherubim’s task? They are “to keep the way” to the tree of life, לֶשָׁמֶר אֶת-הַרְּאָרָה עַל-הָרְאוֹיָם. Most commentators interpret this as barring the way.336 A few have tried to see a positive connotation, interpreting their role as showing the way back to the tree of life.337 However, Gen. 3: 22 clearly implies that the man and woman are being ejected from the garden in order to stop them getting to it. While it is tempting to read into the narrative a potential happy ending, the story as it stands does not suggest this. It is an aetiology of the current human condition, not its future possibilities, and the Cherubim mark the limits of human existence. It is significant that in the list of references to the Temple in Jerusalem, particular attention is paid to the fact that the Cherubim were carved on the doors. Door deities were not unheard of and the door-keeper ritual that seems to lie behind Ps. 24: 7-10 implies that the doors themselves may have been seen as animate guardians. Hamilton links the Cherubim to the Levitical guardians of the Tabernacle (Num 1: 51, 53), since they “keep the charge” (וּמָשַׁת אֶת-הַמֶּשֶׁבְתָּן) of the Tabernacle.338 One could conceivably extend this idea to the door-keeper role of the Levites in the Chronicler’s Temple, but this would be anachronistic and, since the Chronicler has not included the Cherubim in the descriptions of the Temple walls and doors, it is best to assume that no connection is being made. Several commentators have linked this guardian role to Assyrian statues, but the number of logical assumptions that have to be made for this to work make this line of argument tentative.

337 Anon., 1851: 31. Goldstein (Goldstein, 1928: 12) took the positive view with the Cherubim representing the Torah. Sacks’ reading is an interesting negative twist on this view, since he comments that any attempt to seek a way back to the tree of life would be pagan since, he says, the Cherubim were basically pagan images (Sacks, 1990: 37).
at best. The guardian Cherubim has been linked to the serpent. Arnold, following Huidberg, suggests that the serpent represents Baal, one of the guardians of the sacred tree. However there is no evidence that Baal was ever symbolised by a serpent. This is certainly not the role of the serpent as presented in this version of the myth, but, if such an idea were to underlie it, it would be an interesting parallel to the MT version of Ezek. 28 in which it is the guardian Cherub who is punished.

The Cherubim are not the only boundary markers, though. How do the Cherubim relate to the sword? The exact translation of לוח נחáb does not affect this discussion. The sword appears to be animate, something not unknown in Ugaritic literature. While the phrase, לוח נחáb, is similar to the Phoenician phrase, râp hs, “Reshep of the Arrow”, any animate interpretation of the sword as some sort of deity alongside the Cherubim is forcing the text. There are several references to God wielding a sword of some sort, but in none of them is the sword animate, other than in Zech. 13: 7, but even this is probably only a metaphor. God himself may be the sword, but there is no sense of the sword having a life of its own. Three angels appear carrying swords (Josh. 5: 13; Num. 22: 23, 31; 1 Chron. 21: 16, 27), which has led some to imagine that there was a single Cherub wielding the sword outside Eden.

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339 Arnold, 2009: 62-63. Mieke Bal makes a similar assertion, though not related to Baal (Bal, 1985: 35): “If, as many middle-eastern myths have it, the serpent, as the representative of immortality because of its capacity to renew its skin, is God’s helper as the guardian of the tree of life, then our serpent does an excellent job. Also, the serpent with its double tongue, evolving into the dragon with its flaming tongues, may very well be the same creature as the cherubim with flaming sword of Gen. 3: 24.”

341 KTU 1.2 i 32-33; 1.3 iii 45-46.
342 Hendel, 1985: 672-674.
343 Skinner suggests they may be a pair of wind demons (Skinner, 1912: 90). Cassuto believes that the Cherubim are among those being referred to by the first person singular plural in the divine speech in Gen. 3: 22 (Cassuto, 1961: 172).
344 Deut. 32: 41-42; Ps. 7: 13 (ET 12); Isa. 27: 1; 34: 5-6; 41: 2; Jer. 47: 6 (the sword is addressed here, but it does not make it animate); Ezek. 21: 3-28;
345 Deut. 33: 29
Neither MT nor LXX can be read in that way, though.\textsuperscript{346} This may also account for those who use military terms, referring to a detachment or phalanx\textsuperscript{347} of Cherubim. Alternative suggestions include linking the sword to the lightning of Ezek. 1: 13, the “stones of fire” in Ezek. 28, or to the coals of fire noted previously.\textsuperscript{348} These connections can at best be described as loose or indirect. We are left with a unique image, of Cherubim on the one hand and a moving sword on the other.\textsuperscript{349} None of the other references to Cherubim associate them with weapons of any kind.\textsuperscript{350} Indeed, if one assumes a largely bovine form for them, the ability to hold the sword would be problematic,\textsuperscript{351} but since Ezekiel allows for hands in addition to hoofs and wings, anything is possible. The linking of Cherubim with a flaming sword in Gen. 3: 24 is unique.

**The Meaning of יִכְבַּשׁ**

What is the meaning of יִכְבַּשׁ? A number of proposals have been made which affect the interpretation of Cherubim. Foote noted that the *Hiphil* of the verb is used at Exod. 24: 16, when Yhwh descends on Sinai.\textsuperscript{352} It would only be a short mental step to go from this link to the Cherubim of the Ark and the Tabernacle (cf. also Josh. 18: 1). Indeed it has been suggested that, since “Tabernacle” (תַּרְכּוֹת) and יִכְבַּשׁ share the same root, the cultic paraphernalia is being obliquely referred to. Gunkel suggested that it meant “causing an animal to lie down” (cf. Ezek. 32: 4 of birds) and concluded

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\textsuperscript{346} Cf. Skinner, 1912: 89.
\textsuperscript{347} Gibson, 1981: 140.
\textsuperscript{348} See above, pp. 78–79, n. 305, cf. p. 72.
\textsuperscript{349} The idea, popular in earlier interpretation, that the sword was a Seraph, cannot be entertained (cf. Banister, 1924: 130).
\textsuperscript{350} Foote’s attempt to link the sword to the lightning of Ezek. 1: 13 and therefore to the Cherubim is forced and only succeeds by ignoring the military imagery (Foote, 1904: 283).
\textsuperscript{351} Wood, 2008: 57.
\textsuperscript{352} Foote, 1904: 283.
from this that Cherubim were bestial in form. However, the Hiphil form is also used of someone’s soul (lit. “glory”), Ps. 7: 6 (ET 5), as well as wickedness (Job 11: 14) and the tribes of Israel (Ps. 78: 55). On its own this verb is too broad in meaning to make the connection with any particular object. However, since the Jerusalem Temple is the main controlling idea behind this verse, the use of the verb to denote divine presence and sacred space becomes the most likely possibility. It is going a step too far, though, to link it to the word shekinah and to the vision of the throne-chariot, requiring, as that does, a two-stage step, via the Aramaic of later commentary, to get from Genesis to Ezekiel.

There is one more detail to add to this idea. The Cherubim, according to MT, are said to be placed to the east of Eden (יָמִים יְבוּלָד). Of the two possible meanings of this phrase (“from ancient times”,354 “to the East”355) the more likely meaning is “to the East”.356 There is no other reference to an entrance to Eden being in any particular direction, so why put one here? Again, there is a clue in the positioning of the doors of the Temple in Jerusalem. These faced East. Just as the Cherubim carved on the Temple doors symbolically guarded the entrance to the East of the sanctuary with its sacred palm trees, so the Cherubim (and the sword) of Gen. 3: 24 guard the way to the garden enclosure and the tree of life from the East. Although one might argue that it is the two Cherubim in the holy of holies who are the primary guardians, they are less equivalent to the Cherubim in Gen. 3: 24 because they are on the inside of the sanctuary while the Eden Cherubim are outside the garden.

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354 Gawler, 1851: 27-29, cf. e.g. 2 Kgs. 19: 25; Ps. 68: 34 (ET 33); Prov. 8: 20; Isa. 37: 26; 45: 21.
356 LXX apparently renders this phrase, ἀπέναντι, “opposite”.

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Gen. 3: 24 and Ezek. 28: 11-19

It appears that the strongest clues for interpreting the Cherubim of Gen. 3: 24 point to the Jerusalem Temple. But how does this verse relate to the vexed passage of Ezek. 28: 11-19? I have already argued that both MT and LXX readings of that passage may refer to the defunct olive-wood Cherubim of the Jerusalem Temple. Although in Ezek. 31 the Garden of Eden is identified with Lebanon, this does not rule out the possibility of multiple meanings in Ezekiel. After all, if the royal palace in Jerusalem can be named after Lebanon (“The House of the Forest of Lebanon” – 1 Kgs. 7: 2; 10: 17, 21) why could not some connection with the Temple be made as well? The focus of Ezek. 31 is on the nature of the trees of Eden, which would make a connection with Lebanon quite natural. It has already been noted that there is no mention of trees in Ezek. 28, so a different take on Eden is as work there.

What, though, are the possible literary connections between it and Gen. 2-3? Any answers to this question rest on a number of assumptions. First of all, which version of Ezek. 28: 11-19 is being read, MT or LXX, or is there something that lies behind either or both? Secondly, does Gen. 2-3 date earlier or later than the Ezekiel passage? Thirdly, does one text derive from the other, or is there a common nexus of ideas behind the two of them? Firm answers to these questions are highly unlikely, but it may be possible to point out some relative possibilities.

Because the textual tradition behind both MT and LXX reading of Ezek. 28: 11-19 is complex and opaque, we have to consider both alongside each other as well as potential earlier versions. As to the dating, no version of the Ezekiel passage is

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358 S. R. Driver concluded that Ezek. 28 (LXX) was based upon more ample traditions about paradise and “the fall” (Driver, 1926: 60-61).
likely to date prior to the sacking of Jerusalem (Ezek. 26: 1), but what of Gen. 2-3? If Gen. 2-3 is a part of Gen. 1-11, or more widely part of the patriarchal narrative in Gen. 12-50, then a pre-exilic date is virtually certain. On the other hand there is some debate over the literary integrity of the Eden narrative, and the subject matter, the description of the basic human condition, could be applicable to virtually any situation. Nevertheless, if it were argued that Gen. 2-3 post-dated Ezekiel, it would also have to be explained how it found its way into the overall narrative of Genesis. It is simpler to accept the position of the story as it is and treat it as pre-exilic.

So, assuming that Gen. 2-3 ante-dates Ezekiel, theoretically the poet may have been aware of it. However, why would the writer move from a universal story of humanity’s condition to the rather more parochial matter of the King of Tyre? Why would he introduce new elements such as the gem stones, and the phrase, “mountain of God”? The originality of Ezekiel has been noted above, but it is very difficult to argue for direct literary dependence on the Eden narrative. There is too much else going on. It is more likely that some shared nexus of ideas and mythology underpin

359 Nicholson and Emerton make the point that the portrayal of Esau in the patriarchal narrative does not reflect the animosity to Edom following the sacking of Jerusalem (Nicholson, 1998: 159-160; Emerton, 2004: 127). The acceptance of a multiplicity of sanctuaries implies a date prior to the Josianic reforms. While van Seters casts doubt upon the reasons for questioning the pre-exilic dating of this material, his positive arguments for a late date do not close the question either (Van Seters, 1975: 148-153). Indeed, he admits that the question should remain open and avoids it in his later book (Van Seters, 1992: 4-5).

360 I note the possibility that Gen. 3: 23 is secondary to 3: 22, 24 (e.g. Dockx, 1981: 60-61, 62, 64; Westermann, 1984: 271).

361 This is reflected in von Rad’s conclusions. He believes Gen. 2-3 to ante-date Ezek. 28, but that the Ezekiel passage is a more archaic version of the Eden myth (von Rad, 1958: 79-80), and the same could certainly be said of Job 15: 7-8 (Day, private communication). Cassuto has a similar, if more detailed theory. He sees MT of Ezek. 28 (he does not discuss LXX) as a saga based upon the subsequent expulsion of one of the Cherubs who were placed in the garden of Eden in Gen. 3: 24 (Cassuto, 1961: 81) and sees this as in the same cycle of saga as Gen. 6: 1-4. He links the mention of bdellium and onyx in Gen 2: 11-14 to the stones of the High Priest and Ezek. 28 (Cassuto, 1961: 120), and interprets the task of the man in Eden (Gen 2: 15-16) as service with the sense of guarding because of the use of גָּפֶן, concluding that the Torah has “purified” the tradition of this being done by Cherubs and placed a man there instead (Cassuto, 1961: 123). Blocher considers Ezek. 28 to be a free depiction of “the Fall” (Blocher, 1979: 125).
their different literary creations.\footnote{For this line of thought cf. e.g. Ruppert, 1992: 167.} Each writer had a different agenda. Gen. 2-3 is part of a larger narrative about the dispersion of humanity and the beginning and flourishing of evil. Like in Ezekiel, the Jerusalem Temple lies behind Gen. 2-3, but, unlike Ezekiel, the writer of this text was grappling with universal concepts of good and evil, life and death. Both passages assume that the reader knows what Cherubim are,\footnote{Cassuto, 1961: 174-175; Sarna, 1989: 30.} but again, the differences in their presentation make an argument for direct literary dependence unlikely.

Has Ezek. 28 had an effect on the later literary history of Gen. 2-3? Even if we follow LXX and view the Cherub as the agent of expulsion rather than the chief protagonist, this seems unlikely. There is more than one Cherub in Gen. 2-3, and while their role is apotropaic in both, the Cherubim of Gen. 3: 24 have a specific role which is to prevent re-admittance to the garden rather than to effect ejection from it in the first place.

**Gen. 3: 24, Conclusion**

The reference to Cherubim in Gen. 3: 24 is relatively insignificant. There are small pieces of evidence, though, to show that the most likely concept lying behind the verse is the decoration on the walls and doors of the Temple in Jerusalem. Although anachronistic, the depictions of sphinxes and sacred vegetation in Cleveland’s article are the most helpful images for the reader trying to visualize both the Temple Cherubim and those of the Garden of Eden.\footnote{Cleveland, 1963: 55-60.} While there is an overlap of mythological data between this passage and Ezek. 28: 11-19, the differences are

\[\text{footnotes} \]
substantive enough for the two passages to be largely independent of each other in
their conception and execution.

*The Cherub of Ps. 18: 11 (ET 10) // 2 Sam. 22: 11*

The Texts

Psalm 18: 11  יִנָּרֶכֶת עַל-כְּרוּב וְנָשַׁהוּ נְדָרָה עַל-כְּרוּבֵּיהָ:

2 Samuel 22: 11  יִנָּרֶכֶת עַל-כְּרוּב וְנָשַׁהוּ נְדָרָה עַל-כְּרוּבֵּיהָ:

Psalm 18: 10  He rode on a cherub, and flew; he came swiftly upon the wings of the
wind.

2 Samuel 22: 11  He rode on a cherub, and flew; he was seen upon the wings of the
wind.

Psalm 17: 11  καὶ ἐπέβη ἐπὶ χερουβιν καὶ ἐπετάσθη ἐπετάσθη ἐπὶ πτερύγων ἀνέμων

2 Samuel 22: 11  καὶ ἐπεκάθισεν ἐπὶ Χερουβιν καὶ ἐπετάσθη καὶ ὤφη ἐπὶ πτερύγων ἀνέμου

Psalm 18 (LXX 17) is described as a Psalm of David and linked to deliverance
from enemies. It is largely reproduced in 2 Sam. 22 among the appendices to the
David cycle. It contains a passing reference to either a Cherub or Cherubim
(depending on which version is read), which presents a different image from the ones
elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible.

ָּטְּרֵי and יָּטְּרֵי

There are a number of textual issues which affect our interpretation of this
verse. First of all Ps. 18: 11 (ET 10) uses the verb, יָּטְּרֵי (fly swiftly),365 in the second
half of the verse, while the equivalent verb in 2 Sam. 22: 11 is יָּטְּרֵי (was seen). It is
easy to see how confusion between the two readings could have occurred, requiring as

365 This verb is used of an eagle (Deut. 28: 49; Jer. 48: 40; 49: 22), cf. Hirsch, 1882: 121.
it does a simple confusion of מ and מ, something which is frequent in the Old Testament textual tradition. Which is the preferred reading? Syriac, Targum and Vulgate all follow the Ps. 18 version at this point. The Niphal, נֵכֶל, is suspicious. It is the only verb in the entire poem where God is the subject of a passive verb. This does not fit the general description of God as active and engaged in response to the plea for help. Furthermore, it seems quite possible that it may have been confused with the use of the same form in 2 Sam. 22: 16. There the subject is “the channels of the sea”\(^\text{366}\). Wood also makes the point that Yhwh is surrounded by cloud and darkness which would suggest that, if anything, he was hidden rather than visible.\(^\text{367}\)

The LXX translator of 2 Sam. 22: 11 has followed the text as it is now. The LXX of Ps. 18: 11 (ET 10), however, has used the same verb for both פָּנְיוּם and נֵכֶל: ἐπετάσθη. It is not clear why this is so. Either there is another form of the verse now lost in which the verbs are the same, or this is a free translation.

**How Many Cherubim?**

The second issue concerns how many Cherubim there are. MT mentions only one. LXX uses a plural form,\(^\text{368}\) which might or might not be a collective singular.\(^\text{369}\) The suggestion that a plural form was original in order to be parallel with the plural “wings” of the second half of the verse is unnecessary. Also, it is easier to argue that the plural was introduced later in order to harmonise with other places where Cherubim are usually in pairs or fours. If the original reading were plural, it would be

\(^{366}\) So is MT of this verse. Syr. reads “waters” as does MT of Ps. 18: 16 (ET 15).

\(^{367}\) Wood, 2008: 85-86. Kidner, however, sees this tension reflected in Ezek. 1: 4, where the cloud discloses what is hidden inside (Kidner, 1973: 92).

\(^{368}\) Cross and Freedman’s emendation of the MT to “restore” a plural is arbitrary (Cross and Freedman, 1953: 24, n. 28; cf. McCarter, 1984: 457).

\(^{369}\) Cf. Briggs, 1906: 143; Oesterley, 1955: 165; Anderson, 1989: 260; Caquot, 1994: 601; Goldingay, 2006: 263, n. 26. It is surprising that NIV takes this line along with the new rendering “mounted” in both Ps. 18 and 2 Sam. 22.
very difficult to explain why a singular form crept in, when there is only one other place in the Hebrew Bible where one Cherub clearly appears on its own: Ezek. 28: 14, 16. Consequently, it is more likely that the singular form is original. This has important implications for the overall interpretation of the image.

**Poetic Issues**

Wood has described in some detail the options available to the reader when it comes to poetic parallelism. Is Cherub in parallel with “thick darkness under his feet” (Ps. 18: 10b, ET 9b), or with “the wings of the wind” (Ps. 18: 11b, ET 10b), or both? If the former, is there any connection with the next verse: כרעות חשך ומערה,” “he made darkness his covering”? Although this phrase is not reproduced in 2 Sam. 22: 12, it is in the LXX of that verse, which implies that Ps. 18: 12 (ET 11) is the preferred reading. There is a difference of emphasis in these two possibilities. The darkness implies a protective role, while the wings of the wind suggests a dynamic one. It is possible that the poet intends both ideas to be read into the Cherub, but it is worth considering them separately. The protective role would fit the apotropaic nature of the Cherubim elsewhere, at the entrance to the Garden of Eden, on the doors and walls of the Temple and Tabernacle, over the Ark, and possibly in Ezek. 28. The dynamic role is something that only occurs elsewhere in Ezekiel’s visions, and even that is not consistent. It is hard to reject either of these emphases.

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370 Dahood argues that there is a connection with Ezek. 28: 14, and that this is evidence that the reading of the Psalm should be singular (Dahood, 1966: 107).
What of the connection to יתנש תור הַחֲרוּב? Although הַחֲרוּב has a range of meanings, both secular and sacred, here it is related to the sanctuary. Indeed, Ps. 61: 5 (ET 4) quite specifically connects it with Yhwh’s wings and with the sanctuary. While the former may not be the Cherubim in that verse (Yhwh is described with wings elsewhere), the nexus of imagery suggests either the Ark underneath the large Cherubim of the pre-exilic Temple or the Mercy Seat as described with the Cherubim in the Mosaic Tabernacle. The imagery is rich and should certainly not be reduced to seeing the Cherub as some sort of personification of cloud or storm, despite the interesting connections to Exod. 15, Ps. 104, Hab. 3 and the Ugaritic “rider of the clouds”.

Horse or Chariot?

So is Yhwh riding directly on the Cherub or is he driving some sort of chariot? The singular Cherub, while not ruling out the chariot idea entirely, tends to suggest some sort of mount. The plural requires some explanation in terms of a

376 Cf. Ewald, 1880: 129; Cheyne, 1888: 50; Wellhausen, 1898: 170; Seybold, 1996: 81; Eaton, 2003: 105. Allison’s conclusion that the Cherubim are the lightning (Allison, 1906: 89) seems odd in view of the comparison to thick darkness. Dhomme’s suggestion that there may be a connection with Marduk (Dhomme, P., 1910: 426, “Le Seigneur prit le déluge, sa grande arme, Il monta, comme char, la tempête sans rivale, effrayante …”) is attractive apart from the fact that no heavenly beings are mentioned alongside the deity. While Weiser is among those who suggest the embodiment-of-cloud idea, he, unusually and specifically, links this verse to the Cherubim of the Ark (Weiser, 1959: 128). This idea possibly lies behind Rodd’s description of the imagery as being volcanic as well as meteorological (Rodd, 1963: 38).
379 This connection is made in the Midrash of this verse (Braude, 1959, Vol. 1: 243-244). Cf. also Eaton, 1967: 63.
382 Gunkel hedges his bets (Gunkel, 1925: 63), while there are those who think that either image is absurd or offensive (e.g. Rhodes, 1960: 45). Kittel is hardly complementary: “die Kerube selbst sind von Hause aus nichts anderes als die Träger und Gehilfen, die den Blitz schleudernden Diener des Gewittergottes” (Kittel, 1922: 65).
383 Contra Mettinger, 1982b: 102, who sees the single Cherub as representing the entire chariot.

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chariot pulled by Cherubim or the throne chariot idea of Ezek. 1.384 The latter idea would be evidence of harmonisation with Ezekiel’s vision,385 or, even later, with the Chronicler’s interpretation of it. There has been some debate about the meaning of לעב “mount”.386 Could it mean “drive”,387 or does it simply refer to someone riding, for instance, a horse? The overwhelming meaning of לעב referred to riding some sort of beast,388 so it seems most likely that that is the sense here. In which case, the Cherub in this verse is, uniquely, being ridden by Ywhh.
Dating

Commentators have dated this poem anywhere from the early monarchy\textsuperscript{389} to the Maccabean period.\textsuperscript{390} Today there is a broad consensus that this is a pre-Exilic royal psalm.\textsuperscript{391} While the editorial notice in the Psalter, and the placement of the psalm in the Davidic cycle cannot be cited as reliable evidence of date, the internal evidence suggests a pre-exilic context. It is a psalm of thanksgiving after at least one battle, in which the main voice has been victorious. This voice is a Davidic king (Ps. 18: 51, ET 50 // 2 Sam. 22: 51).\textsuperscript{392} It has been suggested that this could have been written at a later date in order to glorify an essentially fictional David.\textsuperscript{393} While the Temple is mentioned,\textsuperscript{394} something which would post-date David and therefore indicate that the Psalm is retrospective, it is a step too far to see this as evidence that David is a fictional creation for the writer. If the composition took place in the early days of the pre-exilic Temple a closer connection would be possible, while a fictional creation would be more likely, should the Temple referred to be the post-exilic one. To date the psalm as late as the second century is unwise, and any period between the

\textsuperscript{389} Baldwin, 1988: 286.
\textsuperscript{390} Duhm, 1899: 53 for the Maccabean period. Buttenwieser dates it to the reign of Artaxerxes II because, he says, of the sense of peril (Buttenwieser: 1938: 462), as if such a sense were unique to this period.
\textsuperscript{392} Anderson, 1989: 262. Clifford works with this sort of date (Clifford, 2002: 105) but his suggestion that this is the installation of the king after Yhwh’s cosmic victory is pushing the evidence too far.
\textsuperscript{393} Goldingay notes the idea (Goldingay, 2006: 256).
\textsuperscript{394} Although 2 Sam. 22: 8 reads מַלְאָכוֹת יָהָוֶה הַיְשֵׁרָה מִשְׁפָּט, possibly implying that the previous verse refers to Yhwh’s heavenly temple, Ps. 18: 8 (ET 7) reads מַלְאָכוֹת יָהָוֶה אֵ撮ר. This reading does not affect the nature of the temple in the previous verse one way or the other, so it can be treated as either the physical temple or the heavenly one. LXX follows both readings in either case. The addition of “holy” in LXX of Ps. 18, while a unique reading, does not add to the debate about whether this temple is physical or heavenly.
fall of Jerusalem in 597 and the Maccabean era simply would not fit the triumphalist note. Consequently I date this reference to a Cherub somewhere during the time of the Jerusalem monarchy.

**Cherubim and the Temple**

So what is the significance of the Cherub in this verse? Wood points out, correctly, that it is the only specifically supernatural element in the description.\(^{395}\) This suggests that the Cherub has the role of tying what would otherwise be just another storm theophany down to a particular context. If Terrien is also correct in seeing this verse as the turning point of the first part of the Psalm,\(^ {396}\) the significance of the Cherub is enhanced. What is that context?

Before answering that question, it is worth pointing out two similarities between the use of this Cherub here and in Gen. 3: 24. First of all, the previous paragraph notwithstanding, the Cherub is insignificant in the overall theme of the psalm. It is a single element of one section of the psalm. Were the Cherub not present in the poem, the psalm would lose nothing of its theme of divine salvation. As with Gen. 3: 24, this insignificance is reflected in the omission of any comment on Cherubim by many interpreters.\(^ {397}\) Secondly, the writer of the poem, as with the writer of Gen. 2-3, assumes that the reader knows what a Cherub is.\(^ {398}\) In themselves, these two points do not amount to evidence for a connection with Gen. 3: 24. However, as


\(^{396}\) Terrien, 2003: 190, 194.

\(^{397}\) The number of commentators who ignore the Cherub(im) is not insignificant, but is a smaller proportion of the whole than commentators of Gen. 3: Smith, H. P., 1899: 378; Schmidt, H., 1934: 26; Conroy, 1983: 132.

\(^{398}\) This should be distinguished from the reader knowing what they looked like. Caquot makes the point that the decorative form of the Cherubim may have been forgotten (assuming a late date for the verse), even though the reader would have known that they were supposed to have adorned the Temple (Caquot, 1994: 601).
with that text, the biblical reader has only got the other biblical references to go on. Which ones are relevant?

A possible link to the Mosaic tent in the use of קַבָּר has already been noted. 

While it is possible that traditions about the tent of meeting existed in the pre-exilic period, most scholars tend to date the description of the Mosaic tent and cultic paraphernalia to a later date. I would not want to base a reading of this verse on the premise that this late dating is incorrect. It is safer to turn to the other piece of internal evidence in the psalm which links the theophany to the Temple (Ps. 18: 7, ET 6). The writer of this psalm is describing Yhwh’s deliverance in a storm theophany, and, if the Temple is the earthly one, the Cherub could have the role of pinning the imagery down to the Temple. It is the only word that specifically connects the two. The writer introduces an interesting element into the description, though, namely the element of dynamism. The picture of Yhwh riding a Cherub like an animal is unique. However, given the unique nature of this image, it is possible that this also is the only reference which links a Cherub to Yhwh’s heavenly Temple. Given the propensity, though, of other references to Cherubim being related to physical sanctuaries, this seems the less plausible option, and that the role of the Cherub in the psalm is to evoke the Jerusalem Temple in the mind of the reader.

Conclusion: The Relationship of Ps. 18, Gen. 3 and Ezek. 28

Ps. 18: 11 (ET 10) is a unique interpretation of the role of the Cherubim and is probably the earliest reference to a Cherub as a living creature. It takes as its starting point the Cherubim of the Jerusalem Temple but, unlike Gen. 3: 24, treats them in a different way. In Gen. 3: 24 they continue their apotropaic role. In Ps. 18 // 2 Sam. 22
the Cherub is additionally a divine war horse. Although this is a unique image, it suggests that the Cherubim were largely bestial in form, something which was impossible to discern from Gen. 3: 24.400

Did the writer of Gen. 3: 24 know of this reference to a Cherub? There is nothing in the presentation of the Cherubim in the Eden story to suggest that he does. Neither is there any sense of the Cherub in Ezek. 28: 14, 16 having a similar role. However, all these texts are linked, in that the Cherubim are sentient supernatural beings which relate in some way to the cultic images of the Jerusalem Temple. They are expected to obey Yhwh’s will, and, with the exception of Ezek. 28: 14, 16 (MT), they do.

