

**‘Whoever Lost Children Lost Her Heart’: Valourised Maternal Grief in
the Hebrew Bible**

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Short Abstract

Recent studies on ancient Israel’s mortuary culture have shown that mourning rites were not restricted to the occasions of death, burial and subsequent grief but were, in fact, implemented in diverse contexts. In this thesis I am looking at biblical traditions in which these solemn practices contributed, or sought to contribute to various forms of social restoration. More specifically, I explore the stories of biblical grieving mothers who are placed at key junctures in Israel’s history to renegotiate the destinies not only of their own children, dead or lost, but also those of larger communities, i.e. family lines, ethnic groups, or entire nations. Since ‘the social and ritual dimensions of mourning are intertwined and inseparable...[and] rites in general are a context for the creation and transformation of social order’, these women use the circumstance of their ‘interrupted’ motherhood as a platform for a kind of grief-driven socio-political activism. Since maternal bereavement is generally understood as the most intense of all types of loss and was seen as archetypal of all mourning in ancient Near Eastern cultures, Israelite communities in crisis deemed sorrowing motherhood as a potent agent in bringing about their own survival and resurgence back to normalcy.

I begin my discussion on mourning rites as tools of social preservation and restoration in biblical traditions with (1) a list of modern examples that attest to a phenomenon of social, political, and religious engagement among women that stems from the circumstance of child loss; (2) a survey of recent grief and death studies that identify maternal grief as the most intense and the most enduring among other types of bereavement; (3) an overview of ancient Near Eastern cultures (Mesopotamia, Egypt, Hatti, Syro-Palestine) that not only viewed maternal grief as paradigmatic of all mourning but also utilised ritual actions performed by mothers in contexts of large scale catastrophes as mechanisms for dealing with a collective trauma. Against this background my project then turns to discuss four biblical mothers: Hagar (Gen. 21:14-21), Rizpah (2 Sam. 21:1-14), the woman of Tekoa (2 Sam. 14:1-20) and Rachel (Jer. 31:15-22), all of whom perform rites for their dying or dead children and exhibit a form of advocacy for society at large.

Long Abstract

CHAPTER I: MATERNAL GRIEF AS AN ARCHETYPE IN THE PSYCHOLOGY OF GRIEF AND ANCIENT NEAR EAST

Across cultures mourning the dead not only meets a variety of personal needs of the mourner, but may also address a number of socio-political and religious concerns within the community that lost its member. The thesis explores the use of mourning practices and customs performed by bereft mothers in the contexts of ancient collective crises and conflicts. In particular, this project examines the use of these rites (laments, funerary dances, mortuary vigils, etc.) performed by biblical mothers at important phases in the history of ancient Israel and Judah: the disintegration of an ethnic group, the cessation of a royal dynasty, the downfall of a nation.

The thesis begins with a brief survey of recent psychological studies, which demonstrate that amongst various types of bereavement maternal grief is generally regarded as the most intense type and is the most persistent. It then proceeds to look at anthropological studies that show how interrupted motherhood often leads to various forms of socio-political and religious engagement among women constituting a form of grief-driven activism. Building on these studies, the first chapter of the thesis surveys the ANE cultures – Egypt, Hatti, Syro-Palestine, Mesopotamia – to show that the various features of maternal grief outlined in modern day death and grief psychology (intensity of pain, a sense of loss of self, long-enduring bond with the lost child) were also present in the intuition of the ancients on the subject. Using the extant ANE sources – mythologies, liturgies, medical texts, royal chronicles, etc. – this chapter suggests that in the taxonomy of both death-related and non-death-related types of grief and their emotive and ritual expression, maternal grief and associated mourning behaviours were seen as archetypal and were implemented paradigmatically. Such understanding of maternal bereavement in ancient cultures is evident in, for example: 1.) the cross-gender application of its symbolism, i.e. when it is used to represent men's grief; 2.) the encoding of extreme cases of non-death related distress or the collapse of inanimate objects (e.g. temples) with the symbolism of maternal mourning; and 3.) the application of mother grief to large scale catastrophes to amplify their pathos and/or to meet a variety of communal needs.

With the historical backdrop about the place of mothers in ANE mytho- and socio-religious discourse of bereavement, the rest of the thesis explores how four biblical mothers exhibit a form of advocacy that fuses their personal concerns and the needs of larger societies. In his essay on ritual weeping and its functions, Ebersole claims that 'ritual tears – both shed and unshed – are telling' and that historians of religion 'must develop new ways of listening carefully for the tales that they tell.' The premise of this thesis is that ritual tears and concomitant mourning rites of bereft mothers were not taken lightly in the ancient world. In fact, they were deemed to carry the greatest potential for social transformation.