399 Mettinger, 1982b: 32-36; Broyles, 1999: 104. Both Mettinger and Broyles, however, interpret the Cherub of the Psalm as a throne chariot in the light of the Temple connection.
400 This point may suggest that the MT reading of Ezek. 28: 14, 16 is a later one, since it is a human being who is being equated with the Cherub, and not an animal.
Chapter 3: The Images in the Tabernacle and the Temple

Introduction

In Ezekiel, Genesis and Psalm 18 the Jerusalem Temple is the key point of reference for all the texts which describe or refer to Cherubim, and it is to the Temple itself that we now turn. I shall survey the texts about the Solomonic Temple in the same chapter as the texts about the Mosaic Tabernacle because there are clear connections between the two. Both the Tabernacle and the Temple have a main room and an inner room. Both are surrounded by a court. Both have two sets of doors or veils. In both, the Cherubim appear in close connection to the Ark of the Covenant (itself the central cultic item), as well as on the walls and on the doors or veils. The Tabernacle descriptions, which, for want of a better label, I shall describe as Priestly material, are based upon the format of the Temple. Whether this is due to the second-hand influence of the literary descriptions of the Temple, or through first-hand knowledge of it on the part of the Priestly writer, is a moot point. Although P is generally dated to the fifth or sixth century BCE and is the latest of the Pentateuchal sources, the possibility that some sections of it may have an earlier history means that, with regard to the Tabernacle descriptions, an open mind needs to be kept on this issue. 401

I shall begin with the descriptions of the Solomonic Temple in Kings, seeing as these are more likely to antedate the Tabernacle material than the other way round.

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Then I shall turn to the descriptions of the Tabernacle, before looking at how the material is treated by the Chronicler. I shall also propose some referents from the archaeological record for the Temple Cherubim and for those of the Tabernacle, before drawing conclusions.

The Cherubim of Solomon’s Temple in the First Book of Kings

Introduction

There are two assumptions that could be made in describing this material. On the one hand, we could assume that the descriptions in Kings are based on eye-witness material about the pre-exilic Temple.\(^{402}\) The note at 1 Kgs. 8: 8 which states that the poles of the Ark were visible “to this day”, יראתי את ענווגת הארון, implies an eyewitness account. Although there are proposals of editorial layers in the material,\(^{403}\) because these do not substantially affect the discussion of the Cherubim themselves, they are not relevant here. Even if there are editorial layers, it is quite possible that these also are based on first-hand knowledge of the artefacts. If, on the other hand, the texts were written some time after the destruction of the Temple, it is quite possible that both editorial material and the original material are distanced from the physical reality they purport to describe.\(^{404}\) Either way, the descriptions in Kings are the nearest thing

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\(^{402}\) Noth’s original thesis that the Deuteronomic History was a sixth-century work comprising Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings (Noth, 1981), with proposed variations of it (Smend, 1971: 494-509; Dietrich, 1972; Cross, 1973: 274-289), along with subsequent discussions (e.g. Nelson, 1981; Römer, 2005; Geoghegan, 2006) of the nature and extent of different revisions of the History do not directly impact on this thesis since the material describing the Cherubim may or may not have been an independent source available to the writer or writers of the Deuteronomic History.


\(^{404}\) Waterman’s suggestion, however, that the Cherubim and the Ark could not have existed in the Temple because of their absence in Ezekiel and other differences in P and Psalm 18, is illogical (Waterman, 1947: 163). His general idea that the Temple was a royal treasury is reductionist and does not account for the additional material in the text (cf. Wright, G. E., 1948: 53). Patrai’s bizarre interpretation of the Debir as the divine bed-chamber (Patrai, 1970: 206) also ignores the text, in favour of the Talmudic tradition of copulating Cherubim (Yoma 54a-b). For a full discussion of the disappearance of the Ark see Day, 2005: 250-270.
we have to a description of cult artefacts from the pre-exilic Temple in Jerusalem, and
any question about the internal unity of the text can only be raised in answer to any
logical problems about the Cherubim themselves.\footnote{A good example of a speculative historical reconstruction can be found in Würthwein, 1985: 91, who sees traces of tension between the Ark tradition and the Jerusalem Temple tradition. Earlier, Würthwein assigns some Cherubim to a first literary layer (Würthwein, 1985: 79-81) and others to a second (Würthwein, 1985: 61, 69-70), while at the same time claiming that their form is unclear.}

Throughout the description here, I shall be trying to envisage the Cherubim
using the information that the text contains. Whether this relates to the actual reality
of the pre-exilic Temple, or simply to how the writer imagined it, does not really
matter. I am trying to make sense of the text in its own right, rather than trying to
impose a solution from archaeology upon it. The archaeological record is useful in
helping to envisage what the writer might have had in mind, but the text must be the
source of any controlling concepts rather than the other way round. Most of the
references to Cherubim are in name only, but we start with the largest and most
detailed description of the two Cherubim in the Debir.

The Two Large Cherubim in the Debir (1 Kings)

1 Kings 6: 23-28 In the inner sanctuary he made two cherubim of olivewood, each ten
cubits high. \footnote{A good example of a speculative historical reconstruction can be found in Würthwein, 1985: 91, who sees traces of tension between the Ark tradition and the Jerusalem Temple tradition. Earlier, Würthwein assigns some Cherubim to a first literary layer (Würthwein, 1985: 79-81) and others to a second (Würthwein, 1985: 61, 69-70), while at the same time claiming that their form is unclear.}Five cubits was the length of one wing of the cherub, and five cubits
the length of the other wing of the cherub; it was ten cubits from the tip of one wing
to the tip of the other. \footnote{A good example of a speculative historical reconstruction can be found in Würthwein, 1985: 91, who sees traces of tension between the Ark tradition and the Jerusalem Temple tradition. Earlier, Würthwein assigns some Cherubim to a first literary layer (Würthwein, 1985: 79-81) and others to a second (Würthwein, 1985: 61, 69-70), while at the same time claiming that their form is unclear.} The other cherub also measured ten cubits; both cherubim had
the same measure and the same form. \footnote{A good example of a speculative historical reconstruction can be found in Würthwein, 1985: 91, who sees traces of tension between the Ark tradition and the Jerusalem Temple tradition. Earlier, Würthwein assigns some Cherubim to a first literary layer (Würthwein, 1985: 79-81) and others to a second (Würthwein, 1985: 61, 69-70), while at the same time claiming that their form is unclear.} The height of one cherub was ten cubits, and
so was that of the other cherub. 27 He put the cherubim in the innermost part of the house; the wings of the cherubim were spread out so that a wing of one was touching the one wall, and a wing of the other cherub was touching the other wall; their other wings toward the center of the house were touching wing to wing. 28 He also overlaid the cherubim with gold.

**1 Kings 8: 6-7** Then the priests brought the ark of the covenant of the LORD to its place, in the inner sanctuary of the house, in the most holy place, underneath the wings of the cherubim. 7 For the cherubim spread out their wings over the place of the ark, so that the cherubim made a covering above the ark and its poles.

**The Texts**

Two wooden Cherubim are described here, and their position in relation to the Ark of the Covenant. They are said to be ten cubits tall, with wings that are five cubits in length, producing a total wing span each of ten cubits (v. 24). This means that they stand half the height of the twenty-cubit cube that is the Debir, the inner sanctuary. They are covered in gold leaf (v. 28). 406

There are a number of problems with the description of these two large Cherubim. The singular suffix on כַּפֶּרֶת in v. 23 is awkward, since there is no singular noun for it to refer to. 407 Several commentators suggest moving v. 26 to solve this problem. 408 The nature of עַץ-כֶּנֶר is debated, what type of wood it is. 409

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406 Leithart’s idea that the two Cherubim are represented outside the Temple by the two large pillars, Jachin and Boaz (Leithart, 2006: 56), is entirely speculative.
408 Stieglitz, 1970: 56 sees its antecedent in Ugaritic šum which is paralleled with “cedar”. Mulder, 1998: 268 suggests that it means “wild olive wood” as opposed to cultivated, עַץ-כֶּנֶר (Neh. 8: 15). Cogan, 2001: 244 translates “pinewood”.

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The main issue, though, is the lack of clarity in the description.\textsuperscript{410} The size is
described twice: once in v. 23, פֵּרָה אֲמָה הָעָשָׂרָה הָאָשֵׁרָה; and again in vv. 25-26, using a
different phrase, פֵּרָה פַּרְדָּס, in which the identical nature of the two Cherubim is
emphasized.\textsuperscript{411} Although the wings are said to be five cubits long, their width,
thickness and shape are not described. The wings touch the walls and meet in the
middle (v. 27).\textsuperscript{412} It is not certain how many wings there are. The singular פֵּרָה in v. 27
could be a collective, and it is possible that the “first” and “second” of v. 24 could
refer to the Cherub rather than the wing.\textsuperscript{413} They face inwards, פֵּרָה פַּרְדָּס,\textsuperscript{414} but it
is not clear how that works out.

There has been some debate about whether פֵּרָה פַּרְדָּס is a technical term
referring to a sanctuary,\textsuperscript{415} and even whether the Tabernacle itself was placed in its

\textsuperscript{410} This unclarity makes visual reconstructions such as Schmidt, E., 1899: 166; Garber, 1951: 13, 15,
\textsuperscript{411} De Vries sees the use of פֵּרָה with the preposition ב as a sign of original architectural records (De
\textsuperscript{412} Slotki makes the point that for the sizes to be correct the wings need to meet on the backs of the
Cherubim as well (Slotki, 1983: 44). Jones unjustifiably treats v. 27 as secondary (Jones, G. H., 1984:
170).
\textsuperscript{413} Cf. Blake, 1915: 139. Rice sees the outspread wings as positioned for flight similar to Ezek. 1 (Rice,
1990: 53).
\textsuperscript{414} Montgomery, 1960: 155 argues that this phrase is derived from Ezekiel. For a more detailed
discussion of the possible direction in which the Cherubim were facing see below on the Chronicler’s
version. Mulder, 1998: 270 says it is the inner part of the house rather than the Debir.
\textsuperscript{415} Mulder, 1998: 387.
entirety in the Debir. Either way, the Ark and its poles are somehow covered by the wings of the Cherubim, and yet the poles are said to be still visible in some way (1 Kgs. 8: 8) because of their length. Sadly the length of the poles is nowhere given, so how they relate to the wingspan of the Cherubim is unknown. However, the implication of the comment is that only the ends of the poles could be seen. If they were placed perpendicular to the length of the Temple, then it should be assumed that the Ark in the middle was masked, but not the sides of the Debir. If the dimensions of the Cherubim are accepted with their wings covering the Ark in the middle but not the poles towards the sides, the reader would have to envisage the inner wings covering more than the outer wings. Additionally, the poles of the Ark would have to extend nearly twice the length of the Ark (assuming the dimensions of P) in either direction to reach beyond the bodies of the Cherubim. On the other hand, if the Cherubim were over or behind the Ark, why would there be a special note about only the ends being visible? It is possible that the doors to the Debir, referred to later, might only cover the centre of the Debir and not the sides, but this would be a little odd. One could

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416 Friedman, 1980: 245-246. He says a reduced sized Tabernacle, 20 x 10 x 8 cubits would fit between the Cherubim. This theory is based on accepting the notes at 1 Kgs. 8: 4 and 2 Chron. 5: 5 that the tent of meeting was brought to the Temple along with the Ark. He also notes Josephus Ant. 8: 103, which says the winged Cherubim appeared as a tent. For counter arguments, see Murray, 1990: 302, who argues that יָשַׁר is merely the locus of the Ark. Hurowitz notes Helga Weippert’s point against Friedman that the ten cubit height of the Tabernacle would not allow enough room under the wings of the ten cubit high Cherubim, assuming that the wings were not at the very top of the Cherubim. He then notes Friedman’s rejoinder that the wings may rise vertically and then horizontally (Hurowitz, 1995: 133, 142; cf. ANEP, nos. 332, 456, 520, 534, 614, 617, 644-647, 649, 651-656, 659, 705, 706, 809, 815, 829, 855). All of these arguments could be discounted if the Cherubim were imagined as frescos that were higher than floor level. Gooding’s discussion of the LXX of 1 Kgs 6: 19 is relevant to this, since the LXX of this verse states that the Debir is ἀνάμεσα τῆς οἰκίας of the house (Gooding, 1965: 410-412). Buis, however, disagrees, seeing the phrase as “à l’intérieur” (Buis, 1997: 71), no doubt reflecting the Arabic derivation of Debir. Gooding’s argument is weak, though, because LXX goes on additionally to use the word ἐσωθεν. Ouellette argues that the term Debir originally denoted some sort of dividing wall (Ouellette, 1970: 338-340), but this makes for an unnecessarily complicated reading of the text. His suggestion that floor was raised up, so that the extra ten-cubit height of the Temple could be accounted for is more reasonable (Ouellette, 1970: 341).
argue, though, that the doors may not always have been shut, or that the reference to the visibility of the poles was simply a theoretical one.

If the Ark were imagined to be lengthwise in the Debir\textsuperscript{417} with the ends sticking out of the front of the Debir into the main part of the Temple, that creates even more problems. One solution is to imagine some sort of covering for the Ark which is not described in Kings (such as the veil and other waterproof coverings for transportation in Num. 4-5, out of which the poles protrude for the purpose of carrying). Another way to deal with this problem is to suggest that the text about the poles existed independently of the verses describing the Cherubim themselves.\textsuperscript{418} If that is the case, then we should take seriously the possibility that the note about the Cherubim “covering” is also separate, since it forms part of the same section.\textsuperscript{419} Such an interpretation would rely on one layer of text being incompatible with the other,\textsuperscript{420} or on some significant artefact from the Temple being completely ignored. None of these solutions is particularly satisfactory, but we will need to reserve judgement on this matter for the time being.\textsuperscript{421}

It is not clear whether the Cherubim are two-dimensional or three-dimensional, nor whether they are on the floor or, if some sort of fresco, higher up the wall.\textsuperscript{422} Most scholars assume that they were three-dimensional, but the text does not demand it. If they were two-dimensional then the speculations about the Tabernacle become more plausible. As already noted, the number of wings is also not specified.

\textsuperscript{417} Mettinger’s confidence in the orientation of the Ark belies the evidence (Mettinger, 1982b: 87).
\textsuperscript{418} Jones, G. H., 1984: 194-195 associates this section with P, De Vries, 1985: 124 with P and D.
\textsuperscript{419} This would undermine Nicholson’s argument (contra Beyerlin) that the sapphire pavement of Exod. 24: 9-11 cannot be compared to the Cherubim throne since that was hidden while the pavement was not (Nicholson, 1974: 91).
\textsuperscript{420} Mettinger, 1982b: 51 sees 1 Kgs. 8: 1-11 as a conscious suppression of the throne idea.
\textsuperscript{421} Waterman’s proposal that the Debir was created to cover the Cherubim but not the Ark simply does not make sense (Waterman, 1943: 291-292).
\textsuperscript{422} Cf. De Tarragon, 1981: 10.
The position of the Cherubim in relation to the Ark is not clear, because the meaning of אֲגָלוֹת could be “behind” or “beneath”, and the nature of the “canopy”, is unclear, since כּוֹכֶב could mean “cover” (Ps. 140: 8, ET 7), “hedge about” (Job 40: 22), “screen” (Exod. 40: 3) or “wrap up” (Lam. 3: 44). This means that a number of reconstructions could be made. The Cherubim could be large-leaved doors at the front of the Debir, although given that the doors to the Debir are given a separate notice elsewhere, this seems unlikely. Alternatively, they could form the top half of the back wall of the Debir, and it is even possible that their wings formed part of the ceiling.

**Archaeological Data**

All of these possibilities are made purely with reference to the texts. Looking at the archaeological data, the prime candidate for a referent for these two Cherubim is the winged sphinx. The speculative suggestion of earlier generations that the calves of Jeroboam I were somehow a counterpart to the Cherubim can be

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424 Cogan, 2001: 279.
429 Whatever the physical appearance of the wings, Walsh concludes that the festival in which the Ark was placed under the wings of the Cherubim was Sukkoth, because of this description (Walsh, 1996: 109, n. 5).
430 Albright, 1938: 1-3; Wright, G. E., 1941: 27-28 (Wright points out the lack of Mesopotamian-style sphinx in Syria and Palestine); 1944: 73. Wiseman, 1993: 110 gives a convenient and clear summary of the possible archaeological references: 1. winged Syro-Phoenician sphinxes; 2. protective figures on doorways; 3. forming a throne like the Megiddo or Nimrud Ivories. He adds a fourth interpretation that the Cherubim represent the protecting and overshadowing wings of God all around. Cf. also Smith, M. S., 1997: 87-91, 98.
discounted.\textsuperscript{431} For many commentators, the assumption is made that the Cherubim form some sort of throne with their wings, under which the Ark is placed as the divine footstool.\textsuperscript{432} The throne idea is quite unsatisfactory because it is simply not justified by the description in the text,\textsuperscript{433} and, even if there were a physical reality along the lines of a throne that existed in the pre-exilic Temple, we should be forced to ask why this form was ignored by the writer of Kings.

Eichler has recently proposed that the Cherubim could be upright, drawing particular attention to the winged, humanoid deities on the sarcophagus of Tutankhamun.\textsuperscript{434} Turning to Petit’s recent survey of Levantine, Cypriot, Phoenician and Greek guardians of immortality, there are a number of upright winged beings,

\textsuperscript{431} Although this idea antedates twentieth-century scholarship (e.g. Spencer, 1727, Vol. 2: 855), it is worth noting some of its modern advocates (Waterman, 1915: 253; Meek, 1921: 129, n. 1; Wright, G. E., 1947: 17, n. 31; Kaufman, 1951: 188-189; Ginsberg, H. L., 1961: 345) and in particular one opposing voice, Jacob Hoschander: “There is another original statement that the Cherubim of the Ark of the Covenant were a representation of the Deity just as the Golden Calfes of Jeroboam . . ., which has not the least historical basis, and which any person who has some reverence for Israel’s religion will regard as little short of blasphemy.” (Hoschander, 1926: 436.) The debate is also noted in Aberbach and Smolar, 1967: 135; Danelius, 1967: 98; Rundin, 2004: 484, n. 35. Goldstein and Cooper use the comparison and then put forward the suggestion that the Cherubim represented the acceptance of carved or hammered images but not cast ones (Goldstein and Cooper, 1990: 28). Day argues that, while the Cherubim formed some sort of pedestal for the deity, the calves were themselves images of the deity going back to El symbolism (Day, 2000: 34-41), and therefore not a counterpart to the Cherubim at all.

\textsuperscript{432} E.g. Gray, J., 1964: 162. Gray also says that the Cherubim could have been diagonal, which is rather different (Gray, J., 1964: 163). Robinson allows the throne idea (Robinson, J., 1972: 79-80), but interestingly does not see the role of the Cherubim in it as apotropaic, something which he says was introduced in P after Mesopotamian influence. I am not convinced that we can be that specific about either such a change in role, or about the influence of Mesopotamian imagery over P. Rehm argues that the Ark was originally the throne itself but became the footstool when placed underneath the Cherubim (Rehm, 1979: 93). Other commentators who accept the throne form include Ross, 1967: 80, 82, 83, 86, 90; Cogan, 2001: 244; Werlitz, 2002: 82-83, 93; Fritz, 2003: 74; Hens-Piazza, 2006: 78. Perhaps the most detailed argument in favour of the throne is in Mettinger, 1982a: 109-138, especially 116. The earliest overt reference to this idea that I can find is Simon Patrick (Patrick, 1731: 205).

\textsuperscript{433} Cf. Segal 1963: 234-235, who advocates empty space aniconism instead, while accepting the idea that the Ark was the footstool.

\textsuperscript{434} Eichler, 2011: 178, 179, 180. Cf. Eaton-Krauss, 1993: Plates 1-17, which show the female winged humanoid figures protecting the corpse. Phrases from the inscriptions, “my arms are round about your corpse” (Eaton-Krauss, 1993: 26), “my arms are round about you” (Eaton-Krauss, 1993: 29), “my arms embrace you” (Eaton-Krauss, 1993: 30), and “my arms envelop him who is within”, (Eaton-Krauss, 1993: 30) all imply that it is various deities who are protecting the deceased person. Of course, this form would have little to do with the descriptions in Ezek. 1 and Isa. 6.
both animal and humanoid which complement Eichler’s suggestion.\textsuperscript{435} A gold-plated silver bowl, from Kurion in Cyprus,\textsuperscript{436} contains winged animals and winged humanoid figures, one of which is very similar in stance to the Tutankhamun figures. On the bowl the humanoid figure stands upright with wings outstretched horizontally. This is effectively the same stance as those on the sarcophagus. The right angle formed by the wings of the latter is dictated by the shape of the sarcophagus. A similar plate from Rome, but Cypro-Phoenician in style, shows a winged humanoid figure with outstretched wings above another figure in a chariot in a gesture of protection of the second figure.\textsuperscript{437}

That the Cherubim are upright is suggested in Kings, since only their height is given, and not their length.\textsuperscript{438} The winged deities to which Eichler refers stand at the corners of the sarcophagus, which would not fit the description in Kings, if we assume that the wall referred to in v. 27 is the side wall. The wings outstretched in either direction, however, would fit, if we imagine the wings that touch the wall to be touching the back wall.

With this in mind it is possible to envisage the two Cherubim’s wings as forming the front and sides of a ten-cubit long and five-cubit deep, open-topped cuboid in the centre of the rear half of the Debir, within which the Ark resided, the Cherubim themselves standing at the corners in a similar way to Tutankhamun’s sarcophagus. The footprint of this cuboid would have similar proportions (4 x 2) to the footprint of the Ark (5 x 3), as described by P. The Cherubim could be either two-dimensional or three-dimensional, humanoid or non-humanoid, and with two or more

\textsuperscript{435} The idea of looking in Phoenician art for forms that help the reader imagine the physical appearance of Solomon’s Temple is nothing new. Cf. e.g. Foote, 1904: 284.
\textsuperscript{436} Petit, 2011: fig. 34.
\textsuperscript{437} Petit, 2011: figs. 83-84. Cf. also fig. 126 for prone winged figures on a Mycenean ivory comb.
\textsuperscript{438} Kitchen, 1987: 128.
wings. This form potentially could solve the problem of the poles as well. If the wings that are spread along the front and sides of the cuboid were along the top, as in the sarcophagus, or if the poles were placed towards the bottom of the Ark (their position is never specified), there would be a suitable gap lower down for the poles to protrude, while still remaining in the Debir. The role of such Cherubim would be apotropaic. The problem with this reconstruction, though, is that it is dependent on the outer wings of the Cherubim touching the same wall, the back one, and the text specifies two walls (v. 27). One way round this is to imagine that the wings are hinged (like the main doors to the Temple) and so would reach to the side walls, if opened up. We would have to question why this detail was not mentioned though, in the same way that there is a note about the hinged main doors to the Temple. Alternatively, one might argue that הַמַּעֲשֵׂהּ is present due to dittography, coming as it does so close to the phrase הַמַּעֲשֵׂהּ.

Conclusion

What are the details that seem certain? The upright nature of the figures is reasonable. The humanoid figures from the sarcophagus of Tutankhamun and the Cypriot bowl would best fit the description, though not with their wings at a right angle. The multiplicity of forms of winged creatures in the archaeological catalogue precludes certainty in identifying a physical artefact that fits the Kings text, but I offer the reconstruction above on the basis that it is no less plausible than the throne reconstruction which has been so widely accepted. Unlike the throne idea, it allows a mental image of the Cherubim to be reconstructed which does not require the reader to ignore large elements of the text, or to add details which are not described. The need to ignore the reference to the “second” wall in v. 27 is a problem, as is the alternative of introducing a hinged element to the Cherubim themselves. However,
this reconstruction opens up interesting possibilities for how we imagine the
Cherubim of the Kapporeth which we shall investigate shortly. Before turning to the
Mosaic Tabernacle, though, we need to look at the remaining Cherubim in the
Temple.

The Cherubim on the Temple Walls (1 Kings)

1 Kings 6: 29 He carved the walls of the house all around about with carved
engravings of cherubim, palm trees, and open flowers, in the inner and outer rooms.

On all the walls of the Temple there were a combination of Cherubim, flowers
(מַפְרָה) and palm trees (חַמָּר). The combinations of winged creatures and
sacred vegetation in the archaeological catalogue are too numerous to be listed
here.\(^{439}\) However, the role of the Cherubim has been seen as apotropaic, devotional\(^{440}\)
or a combination of the two. Given the apotropaic nature of the two Cherubim in the
Debir, the simplest solution is to see these as having the same role. Their appearance
on the doors would suggest a similar conclusion. The reference to them being
“within” and “without” (מַפְרָה וּלְחָצֵן) is generally seen as referring to the two
internal parts of the Temple,\(^{441}\) but the existence of winged sphinxes on the outside of
the Temple at ‘Ain Dara,\(^{442}\) begs the question whether the outside walls are being
referred to.\(^{443}\) The description of a three-storey annex around the outside of the
Temple makes this seem unlikely, though.

\(^{440}\) Cf. Brueggemann, 2000: 91 for this view.
\(^{442}\) Abou-Assaf, 1993: 12 and fig. 15
\(^{443}\) Gray, J., 1964: 163 is agnostic on this point.
It has been pointed out that v. 29 clashes with 1 Kgs. 6: 18 where Cherubim are not mentioned among the carvings of the Temple.\textsuperscript{444} This does not affect the
appearance of the Cherubim in terms of their form, but it does raise questions over the
validity and consistency of the descriptions.\textsuperscript{445}

\textbf{The Cherubim on the Doors of the Debir (1 Kings)}

1 Kings 6: 31-32 For the entrance to the inner sanctuary he made doors of olivewood;
the lintel and the doorposts were five-sided. \textsuperscript{32} He covered the two doors of olivewood
with carvings of cherubim, palm trees, and open flowers; he overlaid them with gold,
and spread gold on the cherubim and on the palm trees.

The doors\textsuperscript{446} of the Debir were made from the same wood (ךוחשע) as the
Cherubim within the Debir. A different wood (ךיאהך) was used for the doors of
the Temple itself, although the former wood was used for the posts. The Cherubim of
the doors were carved like those on the walls of the Temple, and overlaid with gold
leaf.\textsuperscript{447} Also, like the Cherubim on the walls, they were combined with flowers and
palm trees. Nothing in these descriptions adds to our knowledge of the form of the
Cherubim, but the presence of doors to the Debir raises interesting questions about
how the poles of the Ark might be seen in the Temple, as noted above.

\textsuperscript{444} Curtis, E. L., 1910: 325. The Chronicler has a similar inconsistency (2 Chron. 3: 5), and the nature
and possibility of doublets is discussed by Steins, 1995: 389-392.
\textsuperscript{445} Cf. also Montgomery, 1960: 154 who sees these descriptions of the walls as dependent on Ezek. 41:
18-25.
\textsuperscript{446} Burney, 1903: 77 discusses whether the phrase קוחשע was suggestive of post-exilic style, but
then undermines his argument by accepting an earlier date for the same phrase later in the chapter.
Mulder, 1998: 275 notes the awkward nature of this phrase and interprets it consequently as a gloss.
\textsuperscript{447} The Hiphil of "עתירה is unique and refers to some method of pressing or spreading (Cf. Slotki, 1983:
45; Jones, G. H., 1984: 172).
The Cherubim on the Doors of the Temple (1 Kings)

1 Kings 6: 33-35 So also he made for the entrance to the nave doorposts of olivewood, four-sided each, and two doors of cypress wood; the two leaves of the one door were folding, and the two leaves of the other door were folding. He carved cherubim, palm trees, and open flowers, overlaying them with gold evenly applied upon the carved work.

There are extra details about how these doors work, with some sort of folding leaves. They would have been bigger than those of the Debir, so maybe this was a practical aspect of heavier doors. The Cherubim are again placed with flowers and palm trees, but there is an extra piece of information about how the gold is applied:

The Pual confirms the assumption made above that the Cherubim were covered in gold leaf, otherwise the carvings would not be visible. As with the Cherubim on the walls and other doors, no indication of their form or size is given.

The Cherubim on the Cult Stands (1 Kings)

1 Kings 7: 29 on the borders that were set in the frames were lions, oxen, and cherubim. On the frames, both above and below the lions and oxen, there were wreaths of beveled work.

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450 Fritz, 2003: 75 does not give a reason why he thinks that there would not be room for the Cherubim on these doors.
1 Kings 7: 36 On the surfaces of its stays and on its borders he carved cherubim, lions, and palm trees, where each had space, with wreaths all around.

I am not going to attempt here a reconstruction of the actual form of the cult stands described. It has been suggested that artefacts from Enkomi are the most likely referent for these, but apart from some interesting winged sphinkes no single artefact really provides a useful image for the reader. The combination of Cherubim with lions and oxen in one place, and then with lions and palm trees in another has been used as an argument for two different sources. However, the appearance of lions and oxen without Cherubim muddies the water somewhat. It is too speculative to rest a theory of editorial layers on incidental descriptions of engravings. The fact that the Cherubim do not appear anywhere else in connection with lions is curious, and I cannot see any particular significance in their appearance on the cult stands that adds to the information already described. Perhaps the main point to be discerned is that the Cherubim here add to the overall number that were in and around the Temple, and that this should inform the discussions of the Cherubim formula in Chapter 4.

\[451\text{ Reading qere.}\]
\[452\text{ Cf. Jones, G. H., 1984: 186.}\]
\[453\text{ Dikaios, 1969, Vol. 3a: Plate 179, nos. 5 (1591) and 6 (1261).}\]
\[454\text{ Burney, 1903: 91-92; Gray, J., 1964: 178-179; cf. Jones, G. H., 1984: 171. Mulder, 1998: 349 argues that the two different lists refer to two different parts of the stand. This assumes the meaning of ד to be “base” (BDB, 487). Cogan, 2001: 265 interprets the word as an adverbial particle, rather than a spatial preposition.}\]
\[455\text{ Mulder, 1998: 334 notes that Josephus Ant. 8: 82 replaces Cherubim with eagles and suggests that this reflects the influence of Ezekiel. This seems unlikely, though, since Josephus elsewhere describes the form of the Cherubim as unknowable (Ant. 3: 137; 8: 73).}\]
\[456\text{ So Cogan, 2001: 267.}\]
Introduction

In the descriptions of Solomon’s Temple there were five groups of Cherubim: 1, in the Debir; 2, on the walls; 3, on the doors to the Debir; 4, on the doors to the main body of the Temple; 5, on the cult stands. In the descriptions of the Mosaic Tabernacle four of these groups have equivalent Cherubim: 1, on the Kapporeth; 2, on the inside of the Tabernacle; 3, on the veil; 4, on the screen (LXX only). There are no equivalent cult stands. These correspondences are too numerous to be accidental.457 Whatever the date of the P descriptions in relation to the Temple, one way or another there is a conscious link between them. That said, any differences have to be accounted for.

The Cherubim of the Kapporeth

Exodus 25:17-22 Then you shall make a mercy seat of pure gold; two cubits and a half shall be its length, and a cubit and a half its width. 18 You shall make two cherubim of gold; you shall make them of hammered work, at the two ends of the mercy seat. 19 Make one cherub at the one end, and one cherub at the other; of one piece with the mercy seat you shall make the cherubim at its two ends. 20 The cherubim shall spread out their wings above, overshadowing the mercy seat with their wings. They shall face one to another; the faces of the cherubim shall be turned

toward the mercy seat. \(^{21}\) You shall put the mercy seat on the top of the ark; and in the ark you shall put the covenant that I shall give you. \(^{22}\) There I will meet with you, and from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim that are on the ark of the covenant, I will deliver to you all my commands for the Israelites.

**Exodus 37: 7-9**

He made two cherubim of hammered gold; at the two ends of the mercy seat he made them, \(^{8}\) one cherub at the one end, and one cherub at the other end; of one piece with the mercy seat he made the cherubim at its two ends. \(^{9}\) The cherubim spread out their wings above, overshadowing the mercy seat with their wings. They faced one another; the faces of the cherubim were turned toward the mercy seat.

**Numbers 7: 89**

When Moses went into the tent of meeting to speak with the LORD, he would hear the voice speaking to him from above the mercy seat that was on the ark of the covenant from between the two cherubim; thus it spoke to him.

**General Points**

As with the two large Cherubim in the Temple the greatest discussion takes place concerning the two Cherubim that were attached to the Kapporeth. They were made of wrought gold and were either joined to the Kapporeth or formed from it. It could be argued that they were soldered onto it,\(^{459}\) because they were made of a lower grade gold (性价),\(^{460}\) as opposed to the היזך השחר of the Kapporeth. Alternatively, the reference to the gold of the Cherubim could be referring back to the pure gold of the Kapporeth, since they are made מישראל ה формиров. The sense of חוה формиров is key

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\(^{458}\) Reading gere.

\(^{459}\) Driver, 1911: 271.

\(^{460}\) Propp, 2006: 389.
here. Does it denote position\footnote{Propp, 2006: 389. Propp refers to Exod. 28: 8 for a similar phrase, ָנהדא ע"ש, concerning the attachment of the Ephod to the breastplate.} or form?\footnote{Those who see the Cherubim as being formed of one piece with the Kapporeth include Gawler, 1851: 5-9. Kalisch, 1858: 504 argues that the ancient writers took this view, and that the Cherubim were included at Exod. 26: 34 where only the Kapporeth is mentioned (Kalisch, 1858: 515). Cf. also Cassuto, 1967: 332; Hyatt, 1971: 267. For an agnostic treatment of this question see Cole, 1973: 191; Mackay, 2001: 444.} The Kapporeth itself is described only very simply, with two dimensions. Either the thickness was too small to be described, in which case it would be a rectangular plate, or the third dimension was too complicated to allow a particular thickness to be noted.\footnote{De Tarragon asks similar questions to these, arguing against it being a cover that is closely connected with the Ark (de Tarragon, 1981: 7-8).} Nevertheless, it seems odd that a complicated form is ignored, unless that form were the Cherubim themselves.

Whatever the form of the Kapporeth, the name should be taken primarily as a technical cult term denoting the place of expiation,\footnote{Haupt, 1900: 61, 80; Zimmerrn, 1901: 92; Michaeli, 1974: 230 (although he sees the idea as ambiguous on p. 233); Childs, 1974: 524; Janowski, 1982: 347; Durham, 1987: 359-360; Lang, 1995: 298; Motyer, 2005: 254. Görg, 1977: 115-118 (cf. Mettinger, 1982b: 88), notes a possible link to an Egyptian phrase, \textit{ks (n) rdyw}, meaning "sole of the feet", but Day argues that it would be odd for a footstool to have such a name (Day, 1988: 60).} especially in the context of Lev. 16 where the \textit{Piel}, בְּשָׁם, "make atonement", occurs ten times in conjunction with the Kapporeth’s four appearances. Even if it appears physically to be in the form of a lid,\footnote{Pixley, 1987: 193. The idea that this is primarily a cover is perpetuated, nevertheless, not least because of the NIV rendering of it as an "atonement cover" or more simply as a "cover" (Exod. 25: 18-22; 37: 7-9).} something which is by no means certain, its “lidness” is not what is being referred to.\footnote{For this debate in the context of the Chronicler cf. Jarick, 2002: 154. Cf. also Holzinger, 1900: 122.}

\textbf{The Kapporeth}

More importantly, there is nothing in the description about how the Kapporeth stays attached to the Ark. Its length and breadth are identical, and yet it and the Ark are inseparable throughout the P narrative, even when covered with the veil and various other protective paraphernalia. Common sense demands that there be an
overlap of some sort, however small. At this point I would like to draw attention to
the crown of the Ark, גֵּבַר נַחֲלַת הָאָדָם (Exod. 25: 11). Again this is a very cursory note
attached to the end of the description of the gold plating that covers the Ark inside and
out, and its precise nature is not clear. Similar crowns are described on the altar of
incense (Exod. 30: 3) and on the table for the bread of the Presence (Exod. 25: 24).
Only items in the Tabernacle have a crown. On the table it is attached to a border
(משובץ). It appears that this crown was some sort of decorative addition. It is
presumably technical in nature, but it is not unreasonable to assume that it is near the
top of the item, since crowns tend to adorn heads rather than feet. While this does not
help us directly with identifying how the Kapporeth might sit atop the Ark, it does
give us an example of a technical detail which stands proud of the basic dimensions of
the Ark itself. It is quite reasonable, therefore, to allow that similar incidental
details existed, in order to make them work.

The Two Cherubim

Let us return to the Cherubim. There are two. They are made of wrought gold
(עֵבֶר אֲדֹנָי), either the gold of the Kapporeth itself, or some alternative gold which is
somehow fixed into position on either end of the Kapporeth. The other wrought items
are the candlestick (Exod. 25: 31) and the silver trumpets (Num. 10: 2), both of which
are three-dimensional. However, it is a moot point to ask whether a hammered
fresco is two-dimensional or three-dimensional, so I shall not attempt to resolve
that issue.

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467 Holzinger, 1900: 121.
468 For similar comments in which he compares the Ark to a jewellery box see Beer, 1939: 131.
470 Jacob, B., 1997: 772.
The wings are described using terms which all occur in the Kings account of the equivalent Cherubim in the Temple. Their wings are in a position that is “divided” or “spread”, מקריבים כפניים, (cf. 1 Kgs. 6: 27). They are “upwards”, י [`ט, just as the wings in the Temple are י. All of these phrases have an identical meaning, if not form, in 1 Kgs. 8: 7. This has to be deliberate. Nevertheless, as with the Kings description, the reader is left with several possible mental images, not least the number of wings.473

The description of the direction of the faces of the Cherubim presents a problem. The faces of the two Cherubim are pointing in two directions: towards each other [אלו הפנים אל זה אל זה] and towards the Kapporeth [אל הפנים אל קפורית].474 It could be argued that these two phrases refer to the same general direction,476 and are not intended to be entirely accurate. However, the fact that the second part of this description is a separate phrase, and that the former phrase is marked with an `athanah by the Massoretes, implies that these are complementary details rather than variations of a single idea. Somehow the reader is supposed to imagine that the Cherubim could be facing the Kapporeth and each other at the same time. Given how vague is the description of the Kapporeth itself the reader is left guessing. However, whatever the form of the Kapporeth, the only possible way that the Cherubim could face each other and the Kapporeth, is for them to be on the sides. If the Kapporeth is three-

473 Commentators generally assume two (Kalisch, 1858: 480), but the text does not specify this.
474 4QpaleoExod and Sam. read אל פני אל פני קפורית (Propp, 2006: 323).
476 E.g. Kalisch, 1858: 480; McNeile, 1908: 161; Driver, 1911: 271; Durham, 1987: 359-360; Mackay, 2001: 447. Propp discusses this issue in some detail (Propp, 2006: 391-392) and concludes that the two phrases form a chiasm with a single idea. He rejects the possibility of their reflecting independent sources.
dimensional that is easy enough to envisage. If it is two-dimensional the reader is forced to picture them, at least in part, as lower than the top.

How does the Kapporeth relate to the Ark, though? It is said to be placed על יאַר במלאות. What is the meaning of this phrase? As noted in the chapter on Ezekiel, the exact form, מִלאָמָל, only occurs in P or in material relating to things of interest to priests. Its specific usage in the Tabernacle descriptions produces an interesting parallel. The leather covering (מָכֶסֶה) for the Tabernacle is said to be מִלאָמָל (Exod. 26: 14; 36: 19; 40: 19). It is used with the same preposition, על, and the combination of these two words in the hands of the same writer is likely to mean the same thing. The covering for the tent, while not given any dimensions, is clearly a waterproof layer for protection from the weather. This means that it would cover the sides as well as the top. If this idea is applied to the Kapporeth, it is reasonable to assume that it too covers the sides of the Ark as well as the top. If the crown protrudes from the sides, then that might mark the lower limit of the Kapporeth/Cherubim. Alternatively the crown may be an adornment on the top and not affect the dimensions of the Kapporeth at all. Either way, I would like to propose that, in the mind of this writer, the Kapporeth “covers” the Ark in the same way that the protective leather for the Tabernacle covers the Tabernacle itself. If my reconstruction is correct, the position of the expiatory is not so much spatially above the Ark as all over it. It is the Ark and its contents, covered on all sides by the Kapporeth, that represents the place where God meets with Moses. God can speak מִלאָמָל the

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477 See above, pp. 47-48.
478 De Tarragon also questions the meaning of מִלאָמָל but does not make the connection that I have made here (De Tarragon, 1981: 7).
Kapporeth and the Cherubim and the Ark, because he is not pictured in the worshipper’s mind as tied to a particular spot, but resides more generally within the locus of the Ark and its covering cult items. Yhwh will meet (נָאוֹת הַרְפָּא) and speak (רְפָּא) with Moses. It is as if the Ark, Kapporeth and Cherubim together form a mini sanctuary.

This is inevitably a speculative reconstruction but, while my reconstruction of the Cherubim in the Debir of the Solomonic Temple necessitated questioning one word of the description or adding in an element not described, this reconstruction does not abuse the text at all. Every aspect of what the writer has to say has been taken into consideration. It allows for the Cherubim to be two- or three-dimensional, to be hammered out of the Kapporeth or soldered onto it. It takes seriously the phraseology of P in the context of the Tabernacle. Crucially it does not assume anything to be present that is not in the text, unlike those who imagine some sort of throne sitting on top of the Ark. It allows for ambiguity. However, before moving on to the rest of the Cherubim, there are some artefacts which will help to illustrate the concept.

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479 While it can be argued that the Numbers reference is from a later hand (Morgenstern, 1938: 372), because it does not contradict the Exodus descriptions, such a possibility has little impact on the overall discussion here.
480 So Exod 25: 22 MT, נַעֲרֵי. LXX reads γυναικαρχιαί, presumably from נַעֲרֵי. Zimmermann, 1944: 462-463 rejects the idea that the last two words of this verse, נַעֲרֵי, introduced a new lost divine speech, arguing that they are a textual variation on נַעֲרֵי מִפְּרָדֵק. For the Rabbinc discussion of the this unusual Hithpael cf. Yadin, 2003: 702-705.
481 Interestingly Holzinger argued that the cover for the Ark was in fact the Tabernacle itself and its embroidered Cherubim (Holzinger, 1900: 128). He tried to show that, consequently, there would be no need for a second Kapporeth within the Tabernacle (Holzinger, 1900: 123). Myers notes this possibility (Myers, 1965a: 29).
482 This idea has been accepted in both academic and popular commentaries: Delitzsch, 1884: 350; Morgenstern, 1960: 186; Cassuto, 1967: 334-336; Cole, 1973: 191; Cundall, 1981: 111; Sarna, 1991: 161. For the claim that Nahmanides (1194-1270) saw the Cherubim forming a throne cf. Wolfson, 1989: 146-147.
Archaeological Data

The purpose of archaeological referents here is not to make a case for some historical reality. Neither is that the intention of the mental reconstruction that I have offered. The purpose of these artefacts is to assist the reader of the text to make some sense of the description presented. If physical artefacts can help in this process, that is all to the good. At no point am I suggesting that this makes the text more or less reliable as a witness to some object which might, theoretically, be excavated by a miraculously fortunate archaeologist. I emphasize the point here especially, because it is almost universally accepted in scholarly circles that the Mosaic Tabernacle is a literary fiction.\footnote{Although for most scholars, the existence of the Ark and Cherubim were not. E.g. Clements assumes their existence when discussing apparent Deuteronomic demythologising of the Ark by their removal from the descriptions (Clements, 1965: 302-303). This is not to discount the possibility of an older independent tradition for the tent in Exod. 33: 7-11; (e.g. Childs, 1974: 589-593) Num. 11: 14-17, 24-30; 12 (e.g. Mettinger, 1982b: 81). May, 1936b: 216-217, cf. Cross, 1947: 67.}

There are a couple of interesting artefacts which may assist the reader. Some model temples from Megiddo serve as possible examples of what the Ark might have looked like in the writer’s mind. This was suggested by H. G. May in 1936. He proposed that the Ark might have been decorated with Cherubim.\footnote{It is interesting to note that May translates the Cherubim formula as “inhabiting the Cherubim” and moves away from any idea of enthronement. Cf. Morgenstern, 1960: 186 who describes the enthroned Yhwh as “surrounded” by Cherubim, which implies more than simply the two on the Ark. Kawashima also uses the word “inhabit” (Kawashima, 2006: 229). Cf. Propp, 2006: 517 (“among”).} However, he did not engage in detail with the descriptions in Exodus (or 1 Kings), and ignored the Kapporeth completely. The reconstruction that I have suggested above makes the Ark and Kapporeth combination look very similar to the models from Megiddo. The fact that they are made of wood, rather than the pottery of the Megiddo artefacts, would make a shoebox type arrangement more conceivable, but the overall effect would be to have one object surrounded by the wings of the Cherubim.\footnote{May, 1936b: 216-217, cf. Cross, 1947: 67.} This concept is
physically similar to the sarcophagus imagery with which I compared the Kings texts.\footnote{May argues that the Cherubim may have been on the corners (May, 1936b: 218), which would also coincide with the sarcophagus imagery. It is also worth noting the early suggestion of John Spencer that the Ark has connections with Egyptian coffins (Spencer, 1727, Vol. 2: 829-834). Such an arrangement means that the Cherubim have a specific role to play in such a portable, model shrine, which overcomes Herbert’s objection to the idea, namely that their appearance would be unaccounted for (May, 1946: 279).} I also noted that the proportions of the Cherubim were similar to those of the Ark. It is looking increasingly likely that we have a common style or referent for both the Kings and Exodus texts.\footnote{Note also at this point Propp’s description of the Cherubim’s wings as a sort of “miniature tabernacle” (Propp, 2006: 390).}

**Conclusion**

While there might be a common style for both the Cherubim of the Temple and the Ark/Kapporeth/Cherubim in P, there are three important differences. The Cherubim in the Temple are much bigger than the Ark, they stand separate from it\footnote{Knoppers’ comment that the Temple Cherubim (admittedly he is discussing the Chronicler’s description of them) are attached to the Ark is odd (Knoppers, 2004: 934).} and no mention is made of a place of expiation in the Temple, even if it is assumed that something of that nature were taking place there. The changes could be accounted for if the P description is based upon a physical reality in Jerusalem,\footnote{Milgrom dates the cultic elements of P prior to 586 BCE (Milgrom, 1970: 148, n. 33).} but which was unknown to a writer of Kings, who was describing things much later while knowing the P descriptions. In that case the writer of Kings would be creating a literary fiction as well as P. However, we would then have to explain why the Kings writer omitted any language about expiatory cultic actions. It makes more sense to give literary priority to Kings over P.\footnote{Noth, 1959: 165-167; Scharbert, 1989: 103.} P has clearly accepted the section describing the covering by the Cherubim and the protrusion of the poles. If P were to envisage the Temple Cherubim much as I have described it, and created a pre-conquest literary
equivalent, he would not have felt compelled to follow the Temple descriptions slavishly.

So could this mental image of the Temple have some basis in history? There is no hard evidence. There are three possible solutions here that are relatively simple. 1. The Kings writer was describing something that looked different from how I have envisaged this, and consequently the form of the poles and Cherubic covering is a secondary editorial layer which does not quite fit. 2. There is no secondary editorial layer and the description has omitted a key element in how the poles related to the Cherubim. 3. The wings of the Cherubim were at right angles and touched the back wall rather than the side walls, something that is possible, either by imagining a hinge mechanism that is not mentioned, or by removing one word from the text on the grounds that it has crept in due to dittography at an early stage of transmission.

Before drawing final conclusions, though, there are other Cherubim to be considered in the Mosaic Tabernacle.493

The Cherubim on the Tabernacle, the Veil and the Entrance

Exodus 26: 1 Moreover you shall make the tabernacle with ten curtains of fine twisted linen, and blue, purple, and crimson yarns; you shall make them with cherubim skilfully worked into them.

Exodus 36: 8 And the curtains of the tabernacle of the Holy of Holies shall hang two cherubim of gold upon the mercy seat.
Exodus 36: 8 All those with skill among the workers made the tabernacle with ten
curtains; they were made of fine twisted linen, and blue, purple, and crimson yarns,
with cherubim skillfully worked into them.

Exodus 26: 31 You shall make a curtain of blue, purple, and crimson yarns, and of fine
twisted linen; it shall be made with cherubim skillfully worked into it.

Exodus 36: 35 He made the curtain of blue, purple, and crimson yarns, and fine
twisted linen, with cherubim skillfully worked into it.

Exodus 37: 5 καὶ ἐποίησαν τὸ καταστάσαμα τῆς θύρας τῆς σκηνῆς τοῦ μαρτυρίου ἐξ
ιακίνθου καὶ πορφύρας καὶ κοκκίνου νεοπημένου καὶ βύσσου κεκλωσμένης ἑργοῦν
ὑφάντων χερουβιμ

Exodus 36: 37 He also made a screen for the entrance to the tent, of blue, purple, and
 crimson yarns, and fine twisted linen, embroidered with needlework;

I am considering all of these references together, because in detail they do not
tell us very much about the Cherubim. Apart from some occasional discussion about
their size\(^{494}\) and number,\(^{495}\) there is very little to be said about them. Rabbinic
speculation about the nature of the embroidery is interesting,\(^{496}\) but not particularly
illuminating. It seems strange that MT of Exod. 36: 37 omits Cherubim from the
entrance to the Tabernacle, when this clearly would be an equivalent to the Temple
doors in Jerusalem. LXX has either corrected this omission, or MT is faulty at this

\(^{494}\) Mackay’s discussion of the different sizes of cubit is particularly helpful (Mackay, 2001: 441).
\(^{495}\) Strong, J., 1893: 273; Halivni, 1996: 106 (referring to a tradition in the Babylonian Talmud –
Sukkah 5b – that the face of the Cherubim was not smaller than a handsbreadth).
\(^{496}\) Kalisch, 1858: 511; Durham, 1987: 371. *Yoma* 72b records a difference of opinion over whether the
embroidery was double-sided or not (Sarna, 1991: 167).
point. As with the Temple, the combination of Cherubim and vegetation is significant, but the position of the Cherubim particularly on the veil and screen (in the case of LXX) suggests that they were guardians of the sacred enclosure.

We are very nearly at a point when some conclusions can be drawn about how these texts which describe the Tabernacle and the Temple Cherubim fit together. But before we do that, we need to consider the descriptions of the Chronicler.

**The Cherubim of Solomon’s Temple in Chronicles**

The main purpose of this section is to point out how the Chronicler has developed the description of the Cherubim. Writing later than all the previous descriptions it is apparent that the Chronicler was aware of the earlier texts, but handled them in a new way.

**The “Chariot” of the Cherubim (1 Chronicles)**

1 Chronicles 28: 18 for the altar of incense made of refined gold, and its weight; also his plan for the golden chariot of the cherubim that spread their wings and covered the ark of the covenant of the LORD.

The most striking feature of the Chronicler’s Cherubim is the description of them as forming some sort of chariot: יִקְרָבְתָּםּ of the Chronicler, it is a convenient way of combining the descriptions of 1 Kings and Exodus (the use of

497 Houtman points out that the absence of the Cherubim from this entrance veil signifies that the Cherubim themselves are part of what is being hidden (Houtman, 2000: 418). If this were the case, this would be a unique idea. Meyers simply sees it as a sign that this screen was less elaborate (Meyers, 2005: 236). It is also worth noting at this point that Targum Neofiti omits the Cherubim from Exod. 26: 1 (Propp, 2006: 327).

498 The possibility of word play between these two words (McKenzie, S. L., 2004: 216) cannot be discounted.
at Exodus 25: 9, 40 is a bit of a giveaway that Exodus is being referenced with those of Ezekiel, without having to describe the image in detail. This verse forms part of an inventory of the contents of the Temple, which David makes before his death. There is some debate about how the list works exactly, but it does not substantially affect this discussion. The spreading and covering actions of the Cherubim are emphasized, using the same verbs as 1 Kings 8: 7.

No mention is made of the Kapporeth at this point, but the Chronicler is aware of it (1 Chron. 28: 11). It is reasonable to assume that, for the Chronicler, the chariot of the Cherubim is its equivalent. The Chronicler is unclear whether the Cherubim were made of wood and covered with gold or simply made of gold. If the latter, presumably this reflects the entirely gold form of the Cherubim on the Ark in P.

The Cherubim on the Temple Walls and the Veil (2 Chronicles)

2 Chronicles 3: 7 So he lined the house with gold - its beams, its thresholds, its walls, and its doors; and he carved cherubim on the walls.

2 Chronicles 3: 14

500 The idea that the Ps. 18 is also being referred to (Curtis, E. L., 1910: 299) is unjustified, unless the Chronicler were aware of a form of the Psalm which followed LXX. Japhet’s connection of the Chariot idea with the “old” Cherubim formula (Japhet, 2002: 450-451) is unconvincing. Johnstone also suggests a connection to Isa. 66: 15 (Johnstone, 2007: 281). These are multiple chariots, however, which does not quite work.

501 Bertheau, 1873: 217; Slotki, 1952: 151; Braun, 1986: 269. If the Cherubim are part of the Ark, a possibility noted by Klein (Klein, 2006: 526-526), then we could assume that these are different from the Cherubim of 2 Chron. 3: 10-13. If they are not, then the opposite would be true. It seems odd, in the former case, for there to be no further reference to these other Cherubim. The simplest solution is to see the Cherubim in apposition to the Chariot, but not as part of the Ark, and therefore the same as the large Cherubim mentioned later.

502 Anticipating the placement of the Ark beneath them later on (Japhet, 1993: 578).

503 Michaeli’s suggestion, that the chariot was something other than the two large Cherubim of the Debir (Michaeli, 1967: 136, n. 5), is not convincing because the reference to the wings spreading and covering can only suggest them.

504 Dirkse, 1996: 435-436 sees the phrase “Cherubim of gold” here as a scribal addition. He proposes altering the phrase הָרָשִׁים לְפָרַסְתָּם פַּסְפָּסָם to לְפָרַסְתָּם הָרָשִׁים פַּסְפָּסָם.
2 Chronicles 3: 14 And Solomon made the curtain of blue and purple and crimson fabrics and fine linen, and worked cherubim into it.

   The internal walls and doors of the Temple are decorated with carved frescos of Cherubim covered with gold leaf. The Chronicler has simplified the reference to the doors. This may be so that he can detract from the fact that he has replaced the doors to the Debir with the veil from the Mosaic Tabernacle.\textsuperscript{505} It is easy for the reader to pass over this point, believing that the Chronicler is faithfully reproducing the description from 1 Kings, when a subtle omission is actually being made. The lack of vegetation is also a subtle change. There are two reasonable explanations for this. Either the significance of the vegetation has been forgotten by the Chronicler’s time, or it is because the vegetation does not appear in the first two visions of Ezekiel when the Cherubim are described in some detail. However, in response to this second point, it should be noted that there are palm trees on the walls of Ezekiel’s future Temple (Ezek. 41: 18, 12, 25).

2 Chronicles 3: 8 καὶ ἐποίησεν τὸν οἶκον τοῦ ἁγίου τῶν ἁγίων μῆκος αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ πρόσωπον πλάτους πῦρεων ἑκατόν καὶ τὸ εὐρος πῦρεων ἑκατόν καὶ κατεχρύσωσεν αὐτὸν χρυσίῳ καθαρῷ εἰς χερουβιν εἰς τάλαντα ἑξακόσια

   LXX adds a note that there were Cherubim in the Holy of Holies (the Chronicler uses the phrase from Exodus here, rather than “Debir”, although this term is used elsewhere by the Chronicler). MT does not note this, but the general description of the walls and doors in the previous verse could include the walls of the Debir.

\textsuperscript{505} The suggestion that he is reflecting the existence of a veil in Zerubbabel’s Temple (Curtis, E. L., 1910: 327-328) is speculative: cf. Becker, 1988: 16.
The Cherubim of the Debir (2 Chronicles) 506

2 Chronicles 3: 10-13 In the most holy place he made two carved cherubim and overlaid them with gold. 11 The wings of the cherubim together extended twenty cubits: one wing of the one, five cubits long, touched the wall of the house, and its other wing, five cubits long, touched the wing of the other cherub; 12 and of this cherub, one wing, five cubits long, touched the wall of the house, and the other wing, also five cubits long, was joined to the wing of the first cherub. 13 The wings of these cherubim extended twenty cubits; the cherubim stood on their feet, facing the navel.

2 Chronicles 5: 7-8 Then the priests brought the ark of the covenant of the LORD to its place, in the inner sanctuary of the house, in the most holy place, underneath the wings of the cherubim. 8 For the cherubim spread out their wings over the place of the ark, so that the cherubim made a covering above the ark and its poles.

The description of the two large Cherubim in the Debir relies heavily on that in 1 Kings,507 but there are significant differences. The Chronicler omits any reference to their height. The entire wingspan of the two Cherubim together is specified: twenty cubits. There are a couple of technical terms. They are said to be carved in some way, יִשְׁנָה. This hapax legomenon is assumed to derive from a root ית, found in

506 Steins’ reference to 11 QT 6: 6; 7: 10, 13 with regard to this section (Steins, 1995: 393) is insecure, because columns 3-12 of this scroll are too badly mutilated to allow a secure reconstruction.
Arabic, meaning “form” or “fashion”. The wings are also “joined”, rather than simply touching. There is an additional note that the Cherubim are standing on their feet, The only other reference to the feet of the Cherubim is Ezek. 1: 7, following the interpretation given later in chapter 10 of that book that the living creatures referred to there are Cherubim. How they were standing in this description is left open. We are left guessing whether they were biped or quadruped. The Chronicler simply could not have known. Their faces were . In the first seven verses of this chapter, refers to the entire Temple six times. In vv. 8 and 10 we find the phrase used twice, presumably meaning the same thing. Consequently, according to the Chronicler the two Cherubim were facing out of the Debir and into the main part of the Temple.