CHAPTER II: HAGAR

This chapter focuses on Hagar, Abraham's Egyptian concubine, and her mourning rite in the wilderness of Beersheba. Gen. 21 deals with the branching out of two lines within the Terahite-Abrahamic family and narrates the endangerment of Ishmael in the process. Although Gen. 21:14-21 does not contain a case of child death proper, a few lexemes utilised in it undeniably cast Ishmael's misfortunes as an instance of dishonorable ejection from the

family and a subsequent demise in the wilderness. This chapter explores how, due to the redactional manipulations of earlier materials, the Genesis editor portrays Hagar, a bereft mother, in the fashion of ancient ANE weeping goddesses and thus exacerbates the power of her mourning. Given the foundational nature of patriarchal cycles and Hagar's ancestral status within them (Gen. 16:10, 21:13, 18, 25:13-18), the editor uses Hagar's actions to solicit God's attention and to secure his patronage not only for Ishmael, but for the entire line of his descendants.

Furthermore, following the lead of many scholars who postulate the Persian period Yehud as the location of the final formation of Genesis, this chapter understands that the final editor used the figures of Hagar and Ishmael as ciphers for the banished group of women and children resulting from the marriage reforms outlined in Ezra 9-10. Fashioning the rhetoric of the wilderness episode as a narrative eulogy, the compiler of Genesis mourned those in Yehud who had been integrated into the community through marriage and then alienated so that the community's genealogical purity would not be compromised. As weeping and mourning in cross-cultural phenomena of societal injustices may function as public protests and may 'implicate superiors in a [faulty] moral economy,' the Gen. 21 episode offers a dissenting voice in the dominant discourse of ethnic and religious purity. By tapping into the trope of bereft mothers and discarded children, the compiler of Genesis tailored the wilderness episode to address the needs of two ancient communities – an emerging ethnic line in the Terahite-Abrahamic family in Genesis and the alienated immigrant sector within the Persian-period Yehud. Exploring his nation's origins marked by disfranchisement and facing disintegration within his own context, the final editor creates a ritual drama with a clear 'death-resurrection' pattern. Through the agency of Hagar, he seeks to counteract the moral economy created by the purist movement within the first patriarchal family and his own audience and mend the social fabric of these communities.

CHAPTER III: RIZPAH

This chapter explores the account of Rizpah, a sorrowful mother, whose mournful vigil is featured at the moment of a cessation of a royal dynasty and thus during a transitional phase of Israel's history (2 Sam. 21). Although canonically the story of Rizpah and her ritual actions appear after the account of the Tekoite's appearance before David in 2 Sam. 14, another bereft mother who is discussed in this thesis, Rizpah's mourning is analysed first due to the chronological considerations.

In 2 Sam. 21 the Gibeonites and David decide the fate of Saul's house and execute seven members of his family. The execution is meant to be a sacrifice of atonement and cleanse the land of evil, yet it seems powerless to do so. When Rizpah interferes and initiates a six month vigil by the exposed corpses of her children, David responds with the interment of their remains and 'the burial of all members of the family in the ancestral tomb at Zela, which symbolises the burial of dynasty.' Accordingly, both ancient and modern day scholarship unanimously acknowledges the causal link between the burial of the Saulide martyrs and the restoration of a nation ravaged by a famine, and credits Rizpah with the resultant equilibrium. Given the grief archetypes outlined in the first chapter of the thesis and given that mourning rites can provide a critique of oppressive social systems, the present analysis of 2 Sam. 21 suggests that the author of Samuel stretched the power of Rizpah's vigil to the uttermost limits of ritual and socio-political rhetoric. As the semantics of *בת-איה רצפה* overlaps with conventions in the international nomenclature for punitive treatment of heirs/remnants in response to breached covenant obligations, this chapter argues that

Rizpah's watch brings David's broken oath regarding the protection of Saul's male descendants (1 Sam. 24:21-22) to the forefront of the narrative. Placing the woman named Rizpah into the story about remnants, the narrator extracts and exploits the maximum of its underlying ideology, turning her vigil into a social commentary on David's actions. As soon as the king hears what she, רִצְפָה בַת־אִיָּה פִלְגַשׁ שָׂאֻל, has done, he immediately responds. Questioning the exigency of young Saulides's immolation and bringing the king's flawed remnant theology and dubious ethic in relation to oaths to the public focus, Rizpah's sorrowing vigil calls for measures to mitigate her sons' shameful fate and alleviate penal plagues ravaging the nation.