The note about describing the placement of the Ark under/behind the wings of the Cherubim (2 Chron. 5: 7-8) reproduces the text of 1 Kgs. 8: 6-7 exactly, except that there is a different verb used to describe the covering wings. In 1 Kgs. 8: 7 it is , a Qal imperfect third masculine plural of . Here it is , a Piel imperfect third masculine plural of . Unlike more clearly denotes some sort of covering. While the two forms are very similar, and could have occurred due to metathesis, it is possible that this change signifies the writer’s particular

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508 BDB, 847. Cf. Bertheau, 1873: 246; Slotki, 1952: 169; Williamson, 1982: 209. Myers and Williamson suggest that they are molten images, rather than wood (Myers, 1965a: 15; Williamson, 1982: 209). Certainly that they are made of wood is omitted, but it seems unlikely that the Chronicler would make this change from 1 Kings, unless he were making a reference to the metal Cherubim of the Tabernacle, and even then the Tabernacle Cherubim are wrought rather than cast. Japhet similarly interprets this word as “refined” (Japhet, 1993: 496-497).
509 In 1 Kgs. 8: 6-7 Noth considers this to be a gloss (Noth, 1964: 178).
510 Cogan, 2001: 279.
understanding of what the Cherubim were for, namely a protective covering.\textsuperscript{511} The
Chronicler omits any reference to the protrusion of the poles. Perhaps he has
struggled, as I have, to imagine how that description of them might work.\textsuperscript{512}

\textbf{The Chronicler’s Cherubim, Conclusion}

The Chronicler has given a conflated interpretation of the Tabernacle and
Temple descriptions, with one eye on Ezekiel. However, he is fundamentally guessing
since the Cherubim were long gone. His descriptions are more elegant, but details
such as the precise meaning of רֻבֵּשַׁנִּים have been lost. The fact that the reader of this
description is still at a loss as to how to visualise the Cherubim, despite the technical
terminology, shows that the Chronicler was unable, or unwilling, to clarify the matter.
He was more interested in showing that David’s Cherubim (let us face it, for the
Chronicler, David was the effective builder of the Temple) and the Mosaic heritage
were linked, and that what Ezekiel saw fitted in as well.

Really, the Chronicler is perhaps the earliest attempt to interpret the texts from
Kings, Exodus and Ezekiel in a meaningful way for the people of his day.\textsuperscript{513} He was
trying to do what we are trying to do today, visualise the descriptions that he has
received, but without doing violence to the text.\textsuperscript{514} His solution is a galant one,
harmonising three sources, adding technical details here and there and simplifying the
description elsewhere. His description, though, is more of a postscript to the more
detailed debate about 1 Kings and Exodus. He is too far removed from the first

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext{511}{Hayes points out that, for the Chronicler they are protecting the Law (Hayes, 1963: 421). Myers sees
them as a canopy (Myers, 1965a: 29). Selman’s suggestion that the Ark is “completely covered” is
speculative (Selman, 1994a: 319).}
\footnotetext{512}{Pratt suggests that in Chronicles the Cherubim cover the poles as well as the Ark (Pratt, 2006: 318),
but this cannot be discerned from the text.}
\footnotetext{514}{This contrasts with some of the wilder confluations such as the anonymous writer of the Cowen Tract
of 1851 (Anon., 1851: 29-30). Such multiple faces are rejected by Curtis (Curtis, E. L., 1910: 327-328).}
\end{footnotes}
Temple to be an authority on it or its contents. While some would argue that the same
could be said of the other writers as well, their descriptions of the Cherubim are the
root texts for any other descriptions, and, as such, they are the starting point for the
discussion.

Conclusion

The texts which describe the Cherubim in Exodus are dependant on the
descriptions in 1 Kings. They are a literary creation which imagine the Cherubim of
the Kapporeth to be covering the Ark, in the same way that the protective covers were
draped over the Tabernacle itself. The writer is dependant on the Kings narrative,
especially with reference to the covering of the Ark and the spreading of the wings.
The literary context of the Tabernacle descriptions, however, enables the writer to
reduce the size of the Cherubim and more closely join them to the Ark itself. Only
their faces and wings can be imagined from the text. It is futile to imagine some
historical reconstruction of these Cherubim, although the temple models from
Megiddo and, to a lesser extent, the winged deities on the Tutankhamun sarcophagus
and Cypriot bowls, help the reader to imagine a form that makes sense.

The Cherubim in the Temple are less clear, although, from a literary point of
view, they are the root description. It is possible that there are two layers to the
description, one describing the Cherubim in the Debir and another describing the
position of the Ark and poles. If this is the case, the description of the Cherubim is
quite opaque. If there were no secondary editorial layer, and the reader imagines the
Cherubim’s wings to be outstretched in a straight line, then the section about the poles
has to be ignored. If the wings of the Cherubim were at right angles and touched the
back wall rather than the side walls, the reader can reasonably envisage something
which looks similar in the mind’s eye to the Cherubim of the Kapporeth.
On balance the third of these proposals seems to be the best option since it takes into consideration the most number of details in the text and does least damage to it. These two Cherubim, however, were not the only ones. They also occur on the walls and the doors, in combination with sacred vegetation. Their primary role is protective.

At no point in this discussion has any comparison been made with the Seraphim. Apart from the fact that they are winged creatures, and their locus is probably the Temple, the writers of 1 Kings, Exodus, and Chronicles, if they were aware of them, have not taken the trouble to make that connection.\(^515\) The multiplicity of images would count against that connection being made, if the reader were assuming only two Seraphim in Isaiah’s vision. However, the lack of clarity in the descriptions does not preclude reading the Seraphim into the text.\(^516\) The multiplicity of Cherubim, however, on the walls and entrances to both the Temple and the Tabernacle will have an important effect on the translation of the Cherubim formula, and this is the subject of the next chapter.

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\(^{516}\) E.g. Heinisch, 1934: 202.
Chapter 4: The Cherubim Formula

Introduction

The Cherubim formula, יְסֶפַר הֶרְכְּבֵים, occurs seven times in the Old Testament (1 Sam. 4: 4; 2 Sam. 6: 2; 2 Kgs. 19: 15; 1 Chron. 13: 6; Isa. 37: 16; Ps. 80: 1; 99: 1) and, additionally, one further time in the Apocrypha (Dan. 3: 55). Of these 2 Sam. 6: 2 and 1 Chron. 13: 6 are parallel, as are 2 Kgs. 19: 15 and Isa. 37: 16. The syntax of the phrase admits many different translations, primarily because of the lack of preposition in the Hebrew text, when one is required in translation to make any sense of it. There are, in fact, three variables: firstly, the translation of יְסֶפַר; secondly, which preposition to use; and thirdly whether the relationship between the two words is objective or genitive. The difficulty the translator faces is how to choose from the possibilities available, without necessarily imposing any preconceptions about what form the Cherubim may have taken, or what purpose they may have served.

After presenting the texts, I shall look at the three variables individually, and then assess how modern critical conclusions about the physical descriptions of the Cherubim affect the discussion, with regard to the earliest setting for the formula.

The Texts

עָרַ֣בְרֵ֤י בַּהֲלוֹאֵ֣ת הַאָלָּלוֹתָּ֔הּ בַּתְּרוּשָׁ֖ת הַכָּלָ֣ה יָדָּ֑ה חֲנַמֶּ֔ה שֶׁל חָיָ֖ה מָלֶ֑שׁ בַּתְּרֻ֖שַׁת
1 Samuel 4: 4

517 I have not discussed this verse, since this chapter will concern itself primarily with how to understand the Hebrew phrase. Greek, like English, inevitably has to make some assumption about that understanding in order to produce a sensible translation. With the exception of 1 Sam. 4: 4, which is a literal translation, LXX inserts the preposition ἐν to give sense to the formula.


519 Mettenger sees the Cherubim formula as the corollary of the throne and footstool imagery (Mettenger, 1982b: 23-24, 36-37), but he does not consider other possible interpretations.
1 Samuel 4: 4 So the people sent to Shiloh, and brought from there the ark of the covenant of the LORD of hosts, who is enthroned on the cherubim. The two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were there with the ark of the covenant of God.

1 Samuel 4: 4 καὶ ἀπέστειλεν ὁ λαὸς εἰς Σηλωμ καὶ αὐρουσιν ἐκεῖθεν τὴν κιβωτὸν κυρίου καθημένον χερουβιμ καὶ ἀμφότεροι οἱ υἱοὶ ኝி μετὰ τῆς κιβωτοῦ Οφνι καὶ Φυρεσ. 520

2 Samuel 6: 2 David and all the people with him set out and went from Baale-judah, to bring up from there the ark of God, which is called by the name of the LORD of hosts who is enthroned on the cherubim.

2 Samuel 6: 2 Νιύον τοῦ ναὸς ὑπερηφανείς, ἐπελθῇ καὶ ἀπορεῖσθαι, ἐπελθήσῃ ἀπὸ τοῦ ναοῦ καὶ ἀπορεῖται λεγόμενον Δωρὶ τῆς θυσίας ἀπὸ τοῦ ναοῦ καὶ ἀπορεῖται δῆμος καὶ ἀπορεῖται ἀπὸ τοῦ ναοῦ καὶ ἀπορεῖται:

1 Chronicles 13: 6 And David and all Israel went up to Baalah, that is, to Kiriath-jearim, which belongs to Judah, to bring up from there the ark of God, the LORD, who is enthroned on the cherubim, which is called by his name.

1 Chronicles 13: 6 Νιύον τοῦ ναοῦ ἀπὸ τοῦ ναοῦ, ἐπελθῇ καὶ ἀπορεῖσθαι, ἐπελθήσῃ ἀπὸ τοῦ ναοῦ καὶ ἀπορεῖται λεγόμενον Δωρὶ τῆς θυσίας ἀπὸ τοῦ ναοῦ καὶ ἀπορεῖται δῆμος καὶ ἀπορεῖται ἀπὸ τοῦ ναοῦ καὶ ἀπορεῖται.

There are some stylistic differences between these two versions,521 but the most important difference is the use of the name יְהֹוָה in one, and not the other.522 Questions of originality cannot be established,523 but the possible historical settings for the formula in early Israelite religion will need to be considered later.

The syntax of 2 Sam. 6: 2 is odd.524 The version in 1 Chron. 13: 16, transferring the phrase, אֲשֶׁר נֹרַחְתָּ לָם, to the end of the sentence, is another way of stating the same thing,525 that the Cherubim formula is here

520 LXX omits “covenant” and “hosts”.
522 It is also omitted in 4Q Sam6.
523 Ackroyd sees the Chronicler “correcting” the text (Ackroyd, 1973: 57).
associated with Yhwh. The place upon which the title is named could be the Ark, but it could also be the Temple in Shiloh.

2 Kings 19: 15 And Hezekiah prayed before the LORD, and said: “O LORD the God of Israel, who are enthroned above the cherubim, you are God, you alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; you have made heaven and earth.”

Isaiah 37: 16 “O LORD of hosts, God of Israel, who are enthroned above the cherubim, you are God, you alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; you have made heaven and earth.”

The wording of the formula in these texts is exactly the same, except for the inclusion of נָבְאָת. As with the previous pair, originality cannot be established, so it is only possible to say that the Cherubim formula was associated with the name, נָבְאָת, in the mind of one writer, and not the other.

Psalm 80: 1 Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, you who lead Joseph like a flock! You who are enthroned upon the cherubim, shine forth.

527 Myers avoids this problem entirely by translating the phrase “whose legend reads” (Myers, 1965b: 100). Ackroyd suggests that this phrase is subsequently taken up by the Deuteronomist, which would imply that he sees this part of the text as original (Ackroyd, 1971: 64). Selman considers the opposite view that the phrase in this context refers to the sanctuary in Jerusalem (Selman, 1994b: 152-153). Baale Judah may also have been the locus of the Cherubim as well (1 Chron. 13: 6) and it is not inconceivable that the Ark and Tabernacle were kept at Gibeon during the building of the Temple, given the latter’s importance (1 Kgs. 3: 4).
528 Syr. and Luc. both include נָבְאָת in 2 Kgs. 19: 15.
529 Long describes its use here as “hymnlike” (Long, 1991: 226).
As with Hezekiah’s prayer, the Cherubim formula is here used as part of a vocative phrase.

Psalm 99: 1 The LORD is king; let the peoples tremble! He sits enthroned upon the cherubim; let the earth quake!

Although in Hebrew there is no change to the formula, some scholars consider the sense of this verse to be different from the others. Whereas the other occurrences of the formula suggest that Yhwh is static on his throne, it has been suggested that this verse describes Yhwh taking his place on his throne, in a similar way to Ps. 47: 6, 9 (ET 5, 8).\(^{530}\) This would be an enthronement psalm in the strict sense.\(^{531}\) Either way the sense of Yhwh sitting on a throne is present.

The First Variable: The Meaning of בָּשָׁם

Since the second half of the nineteenth century the vast majority of scholars and popular writers have rendered בָּשָׁם as “enthroned”.\(^{532}\) This is reflected in the consistent use of “enthroned” or “throned” in the NEB, REB, NRSV, NASB, NIV,


\(^{531}\) This could be a heavenly or earthly throne (Kraus, 1989: 269).

NJPSV, JB⁵³³ and NJB.⁵³⁴ In contrast, the use of “seated” or “sits” has been considerably less popular.⁵³⁵ In any case, many writers use a combination of “sitting” and “enthroned”,⁵³⁶ and indeed it could easily be argued that the concept of a king sitting⁵³⁷ is tantamount to enthronement anyway. However, it is not at all clear whether or not Yhwh is being viewed as a king in the Shiloh narratives, or on the lips of the King of Judah.

The translation “dwell” appears often enough to be significant,⁵³⁸ although it is probable that this stems from the use of “dwell” in six out of the seven occasions in the KJV. Usually, the verb which indicates God “dwelling” anywhere but in heaven is גְּדָּה.⁵³⁹ While this may not preclude translating גְּדָּה as “dwell”, it may indicate that the meaning of the Cherubim formula refers to God’s heavenly existence, as in Ps. 2: 4; 29: 10; 113: 5, were this translation to be understood.

Where possible, the context of the seven uses of the Cherubim formula should be used to discern the meaning of גְּדָּה. As already noted Ps. 99 suggests the enthronement of Yhwh. The use of eman in the same verse makes this clear, and the

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⁵³³ JB uses “enthroned on” except at 1 Sam. 4: 4; 2 Sam. 6: 2; 1 Chron. 13: 6 where it reads “seated on”.
⁵³⁴ Similarly in modern German translations the use of thronen has become almost universal, being used exclusively in Der Einheitsübersetzung der Heiligen Schrift (1980), Der Lutherbibel (1984), with the exception of Ps. 99: 1, and Der Elberfelder Bibel revidierte Fassung (1993). In contrast the 1545 Luther Bible uses a combination of sitzen and wohnen.
⁵³⁷ The royal connection in Ps. 99 in particular is overt.
⁵³⁹ Merrill, 2004: 186.
reference to the footstool (v. 5) could mean the Ark itself.\(^\text{540}\) Could the same thing be applied to the other instances? Ps. 80 contains no references to God reigning. Most of the imagery is agricultural. Nevertheless, God is invoked as the supreme authority over Ephraim, Benjamin and Manasseh (Ps. 80: 3 ET 2),\(^\text{541}\) the one who “leads” (נפש) Joseph, something appropriate to monarchs (2 Chron. 25: 11; Isa. 20: 4).\(^\text{542}\) The two accounts of Hezekiah’s prayer (2 Kgs. 19: 15; Isa 37: 16) are situated in the Temple. It is emphasised that Yhwh is the God of all the kingdoms (הַלַּעֲמִי) of the earth. The Temple is the place where Isaiah had seen “the King, the LORD of hosts” (Isa. 6: 5). It is quite likely that the Kingship of Yhwh is intended in both Ps. 80 and in Hezekiah’s prayer, and therefore his “sitting” would be “enthronement”. However, in Ps. 80, Yhwh may be in heaven (v. 15 ET 14).\(^\text{543}\) In this context the Cherubim may not be cult objects but spiritual beings. It is possible, though, for the phrase to refer to both the heavenly reality and its physical equivalent.\(^\text{544}\)

\(^{540}\) Day, 1990: 128; 2005: 263-264; Pratt, 2006: 175; Day, 2007: 73-74. Maher confuses the imagery, seeing the Ark as the footstool and the throne (Maher, 1977: 95). Baldwin also first sees the Ark as the footstool (Baldwin, 1988: 69) and then the Cherubim as the footstool of the heavenly throne (Baldwin, 1988: 206-207). Mettinger, 1982b: 29-32 makes a good case for showing that both the heavenly and the earthly throne were implied, although I do not believe it necessarily follows that the Cherubim formed a throne.

\(^{541}\) Rhodes suggests that this reference to northern tribes may mean that there were also Cherubim in the north (Rhodes, 1960: 116-117). This is similar to Halpern’s speculation that if the bulls in Dan and Bethel were the equivalent of the Cherubim and God “dwell between them” then the entire country would be his throne (Halpern, 1976: 32, n. 5). However, Day and Clifford both see Ps. 80 as set in the south (Day, 1990: 35, 119; Clifford, 2003: 53), which would preclude Halpern’s suggestion. Day points out that the Psalm seems to look back to the Davidic/Solomonic empire when Shiloh had lost its importance and the focus was in the south.

\(^{542}\) Foote links this verb to the Exodus narrative in Ps. 78: 14 (Foote, 1904: 281).

\(^{543}\) Cf. Boylan, 1924: 51, who relates this to the idea that the Cherubim may have been the embodiment of cloud. Eerdmans oversteps the mark in pursuing this latter idea when he translates the formula in Ps. 99: 1 as “sitteth on the dark clouds” (Eerdmans, 1947: 452). Maillot also considers the possibility that the Cherubim are “montures célestes de Dieu” (Maillot, 1966: 183).

But what of the references which relate to Shiloh? The Kingship of Yhwh is not mentioned in these passages at all. Indeed, the only place in the entirety of 1 and 2 Samuel that Yhwh is called King is 1 Sam. 12: 12, Samuel’s speech, which is pointedly contrasting the human king with the divine one. Many scholars consider this speech to be part of a late editorial layer. It appears that, if the two references to the Cherubim formula are also retrospective insertions\(^545\) (including the name יְהוָה יִתְנָא) they may be indications that Yhwh was an enthroned King in the mind of the editor. On the other hand, if they are part of an original narrative, they may be anything but.\(^546\) Nevertheless, even if this were part of such a narrative we could argue that the use of the phrase יְהוָה יִתְנָא may indicate that Yhwh is the king of a heavenly army. This brings us to the nub of the problem. How much of the material about the Temple and the Ark can be used as evidence for reconstructing the nature of Israeliite religion in the period before the Jerusalem Temple? I shall return to this question later.

To conclude so far, it is reasonable to translate יִתְנָא as “enthroned” in four out of the seven occurrences, and possibly in the other three, especially if they are considered editorial. Questions remain about the relationship between the formula and any artefacts that may or may not have existed in Shiloh and later in Jerusalem. These questions are affected by which preposition is understood. Before considering that, however, I shall consider the nature of the relationship of the two words of the formula.

\(^{545}\) Smith, H. P., 1899: 34; Dhorme, P., 1910: 319.
\(^{546}\) Freedman says the formula originates in the period of the Judges (Freedman, 1960: 156). Dahood also considers it “ancient” (Dahood, 1968: 254).
The Second Variable: The Relationship of עַרְבִּים to שִׁבְך

Wood has proposed a translation which understands the relationship between the two words to be nominal rather than verbal, based on a construct relationship between them.\footnote{Wood, 2008: 12-14.} The construct could be subjective (“the Cherubim dweller”) or objective (“the dweller of the Cherubim”). Either way this idea increases the likelihood of the formula referring to more than just the two main Cherubim near the Ark. It could refer to all the cult images in the Temple, or even to their heavenly equivalents as well.

Wood argues that שִׁבְך means “dweller”, as in Num. 21: 1; cf. 33: 40. The King of Arad is the בְּשִׁבְך עַרְבִּים. Wood is not the first to have suggested this relationship. Robert Gordis,\footnote{Gordis, 1928: 259.} commenting on Amos 8: 14 suggested repointing בְּשִׁבְך עַרְבִּים to בְּשִׁבְךָ עַרְבִּים (“your dweller of Beersheba”). He suggests that this may be similar to the Cherubim formula, but inserts a preposition into the latter, discounting the genitive relationship. McKane notes Weiser’s suggestion that בְּשִׁבְךָ עַרְבִּים (Jer. 21: 13) could be similar to the Cherubim formula.\footnote{McKane, 1982: 72; cf. Weiser, 1960: 182.} While this is very similar in sense to Num. 21: 1, Weiser translates the phrase “Thronen auf dem Tal,” and McKane makes the point that “valley” is not an animate object, without suggesting the need for a genitive construction. McKane’s criticism may also be levelled at Wood’s suggestion. The lack of any example of an animate object in a construct relationship to שִׁבְך, combined with the clear understanding of שִׁבְך as “enthroned” in at least Ps. 99: 1, and probably in Ps. 80: 1; 2 Kgs. 19: 15 and Isa. 37: 16 leads to the conclusion that
Wood’s suggestion is incorrect, and that the relationship between the two words of the formula is verbal rather than nominal, requiring a preposition in translation.

**The Third Variable: The Preposition**

A survey of the translations used for the Cherubim formula reveals considerably less consensus over which preposition to understand than there is over the translation of בְּשַׁלְלָה. In English,\(^550\) prepositions include: “between”,\(^551\) “above” / “over”,\(^552\) “on” / “upon”.\(^553\) It is interesting to note that there is little discussion of what preposition should be used.\(^554\)

The use of “between” is influenced by Num. 7: 89, where Yhwh is said to speak with Moses from between (תְּרוֹם לַם) the Cherubim. This may account for the popularity of this preposition in conservative evangelical commentaries, and those nineteenth-century writers whose descriptions of the Cherubim attempt to harmonise

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\(^{552}\) Spoer, 1904: 100-102 (Spoer’s translation is of an amulet inscription, but reflects his understanding of the Cherubim formula: “I pray thee, O Yahweh, God of Israel, who dwellest above the cherubim, show grace and compassion and pity and mercy to thy servant who wears this amulet, Zachariah, the child born of Leah”); Curtis, E. L., 1910: 205; Leslie, 1949: 83, 244; Myers, 1965b: 100; Leupold, 1972: 579, 695; Slotki, 1983: 282; Brueggemann, 2000: 508; Eaton, 2003: 289, 346; Davis, D. R., 2006: 279.


\(^{554}\) The only discussion I could find was in Hertzberg, 1960: 33, 35, 225.
the different texts into one single concept. The idea that God would be between the Cherubim would also fit with the P description of the wings of the Cherubim covering the Mercy Seat (Exod. 25: 20; 37: 9) while the Cherubim bodies were somehow flanking it.

“On” and “upon” should be linked together and distinguished from “over” and “above”, since the two pairs suggest a different spatial relationship between the deity and the Cherubim. In the first pair, the prepositions imply that the deity is touching the Cherubim. The second pair give the impression that Yhwh is floating in the vicinity of them. This distinction is subtle, but because of the unclarity of this aspect of Ezekiel’s vision in Ezek. 1, it is important to recognise it. It also becomes relevant when we consider the apparent independence of Yhwh from the Cherubim in Ezek. 8-11. If the divine bottom is actually touching the Cherubim, it is far easier to imagine the Cherubim forming a throne, even if the deity is invisible. On the other hand, if Yhwh is floating, even though the Cherubim may form a throne beneath him, one is forced to ask whether he is properly enthroned or even seated at all. “Above” and “over” allow for a certain amount of movement of the deity, though limited.

The preposition “between” is less precise. It leaves open the question of whether Yhwh is in contact with the Cherubim or not. It also leaves open the question of whether they form a throne. Even if they do, one might say that, with the Cherubim forming the sides of the throne, God is between them.

555 Meredith, 1860: 44-46 (Meredith is an unusual and early example of this, arguing that Yahweh was a fire god who dwelt between the Cherubim which he considered to be “idols”). Modern scholars have avoided making their interpretations dependent on Num. 7: 89 because of the assumption that it is a late text, but confusion of imagery still creeps in (e.g. Rogerson and McKay, 1977: 157, 228; Broyles, 1999: 330). Alter (1999: 22) describes the Cherubim as “fierce winged beasts” and “God’s celestial steeds” and concludes (“and so”) from this that they form a throne!
556 For a completely different interpretation of how Yhwh might be touching the Cherubim, German Kabbalistic literature interpreted the formula to mean that the divine name was inscribed upon the heads of the Cherubim (Wolfson, 1993: 53).
The prepositions considered so far (“between”, “above”, “over”, “on”, “upon”) all presuppose the proximity of Yhwh to either the two Cherubim on the Ark of the Covenant, the two large Cherubim of the Temple, or some combination of them.\(^{557}\) They do not envisage the other Cherubim of the Temple or the Tabernacle as included in the formula. This deficiency has already been pointed out by one or two scholars, most recently Wood.\(^{558}\) An interpretation of the text which only takes into consideration two of the Cherubim rather than all of them is flawed. We have seen in the previous chapter that there is no guarantee that the two large Cherubim formed a throne, and the reader of the text needs to be liberated from a fixation with the Ahiram sarcophagus which precludes other parts of the text. The use of “between” rules out too many options for it to be a safe translation. The other Cherubim should get a look in.

The other problem with all these prepositions is that they imply a static deity, the final comment with regard to “over” and “above” notwithstanding. Yhwh is a potentate who is made impotent by his very title. Yhwh is seated, dwells, inhabits, is enthroned in a particular place (heavenly or earthly, it does not really matter) and that is that. While the Cherubim may well be apotropaic,\(^{559}\) as the divine keepers they not only keep the people out but they also, psychologically, keep the deity in.\(^{560}\)

The contexts of the Cherubim formula suggest a certain amount of movement of the deity, but only insofar as his actions extend outwards from a central point. Ps. 99 is entirely static in its setting, namely the worship of God in Zion (v. 2), his holy

\(^{557}\) The German and French equivalents suggest similar referents.
\(^{558}\) Wood, 2008: 3.
\(^{559}\) The idea that the role of the Cherubim is basically apotropaic cannot seriously be disputed. It is interesting to note Jarick’s idea that the Chronicler had in mind the earthy keepers of the Temple (Jarick, 2002: 93).
\(^{560}\) Of course, one person’s confined deity is another person’s permanent and restful one, cf. Jones, W., 1879: 99.
hill (v.9). The previous enthronement psalms, however, refer to God’s action further afield. In Ps. 98 his power is seen to the very ends of the world (v. 3), and he comes to judge the world (v. 9). In Ps. 97 his judgements are again world wide with fire and lightning going before him (vv. 3-4). In Ps. 96 the sanctuary (heavenly or earthly are not specified) is the focus of attention (v. 6), but combined with the idea of his coming in judgement (v. 13). Turning to Ps. 80 the dynamic from God’s dwelling place outwards is similar, only it is more a plea for action than a celebration of it. Ironically, while the psalms which suggest more strongly the idea of enthronement of the deity (Pss. 95-99) also celebrate his world-wide activity, this psalm which pictures God habitually out and about seems to imply that he is more static than is desired. The psalmist asks that he shine forth (יִרְאוּ), but infers that he is not doing so at present. Turning to Isa. 37: 16; 2 Kgs. 19: 15 the static Yhwh fits the context. Hezekiah is famously shut up like a bird in a cage by the King of Assyria. Apparently, so also is Yhwh, despite both the narrator’s, king’s and prophet’s assertions to the contrary. Any movement in these passages is tied to the sanctuary. Yhwh sits in judgement and his power extends outwards. He himself, however, remains tied down.

These contexts suggest somehow that Yhwh’s enthronement, if that is what it is, transcends the Temple itself. If anything he is enthroned in the heavens, from where his cosmic actions begin. Any devotee of Yhwh-who-dwells-in-Zion would have had one eye on the heavens, just in case.

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561 Whether or not these Psalms can be imagined as part of an enthronement ceremony along with Ps. 47: 6-9 (ET 5-8) is a moot point (cf. also 2 Sam. 6: 15), but taken on their own they could be used in a static sense as well.
It is virtually impossible to tell whether God is static in the Samuel narratives or not. His presence is associated with the Ark, which is moved from place to place. If the Ark is associated with the throne, however, he would still, theoretically at least, be seated on it. However, within the Temple at Shiloh he comes and stands in Samuel’s first vision (1 Sam. 3: 10). On at least one occasion, if Yhwh was enthroned, he removes himself from the throne to communicate with Samuel within the Temple precincts at Shiloh.

The preposition “among” has been proposed on at least one occasion, in order to take into consideration the other Cherubim both of the Temple and the Tabernacle. This preposition would also allow Yhwh some independence from the proposed throne. Alternatively, one might use “with”. Both prepositions allow God to be enthroned in the sanctuary, but also to be free to roam within the hallowed courts. He walks with his creatures in the Garden of Eden, and dwells among the trees and Cherubim of the Temple as well. This does not preclude the possibility of some sort of throne arrangement in the Temple paraphernalia, but it does not demand it either. Given the lack of clarity in the descriptions of the Temple and Tabernacle furnishings, it seems reasonable for the translator to adopt a translation which does not presuppose something for which there is little evidence.

Should the preposition be “among” / “amidst” or “with”? The preferable option is “among”, because it implies that Yhwh is somehow surrounded by Cherubim rather than alongside them. This gives a stronger sense of their apotropaic role. Yhwh is central to their existence. He is above them in nature and in rank.

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564 This point was discussed in 1907, but the writers failed to draw any conclusions from it about how the formula should be rendered (Price and Smith, 1907: 148).
**Historical Issues: Shiloh, the Jerusalem Temple and P**

There is now one more issue to consider. Is Yhwh *enthroned* among the Cherubim, or does he *dwell* among them? It is clear that “enthroned” works in Ps. 80: 1; 99: 1; 2 Kgs. 19: 15; Isa. 37: 16, and “dwell” could seriously be considered if the heavenly throne were also being indicated. There is still a logical problem, though. While discussing the Temple in Jerusalem, there is a useful description of it in 1 Kings, and a further one in 2 Chronicles.\(^566\) It is not unreasonable to posit a first edition of Kings which was dated to the reign of Josiah.\(^567\) Even the descriptions in P, of the Ark, Tabernacle and Mercy Seat, can and have been used to make sense of the Cherubim formula, not least by the writer of Num 7: 89. It seems clear that this writer would not have understood the meaning of בָּשָׂם as “dwell” in terms of Yhwh’s presence in the tent itself, neither would the writers of Ps. 80: 1; 99: 1; 2 Kgs. 19: 15; Isa. 37: 16, with regard to the physical Temple in Jerusalem.

However, there are problems when discussing Shiloh.\(^568\) There is no description of the Temple at Shiloh, other than incidental material in the early Samuel narrative. According to the narrative, there were door posts.\(^569\) There was some sort of

\(^{566}\) It does not necessarily follow that the Cherubim formula could not have been used after the destruction of the cult objects. Plumer (1867: 768) rejects this possibility. Duhm, on the other hand envisages a later period when the Cherubim formula was “rhetorical” (Duhm, 1899: 208). Cobb, who dates Ps. 80 to the Maccabean period sees the formula as linking the psalm back to the time of David (Cobb, 1905: 277). Bird takes a similar line to Plumer, arguing that Ps. 80 refers to the Ark and therefore must be pre-exilic (Bird, 1927: 74). Carleton also links the psalm to the Ark (Carleton, 1945: 220, 265; cf. also Leslie, 1949: 244). Heinemann argues that the Cherubim formula cannot have been used after the end of the monarchy because he considers it to be a military term (Heinemann, 1950: 299-300).


\(^{568}\) This is not to say that the biblical narratives surrounding Shiloh are not basically correct (Cf. Day, 1979b: 87-94 in which he argues for an eleventh-century destruction of the city, based on the notice in Jer. 7: 12, 14 that Shiloh was where Yhwh placed his name *at first*, namely before Jerusalem in the tenth century). The eleventh-century destruction of Shiloh was later confirmed by archaeological evidence (Finkelstein, Bunimovitz and Lederman, 1993: 338-339). It is merely that they do not tell us very much about the form and nature of the worship there, especially the Cherubim.

\(^{569}\) 1 Sam. 1: 9 (יִנָּחֵשׁ).

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communal area for boiling meat. There were doors which were closed on a daily basis, at least one lamp, and the Ark was usually kept in there. The destruction of Shiloh is not described, but it may be inferred from the fact that Samuel leaves Shiloh after the battle of Ebenezer, the Ark is not returned there, and the destruction of Shiloh became legendary, although possibly a nominal prophetic presence remained there. I Sam. 4: 4 mentions the Cherubim formula at the time of Shiloh, but this does not tell us what they looked like or what they were. That is not to say that Cherubim were not there, merely that any reconstruction of what form they might have taken can only be based on descriptions that are both anachronistic and fundamentally about other places, namely the Jerusalem Temple and the Tabernacle.

Alternatively, reconstructions can be based upon the archaeological record, and famously have been, especially following the form of the Megiddo ivory plaque and the sarcophagus of Ahiram of Byblos. The strongest proponent of this view has been Mettinger. He argues that the Cherubim formula should be linked to the phrase הַיֶּהֵי מִלְאָה. However, in this he does not take sufficient notice of the

570 1 Sam. 2: 13-16.
571 1 Sam. 3: 15.
572 1 Sam. 3: 3.
573 1 Sam. 3: 3.
574 1 Sam. 7: 17.
575 1 Sam. 7: 1.
576 Ps. 78: 60; Jer. 7: 12, 14; 26: 6, 9. It is worth noting that the oracle in Jer. 7: 12, 14 assumes that there are visible ruins of Shiloh for people still to see, which also suggests some sort of building there.
577 1 Kgs. 14: 2, 4.
578 We could argue more generally about the nature of the Ark in Baale-Judah. While the place name undoubtedly ante-dates any controversies over Baal worship (Curtis, E. L., 1910: 205), and it is quite possible that the Ark in some form existed there, the descriptions of the Ark and its construction in Exodus cannot necessarily be superimposed upon that place.
582 Mettinger, 1982a: 113.
texts which do not include it. He describes the main artefacts noted above, and
writes of the Cherubim “it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the inner pair of wings met
horizontally .. and formed the throne seat.”583 This is despite the fact that none of the
Old Testament descriptions suggest this. His argument that there was a Cherubim
throne at Shiloh584 is speculative. The “fragile mosaic of materials”585 is a little too
fragile to be the basis of an entire theory.586 Mettinger does not offer arguments
against this being a retrospective projection from Jerusalem to Shiloh, and a possible
connection to bull-worship at Bethel587 scarcely constitutes hard evidence.

While it may be valid to speculate about a Cherubim throne at Shiloh, it goes
beyond the evidence to say whether that throne was somehow attached to the Ark588
itself (as in P), or whether it was a fixed part of the Temple furniture (as in
Jerusalem).589 Such speculation could also include suggestions about the internal and
external decoration of the Temple and its precincts. Might there have been Cherubim
on the external walls like those at ‘Ain Dara? Could it be that there were stands there
like the one from Enkomi? Such ideas would have to be based on temporal and
geographical proximity, as well as having some connection to the literary descriptions
in the Bible, however anachronistic. Finally, while it seems unlikely that the Temple

584 Mettinger, 1982a: 128-134.
585 Mettinger, 1982a: 130.
586 It is worth noting how Cross makes similar leaps of logic. He states that יִתְנָּה אֵל is “evidently
an ‘El epithet applied to Yahweh” (Cross, 1973: 69) and makes the assumption that the P descriptions
of the Mosaic Tabernacle go back to “the Tent of David” (Cross, 1973: 72).
588 Klein’s description of the Ark in this context as a “war pulladium” (Klein, 2006: 332: cf. Cross,
1973: 231) may be a good one, but it can only be based upon the narrative of the text, rather than any
particular imagery from either text or artefact.
589 Two writers illustrate this issue very nicely. Haran argues that there was no link between a
Cherubim throne and the Ark in the Samuel narrative because there is no mention of תִּתְנָה in either
discussion of Ps 78: 60 (Schley, 1989: 140-142). Neither argument is conclusive because of the potential distance
between the cited texts and the historical setting.
at Shiloh and the Ark contained no representations of Cherubim at all, it is possible
that they were not as detailed or prolific as the biblical descriptions, especially since
the latter are trying to emphasize how unusually extravagant were both the Temple of
Jerusalem and the Tabernacle and Ark.  

In conclusion, while there may have been some sort of Cherubim throne like
those in the archaeological record, there is considerable distance between the object
itself and the literary descriptions of the Old Testament. This being the case, the
translator of the Cherubim formula should take very seriously the idea that more than
one interpretation is quite valid, not least those of the biblical writers themselves,
none of whom actually describe a Cherubim throne as is found in the archaeological
record. The translator should also consider that both the archaeological and literary
record provide evidence of the possibility of a multiplicity of forms of Cherubim
which may also have existed at Shiloh. All things considered, the translation of
כִּכְרֵבָא for the Cherubim formula in 1 Sam. 4: 4; 2 Sam. 6: 2; 1 Chron. 13: 16
should be either “who dwells among the Cherubim” or “who sits enthroned among the
Cherubim”. If it were an editorial anachronism, the second choice would be better. If
it were to represent pre-monarchic Israelite religion, either translation would be
possible, but neither would be provable. On balance, then, and for the sake of
consistency in translation across the Old Testament, “he who sits enthroned among
the Cherubim” seems to be the most appropriate translation for 1 Sam. 4: 4; 2 Sam. 6:
2; 1 Chron. 13: 16.

590 Campbell is pushing the bounds of logic in the other direction by stating that the image in 1 Sam. 4:
4 is different from the imagery in the Temple and P (Campbell, 2003: 66). We simply do not know.
591 This lack of clarity can lead to a varied interpretation. For instance, Hirsch, allegorically, sees the
throne as the law which is beneath the wings of the Cherubim (Hirsch, 1882: 190).
Conclusion: “he who sits enthroned among the Cherubim”

What I have tried to do in this chapter is avoid circular argument. It is all too easy to decide in one’s own mind what the Cherubim look like, and then translate the Cherubim formula to fit in with that preconception. By using the preposition “among”, speculative reconstructions of the Cherubim on the Ark and in the Temple have not been ruled out. Indeed, the use of “enthroned” in at least four of the seven occurrences would still allow those wishing to reconstruct a Cherubim throne to do so. However, “among” brings the other Cherubim into the picture, allows Yhwh to get out of his throne, and presents us with a more dynamic deity. Yhwh does not simply “sit” among the Cherubim, he moves among them. Neither is he simply a God who floats ethereally above. His feet are on a footstool, probably the Ark, and he lives and walks among mortals as and when he chooses.

592 In recent commentaries the tendency to leave the question open is becoming more popular (e.g. Alter, 2007: 346).
Chapter 5: The Seraphim

Introduction

With regard to the Seraphim, prior to the modern period there were few scholars proposing that they were serpentine in form.\footnote{The earliest I can find is Tenison, 1678: 351.} Most popular commentaries treated the Seraphim as angelic\footnote{This is something that has tailed off in recent years, despite an increase in popular interest in angelology. It is interesting to note that the medieval angelic hierarchies have disappeared in modern poetry: “Nineties poets showed almost no interest in the traditional lore of angelology, as expounded by medieval theologians like the Pseudo-Dionysius. One finds no reference in recent poetry, for example, to the ancient classification of angels into three triadic hierarchies” (Gilbert, 2001: 246). However, the angelic still finds occasional supporters - Watts, 2005: 106.} or allegorical\footnote{Modern commentaries tend to ignore allegorical interpretation. However, for a useful, though not exhaustive, list of patristic interpretation see Lienhard, 2001: 241-242 (his list includes Bede, Homilies on the Gospels 2: 18; Justin, Dialogue with Trypho 94; Ephrem the Syrian, Commentary on Tatian's Diatessaron 16: 15; Augustine, Explanation of the Psalms 74: 4; Gregory Nazianzus, Oration 45: 22) and McKinion, 2003: 49, 125 (he cites Chrysostom, Against the Anomoeans 3: 24; Eusebius of Caesarea, Commentary on Isaiah 6: 2; Origen, De Principiis 1: 2; 4: 3; Gregory the Great, Morals on the Book of Job 6: 33. 62). In the early modern period, Cherubim and Seraphim have even been likened to Oriental Orthodox liturgical fly swatters (Sophocles, 1860: 501).} or both. The serpentine idea was slow to get started and is reflected in BDB which has two entries for the references under ר"ש ת and ר"ש ת II.

רו ת I - Num. 21: 6, 8; Deut. 8: 15; Isa. 14: 29; 30: 6.

רו ת II - Isa. 6: 2, 6.\footnote{BDB p. 977. A Judahite of the same name occurs in 1 Chron. 4: 22.}

This etymological separation can be traced back to the LXX reading of Isa. 6:
2, 6. LXX treats ἄρπαζε in these verses as a transliterated proper name: Σεραφημ. Is this justified? The first set of references are clearly something to do with snakes. The context of all of them requires this. However, the picture in Isa. 6, while not precluding a serpentine interpretation, does not require it. The question for the interpreter is whether or not to apply the serpentine interpretation to Isa. 6 or not, without simply reading in a pre-conceived idea.

I shall begin this chapter with a review of the etymological issues surrounding ἄρπαζε, because the conclusions drawn about them have a direct impact upon the

597 The notion that the Seraphim were serpentine gained considerable ground as the modern period progressed. Knobel did not believe they were serpentine (Knobel, 1861: 109-110). Delitzsch does not quote the Hebrew word for Seraph when discussing Isa. 14: 29; 30: 6 (“flying dragon” in his translation), thus drawing the readers’ attention away from any possible connection with Isa. 6 (Delitzsch, 1866: 201, 315). William Rainey Harper goes so far as to deny any reference to Seraphim other than Isa. 6 (Harper, 1896: 44). Harper is typical of non-critical interpreters. Elsewhere he simply confuses Cherubim and Seraphim completely (Harper, 1897: 55). Skinner (Skinner, 1896: 44) sees the Isa. 6 references as unique but at the same time acknowledges a link with the snakes, distancing the two by suggesting that Nehushtan (2 Kgs. 18: 4) was an intermediate link. He also goes on to decry flying snakes as a creation of popular imagination (Skinner, 1896: 120, 227). The following commentators also separate them: Gray, G. B., 1903: 277-278; Baentsch, 1903: 575-576; Holzinger, 1903: 92-93; Wade, 1911: 39; Hehn, 1913: 314; König, 1926: 89-90; Roberts, L. G. A., 1931: 17; Reider, 1937: 94; Kissane, 1941: 74 (they have “nothing in common with serpents except the name”); Muckle, 1960: 25; Mauchline, 1962: 90; Young, 1965 Vol. 1: 239-240; Wildberger, 1965 Vol. 1: 264-265 (though Wildberger, like Skinner, understands the link to snakes through Nehushtan – Wildberger, 1965 Vol. 2: 96-97); Sturdy, 1976: 147-148; Wenham, 1981: 157, n. 1; Jensen, 1984: 86; Jacob, E., 1987: 99; Motyer, 1993: 76; 1999: 70. Heinisch’s comment on Num. 21 that “the snakes are called ‘seraphim’” implies that he separates the two, seeing the snake references as an alternative use for the proper name (Heinisch, 1936: 82). Stacey objects to any speculation about the form of the Seraphim: “If we begin to speculate about the form of the Seraphim, we shall soon find ourselves asking what colour Yahweh’s robe was, and we shall have lost the sense of awe and mystery” (Stacey, 1993: 43). Those who do make the connection include Wake, 1873: 389 (cf. also Wake, 1888: 47, although Wake mistakenly identifies Seraphim with teraphim – Foote, 1902: 28); von Orelli, 1887: 28; Dillmann, 1890: 55-56 (quoting Gesenius); Marti, 1900: 64 (although he translates Isa. 14: 29; 30: 6 as “flying dragon” pp. 131, 220). The view was put forward for discussion at the Twelfth Congress of Orientalists in Rome in 1899 by Paul Haupt, (Anon., 1900: 220), and, interestingly on that occasion, combined with the lightning theory (cf. Haupt, 1907: 7). Others who link the Seraphim with serpents include Schneider, 1909-1912: 17; Meek, 1921: 118; Povah, 1925: 131 (who links the whole idea to psychology, with the Seraphim representing the male libido – cf. Hines, 1928: 223 - contrast Joines’ description of their feminine side – Joines, 1967: 409, 415; cf. Terrien, 1970: 321; also the identification of both genders in Elizabeth Barrett’s poem, “The Seraphim”; cf. Straight, 2000: 269-288); Irwin, 1928: 86-87; Procksch, 1930: 54; Hippisley, 1944: 20; Fohrer, 1960 Vol. 1: 23; Kaiser, 1972: 76; de Savignac, 1972: 320-325; Joines, 1974: 42-54; Kilian & Zapf, 1986: 48; Beuken, 2003: 169, 171. Gray was agnostic on whether they are serpentine or not (Gray, G. B., 1949: 105; cf. Oswalt, 1986: 179; Davies, E. W., 1995: 217). Childs accepts the serpentine link, but only as distant background information (Childs, 2001: 55). For the idea that the snakes might be dragons cf. additionally Smith, G. A., 1918: 122; König, 1926: 187.
resulting interpretation of the texts. Then I shall look in more detail at the individual
texts themselves, before drawing some conclusions about Isa. 6 in particular.

**Etymology of הָרָנָה**

As just noted, BDB gives two entries for הָרָנָה. The verb associated with both
is הָרָנָה, “he burns”. The association of fire imagery and snakes is widely
acknowledged. The fire refers to the effect of the snake’s bite (some sort of fever or
burning sensation in the skin), or to the venom itself. Others have speculated that
the fiery reference is to the movement of the snake, like lightning, or its markings. Either way, the association in popular imagery of desert-dwelling serpents with fire is
strong enough for this connection to make sense. As regards Isaiah’s vision, the
burning connotation has been used imaginatively over the centuries. People have
frequently speculated about the angelic, largely humanoid form, of the Seraphim,
while indulging in allegorical interpretations of their burning attributes. The fiery
nature of Seraphim can be intransitive, with the Seraphim representing some sort of
hypostatic embodiment of fire, or transitive, with the emphasis on how they burn or
purge those around them, in this case, Isaiah. The fiery etymology works comfortably
with both serpentine and angelic ideas, and so does not help in deciding how to read
Isaiah’s vision.

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598 Elliott-Binns, 1927: 138-139; Reider, 1937: 94; Craigie, 1976: 188, n. 8; Mayes, 1981: 193; Davies,
599 Riggans, 1983: 158; Christensen, 1991: 176-177 claims that Cazelles is the originator of the idea
that “fiery” refers to the venom itself rather than the effects of it. Unfortunately I was unable to find a
600 Kaiser, 1972: 76.
601 Motyer’s argument that the lack of a definite article means that the word is descriptive is incorrect
(Motyer, 1999: 70), since the definite article occurs in Isa. 6: 6. It could simply mean that there were an
undefined number.
Should לוח be treated as a noun or an adjective?\textsuperscript{602} If it is adjectival, the interpretation will focus, as above, on the fiery or burning nature of the object that it describes. Should it be a noun, one is forced to make conclusions about the type of creature - spiritual, mythical or otherwise - to which it refers. Again, however, decisions have to be made based on contextual information.

It seems that the decision to separate the references into two categories is arbitrary and based upon preconceived ideas about the text in each case. A more detailed look at the texts and how they interact with each other may assist in arguing for or against this stance. Before looking at the texts, though, further consideration should be given to one etymological interpretation which is associated with neither fire nor snakes.

In the introduction I noted the attempts to see Seraphim as griffins.\textsuperscript{603} This theory only works if two meanings for לוח are allowed. It seems utterly implausible to argue that the references under לוח I (Num. 21: 6, 8; Deut. 8: 15; Isa. 14: 29; 30: 6) could refer to griffins. The theory makes the assumption that a separate meaning for לוח exists. Unfortunately, as with traditional angelic interpretations of Isaiah’s Seraphim, the etymological conclusion is forced by preconceived notions. The griffin theory, though, is particularly interesting, since it is one of the few attempts to link Seraphim with Cherubim. However, there would need to be other arguments in favour of equating these beings for this reading to be justified, but I shall only address this question at the end of this chapter in the light of a more detailed textual study. Even if the textual study shows that this etymology is unlikely, how do we account for the

\textsuperscript{602} Jensen notes this question (Jensen, 1984: 86).
\textsuperscript{603} See above pp. 29-30.
existence in the ancient world of a line of interpretation which equates Seraphim and Cherubim, and for the view that Isaiah’s Seraphim are angelic? Perhaps a closer inspection of the individual texts can shed more light on this.

**Numbers 21: 6, 8**

Numbers 21: 5-9 The people spoke against God and against Moses, “Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we detest this miserable food.” 6 Then the LORD sent poisonous serpents among the people, and they bit the people, so that many Israelites died. 7 The people came to Moses and said, “We have sinned by speaking against the LORD and against you; pray to the LORD to take away the serpents from us.” So Moses prayed for the people. 8 And the LORD said to Moses, “Make a poisonous serpent, and set it on a pole; and everyone who is bitten shall look at it and live.” 9 So Moses made a serpent of bronze, and put it upon a pole; and whenever a serpent bit someone, that person would look at the serpent of bronze and live.

Of all the passages which associate snakes with הֶ.shows, the account of Moses’ brazen serpent is the most detailed. 604 Yhwh sends מַחְשֵׁחַ as a punishment. 605 Whatever these snakes may have been, the use of מַחְשֵׁחַ has to denote a serpent of some sort. 606 The role of יִצְּרֶה in this passage, though, is confused. In v. 6 it

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604 For a discussion about the historical background to the setting of the story see Snaith, 1967: 279.
605 Knierim, 2005: 237 argues that the punishment is ongoing because there is no mention of the Israelites breaking camp.
606 This has nothing to do with נִמַּק II – divination. The noun from it only occurs in Num. 24: 1 so it is unusual. Furthermore the reference within this passage to the people being bitten implies some sort of wild animal.
is either an adjective describing the nature of the לִשְׁנֵי,\textsuperscript{607} or it is a noun, presumably introduced as some sort of gloss, or simply added as an embellishment in apposition with the preceding word.\textsuperscript{608} In v. 8 it is clearly a noun,\textsuperscript{609} something that Moses is told to make. The matter is further confused, because v. 9 tells us that what Moses actually makes is a רֶשֶׁת לְשָׁנָה.\textsuperscript{610} Similarly vv. 7 and 9 only refer to the snakes that bit the people as בְּלֵשְׁנֵי.\textsuperscript{611}

The change in the references to the snakes that bit the people does not suggest any firm conclusions about בְּלֵשְׁנֵי. If it is an adjective, then the narrative does not require it to be used again. Similarly, if it is some sort of explanatory noun, it makes sense in subsequent verses to limit the account to the use of the primary noun, לִשְׁנֵי.

Any repetition of לְשָׁנָה in either sense is unnecessary.

But why does the narrator change the noun with regard to the object that Moses is commanded to make? Is it to indicate that Moses makes something that is not exactly what Yhwh had in mind? Does לְשָׁנָה represent something metaphysical (Isa. 6) as opposed to Moses’ magical totem?\textsuperscript{612} Is the רֶשֶׁת לְשָׁנָה a semi-oblique reference to Nehushtan,\textsuperscript{613} the bronze object which Hezekiah removed from the Temple (2 Kgs. 18: 4)? Or are the two nouns synonymous? Is the reader supposed to

\textsuperscript{607} Cf. Greenstone, 1939: 223 following Rashi, ibn Ezra and Kimchi.

\textsuperscript{608} Either a gloss or in apposition (Oettli, 1893: 46).

\textsuperscript{609} Keel, 1977: 71-72; Ashley, 1993: 404-405, contra Seebass, 1993 Vol. iv / 2.5: 321. Certain Samaritan MSS of Num 21: 6 have a passive participle, לִשְׁנֵי, but they still have a noun at v. 8.

\textsuperscript{610} Words which sound like a snake hissing (Charlesworth, 2010: 348).

\textsuperscript{611} Noth rejects the idea that these two words represent two different sources (Noth, 1966: 136-137). For a contrary view see Scharbert, 1992: 84.

\textsuperscript{612} For the view that this story is about sympathetic magic cf. Seebass, 1993 Vol. iv / 2.5: 324 (who compares it to the Philistines’ gold mice and tumours -1 Sam. 6: 22); Olson, 1996: 136; Levine, 2000: 88 (who also suggests that the goat for Azazel is another example of sympathetic magic).

\textsuperscript{613} Presumably the name is a pun on the metal from which it was made or its red, coppery colour (Gray, G. B., 1903: 278; Greenstone, 1939: 242; Licht, 1985 Vol. 2: 226-227). Wenham notes that red is also the colour of expiation (Wenham, 1981: 158, n. 2) and that the redness of the copper may have been to counteract the redness of the bites themselves (Wenham, 1997: 52-53).
know what a שׁלוע is, and that a מַכָּר is a perfectly reasonable form of it? The
fact that Yhwh instructs Moses actually to make something and put it on a pole
implies a physical object is intended in the command. If מַכָּר were metaphysical,
presumably Moses would have been told to make a copy or an image of it. This
suggests that the מַכָּר in v. 6 is also a noun, probably in apposition with מַעֲשֵּׂה.

It appears that the simplest interpretation of this passage treats מַעֲשֵּׂה as a type
of snake, and that the reader was supposed to know what it was.\textsuperscript{614} That the passage is
connected to the account of Hezekiah’s actions in the Temple is indisputable.\textsuperscript{615}
Whether we should treat it as an aetiology of that account,\textsuperscript{616} or the other way around,
is a matter of debate, though, which has a potential effect on the dating of the passage.
This in turn impacts on its relationship to the other מַעֲשֵּׂה references, especially those in
Isaiah, but sadly hard and fast conclusions about the date are difficult to achieve. It is
difficult to pin down exactly how this passage relates to the documentary
hypothesis,\textsuperscript{617} although the most likely source would be J. Traditionally E is

\textsuperscript{614} For those who take this line cf. Knobel, 1861: 243 (despite the translation “Brandschlangen”); Dillmann, 1886: 118; Watson, 1894: 46; Baentsch, 1903: 575-576; Wenham, 1981: 157, n. 2. For a
mythological interpretation see Procksch, 1930: 202, 204, 387-388. I do not agree with Charlesworth’s
suggestion that the use of two words for snake implies two different species (Charlesworth, 2010: 330)
since a copulative וַהֲלָכֵי would be expected between נִשְׁלָע and מַעֲשֵּׂה.

\textsuperscript{615} Watson, 1894: 48; Fullerton, 1907: 127-128; Mays, 1964: 115-116. Charlesworth draws attention to
the large number of ophite forms in the archaeological record (Charlesworth, 2010: 60-83), noting that
their absence from the Jerusalem environs may have been because of Hezekiah’s reforms
(Charlesworth, 2010: 77-78). He sees this record as good reason to believe that the reference to
Nehushtan in the Temple is reliable and that elements of Num. 21: 4-9 can also be dated earlier than
Hezekiah’s reforms (Charlesworth, 2010: 328, 345-347).

\textsuperscript{616} E.g. Sturdy, 1976: 147-148.

\textsuperscript{617} Gray treats the passage as JE (Gray, G. B., 1903: 274), as does Budd (Budd, 1984: 232-233).
Baentsch says it is “fundamentally” E (Baentsch, 1903: 575-576). Holzinger suggests that it is J
(Holzinger, 1903: 92-93), as does Knierim, 2005: 238. For Procksch it is E (Procksch, 1930: 202, 204,
387-388). Noth also sees it as E (Noth, 1966: 136-137). He sees the references to Yhwh as secondary,
with J (Num 14: 25b) and P (Num. 20: 22-29) providing the narrative framework. Interestingly, Noth
does not see this story as an aetiology of Nehushtan since, he claims, the writer does not know about
the bronze object in the Temple. He does, however, view the story as the root of the belief in the
existence of dangerous snakes in the wilderness. Charlesworth has also recently assigned this to E,
dating it in its current form to the seventh century with elements going back to the ninth (Charlesworth,
2010: 326).
associated with the northern kingdom, and, since Nehushtan was in Jerusalem, this
collection is less likely. We can rule out D, since it seems unlikely that a story
celebrating a Mosaic artefact, which had fallen into disfavour and been destroyed as
part of a cultic revolution during Hezekiah’s reign, would be either written or
influential in the aftermath. Consecutively, it is best to date this story to some time
before Hezekiah’s reign.

The LXX translators did not see מְבֹנָשֵׁי as a noun, but as an adjective.
Throughout the passage, מְבֹנָשֵׁי is translated consistently as Φίλος, including v. 9 where
מְבֹנָשֵׁי is translated literally as Φίλος χαλκόν, מְבֹנָשֵׁי is rendered τοῖς
Φίλος τοῖς ψαρίωντας, clearly an adjectival phrase, “deadly snakes”. In v. 8,
where מְבֹנָשֵׁי is a noun, LXX simply uses the standard noun, Φίλος. It seems very
unlikely that the translators would treat the first incidence of מְבֹנָשֵׁי as an adjective
describing מְבֹנָשֵׁי, and then the second as a synonym of it. It is more likely that they did
not understand it as a noun, and simply harmonised Yhwh’s command with the action
that Moses took.

Num. 21: 6-9 suggests that there was a type of desert-dwelling snake, known
as מְבֹנָשֵׁי, presumably either because of its appearance like fire, or because of the

618 Sakenfeld, on the other hand, sees the story as having been written as an apology for the making of
reformation” since Moses figures very strongly in Num. 21: 4-9 and Moses is specifically mentioned in
the 2 Kings account. Furthermore Moses’ association with snakes of one sort or another is an important
part of the story (Exod. 4: 3; 7: 15 - מְבֹנָשֵׁי; Exod. 7: 9-10 - מְבֹנָשֵׁי). If so, this strengthens the case for this
story pre-dating Hezekiah’s action.
619 Holzinger notes that the phrase is also used of a different type of snake in Jer. 8: 17 (Holzinger,
also Philo’s allegorical interpretation, dependant on the LXX reading, that the snakes symbolise the
the allegorical interpretations in Philo, Leg. II 20; Agr. 22 as well as Wisd. 16: 6f; John 3: 14 (Davies, E.
nature of its bite. This snake was the subject of a judgement narrative relating to the
Exodus story. The Hebrew reader, early in the textual tradition, would have
understood what a חֵרֶף was, while this knowledge was lost by the time of the LXX
translators, who treated חֵרֶף as an adjective.

Deuteronomy 8: 15

Deuteronomy 8: 15 who led you through the great and terrible wilderness, an arid
wasteland with (saraph)\(^{620}\) snakes and scorpions. He made water flow for you from
flint rock, …

The passing reference to חֵרֶף in Deuteronomy is intriguing.\(^{621}\) The fact
that it is a passing reference in itself tells us that the writer (or preacher, if some
theories of the origins of Deuteronomy are to be believed),\(^{622}\) or glossator\(^{623}\) was
comfortable with the term.\(^{624}\) The form, חֵרֶף, raises similar questions to those
surrounding חֵרֶף in the previous passage. Again, are we dealing with an
adjective or a noun? Either is grammatically possible and, either way, the equivalent
result would be similar to the interpretation of Num. 21: 6. It could be an adjective, in

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\(^{620}\) My translation. NRSV has “poisonous”, treating חֵרֶף as adjectival.

\(^{621}\) Most commentators either ignore the reference or deal with it only briefly. Driver links it to Isa 30: 6 and Num. 21, saying that the former reference was “of the same region” (Driver, 1895: 110). Buckland describes this verse as a description of God’s training regime in the desert, without specifically mentioning the details (Buckland, 1930: 46). Cf. also e.g. Cunliffe-Jones, 1951: 68-69; Blair, 1965: 43-44; Thompson, J. A. 1974: 136-137; Gelhard, 1980: 59-60; Batsri, 1983: 25; Braulik, 1986: 72; Tigay, 1996: 95; Clements, 2001: 39-40; McConville, 2002: 165; Nicholls, 2006: 96-106.

\(^{622}\) Budd, 1984: 234.

\(^{623}\) König rejects the translation “Brandschlange” and translates as “Schlange, ja Giftschlange” (venomous snake) seeing חֵרֶף as a gloss based upon Num 21:6 and explaining חֵרֶף (König, 1917: 106).

\(^{624}\) Unlike later Jewish commentary which favoured speculation about their fantastic size “as big as beams” (Finkelshtayn, 1969: 30).
which case it is just describing the nature of the נִשְׂרָה. It could be a noun\textsuperscript{625} in
apposition or a gloss identifying the type of נִשְׂרָה, presumably something the writer or
glossator would expect the reader to know about. Alternatively, נִשְׂרָה could be the
original word with נִשְׂרָה as the gloss.

The choice of these interpretations is affected by the rhythm of the verse. If the
verse has a rhythm at all (rhetorical rhythm is by no means an exact science), it is
most likely to be based upon pairs of adjectival phrases or words.

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נִשְׂרָה יִהְיֶה אֶלַּכָּב
נִשְׂרָה יִהְיֶה אֶלַּכָּב
נִשְׂרָה יִהְיֶה אֶלַּכָּב

After the introductory phrase, “who led you in the wilderness,” there are three
adjectival pairs. The first, נִשְׂרָה יִהְיֶה אֶלַּכָּב, consists of adjectives, both referring to the
wilderness. The second, נִשְׂרָה יִהְיֶה אֶלַּכָּב, uses at least two nouns which are in a
genitive relationship to the wilderness.\textsuperscript{626} In the third pair, נִשְׂרָה יִהְיֶה אֶלַּכָּב, the
form is changed again, using one noun introduced with a simple conjunction and
having a relative clause as its parallel. The question is, how does נִשְׂרָה fit into the
second pair, and does it intrude? The first and third pair only use two nouns, and it
would make sense for the second pair also only to have two nouns. If this is the case
then one of the possible interpretations of נִשְׂרָה may be ruled out. It is unlikely to be an

\textsuperscript{625} Oettli, 1893: 46. Smith treats it as a collective noun (Smith, G. A., 1918: 122). Cf. also Steuernagel,
\textsuperscript{626} SP’s omission of the \textit{waw} consecutive in this phrase (cf. Christensen, 1991: 172-173) is awkward
and, given its appearance in the neighbouring phrases, probably due to scribal error.
\textsuperscript{627} Weinfeld, 1991: 387, 394-395 notes that the identical phrase occurs in Esarhaddon’s inscriptions:
“wo Schlangen und Skorpione wie Ameisen das Feld bedecken” (Borger, 1956: 56, line 4). The second
reference which Weinfeld cites (Borger, 1956: 112, RS lines 5-7), however, is not an exact equivalent
but the poetic sentiment is the same.
original noun in apposition with נָגְלָה. This leaves two possible explanations. Either
נָגְלָה is a gloss, or נָגְלָה is the gloss. If נָגְלָה is a gloss the glossator clearly assumes that
the reader understands what a נָגְלָה is. Alternatively, one might argue that נָגְלָה is the
gloss, explaining to a later audience what this obscure word is, in which case the use
of נָגְלָה is a wonderfully poetic noun the exact meaning of which has been
forgotten.\(^\text{628}\)

This verse is most closely related to Num. 21: 5-9 and Isa. 30: 6. The first
connection has already been pointed out. The second link is due to the the subject-
matter of נָגְלָה, and the fact that it appears as part of a description of the wilderness.
However, the difference in this second connection is that the נָגְלָה in Isa. 30: 6 is
winged, whereas here it is not.\(^\text{629}\) While there was a belief in the ancient world that
desert-dwelling flying snakes were a natural, if rather remarkable, phenomenon, the
change in our texts from flying snakes to non-flying snakes may imply that one text is
referring to fantastic snakes, while the other is not.\(^\text{630}\) This does not help in deciding
whether נָגְלָה in Deut. 8: 15 is an adjective or a noun, but it does suggest some
conceptual distance between this verse and Isa. 30: 6. Whether that distance is
temporal remains to be seen, depending on the date of Isa. 30: 6, but I would certainly
want to date Deut. 8: 15 considerably later than Isaiah of Jerusalem and Num. 21: 5-9.

\(^{628}\) Seebass, 1993 Vol. iv / 2.4: 316. Nelson points out that the heat of the נָגְלָה, and accompanying
drought, contrasts with the water that flowed from the rock at Meribah (Nelson, 2002: 109), but this
could illustrate the poetic nature of the passage rather than providing hard evidence for the use of נָגְלָה
as an adjective.

\(^{629}\) This does not automatically rule out the possibility that there is a tradition of winged snakes in the
wilderness wanderings behind Deut. 8: 15, but, as with the interpretation of the Cherubim descriptions, I
am trying to take the absence of specific information seriously in my reading of the text.

\(^{630}\) Von Rad, 1966: 73 for the natural interpretation. Mayes believes they were fabulous (Mayes, 1981:
193), and it is impossible to identify any particular species (Craige, 1976: 188, n.8).
What both Isa. 30: 6 and Num. 21: 6 have in common, though, is that נֵעָרֶש is a noun. If נֵעָרֶש in Deut. 8: 15 is an adjective, then it is the only example of it in the Hebrew Bible. The other references to נֵעָרֶש are all nouns in form, if not intention. Consequently, it is most likely that, in Deut. 8: 15, either נֵעָרֶש is an explanatory gloss, primarily introduced in order to make a reference to Num. 21: 6-9, or נֵעָרֶש is the gloss explaining the existing text which uses the noun in the same way as Num. 21.

If נֵעָרֶש is a noun here, then this has been misinterpreted by the LXX translators, just as in Num. 21: 6. LXX reads δράκων δέσποιναν (literally “biting snake”) for נֵעָרֶש, treating the second word as adjectival and rendering it with a participle. In Deut. 8: 15, then, נֵעָרֶש is a type of snake, known to the author or glossator, but unknown to the LXX translators.

Isaiah 30: 6

טָאָרְשׁ נַעַרְשׁ הָאָרְשׁ הָאָרְשׁ הָאָרְשׁ הָאָרְשׁ הָאָרְשׁ הָאָרְשׁ הָאָרְשׁ הָאָרְשׁ הָאָרְשׁ הָאָרְשׁ הָאָרְשׁ הָאָרְשׁ הָאָרְשׁ הָאָרְשׁ הָאָרְשׁ הָאָרְשׁ הָאָרְשׁ הָאָרְשׁ הָאָרְשׁ HCD

Isaiah 30: 6-7 An oracle concerning the animals of the Negeb. Through a land of trouble and distress, of lioness and roaring lion, of viper and flying serpent, they carry their riches on the backs of donkeys, and their treasures on the humps of camels, to a people that cannot profit them. 7 For Egypt's help is worthless and empty, therefore I have called her, “the silenced Rahab.”

This reference to נֵעָרֶש occurs in a short oracle (Isa. 30: 6-7) written to discourage political alliance with Egypt during a time of Assyrian political

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631 It is likely that the use of δέσποιναν here may reflect awareness of the other text.
ascendancy. The image is of a camel train crossing the Sinai Peninsula to Egypt, heavily laden. But their journey is pointless. Egypt will not respond. These two verses are part of a wider section on this anti-Egyptian alliance theme, specifically including 30: 1-5 and the whole of chapter 31. The wider section is a complex one and does not affect the debate here. However, an oracle written against Egypt in the face of Assyrian aggression (cf. Isa. 31: 8-9) would be best dated to the end of the eighth century, probably during the reign of Hezekiah, when the temptation to appeal to Egypt would be greatest. The theme of Zion’s inviolability, which underpins this material, would also fit with both the period and an anti-Egyptian and anti-Assyrian stance. As such, it seems that this oracle dates to this period, considerably before Deut. 8: 15, but in close temporal proximity to Num. 21: 5-9.

What, then, is the לָעַבְרָה? As already noted, some believed such creatures really existed. 633 Detailed scientific knowledge of desert fauna would be limited at the time. However, with the reference to Rahab (v. 7) and, possibly, the

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632 This translation involves repointing הַלָעַבְרָה לָעַבְרָה to הַלָעַבְרָה הַלָעַבְרָה הַלָעַבְרָה (cf. Day, 1985: 89). This solves the problem of the plural הַלָעַבְרָה with the singular הַלָעַבְרָה, while at the same time providing a meaning for הַלָעַבְרָה which fits the context quite nicely.

633 Esarhaddon reports seeing two-headed serpents and some sort of flying animal in the desert (ANET 292). Herodotus describes some bones, which Egyptians believed to have been from flying serpents, and that these were destroyed by ibexes (Herodotus, II 75; cf. III 109). The connection with the ibex is also noted by Josephus, who attributes their introduction to Egypt to Moses (Ant. II 10.2; cf. Pliny, Natural History X, 28). Bruno favours a naturalistic interpretation, rejecting the idea of “flying” in favour of the adverbial “speedy” (Bruno, 1953: 132; cf. Auvray, 1972: 264-265 “dragon volant”) although, strangely, he accepts the idea in 14: 29 (Bruno, 1953: 93). Wiseman suggests a completely different meaning for לָעַבְרָה as “jib, prick” following Akkadian appu, uppu (Wiseman, 1972: 109-110), though this suggestion may have been motivated by unhappiness with any sort of mythical creature having a place in the Bible. This means that the only other reference to this word, in Ezek. 32: 10, as a sword makes more sense, and the לָעַבְרָה of Job 41: 10, the “eyelids of the dawn”, could refer to the first shafts of sunlight. Rüterswörden, 2004: 225 connects it with Middle Hebrew שֶׁרֶךְ to suck or slurp. He argues that here שֶׁרֶךְ may not be serpentine, and that the emphasis is on the “root and fruit” imagery. However, LXX does not translate root and fruit, using the words “seed” and “descendant” instead. Clements sees it as mythical (Clements, 1980: 245). Blenkinsopp, 2000: 413; Childs, 2001: 225; Quinn-Miscall, 2006: 97 (“savage animals”) all see them as natural.
beasts (בְּשַׁדָּי - v. 6), the oracle spills over into mythical realms.\(^{634}\) None of the other animals in the oracle are overtly mythical, but שֶׁרֶכּ מִנַּיְפָה could be.\(^{635}\)

The form of the oracle is odd, though. As in Deut. 8: 15, the wilderness – in this case a land (נָחֳל) – is described by three phrases. Each of these is a pair of nouns.

אָשְׁנָה וַעֲנֵקָה   קַשְׁיָה לַשְׁק

The problem is that מִנַּיְפָה intrudes clumsily between the second and third descriptive pairs. NRSV ignores this by simply not translating the offending word. KJV (“into the land of trouble and anguish, from whence come the young and old lion”) treats מִנַּיְפָה as referring to the land, which is possible, but clumsy, and there are still a pair of snakes awkwardly tacked on afterwards. The only other suitable candidates as an antecedent to מִנַּיְפָה are “the beasts of the south” (“animals of the Negeb” – NRSV) or the “lioness and roaring lion”. The first candidate is part of the title of the oracle. Since there are other beasts in the oracle, namely camels, asses, and, not least, Rahab, this makes “the beasts” an unlikely antecedent. This leaves the two lions, לַשְׁקָה לַשְׁקָה. It appears the writer is suggesting that the מִנַּיְפָה are somehow derived from the lions. This is most reminiscent of the form of Isa. 14: 29 in which the שֶׁרֶכּ is the offspring of either a לַשְׁק or a מִנַּיְפָה.\(^{636}\) Even so, it still seems odd that the writer imagines snakes somehow coming forth from lions. My

\(^{634}\) Muckle says, “The title is a catchword based on the following sentence. The ‘fiery flying serpent’ suggests the imagery here is that of a dream or vision.” (Muckle, 1960: 105.) Budd links the flying serpent to the primeval chaos because of the reference to Rahab (Budd, 1984: 234).

\(^{635}\) Cf Cheyne, 1880: 168; Fohrer, 1960 Vol. 2: 88, n. 103. Mauchline says that they are “demons and malign powers” (Mauchline, 1962: 208), Jensen that it was a weird legend (Jensen, 1984: 235, cf. 152).

\(^{636}\) For a discussion of the issues surrounding these alternatives see below.
preferred reading of this verse is, like NRSV, to omit ובית. It appears to be a gloss which has been inserted in an attempt to link this oracle to 14: 29 and emphasise the link with the only other reference to יָדַעְתָּהּ, by suggesting that the snakes in the poem would be unnaturally generated from lions as part of divine judgement, just as one type of snake would be unnaturally generated from another in 14: 29.637 The original poem was simply a vivid and semi-mythical description of the howling desert, which employed an offensive and rather amusing pun against Egypt as a mythical monster and also a dumb animal. The יָדַעְתָּהּ is an incidental part of the poem, which dates most likely to the reign of Hezekiah.

But what of the LXX? Here is the text set out roughly according to the poetic phrasing just identified.

ή ὄρασις τῶν τετραπόδων τῶν ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ
ἐν τῇ θλίψει καὶ τῇ στενοχωρίᾳ
λέων καὶ σκύμνος λέοντος ἐκείθεν
καὶ ἀσπίδες καὶ ἐκγόνα ἀσπίδων πετομένων

The first point of interest is the use of ἐκείθεν after λέων καὶ σκύμνος λέοντος. Presumably it is the equivalent of ובית, but means something different, “from there.” It appears that the translator was not sure what to do with ובית. However, the phrase ἐκγόνα ἀσπίδων πετομένων suggests that the offspring idea was understood. It has been included in the more logical place, namely the third pairing, but between the two snakes, so that the second snake is the offspring of the first and, from a poetic point of view, parallel with it.

Of the thirty-three uses of ἐκγόνος in LXX, on only three occasions is it used

637 Kaiser is unsure whether there was a specific link between this verse and Isa. 6: 2, 6; 14: 29 (Kaiser, 1974: 290).
in conjunction with ἄσπίς (Isa. 11: 8; 14: 29; 30: 6) which itself is used thirty-one
times in all. In only two of these verses is the form exactly the same (Isa. 14: 29; 30:
6), being ἐκγόνων ἄσπιδων in Isa. 11: 8. This suggests that, whatever the motive for
the inclusion of מְנַחֵם, LXX has made the connection with Isa. 14: 29 more overt. It is
unlikely that LXX is following an alternative Hebrew text here, because the position
of ἐκείθεν suggests the wording of MT.

In this poem the ἄρσις is a type of snake, possibly fantastic and
probably dating to the earliest stratum of this text. In addition to the connections noted
in MT and LXX, as only one of two references to מְנַחֵם, the likelihood that
these two verses are connected at an early stage in their transmission is very great,
quite possibly being penned by the same writer. The LXX translator, while noting
overtly the connection between the two passages, has treated מְנַחֵם differently from the
translators of Num. 21: 6 and Deut. 8: 15. There LXX treats it as an adjective, here as
an actual snake.

Isaiah 14: 29

Isaiah 14: 28-32 In the year that King Ahaz died this oracle came: 29 Do not rejoice,
all you Philistines, that the rod that struck you is broken, for from the root of the snake
will come forth an adder, and its fruit will be a flying fiery serpent. 30 The firstborn of
the poor will graze, and the needy lie down in safety; but I will make your root die of
famine, and your remnant I will kill. 31 Wail, O gate; cry, O city; melt in fear, O
Philistia, all of you! For smoke comes out of the north, and there is no straggler in its
ranks. 32 What will one answer the messengers of the nation? “The LORD has
founded Zion, and the needy among his people will find refuge in her.”
As with Isa. 30: 6-7, in Isa. 14: 28-32 we have a short, esoteric oracle, which appears to be a prophetic response to a Philistine political delegation. The tone is disparaging to Philistia, warning them not to rejoice that “the rod” that struck them was broken, because it would be replaced by something worse.

There are problems over the dating of the oracle, mainly because of v. 30. The idea that the poor will feed, presumably in Philistia, does not really fit with Isaiah’s treatment of the “the poor” elsewhere. Normally they are victims of injustice (Isa. 3: 14-15; 10: 2; 32: 7) or are looking directly to Yhwh for assistance (Isa. 11: 4; 25: 4; 29: 32). The closest we get in Isaiah 1-39 to the sense of the poor triumphing over their enemies is in Isa. 26: 6, but Isa. 24-27 is generally seen as post-exilic. Taken out of context Isa. 14: 30 seems to describe the poor in similar terms. If it is an inherent part of the oracle, and the actions of the poor are merely against the Philistines, then this is a unique and slightly odd proposition. The alternative solution of dating the whole oracle to a late period is also problematic. The chances of identifying an exilic or post-exilic period when a Jerusalem prophet could preach the inviolability of Zion (v. 32), at the same time as threatening a neighbouring state with destruction from “the north”, are pretty much non-existent, except in the case of an eschatological conflict such as Zech. 12; 14. As with Isa. 30: 6-7 this scenario best fits the message of Isaiah to Hezekiah during Assyrian aggression in the area. The inviolability of Zion is not yet discredited, something that would surely have been the

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case during Babylonian political expansion, but the threat to the region was a real one. The other problem with dating the whole oracle late is the superscription which dates it to the death of Ahaz. Those who propose a late date are forced to resort to reading this as the work of a well-meaning but uninformed scribe. \textsuperscript{642} The use in the superscription of the phrase, הָדַּ֣ד הָדַ֣ד רֵ֣ינֻ֑שָׁה, should be treated as a separate matter. \textsuperscript{643} Either it is a gloss which does not affect the overall thrust of the oracle, or it is the original form of the superscription. \textsuperscript{644} If it is the former then some other introductory phrase would be required. Either way it does not affect the interpretation. If the oracle is dated late the context does not work and the superscription is awkward. If the oracle is dated early the context and superscription both work, but v. 30 is, at best, unusual and, at worst, out of place. It seems easier to argue for the insertion of v. 30 as a pious interpretation of the oracle in favour of “the poor”, which picks up on the “root” theme of v. 29, rather than trying to explain a difficult context. \textsuperscript{645} Consequently I date at least the majority of this oracle to that given in the superscription, the year that King Ahaz died, some time between 727 and 715 BCE. At this point, then, it is clear that the two uses of הָדַּ֣ד רֵ֣ינֻ֑שָׁה are closely linked temporally. Are they linked thematically? It is not unreasonable to suppose that the oracles in which they occur are from the same hand, with the exception of the minor points already noted. The הָדַּ֣ד רֵ֣ינֻ֑שָׁה in Isa. 30: 6 was potentially, though not

\textsuperscript{642} Cheyne, 1880: 91; Kissane, 1941: 179 Blenkinsopp, 2000: 292.
\textsuperscript{643} Dillmann, 1890: 143; Skinner, 1896: 120.
\textsuperscript{644} The use of הָדַּ֣ד as “oracle” rather than “burden” (2 Kgs. 9: 25; 2 Chron. 24: 27; Prov. 30: 1; 31: 1; Isa. 13: 1; 15: 1; 17: 1; 19: 1; 21: 1, 11, 13; 22: 1, 23: 1; 30: 6; Ezek. 12: 10; Nah. 1: 1; Hab. 1: 1; Zech. 9: 1; 12: 1; Mal. 1: 1) is a standard introductory word, especially in the Isaiah corpus, which was used as antithetico-ammoniation by some (Jer. 23: 33, 34, 36, 38) but it cannot be tied to a particular date.
\textsuperscript{645} Most commentators date v. 29 to Isaiahic authorship (Kaiser, 1974: 53), although Kaiser’s proposed reordering of the verses to 29, 31, 30a, 32b (Kaiser, 1974: 56) is conjectural and does not really solve anything.
definitely, mythical. Is this the same in Isa. 14: 29? There are two other snakes mentioned in the verse, נִקְשָׁה and נֶפֶשׁ. The former is easily seen as a natural phenomenon. The second, while being a hapax legomenon, and as such with potentially mythical overtones, could also simply be a type of snake. However, the image of one type of snake giving birth to another type of snake is anything but natural. The prophet is using an image which, in physical terms, is impossible, to make the point that, if the Philistines thought the first snake was bad, the others would be far worse. Moving from natural to supernatural is a nice rhetorical device. The נִקְשָׁה is a mythical creature, at least in terms of its generation.

But what of the poetic structure? There are two possible ways of approaching the second part of this verse, which affect the overall interpretation.

In the first form there are three generations of snake. The נִקְשָׁה gives birth to a נֶפֶשׁ. This then gives birth to a נֶפֶשׁ נִקְשָׁה. In the second form there are only two generations: the נֶפֶשׁ and נֶפֶשׁ נִקְשָׁה are parallel, both being the offspring of the נִקְשָׁה. Grammatically either reading is plausible. The question for the reader is, which is most likely? For the poem to intend three stages of woe against the Philistines would mean treating it as an allegory. Isaiah, and indeed the pre-exilic prophets generally,
were not known for their allegorical prowess. Allegory was much more the territory of late prophetic literature and apocalyptic.\textsuperscript{650} The oracle is linked to some sort of political delegation, presumably occasioned by a specific event, namely the rod that was broken. That is one event, not two. It is a lot easier to read the second form and see the לֶשֶׁךָ מְשָׁפֶרָה and מְשָׁפֶרָה as a parallel pair. It has more emotional power and is artistically more satisfying. Any remaining question in the reader’s mind, then, over the mythical nature of the image, now evaporates. The naturally occurring snake, which was bad enough for Philistia, would be replaced by something far worse, and the prophet employs both an unusual word and a frightening one to make that point. This oracle is designed to scare the delegation.

So what is the rod,\textsuperscript{651} and what does the prophet have in mind as the more serious threat to Philistia? There are broadly three camps on this question. The first, and by far the most common, interpretation is that the rod and the three snakes refer to Assyrian hegemony, either generally\textsuperscript{652} or more specifically in the form of particular Assyrian monarchs.\textsuperscript{653} The second line of thought is that the rod and snakes refer to

\textsuperscript{650} Kaiser, 1974: 52.
\textsuperscript{651} I am assuming that the rod and the first snake are one and the same because of their close proximity. Elliott-Binns suggests that this connection reflects the story of Moses’ rod turning into a snake (Elliott-Binns, 1927: 140-141; cf. Hayes, 1987: 237; Motyer, 1999: 123).
\textsuperscript{652} Seitz, 1993: 137.
\textsuperscript{653} Smith, G. A., 1889: 272-273. Kellner’s commentary on Isaiah (1895) does not specifically discuss the Seraphim but since the entire premise of his book is that Assyria is the main subject (the frontispiece quotation is “Ah, Assyria, the rod of mine anger”), we may safely assume that he also took this line. Cf. also Skinner 1896: 119; Condamin, 1905: 45; Wade, 1911: 104-105; König, 1926: 187; Roberts, L. G. A., 1931: 43; Kissane, 1941: 179; Muckle, 1960: 58-59; Mauchline, 1962: 144-145; Young, 1965 Vol. 1: 450-451; Auveray, 1972: 165-166; Clements, 1980: 149; Jensen, 1984: 152; Brueggemann, 1998: 136. Allan asserts that the broken rod is most likely to be Sennacherib (Allan, 1930: 84-85). Watts and Donner take the line that the second two snakes represent the same person, namely Sargon (Donner, 1964: 110-113; Watts, 2005: 106). Fohrer thinks that the broken rod is either an Assyrian King, or the occasion of a Philistine delegation to invite Hezekiah to enter an anti-Assyrian alliance (Fohrer, 1960 Vol. 1: 184-185). Hanno of Gaza rebelled against Assyrian rule in 722-720 (and Gaza fell forthwith) as did Ashdod in 713-711 (Wildberger, 1965 Vol. 2: 93-94). This series of events would fit with the death of Shalmaneser V in 722, which could also be the year of Ahaz’s death.
the Judean monarchy.\textsuperscript{654} The third is that there is a cosmic aspect to the poem which is
asserting Yhwh’s authority in the situation.\textsuperscript{655}

There is some difficulty of identifying which Assyrian kings or which
Assyrian campaigns could be relevant.\textsuperscript{656} While Assyrian advances in the region are
well documented, as are the deaths of its monarchs, no Assyrian king is named in this
text and no battles are cited. The tidiest solution is to date the death of Ahaz to the
same year as the death of Shalmaneser V (722), which coincides with Hanno of
Gaza’s rebellion (722-720).\textsuperscript{657} An alternative possibility would be a Philistine
delegation asking for an anti-Assyrian alliance following Assyrian military success in
the region,\textsuperscript{658} the rod being wielded rather than broken. Either way, this Assyrian
interpretation is supported by the reference to the north, the direction from which the
invading forces would come.\textsuperscript{659}

The second suggestion is that the prophet is referring to Judean kings. The
superscription would suggest this, and the death of a Judean king would be a natural

\textsuperscript{654} This was the line taken by Eusebius of Caesarea in chapter 69 of his commentary (Ziegler, 1975:
106). Cf. also Hayes, 1987: 237. Motyer suggests that the rod was David himself, David having been
\textsuperscript{655} Quinn-Miscall, 1993: 51. Quinn-Miscall points out that the people rejoice over a broken rod in Isa.
9: 2-7, which would suggest non-Israelite oppressors, but the birth of a new hope in that oracle would
presumably be Israeliite. If these two oracles were to be linked, it would have to be assumed that the rod
in 14: 29 is an unnamed non-Israelite aggressor, presumably Assyria in some form, but that the snakes
were not. Unfortunately this would be a circular argument. However, it is worth noting that in addition
to the broken rod in both oracles (9: 4; 14: 29) there is also the fiery judgement of Yhwh (תֵּפְסֵי - 9: 4,
14: 29). This strengthens the argument somewhat, although not necessarily with the result of a
cosmic interpretation.
\textsuperscript{656} The three candidates are Tiglath-Pileser III, Shalmaneser V and Sargon II (\textit{ANET} 284-288). The
death of Tiglath-Pileser c.727 is potentially the closest date to the death of Ahaz (Oswalt, 1986: 331),
but this is hardly satisfying. The problem is compounded by the fact that the date of Ahaz’ death is not
exactly certain either (Childs, 2001: 128).
\textsuperscript{657} I am grateful to Prof. Day for this suggestion. The biblical chronology would therefore be Ahaz d.
722, Hezekiah (722-695), Manasseh (695-641), Amos (641-639), Josiah (639-609). This is not a
perfect solution since Hezekiah is said to reign twenty-nine years (2 Kgs. 18: 2), but it solves most of
the dating issues.
\textsuperscript{658} Fohrer, 1960 Vol. 1: 184-185.
\textsuperscript{659} Oswalt, 1986: 333.
occasion for a diplomatic mission from a neighbouring state. The note about the death of Ahaz suggests some connection between him and the rod that was broken. If the were Ahaz, then the other two snakes would either both be Hezekiah, or one would be Hezekiah and the other would be his unborn son. It is worth noting that the three generations interpretation makes less sense when Hezekiah’s son was not even a twinkle in his father’s eye. Nor would the prophet ingratiate himself with the new, twenty-five year old king by suggesting that his as yet unplanned son would be greater than him. The problem with the Judean interpretation is that there is no reason to believe that Ahaz was ever a force to be reckoned with in Philistia. The one reference by the Chronicler (2 Chron. 26: 6-7) to Uzziah’s success in this area hardly amounts to a major event in Philistine politics, when compared with Assyrian occupation of the region. Some have tried to get round this problem by suggesting that the oracle refers to the house of David, and hearkening back to the origins of the monarch when Israelite-Philistine relations were at their worst. This idea, however, does not fit the specific historical context suggested by the superscription and the final verse. The other problem with this theory is the reference to the north: Judean kings would hardly be a threat from that direction. If this reference is treated as a proper noun, Zaphon, and referring to Zion, then this objection would be overcome. The

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660 Cf. David’s disastrous delegation to the Ammonites on the occasion of the death of their king. See below, n. 669.
661 It is strange that the death of Ahaz is mentioned if it is the death of another that is important (Oswalt, 1986: 332).
662 Manasseh was not born until Hezekiah has been king for some seventeen years (2 Kgs. 18: 2; 21: 2).
663 Stacey, 1993: 109. Blenkinsopp’s argument that the prophet would be unlikely to compare a Judean king to a snake (Blenkinsopp, 2000: 292) does not allow for the positive side of snakes, nor for their use as personal names ( – 1 Chron. 4: 22; – 2 Sam. 17: 25, 27; – Exod. 6: 23; Num. 1: 7, 2; 3; 7; 12; 17; 10; 14; Ruth 4: 20; 1 Chron. 2: 10, 11; cf. Schneider, 1909-1912: 17-18).
664 Lowth, 1995: 99. Lowth’s interpretation is that Uzziah is the first snake, Ahaz the second and Hezekiah the third. Although well before the modern period (Lowth’s work was first published in 1778) his interpretation still merits noting even though it is rather odd, since Ahaz was Uzziah’s grandson.
reference to Zaphon at 14: 13 is widely acknowledged to be the divine dwelling place rather than the compass point. However, the reference to ranks of soldiers in 14: 31 does suggest a human source. Alternatively, Ahaz’s conciliatory attitude to Assyria (2 Kgs. 16: 7-10) could make him a symbol of Assyrian hegemony. There was a subtle change in this attitude under Hezekiah. He was forced to conciliate Sennacherib (2 Kgs. 18: 13-16), while Isaiah was prophesying disaster for the Assyrian threat (2 Kgs. 19: 20-31). There are textual difficulties in the accounts of the Assyrian invasion and difficulties in identifying when it might have taken place, but the presentation of Hezekiah and Isaiah is consistent: Hezekiah is doing what he can, practically, to put off the Assyrian threat, while Isaiah is preaching the sovereignty of Yhwh over the whole situation. This difference in attitude may be reflected in this oracle as well.

The third suggestion is that the oracle is cosmic.\textsuperscript{666} The supremacy of Yhwh and Zion is important in Isaiah, but bears little relation to the harsh political realities of the day. The reference to the north in this context is less significant, since Yhwh’s authority can come from anywhere, be it Zaphon or the compass point to which it refers.

It seems likely that there are some elements of all three interpretations in this, and that this is made possible by the prophet’s ambivalent approach to the Assyrian threat. This oracle has a number of different layers to it. The top layer refers to the Judean kings Ahaz and Hezekiah. Ahaz (and behind him, Shalmaneser V, if they died the same year) is the rod that was broken. The rod (םֵּסֶד) in Isaiah is primarily Assyrian (9: 3 ET 4; 10: 5, 15, 24; 30: 31).\textsuperscript{667} However, all the references to the

\textsuperscript{666} While not stepping into the realms of the cosmic, Kaiser approaches it by seeing verse 29 as messianic (Kaiser, 1974: 51).

\textsuperscript{667} It is a Judean King in 11: 4, but this may well be a late text. It is also Babylonian in 14: 5, but one would hardly date this to the eighth century, so it is not relevant.
Assyrian as the rod occur in the context of criticism of Assyria. Yhwh yields the rod of Assyria, not the other way round, and, because of Assyria’s abuses, that rod will be broken. It was a negative, ungodly rod. This movement from seeing Assyria as a valid agent of Yhwh’s will to seeing Assyria as the great oppressor is reflected more generally in the treatment of Assyria in Isaiah 1-39. The more positive line occurs during the reign of Ahaz (7: 17, 18, 20; 8: 4, 7), naturally enough, given how indebted Ahaz was to Assyria for getting the Syro-Ephraimite alliance off his back. Thereafter, and particularly during Sennacherib’s siege of Jerusalem (Isa. 36-37), Assyria is the great aggressor whom Yhwh keeps at bay. The oracle in 14: 28-32 can refer to both Yhwh and Assyria, depending on what the hearer believes. Although it refers to a broken rod, which might be Assyria, unlike Assyria the rod is morally neutral, possibly reflecting Isaiah’s view of Ahaz as the legitimate, if rather tiresome (Isa. 7: 13), custodian of Yhwh’s place of authority during the Syro-Ephraimite crisis, tainted as this was by Ahaz’ pro-Assyrian policy. The rod is Assyrian, but in the guise of Ahaz, the Assyrian puppet.

Underlying this top layer is a second layer which asserts the authority of Yhwh over the international situation. Yhwh reigns from Zion and, although apparently contradicted by the Realpolitik, he is in charge of affairs. This point is important for two reasons. Firstly, it provides a rationale for the political boast that Hezekiah would have any sway over Philistia. Clearly such a situation never occurred, but this oracle is rhetorical. Secondly, the international situation was in turmoil, with the northern Kingdom of Israel changing from being a real threat to the Judean state to a non-

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668 Williamson, however, argues that the references to Assyria being Yhwh’s rod are intended to undermine a misplaced Judaean nationalism (Williamson, 2008: 26, 32).
existent entity in the space of a few years. Hezekiah’s political entourage could have been forgiven for having ambitions which came to nothing in due course. The prophet would be merely expressing that ambition in theological terms.\(^{669}\)

The LXX version has made a number of changes to the oracle, but, while being substantial, they do not impinge upon the discussion of the מִלְתָּאָה מְנַעֵם. The Philistines are now Gentiles more generally (οἱ ἀλλόφυλοι). The diplomatic delegation have become βασιλείας ἣμας ἔθνος. The threat still comes from the north, but the cosmic interpretation is suggested rather than a specific political one, so this does not present a problem. As regards מִלְתָּאָה מְנַעֵם, LXX translates it as ὕπερτόμενον. As in Isa. 30: 6 it is a noun, a type of snake, whether real or mythical.

Isa. 14: 29 refers to a flying snake, the מִלְתָּאָה מְנַעֵם, which represents Yhwh’s authority, as wielded by the newly crowned king, Hezekiah. It is a classic piece of prophetic and political posturing in a volatile international situation. The home of the oracle is Zion,\(^{670}\) but there is enough in it that is potentially cosmic for the

\(^{669}\) I would like to propose a third, speculative, interpretation, which I do not believe has been suggested before. The occasion of a diplomatic delegation from Philistia to Jerusalem on the occasion of the death of Ahaz was similar to the context of David’s disastrous delegation to the Ammonite King, Hanun (2 Sam. 10: 1-5). Hanun made a huge political gaff by abusing David’s diplomats and sending them back half naked. As part of the political archive in Jerusalem, whether fictional or not, and at a time when confidence in the Jerusalemite house of David was high, it is quite plausible that this story was known to the literary elite, “Hezekiah’s men” (Prov. 25: 1), including the prophet. I would like to suggest that the reference in this oracle to the מִלְתָּאָה, with its nasty offspring, could refer to that particular story, since the name of Hanun’s father was מִלְתָאָה. In both texts מִלְתָּאָה is the deceased king. (Schneider, 1909-1912: 17-18 argues that the use of this name suggests that snakes were seen as positive. Cf. also the place names, מִלְתָּאָה - “dragon’s / serpent’s well” Neh. 2: 13 - and מִלְתָּאָה - possibly “stone of the snake” 1 Kgs. 1: 9 - and the general argument that serpent worship originated in Jebusite culture – Rowley, 1939: 137; Seebass, 1993 Vol. iv/2.5: 324; Davies, E. W., 1995: 215-216.) In both texts a diplomatic delegation has been sent on the occasion of the death of that king. In both texts the delegation is sent away with a flea in its ear by the dead king’s son or his officials. It is amusing to speculate (and I must emphasize that this suggestion amounts to no more than speculation) that, when the prophet used the word מִלְתָּאָה, the civil servants in Hezekiah’s court could have picked up that he was making a rather smutty joke at the Philistine diplomats’ expense. They, of course, would have been none the wiser!

interpretation of נָעַר not to matter.\textsuperscript{671} It is possible to read v. 29 as referring to Ahaz and Hezekiah with v. 31 referring to Yhwh’s action through the Assyrian threat.\textsuperscript{672} However, there are important connections between this oracle and the vision of Isaiah in chapter 6.

First of all there is the superscription. Isa. 6: 1 and 14: 28 are the only places in the Hebrew Bible where this formula occurs: “In the year that King X died” followed by the verb.\textsuperscript{673} Secondly, both of these oracles can be dated to the time of Isaiah. Thirdly, they both contain references to at least one winged נָעַר. Fourthly, they are focused on Zion and the throne of Yhwh. Fifthly, they both contain references to smoke (לֹא) as part of Yhwh’s manifestation (cf. also 4: 5).\textsuperscript{674} Whatever the political interpretation of Isa. 14: 28-32, the connection with Isa. 6 is strong. This means the reader has to take seriously the idea that the שְׁרֶשׁ מְנַשֶּׁשׁ of Isa. 14: 29 and 30: 6 is the same thing that Isaiah saw in Isa. 6: 2, 6, namely fantastic winged snakes.

\textit{Isaiah 6: 2, 6}

\textbf{Isaiah 6: 2-4}

כַּשְּרֵפָּשׁ בָּנֹתֵים, יַעֲשֵׂה יָבִא בְּנֹתֵי בֶּנָּה יַעֲשֶׂה יָבִא שְׁרֶשֶׁת בֹּרְשֵׁית, יִתֵּן אֵלֶּיהָ יִתֵּן אֵלֶּיהָ שָׁרֵפֵם שִׁמְשֹׁת שָׁרְפֵם מִשְׁמַרְתָּם בְּכִלָּתָם שָׁרְפֵם מִשְׁמַרְתָּם בְּכִלָּתָם.

\textbf{Isaiah 6: 6}

גָּזִיתוֹת לָלַחְתָּם מְשָׁרָה מְשָׁרָה מְשָׁרָה מְשָׁרָה מְשָׁרָה מְשָׁרָה.

\textsuperscript{671} This fits with Irwin’s consideration that נָעַר in this context could be Zaphon, but that the threat is still Assyrian (Irwin, 1928: 83-86).

\textsuperscript{672} Sweeney, 1996: 238.

\textsuperscript{673} Wildberger notes the similarity but without drawing this conclusion (Wildberger, 1965 Vol. 2: 88). Kaiser emphasises the fact that no nation is named (Kaiser, 1974: 51), but then neither are any other oracles given on the occasion of a political delegation. Oswalt notes that only three oracles in Isaiah are dated - 6: 1, 14: 28; 20: 1-2 (Oswalt, 1986: 331).

\textsuperscript{674} Christensen, 1976: 398; Beuken, 2003: 172. This connection would be strengthened if we accept that נָעַר refers to Zion, the place where the smoke originates in Isa. 6: 3. Motyer, 1993: 147-148 ascribes the smoke to the approaching army which robs it of any theophanic power.
Isaiah 6: 2-4 Seraphs were in attendance above him; each had six wings: with two they covered their faces, and with two they covered their feet, and with two they flew. 3 And one called to another and said: “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory.” 4 The pivots on the thresholds shook at the voices of those who called, and the house filled with smoke.

Isaiah 6: 6 Then one of the seraphs flew to me, holding a live coal that had been taken from the altar with a pair of tongs.

Finally we turn to the main Seraphim references.\(^{675}\) Whatever the Seraphim were, there is no justification for treating these references in isolation from Isa. 14: 29; 30: 6. The vision in chapter 6 is clearly something metaphysical and, as such, allowances need to be made for incongruities and dream-like contradictions.\(^{676}\) But there are some further questions to be cleared up first.

Was Isaiah in the Temple?

It has been suggested that the vision was not of the Temple but of the heavenly palace,\(^{677}\) since כְּפַרְפַּר can mean either, of which the earthly Temple was the copy

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\(^{675}\) Almost all commentators see this vision as original to the eighth-century prophet. Eichrodt dates it to either 747 or 735 (Eichrodt, 1960: 17). However, his placing of the text at the beginning of the book (Eichrodt, 1960: 13) is unjustified, even if one were to posit that the vision took place at the beginning of Isaiah’s prophetic ministry, a supposition which is by no means certain. An exception to this early dating is Whitley, but his argument, that the awkward grammar of Isa. 6: 1 suggests a late date, is very weak (Whitley, 1959: 38-39).

\(^{676}\) This point is frequently made by commentators: e.g. Delitzsch, 1866: 112; Cheyne, 1880: 35-36. Cheyne sees the visions of Isaiah as “a gracious proportion between the revelation vouchsafed and the mental state of the person receiving it.” He contrasts this doctrine, which is accepted by “even” orthodox critics in Germany, with a more fanciful poetic trend of interpretation in England, citing the poetry of William Blake as an example of the latter. Interestingly this reference to the poet is omitted in later editions of his commentary. Also cf. Duhm, 1892: 43. Eichrodt suggests that the Seraphim are a psychological representation of the heavenly equivalent of the Cherubim (Eichrodt, 1960: 21-22).

\(^{677}\) König, 1926: 89-90. He argues that if Isaiah meant the earthly Temple he would have spoken of Cherubim rather than Seraphim, which is curious logic. Haran, on the other hand concludes that he cannot have been speaking of the Cherubim because he was not in the Temple (Haran, 1977: 387). Logically this makes more sense, even if we do not agree with Haran’s premise. Brueggemann, 1998: 58, also sees it as the heavenly throne room.
(Exod. 25: 9, 40).\textsuperscript{678} However, there are several points which suggest that this vision is based upon the earthly Temple.\textsuperscript{679} Yhwh’s robe filled the sanctuary, which could not be the heavenly one, since there would be no room for the rest of Yhwh. An architectural term is used, סָפָר הָאֹהֶל.\textsuperscript{680} There is a logical progression from the inner part of the Temple to the vestibule: God’s throne (Isa. 6: 1) to the רֹאשׁ (Isa. 6: 1) to the threshold (Isa. 6: 4) to the דַּרְכּ (Isa. 6: 4).\textsuperscript{681} The prophet is conscious of his physical presence in the midst of the people.\textsuperscript{682} The mention of the altar, presumably of incense, suggests the earthly sanctuary. The throne of Yhwh could be seen as physically present in the Temple according to the enthronement interpretation of the Cherubim formula.\textsuperscript{683} However, since the Seraphim are part of a theophany, something particularly suggested by the smoke (cf. Isa 4: 5; Ezek 10: 4; Exod 14: 19),\textsuperscript{684} it is possible that additional features may be included which are not from the Temple.

\textsuperscript{678} Delitzsch saw the vision as spiritual, but of the heavenly temple as in Amos 9: 1 (Bergler points out that not only is the shaking of the Temple similar to this verse, but also the fact that Yhwh is standing by the altar in it, the same altar from which the Seraph takes the coal – Bergler, 2000: 469 – one might also add that, as part of that vision Yhwh sends a snake out as punishment – Amos. 9: 3, cf. Maneschg, 1981: 73); Ezek. 8-11; Acts 22: 17 (Delitzsch, 1866: 113). Cf. also Smith, G. A., 1889: 62; Duhm, 1892: 43; Skinner, 1896: 43; Fohrer, 1960 Vol. 1: 22. Wade assumes that Isaiah was in the court in front of the Temple (Wade, 1911: 39). Other commentators continued to assert that he was in the Temple itself: Roberts, L. G. A., 1931: 17; Kissane, 1941: 74. Others still are agnostic: Young, 1965 Vol. 1: 236.

\textsuperscript{679} Williamson, 2005: 124-126.

\textsuperscript{680} Isa. 6: 4. LXX ἱππόθυρον suggests the top of the door posts. MT suggests the entire doorway.

\textsuperscript{681} This contradicts Morgenstern’s ideas that the sanctuary was open (Morgenstern, 1938: 369 - otherwise Isaiah would not have been able to see inside it), and that the shaking of the threshold suggests Yhwh’s entry into the Temple (Morgenstern, 1938: 371, n. 126).


\textsuperscript{683} See Chapter 4, above.

\textsuperscript{684} Meredith, 1860: 46; Kissane, 1941: 74; Moye, 1990: 597-598; Eslinger, 1995: 160-161. Smith’s interpretation of the smoke, as the “mist which ever arises where holiness and sin touch each other” is edifying but hardly justified (Smith, G. A., 1889: 69). Nor is Clements’ statement that it “must” be the incense (Clements, 1980: 75; cf. Oswalt, 1986: 182; Stacey, 1993: 43): nowhere is אִשָּׁר used of incense (Williamson, 2005: 136). Leupold sees it as a symbol of the wrath of God (Leupold, 1977: 133). Day, following Duhm and others, sees the smoke as emanating from the Seraphim (Day, 1979a: 149). Levenson suggests that the final line of the Seraphim’s song should be translated “the fullness of the world is his glory.” Just as the smoke is his glory in the Temple, so the fullness of the world is his glory elsewhere (Levenson, 1984: 289-290).
Where Were the Seraphim in the Vision?

According to MT, the Seraphim were standing above Yhwh. LXX says they were standing around Yhwh.\textsuperscript{685} The end of 6: 2, however, says that they flew, and indeed one flies down to Isaiah. Were they standing at one point and then flying at another?\textsuperscript{686} It has been objected that, since Yhwh’s train filled the Temple, they would have been standing on it\textsuperscript{687} This takes the description too literally, though, and it should be remembered that this was a visionary experience. The most common solution to this issue is to say that they were standing in attendance, much as a cup-bearer would be standing behind the seated dignitary ready to serve if required. In that sense they would be both above and around, “standing” and flying.\textsuperscript{688} This point is significant for the discussion of whether they might be inspired by the Cherubim.\textsuperscript{689}

How Many Seraphim Were There?

Origen, following his Jewish teacher, believed that there were only two,\textsuperscript{690} which he interpreted as the second and third persons of the Trinity.\textsuperscript{691} Two protecting

\textsuperscript{685} If this is an intentional alteration (Wildberger, 1965 Vol. 1: 249) this may be motivated by a desire to clarify the apparent contradiction between standing and flying, or by a desire to harmonise with the surrounding Cherubim frescos, or because it was considered improper for the Seraphim to be above the deity.

\textsuperscript{686} This paradox is discussed in Blowers, 1992: 160.

\textsuperscript{687} Dillmann, 1890: 55-56. Duhm rejects this idea: Duhm, 1892: 44-45.


\textsuperscript{689} See below, pp. 186-188.

\textsuperscript{690} For those in the modern period who cite this cf. Krauss, 1892: 154.

\textsuperscript{691} Origen, De Principiis 1: 3, 4; 4: 1. 26. Cf. also Augustine, To Januarius 16: 29.
deities were common in ancient Near Eastern iconography. Linguistically, it has been argued that the Seraphim are plural, and that they would have been dual in form if there were only two. However, the two carved Cherubim in the Temple (1 Kgs. 6: 23) are not dual either. The lack of the definite article on Seraphim may imply more than two. However, the most natural reading of Isa. 6: 3 is that there are two because of the singular verbs יִנַּסֵּיעַיִּים and יִנֶּשַּׁע, combined with יִנַּשֵּיעַיִּים יִנֶּשַּׁע. Elsewhere this idiom refers to two individuals (1 Kgs. 3: 23) or two camps (Exod. 14: 20), but it can be used of larger groups (1 Kgs. 22: 20). Isa. 6: 6, “one of the seraphs”, is inconclusive either way. In any case 1QIsa has a plural form for יִנַּסֵּיעַיִּים but reverts to singular for יִנֶּשַּׁע. The fact that this question is inconclusive opens up a further one: if there were potentially more than two Seraphim could there have been a host of them?

Were the Seraphim the Heavenly Host, Members of the Divine Court?

Central to this argument is the similarity between Isa. 6 and the vision of Micaiah ben Imlah in 1 Kgs. 22: 19-22. In both passages the prophet has a vision of Yhwh’s throne room, Yhwh’s hosts are mentioned (1 Kgs. 22: 19; Isa. 6: 3, 5), the royal court is present and the question is asked “Who will go?” (1 Kgs. 22: 20; Isa. 6:

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692 Keel, 1977: 115. For instance there were two serpents on Tutankhamon’s headgear, and two winged serpents on the arms of his throne (ANEP, 415-417).
693 Gray, G. B., 1912: 105; G-K 126i.
694 Vg. et clamabant alter ad alterum implies two. Cf. Gray, G. B., 1912: 107-108. Qt has a plural verb here, revealing an assumption by the writer or editor that there were more than two Seraphim.
695 Gray, G. B., 1949: 105. The number of the Seraphim is not affected by the fact that the verb has a continuous sense (Muckel, 1960: 25). Fohrer says that the Seraphim could be a multitude but in two choirs (Fohrer, 1960 Vol. 1: 23; cf. also Young, 1965 Vol. 1: 241).
696 Kaiser, 1972: 76 opts for more than two.
8). Both prophets describe God’s deception (1 Kgs. 22: 22; Isa. 6: 9-10). Also, the
dynamic of the vision is similar to Isa. 6: Micaiah, by reporting what he has seen,
effectively gives the game away, telling Ahab that he has been deceived, but it makes
no difference to the outcome. Ahab listens, but does not understand (Isa. 6: 9). On the
other hand the spirits in Micaiah’s vision are the ones who offer suggestions to
Yhwh’s question rather than the prophet.\textsuperscript{698} The hosts are standing to Yhwh’s right
and left, rather than above him, reflecting the LXX positioning of the Seraphim.

That the Seraphim were at least part of the heavenly host is an attractive
suggestion, but what form did they take? If the discussion of the other Seraph
references is anything to go by, it is logical to assume that they are winged snakes. In
doing this I acknowledge the importance of the suggestion that the winged snakes of
Egyptian provenence may have inspired the prophet.\textsuperscript{699} However, while Egyptian
influence on the Phoenician designs of the Solomonic Temple is generally recognised,
none of the biblical descriptions of the Temple decoration and furnishings make any
mention of snakes at all. If these decorations did exist, one would have to explain their
absence from the written texts. It could be argued that the writers were offended by
them. Clements’ suggestion that the uraeus existed on thrones but not in the Temple
does not solve the problem,\textsuperscript{700} since then we would have to account for their
transference from the secular to the sacred realm. The evidence for the Egyptian link
is, at best, circumstantial. The existence of Nerushtan, and the story of its creation by
Moses, are much stronger candidates as inspiration for Isaiah’s vision.

\textsuperscript{698} Knierim, 1968: 51.
Jacob, E., 1987: 99 (although Jacob does not see the Seraphim in Isa. 6 as snakes); Milgrom, 1989:
173-174, 460. See above, pp. 25-27.
So the Seraphim are snakes, but where have the extra features which Isaiah describes come from? They have six wings. They have feet, hands and faces. They have human voices. They apparently speak Hebrew. (In itself this latter point does not tell against them being snakes, since the serpent in Gen. 3 is also a Hebrew speaker.) Many have argued that these features alone preclude the serpentine form. However, this argument will not do. There is enough archaeological and literary evidence to show that mixed beings could include serpentine elements and still retain the necessary human and ornithological features that Isaiah describes. In addition, one can plead the argument of visionary originality. If the arguments presented above for dating and dependence hold good, Isa. 6 is the earliest of the references to winged Seraphim, with Isa. 14: 29 directly referring to it and Isa. 30: 6, or at least one version

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701 Assuming that this is a distributive dual (Emerton, 2000: 196; G-K 88f; 134q), and not six pairs of wings as in the fifteenth and seventeenth-century MSS of *Apocalypse of Abraham* 23:5 (the fourteenth-century Slavonic Codex Sylvester correctly numbers them as three pairs). Is it possible that Beucken is suggesting six pairs? – “Sechs Flügelpare hatte ein jeder” – (Beucken, 2003: 160). Qa’s four wings is either a mistake (Wildberger suggests haplography - Wildberger, 1965 Vol. 1: 249) or a deliberate change influenced by the description of the Cherubim in Ezekiel. The ubiquity of winged creatures (Miller, 1967: 416) makes arguments for or against connecting Seraphim and Cherubim rather weak. 702 Unless, like Harry Potter, we assume that Isaiah was a Parselmouth (Rowling, 1998: 146). 703 Gawler argued that they could not have been serpentine because of their ability to praise God (Gawler, 1851: 46-47). Nevertheless he did assert that they were linked with the brazen serpent in that the latter represented Christ while the multitude of Seraphim represented Christians (Gawler, 1851: 33-34). Cf. also Skipwith, 1907: 697; May, 1936a: 198, n. 5 (May argues that they are positive in Isa. 6 and negative elsewhere); Jensen, 1984: 86. Young states that they are “personal, spiritual beings, ... they have faces, feet and hands, they employ human speech and understand moral concepts” (Young, 1965 Vol. 1: 239-240). 704 See above, pp. 25-27. In later Jewish and Christian writings animals and mixed beings are seen offering praise to God (Rev. 4: 6-8; 12: 3-9; cf. Ezek: 1; 10; 1 Enoch 61: 10-13 cf. 71: 7; 2 Enoch 9: 13-14; cf. 11: 18; *Test. Isaac* 11: 5; 12: 9; *Lad. Jac.* 2: 6-13; *Par. Jer.* 9: 4). Furthermore Gen. 3: 14 presupposes that the snake in the garden of Eden was originally upright. This was the understanding of patristic writers (Josephus, *Ant.* 1: 1. 4; Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* IV Pref. 4; LAE 26; *Apo. Abr.* 23: 5). Other ancient traditions associate snakes with angels. Tertullian, An Answer to the Jews 10. While describing an Ophite document, Origen reports an epithet or description of Raphael (the archangel) as “the serpent-like”. He appears to accept the epithet as valid (Contr. Cel. VI 30). He also refers to Gnostic beliefs in “serpent-like ruling angels” (Contr. Cel. VI 37). Tertullian describes a Roman belief that the God of the Christians was a mixed being with “serpent legs, with wings sprouting from back or foot” (Tertullian, *Apology* 26). He also refers to a belief in a god, which was “goat-shaped or serpent-shaped, and winged in foot, head, and back” (Tertullian, *Ad Nationes* I 14). Pfeiffer accepted that they were “strange composite creatures” (Pfeiffer, 1938: 156). It is interesting to note the suggestions of artefacts which might be Seraphim but which do not contain any serpentine features: e.g. an Etruscan gem in the British Museum (Six, 1885: 285).
of it, referring in turn to that. 705 As with Ezekiel’s vision of the Cherubim in Ezek. 1, there is a root vision for these oracles also, namely Isa. 6.

**Was Isaiah’s Inspiration for the Seraphim in the Physical Temple?**

It is reasonable to suppose that some recognizable object inspired the vision, otherwise the readers of the account would have been as confused as the LXX translators. A number of suggestions have been made. Because of their singing duties the Seraphim have been likened to the priestly choirs in the Temple, 706 and certainly the use of snakes in personal names 707 makes this suggestion plausible. The coals from the altar may have played a part in inspiring Isaiah’s vision. Their use by the Seraph connects the two. 708

Nehushtan is the obvious candidate, 709 but since there is only one it is not perfect. Additionally, Nehushtan is not described as winged. 710 However, Day argues that Nehushtan could have had wings, 711 and that the multitude of fiery serpents could suggest more than one. 712 One might also argue that the position of the Seraphim above Yhwh reflects the position of Nehushtan on a pole (ם). 713 With the exception of Num. 26: 10, aם is always high up. 714 It is usually used with יָ֖וּנ or יָ֖וּנ: Isa. 5: 26; 11: 12 (cf. 10); 13: 2; 18: 3; 49: 22; 62: 10; Jer. 4: 6; 50: 2; 51: 12, 27. It is a

705 This may also reflect a particular interest in serpents in First Isaiah which has the most extensive serpent vocabulary in the Old Testament (Charlesworth, 2010: 444).
707 See above, n. 663.
708 Quinn-Miscall also points out the similarity of the consonants (Quinn-Miscall, 1993: 34).
711 Williamson’s argument that the Num 21 serpents “were certainly not winged” (Williamson, 2005: 131 n.19) is based on absence of evidence. However this is also true of Day’s suggestion.
712 Day, private communication.
713 Num. 21: 8; 9.
714 Levine notes that the standard would be lofty (Levine, 2000: 88).
military standard visible in battle (Ps. 60: 6 ET 4; Isa 31: 9; Jer 4: 21), it is set on a hill (Isa. 30: 17), or it is a sail on a ship’s mast (Isa 33: 23; Ezek. 27: 7). 4Q525 15, 3\(^\text{715}\) emphasises this aspect of the story. As regards the lack of wings, Milgrom has drawn attention to an eighth-century bronze bowl from Assyria, which has engraved on its rim a winged snake perched on a standard “precisely as one would imagine it” upon recollecting Num. 21: 9.\(^\text{716}\) There are in fact two winged snakes on poles (one each either side of a winged scarab on another pole), and they are surrounded by two winged sphinxes (leonine with human heads). This makes for an interesting comparison for the supposed relationship between a pair of Seraphim and the pair of Cherubim in the sanctuary. The snakes may not have been described as winged, but it does not rule the idea out entirely.

**What About the Cherubim?**

Could the Seraphim be the living equivalents of them?\(^\text{717}\) The texts which describe the Temple Cherubim are unclear enough for the two large olive wood Cherubim to be imagined as standing upright behind the Ark and Mercy Seat (see Chapter 3). Similarly, if the serpentine interpretation of the Seraphim in Isa. 6 is set aside, the role of the Seraphim as royal attendants could also put them in this

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\(^{715}\) שארב יבשחלה ויהולא חפץ עליא (Yehoshua, Psalms 80)

\(^{716}\) Milgrom, 1989: 460. Charlesworth believes that this object is plunder, brought back from Israel by Tiglath-pileser III or Sennacherib, because of the Hebrew name inscribed on it (Charlesworth, 2010: 16). For an image of this artefact see Barnett, 1967: 3, fig. 2.

\(^{717}\) A chapel frieze from the eighth century and found in Megiddo (Keel, 1977: 102, image 84) shows two snakes above and a Cherub/sphinx below. Arguments against identifying them include these. The Seraphim are above rather than below (Nordell, 1889: 344-345; Efros, 1951: 374). Smith points out that the Ark is not mentioned in Isaiah’s vision (Smith, G. A., 1889: 63). Whether this is significant for the idea that the Seraphim were therefore replacements of the Cherubim is debatable. Others who identify the Seraphim and Cherubim include Eichrodt, 1960: 21-22; Gray, J., 1961: 14; Mauchline, 1962: 90 (possibly); Houston, 2000: 264-265 (although his argument that they should be identified because they are mixed creatures is not very strong, since the number of different types of mix precludes any automatic identification of one with another).
position.\textsuperscript{718} Furthermore, it could also be argued that the wings were covering Yhwh’s face and feet just as the Cherubim cover the Ark, in which case their role would be, at least in part, apotropaic.\textsuperscript{719} One might add the argument that the gold-plated Cherubim glinting in the morning sunlight could be described as burning.\textsuperscript{720} Smoke is part of the storm theophany of Ps. 18: 7-16 ET 6-15 (cf. verse 9 ET 8 /// 2 Sam. 22: 9),\textsuperscript{721} which specifically suggests a connection with the Cherubim. Alternatively, if the reader is imagining more than two Seraphim, the Cherubim frescos in the Temple would be numerous enough to serve as the inspiration for choirs of the figures.\textsuperscript{722}

These connections can only be made by somebody who did not understand that the Seraphim were basically winged snakes. Similarly, it is unlikely that somebody who understood Cherubim as winged sphinxes would give them the role that Isaiah sees, flying around the throne with tongs. Consequently, it seems most likely that, for Isaiah, the Seraphim were not inspired directly by the Cherubim in terms of their form. However, it seems likely that his prophetic imagination might

\textsuperscript{718} Procksch seems to take this line (Procksch, 1930: 53).
\textsuperscript{719} Jerome noted the possibility in his Commentary on Isaiah (Wilken, Christman and Hollerich, 2007: 69-70). Brueggemann, 1998: 58 describes the Seraphim as “heavenly winged servants of Yahweh in rapt attentiveness, utterly devoted to Yahweh, fluttering around the Holy One, honouring him and covering him in order to guard and enhance Yahweh’s holiness,” while the translation he uses on the previous page of his book implies that their wings cover themselves. Delitzsch compares the Seraphim covering their own feet to the Cherubim’s wings covering their backs – Ezek. 1: 11 (Delitzsch, 1866: 113). Whitley (Whitley, 1959: 38-39) sees the following additional similarities between the Seraphim of Isa. 6 and the Cherubim of Ezekiel’s visions: their thundering voices (Isa. 6: 4; Ezek. 1: 24-25), and the cloud filling the house (Isa. 6: 4; Ezek. 10: 3-4). Auvray is agnostic on this point (Auvray, 1972: 87). Eslinger’s idea that they are covering Yhwh’s pudenda is rather offensive (Eslinger, 1995: 160-161). Keel points out that “head – feet” imagery in Hebrew may be a phrase expressing the totality of the body (Keel, 1977: 75, cf. Lev. 13: 12). Against this, it should be noted that Isa. 6: 2 refers to the “face” and not the head.
\textsuperscript{720} Lachman, 1968: 71-72.
\textsuperscript{721} Day, 1979a: 149.
\textsuperscript{722} While not equating them and rejecting the idea that they were angelic beings, Cheyne did see both Cherubim and Seraphim as guardians (Cheyne, 1880: 36-37). Toy linked them (Toy, C. H., 1881: 63-64). Nordell “seemed to possess a more independent, self-conscious personality. They appear, not simply as the fiery guardians of the divine holiness, but as exalted spirits whose unceasing employment is the proclamation of this holiness.” (Nordell, 1889: 344-345). Dillmann separated them on the basis of form and function (Dillmann, 1890: 55-56).
have been inspired by the form of Nehushtan combined with the multiplicity of mixed beings decorating the Temple, and that he saw the hosts of Yhwh in semi-serpentine form. The fact that the people had been offering incense to Nehushtan (2 Kgs. 18: 4) shows that Isaiah’s imagination existed in a live cultic situation where it was commonly believed that the bronze serpent represented a heavenly reality. If the dating of Num. 21: 4-9 to the period just before Isaiah is correct, aspects of the snakes in that story may also be inspirational for this vision. Firstly, there is a multiplicity of living snakes which could account for the heavenly host idea. Secondly, the negative living snakes and their positive bronze counterpart reflects the awesome nature of the Seraphim in Isa. 6: 2-3 and Isaiah’s terrified response (Isa. 6: 5) as well as their medicinal action (Isa. 6: 6).\(^{223}\) The image of the burning coal, while having a positive effect, is far from comforting from Isaiah’s point of view during the administration. It is only after he has had the courage to allow his lips to be touched with the coal that his healing is announced.\(^{224}\) Thirdly, in both stories the movement of the snakes is a missionary one\(^{225}\) in response to human behaviour: in Num. 21: 4, they are sent\(^{226}\) to bite the people as a result of their persistent grumbling; in Isa. 6: 5-6 they respond to

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\(^{223}\) The debate about whether the action is purgatory or expiatory (Motyer, 1999: 72) does not affect the overall sense of the positive side of the Seraphim. (Beuken thinks it is apotropaic - Beuken, 2003: 169, 171 - which, while being a clever link to the magical interpretation of Num. 21, may be stretching a visionary experience a little too far.) Williamson, 2005:132 sees the influence of Nehushtan in the purging ritual (Isa. 6: 6-7), since it was a symbol of life and healing. For images of serpents in healing rituals: *ANE*P 657, 658, 660.

\(^{224}\) Noth notes the postive and negative aspects of the snakes in Num. 21 (Noth, 1940: 178-180; 1966: 137-138). Knierim also makes the interesting suggestion that the threefold use of נֹּשַׁע in Isaiah’s lament (Isa. 6: 5) may correspond to the threefold use of יָשָׁע by the Seraphim (Knierim, 1968: 56). Again, this reflects a direct correlation between the positive and negative aspects of the vision. I do not agree with Clements that this is a trial by ordeal (Clements, 1980: 75), since there is no sense in which Isaiah is being tested or judged. He is being cleansed or healed.

\(^{225}\) Riggins takes an unusual line on this. He links Num. 21 to Isa. 6 in that Seraphim were messengers from God in both cases, but he denies that they were snakes (Riggins, 1983: 158). Elsewhere snakes appear to do Yhwh’s bidding when he “sends” them: Deut. 32: 24b; Amos 5: 19; 9: 3 (Maneschg, 1981: 73). Similarly Yhwh sends other wild animals (Ezra 5: 17; 14: 21; Ps. 78: 45).

\(^{226}\) Leibowitz, 1980: 261-262 notes that the use of Pi’el means “released” rather than “sent.” Cf. Seebass, 1993 Vol. iv / 2.4: 313 (who notes a similar dynamic behind the serpent’s action in Gen. 3); Levine, 2000: 87.
Isaiah’s penitential cry. Fourthly, the snakes in both texts are agents of Yhwh. Fifthly, unlike the Temple paraphernalia, the snakes in Num. 21 are living beings. While it is possible for a cult object to inspire a vision of living beings, it seems easier for one living being to lead to another.

Conclusion

There is no good reason for treating the references to יִשָּׁרְאֵל as two separate groups. All the MT references are best understood as some sort of snake. The story in Num. 21: 4-9 was probably the earliest use of the term יִשָּׁרְאֵל. Isaiah of Jerusalem then made the word his own, adding wings and other features. Hands are not specifically mentioned but they are implied by the Seraph’s use of tongs. Whether the feet were feet or genitals is a matter of debate. If the latter are being referred to, then the Seraphim could have been more truly serpentine. These were members of the heavenly host that surrounded Yhwh and worshipped him. In that respect, and in that respect only, the Seraphim in Isaiah’s mind may have been connected to the Cherubim which adorned the Temple in various ways. Isaiah coined the term יִשָּׁרְאֵל הָעֵנָפוֹ and used it a couple of times in short political oracles against Philistia and Egypt.

However, Isa. 6 does not include any overt references to snakes. As such this interpretation is dependent upon the reader knowing the references elsewhere. The author (or glossator) of Deut. 8: 15 knew it. By the time of the LXX translators this knowledge was gone, as was any memory of the form of the Cherubim. At this point

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727 See Chapter 1.
729 Budd’s contention that for the Yahwist the יִשָּׁרְאֵל is “evidently a temple creature (cf. Isa. 6:2; 14:29; 30:6)” is curious (Budd, 1984: 234).
the decision was made to treat Isa. 6: 2, 6 differently and the difference stuck. This
opened up the possibility of a tradition which equated the Cherubim and Seraphim.
This tradition in turn strengthened the case for there being only two Seraphim, rather
than a multitude. The loss of serpentine identification also made it possible for later
generations to see the Seraphim and Cherubim as particular types of angels. If there
were more than two Seraphim, and they were members of the heavenly court, then,
more by luck than judgement, the followers of this tradition were not far wrong. This
conclusion is similar to that of John Watts,\(^{730}\) but it has been reached by a rather
circuitous route and with a much more interesting and diverse mental picture of the
angelic host, one which includes the features of both snakes and sphinxes. It’s angelic
life, Jim, but not as we know it.

\(^{730}\) Watts, 2005: 106.
Summary and Conclusions

Summary of Specific Arguments

In this thesis I have, for the first time, brought together a study of biblical Cherubim with a study of biblical Seraphim. It will be immediately apparent to the reader that there is considerable justification for scholars treating these two subjects separately. Anybody reading this thesis may be forgiven for wondering, by the beginning of Chapter 4, when we are ever going to get round to the Seraphim. However, I have noted a number of points of connection between them. Cherubim and Seraphim are the only winged heavenly beings in the Bible. (Angels are never specifically winged in the scriptures.) They are both associated with and able to handle fire. While the Cherubim are clearly apotropaic, the Seraphim have the potential to be so. Both have some form of cultic referrent in the Temple in Jerusalem: the Cherubim are specifically mentioned, while Nehushtan is the best candidate for the inspiration of Isaiah’s vision. The Seraphim are inherently dynamic, flying in close proximity to Yhwh, while the dynamic element is introduced in Ezekiel. Both could be seen as members of the heavenly host more generally. The biblical writers did not themselves make any overt connection between them, but I have argued that the writer of Ezek. 1 LXX does, subtly altering the text in order to facilitate this identification.

Unlike previous studies I have paid particular attention to whether we are talking about a supposed historical reality or whether we are concentrating on the mental picture of a particular writer. This is especially pertinent in Chapter 3. There I have argued that the descriptions of Cherubim in 1 Kings are designed to be faithful to a historical reality that was known to the writer. The person who describes the Mosaic
Tabernacle, on the other hand, had no Mosaic Ark and Kapporeth upon which to base those descriptions. Similarly the Chronicler had no way of knowing what the Temple Cherubim looked like. The reader should keep this in mind when looking for archaeological referents. This has led me to question whether we should look to objects like the Ahiram sarcophagus in this context.

Taking each chapter in more detail, in Chapter 1 I have argued that the prophet is in a state of anxiety. Ezekiel’s distress (whether Ezekiel is historical or a literary fiction does not really matter) is caused by the fact that Yhwh is no longer dwelling in Jerusalem. I have argued that the first eleven chapters of Ezekiel contain a consistent presentation of concentric waves of judgement, emanating out from the central point, the sanctuary which has been abandoned by Yhwh. I am not aware that this approach has been taken before. This reading has, in turn, led me to make the radical suggestion that we might be justified in reading מֶלֶךְ הַמְּטָקֵל in Ezek. 1: 4 as a reference to Jerusalem and possibly even to the sanctuary itself. Furthermore, I interpret the vision complex in Ezek. 8-11 as a series of three visions of the same thing. I note that at no point is the reader taken within the sanctuary and that the Cherubim mark the literary boundaries between each vision. Again, I believe that this is a new approach to the text.

Building on Wilson’s work which links Ezek. 28 to the High Priest, I show a connection with the tradition that the stones of the high priest’s breastplate were associated with the Cherubim in The Biblical Antiquities of Pseudo-Philo, and that this is a tradition which may account for the MT of the chapter. I posit the idea that the poem against the King of Tyre was inspired, not only by an Adamic myth which is widely acknowledged already, but also by the destruction of the Temple Cherubim and the murder of the High Priest. Having said that, I hold the majority view that the
LXX version of Ezek. 28 is more likely to represent an earlier form of the text with the Cherub as the agent of expulsion from Eden rather than the object of it.

In Chapter 2 I argue for a conscious link in the mind of the writer of Gen. 2-3 between the Garden of Eden and the Jerusalem Temple. In itself this is not a new idea. However, I argue that the position of the Cherubim is a reflection of the position of the Cherubim on the doors of the Temple. Using my approach of concentrating on the position of the writer I have argued that the writer of Ps. 18 and the writer of Gen. 2-3 were probably independent of each other, since their use of Cherubim is so different. Nevertheless I argue that the Jerusalem Temple lies behind both texts.

Chapter 3 is the most radical part of this thesis. In it I offer a new reconstruction of the two large Cherubim in the Solomonic Temple based on the description in 1 Kings. Similarly I offer a radical re-imagining of the form of the Kapporeth and its relation to the Ark. I offer some archaeological referents to illustrate my case, but my prime argument is textual, in that both reconstructions are faithful to the details of the texts in each case in a way that recent focus on particular artefacts has not been.

The conclusions of Chapter 3 lead me in Chapter 4 to question whether the ubiquity of the translation “enthroned upon the Cherubim” in modern translations of the Cherubim formula is justified. I offer an alternative translation, “enthroned among”, which is designed to bring the Temple frescos in from the cold in this respect.

Finally, in Chapter 5, I follow Joines and others in arguing for a serpentine form for the Seraphim. However, I also argue for a direct and conscious link in the mind of the writer between the Seraphim of Isa. 6: 2 and the Seraph of Isa. 14: 29.
Summary of Global Points

There are a number of conclusions that we can draw from this study of biblical Cherubim and Seraphim. Firstly, the Jerusalem Temple was central to both sets of texts. Secondly, the texts exhibit a great deal of unclarity about their actual form which is important to consider when interpreting them. Thirdly, the creativity of the writers allowed them to pull the concept of Cherub and Seraph in different and sometimes contradictory directions.

The Centrality of the Jerusalem Temple

The centrality of the Temple in Jerusalem to both Cherubim and Seraphim in the Bible is the defining context that we have discovered in this thesis. Whether living beings or cult artifacts, these creatures are bound up with the belief systems of all the writers who mention them.

In Ezekiel, teasing out from the complex textual problems some sense of order in the first eleven chapters, the centrality of Yhwh’s departure from the Temple covers most of the subject matter in those chapters. The concentric waves of judgement which Ezekiel describes have the sanctuary at their centre. Yhwh has left his defiled sanctuary and the Cherubim with him. The four creatures of Ezekiel’s visions seem to be inspired by the two large Cherubim of the Solomonic Temple. The Cherubim in the frescos and the doors of the Temple would have been destroyed in the conflagration of 586 BCE. Since they were not mentioned in the list of articles taken to Babylon it is reasonable to assume that the two large Cherubim were also destroyed at this time. The destruction of the physical Temple and the priestly hierarchy possibly leads the writer to retreat from this harsh reality into the heavenly realms where the Temple images are transformed into their heavenly equivalents.
They are dynamic and powerful, serving as the groundwork for Ezekiel’s new theology of a mobile Yhwh who dwells with the exiles.

The story of the Garden of Eden, while theologically concentrating on the nature of the human condition as represented by Adam, has behind it the imagery of the Temple. Such imagery is not uncommon in the ancient Near East, with Cherubim and sacred vegetation occurring frequently. The position of the Cherub facing east at the entrance to the garden reflects the position of the Cherubim particularly on the doors to the Jerusalem Temple.

A looser portrayal of this Adamic myth by Ezekiel also brings the Cherub into play, but in a unique way. Ezek. 28 LXX is similar to Gen. 3 in that the Cherub is without fault and has a role similar to that of the Cherub in Gen. 3. Unlike MT Ezek. 28 LXX sees the Cherub as the agent of expulsion from the garden. This probably reflects a more primitive form of the text. Ezek. 28 MT introduces a hitherto unseen aspect of the Cherub’s moral culpability which is difficult to account for. It is quite probable that this occurred due to scribal confusion over the meaning of נוֹפֵל. I have argued here, though, that this also may be a reflection on the destruction of the two large Cherubim (and indeed the other Cherubim in the Temple, since they would have burned with it).

Psalm 18 and its parallel in 2 Sam. 22 contain an overt reference to the Temple. The smoke and the coals of fire also provide a link to the Seraphim of Isa. 6, something which was also present in the description of the Cherubim in Ezek. 9-10. Cherubim and Seraphim, while being guardians of the deity, also signified the divine presence. Their theophanic role in Ezekiel, Isaiah and Psalm 18 is both dramatic and evocative.
The descriptions of the Mosaic Tabernacle are a retrospective based on the Temple or its perceived form at the time of writing. The similarity of the layout and the position of the furnishings and decoration is not coincidental. On several occasions the wording of the descriptions has been taken directly from the descriptions of the Temple in Kings.

The one set of texts which may not be derived from the Temple in their entirety is that in which the Cherubim formula is cited. It is possible that this formula had a history that antedates the Jerusalem Temple and goes back to Shiloh. However, even if that is the case, it is not unreasonable to assume that the form and decoration of that Temple was not dissimilar to the Jerusalem one, if less extravagant. If the Cherubim formula did not go back to Shiloh, the only other serious candidate as a context for this formula is the Temple in Jerusalem. If so, the associations of the formula with Shiloh are a historical retrospective, not dissimilar to that made with regard to the Mosaic Tabernacle. Either way, though, the formula is associated with the physical sanctuaries of Shiloh and Jerusalem.

Isaiah’s Seraphim are in the Temple, and most likely relate to Nehushtan which was part of the cult there before Hezekiah. It is difficult for the modern reader to imagine them as snakes, though, because their serpentine connection was discredited and the particular word which Isaiah uses seems to have been misunderstood at an early stage of its transmission. There is evidence that the LXX of Ezekiel 1 has identified them with the Temple Cherubim.

The Unclarity of the Texts

If the centrality of the Jerusalem Temple which lies behind all or nearly all of the texts is the central theme of this thesis, the writers’ lack of interest in comprehensive descriptions of them has been the dominant problem to solve. What is
the reader supposed to think while reading a description of a physical object or spiritual being which only gives tantalising pieces of the image? Certainly we have to entertain the idea that this was unimportant to the biblical writers, as well as the possibility that the form was forgotten at the time of writing.

The unclarity of Ezekiel’s visions is part of the tension between a detailed description of theophany and the author’s devotional reticence at describing the divine form. The Cherubim provide a useful buffer between the human and divine worlds which enable the writer to give a sense of the majesty and power of God, while at the same time acknowledging human inability to do it justice in any creative form. This tension is represented by the fascination which these texts have elicited in Jewish mysticism and the unease with which it has been treated by others. The tension of the confusing description in Ezek. 1, which may represent the psychological disturbance of the central character, is reduced in Ezek. 8-11. This may be due to the writer having time to reflect on it (if we follow the book’s dating literally), but also due to the resolution of the theological problem of Yhwh’s departure from Jerusalem. The writer is presenting a theological way forward, but against a background of national disaster. The tension is not completely removed, and it would be unreasonable to suppose that it should. It is merely lessened.

The unclarity of the Cherubim in Gen. 3 is less significant than in Ezekiel. While the figure is central to the plot of the story, its form is not. Very little can be read into the text on this point, and it merely remains to be said that it is unwise to try. The variety of forms in other texts makes it impossible to know what form was in the mind of the writer or the readers. This, of course, does not preclude the reader, ancient or modern, from indulging their fancy while reading. Indeed, it would be impossible
not to do so. But conclusions drawn from such speculation could not be considered secure.

Similar issues surround the description in Psalm 18. However, the parallelism of the Cherub with the clouds (Ps. 18: 11, ET 10) gives us some justification for seeing Cherubim as an embodiment of them. There would be no justification for extending this description to the other texts, albeit unless we were to associate the Cherubim with the theophanic cloud of the Mosaic Tabernacle and the Solomonic Temple.

Given the centrality of the Temple in the interpretation of both Cherubim and Seraphim, the unclarity of the descriptions of the Temple Cherubim is frustrating. Of all the texts this is the point where the reader is particularly invited to imagine what the Cherubim looked like. Unlike Ezekiel, we are talking about cult images rather than heavenly beings, so it is acceptable to look at the details. Indeed, that is what the writers imply that we should do. They give us dimensions, engineering solutions and decorative details, all of which are designed to engage the imagination of the reader, but they stop short of actual diagrams. The temptation to fill in the details is frequently too great to resist, and I have at this point made the attempt to do this. I have suggested a radical re-imagining of the nature of the two large Cherubim in the Solomonic Temple, and, following on from this, of the Mercy Seat on the Ark of the Covenant. I do not believe this has been suggested before in the form I have imagined it, but I believe it makes most sense of the descriptions of the Temple in Kings and the Tabernacle in P. That the Cherubim over the Ark formed some sort of box in both situations seems the best solution to the problems that the texts present. This challenges the status quo that a model throne was envisioned. Even if the historical
reality was a throne, there is no evidence that this was what was in the minds of the biblical writers in either case.

The unclarity of the Temple descriptions in Chronicles is for a different reason. The writer is so far removed from the historical reality that he has tried to gloss over the problems of previous texts. The attempt of the Chronicler to give some coherent description highlights how fortunate the modern interpreter is in having archaeological material to turn to. I have turned to physical artifacts to illustrate my suggestion about the Mercy Seat and the Holy of Holies, but I have not made them the controlling piece of evidence. The text is both the starting point and the end point. Nevertheless, physical models from the ancient world are invaluable in helping the reader to imagine what was being described or hinted at.

The Creativity of the Texts

The fluidity of the concept of the Cherubim begs the question of how this is so. Summary descriptions of Cherubim which assume some sort of harmonisation between texts do not satisfy. We need to account for the differences, not merely in terms of what they are, but also why they are.

I have already offered a suggestion as to why Ezekiel has changed the cult objects of the Temple into living beings, but it is not clear why they have taken the form they have, with four faces and composite features. The answer “that’s what he saw” does not really satisfy. Some sort of reference to the cult objects of the day seems most reasonable. Given the prophecy is set in Mesopotamia, it makes sense to look to the artefacts of that area to explain the differences between the Temple objects and the descriptions in Ezekiel. No exact matches have been found, even if an exact description were being offered, which it is not. Nevertheless, the statuary of Mesopotamia is a good candidate for an inspiration of the writer’s prophetic
imagination along with the cult images from Jerusalem, but the creativity of the writer should not be discounted either. The writer has brought together cult images from Jerusalem, cult objects from Mesopotamia and hammered out a unique image in the cauldron of the theological crisis of the day.

The treatment of the Cherub in the poem about the King of Tyre (Ezek. 28: 11-18) is the most imaginative in the Bible, especially if we are talking about the MT version. The very idea that a Cherub could be morally depraved is difficult to accept (although the story of the fallen angels in Gen. 6: 1-4 is not dissimilar), and yet the audacity of the idea of a sinful Cherub makes me unwilling to treat it as unimportant in its own right.

The Cherub of Eden is merely one part of the creative genius of the writer of Gen. 2-3. I believe that the writer is reworking an earlier form of the myth that is used in Ezek. 28, but that one of the figures from the Temple frescos or from the doors has been animated as part of the story. This shows that considerable literary freedom was being exercised here. Similarly in Psalm 18, the poet’s description is evocative, powerful and unique. The Cherub is a divine steed who flies like the storm clouds that herald Yhwh’s presence.

In all of these texts, Ezek. 1, 8-11; 28; Gen. 3; Ps. 18, the writers show a huge amount of freedom with objects that are central to the Jerusalem cult. The living creatures that were believed to lie behind the objects are described creatively. They are mysterious beings and it is inevitable that people should speculate about them in creative ways, beginning with the biblical writers themselves.

Something similar seems to have happened in Isa. 6. The prophet has created a description based on a model bronze snake on a pole which has captivated the imagination of generations. Six-winged, dangerous fire-carrying beings who circle the
deity and terrify the prophet are a far cry from a static object, however much it may have been associated with the very early history of the nation.

When we turn to the other writings there is less creativity. The descriptions in Kings and P of the frescos, embroidery and images of the Tabernacle and Temple are functional. The reader passes over them quickly and with little thought as to their form and function. Compared to the creative and colourful descriptions of writers of Genesis, Ezekiel, Psalm 18 and Isaiah of Jerusalem, these texts are emotionally dead. There is more concern with the simple facts of the description of the cult than with literary speculation about the heavenly realities that lie behind them. This reverence for the objects themselves is taken a stage further by the Chronicler who not only is trying to describe long forgotten cult forms, but is trying also to be faithful to difficult texts that have come down in the tradition. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that these texts have become the preserve of specialist scholars rather than popular Bible interpretation.

The Possible Identity of Seraphim

In the last Chapter, on Seraphim, their identity was investigated. While my conclusion concerning the writer’s intention is that he was describing winged snakes, based on Nehushtan, the early stage at which this connection was forgotten makes alternative candidates possible to the interpreter. It is quite possible that winged snakes were seen as part of Yhwh’s heavenly entourage, since so many of them are sent out to bite the people in Num. 21. However, their form is less important than their obedience to Yhwh and the effect of their bite on the people. If Isaiah is describing snakes, it does not matter that this is quickly forgotten, since the thrust of Isa. 6 and the message to the people whose ears will not hear and whose eyes will not see has been quoted so frequently, especially in Christian circles, that its greater influence
must be acknowledged. Jewish and Christian communities have existed for so many centuries in ignorance of the serpentine connection that we would do them a great injustice by insisting on the necessity of its inclusion now.

The Role of the Cherubim and the Seraphim

So far I have not commented in this conclusion about the role of the Cherubim and Seraphim. It is clear that the role of both beings is very similar, being primarily apotropaic. The Cherubim of Ezekiel are a frightening reminder of how powerful Yhwh is, as are those of Gen. 3 and Ps. 18. Similarly the Seraphim mark the boundary between Isaiah and the deity. In Ezek. 1, 8-11; 28 (LXX); Gen. 3; Isa. 6 both Cherubim and Seraphim, at Yhwh’s command, initiate a process of judgement. In Ezek. 9-10 and Isa. 6 this involves the handling of live coals. It is possible that the nature of Isaiah’s encounter with the Seraph’s coal is similar to that of the judgement of Jerusalem in Ezekiel. Yhwh is cleansing the sanctuary, the Temple, the city and the land. The final vision of Ezek. 48 envisions a pure land in which priestly cult cleanliness is restored. Similarly, Isaiah is being purged of his uncleanness so that he can be Yhwh’s messenger.

The oracular nature of the Cherubim and Seraphim is inherent in the prophetic texts. The prophets stand in the presence of Yhwh and see him. It is also present in Num 7: 89. There it is Moses who encounters God in between the Cherubim.

It is tempting to add another thread to the role of the Cherubim and Seraphim, namely one of devotees. Certainly the Seraphim perform a devotional role, proclaiming the holiness of Yhwh. The Cherubim do not overtly do this in the biblical texts but perhaps there is an inherent devotion in their proximity and obedience to the deity.


Areas for Further Research

During my research for this thesis, I spent considerable time looking at the early history of the interpretation of Cherubim and Seraphim. It was my original intention to include this in the thesis to illustrate how some of the themes I have described here were handled in later centuries. However, there was not space in this thesis to do them justice. A further part of my studies led me to look at the renaissance and early modern history of the interpretation of Cherubim and Seraphim since the end of the fifteenth century. Again there was not space to include the results of this here. My studies in these two areas have produced work amounting to 80,000 words. It is frustrating that I could not include these, but I have enough material to produce a second thesis on how Cherubim and Seraphim have been treated in nearly two millennia of interpretation.

The history of the interpretation of the Cherubim and Seraphim would be a helpful supplement to this thesis. I have raised questions about what constitutes a valid interpretation, given the differences between MT and LXX recensions in particular. If it is acceptable for the biblical writers to speculate in sometimes contradictory ways about the form of the Cherubim and Seraphim to the extent that at times they are irreconcilable and at others they become equated in the minds of many, why should not the modern reader do the same? I have not mentioned the putti, the little winged babies which are equated with Cherubs in art and popular imagination, since they have nothing to do with the concepts that were in the minds of the biblical writers. However, if it is uncontroversial to forget that Seraphim were snakes, and equally unproblematic that the bestial forms of the Cherubim should pass out of mind, who decides that the interpretative imagination has gone too far?
However, at this point I am fast moving into the realms of the philosophy of biblical reading and reception theory. Perhaps, before I burn my fingers on the coals of fire that lie in that sanctuary, I need to invoke some new Cherubim and Seraphim to guard the boundaries of my studies. Others may feel more able to tread those hallowed courts, but for me, I will be happy to stay outside them and merely speculate as to the form and function of the mystical objects that lie within.
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