CHAPTER IV: THE WOMAN OF TEKOA

In his essay on ritual weeping and its functions, Ebersole argues that since 'mourning rites are scripted as emotionally charged... they can at times provide "cover" for individuals to transgress or violate normal social expectations and prohibitions without fear of serious reprisals.' The truthfulness of this claim becomes particularly evident in the bold, curse-based speech of the woman of Tekoa, yet another biblical mother in distress, who is the focus of the fourth chapter. The premise of the present analysis of 2 Sam. 14, that features the Tekoite, is that in her forceful appeal the woman points out a pattern of David's previous misconducts (profiled in ANE literature as the royal deviance principle) that endangered not only his own family but YHWH's inheritance as well, עַם אֱלֹהִים. Using the ominous phraseology in v. 14, כַּמִּים הַנְּגָרִים אֶרְצָה, and reinforcing its tie to ancient maledictions, the woman parades before David a horrid demise of a nation due to its monarch's failure to rectify inner-dynastic feuds. The audacity of her language forms is justifiable not only in the light of the royal deviance principle(s) operative in 2 Sam. 11-18, but also in view of the frequent use of parabolic utterances with strong elements of curses and taunts that functioned specifically as a means of mockery or reproach in biblical traditions. By placing her curse-related imagery into a lament-based petition, the woman not only creates a rhetorical landscape most suitable for such imprecatory utterance, but also protests its fulfilment in the ensuing chapters in the Absalom saga (2 Sam. 15-18).

As pointed out by many, the Tekoite's efforts eventually fail to bring about long-term resolutions in the Absalom conflict. Yet the multiplicity of rhetorical tactics attempted in her speech and the space accorded to it are suggestive of its significance. In fact, in light of the high-rate mortality among contenders for the Israelite throne (2 Sam. 12, 13, 18, cf. 1 Kgs 2:25) and the threat it posed to the kingdom, the appeal was meant to mend David's fragmented family and jolt his state out of political limbo. Attempting to break the royal deviance pattern in David's career, so vividly traced in its past and looming large in its future, the woman's appeal appears to be of two functions. Embracing a longer history of child loss at the court through the semiotics of grief, she mourns the fate of the royal offspring in retrospect (2 Sam. 12:16, 13:31) and proleptically (2 Sam. 14: 32, 18:14, 15 (cf. 2 Sam. 13:39), cf. 1 Kgs 2:23-25). Gaining fierce imprecatory force from the כַּמִּים הַנְּגָרִים אֶרְצָה simile (2 Sam. 14:14), her plea outlines the massacre awaiting God's people in the future and implicates David in their projected demise (2 Sam. 18). Since the entirety of 2 Sam. 14:1-20 is supplemented with grief-related artifices, the woman's speech was meant to function as an act of mourning for the cumulative death toll of God's people under David's kingship.

CHAPTER V: RACHEL (AND VIRGIN ISRAEL)

Nowhere do maternal grief, politics, and the restoration of a group intersect as powerfully in the Hebrew Bible as in Jeremiah's book of Consolation, which deals with the cessation of Israel's monarchy. The book of Jeremiah addresses the Babylonian invasion at the end of the seventh and beginning of the sixth centuries BC and portrays the fall of Judah in it as a rampant violation of its dead – mass exhumations of Judah's past generations and desecration of its recent casualties (Jer. 8:1-3, 9:20, 21, 14:16, 15:7-91, 16:1-10, 22:19, 25:33, 33:5, 34:19-22, 36:30, and 41:9).

The last chapter of this thesis, therefore, explores Jeremiah's Book of Consolation as it recapitulates the history of the Babylonian crisis in six poignant poems – from invasion to exile to manumission – and ritually marks each phase of the national crisis. The final composition in this series, Jer. 31:15-22, is of particular interest to this thesis as it 'resuscitates' an ancestral mother, Rachel, and engages her in mourning rituals over Judah, cast as her dead child. This chapter argues that in light of the calibre of the task at hand - to bury a nation envisaged effectively as dead and to 'inhume' an entire age, i.e. Israel's monarchy – Jeremiah engages Rachel in vigorous funerary practices: 1.) inconsolable wails (v. 15); and 2.) circumambulating choreography (v. 22b). In addition, this chapter demonstrates that the need for a ritual response to the Babylonian crisis was so strong that Jeremiah prescribes mourning rites at the time of Judah's manumission from Babylon as well. In the manner of earlier materials, where the author conscripted the services of professional female mourners (Jer. 9), Jer. 31, too, assigns mourning rites (the erection of burial markers (v. 21) and ritual wailing (v. 21c, cf. the LXX)) to a female – a group of repatriated Judeans personified as Virgin Israel. Since the precedent of placing laments and adjacent mourning rites in accounts of restoration of 'collapse societies' was well attested in the ANE, their appearance in the Book of Consolation as part of the poetic vision of Judah's reconstitution is not surprising. As various manipulations of the dead in the ancient Orient were viewed as either acts of violence or acts of benevolence, this chapter argues that the actions of Rachel and Virgin Israel can be viewed as part of God's benevolent scheme of Judah's restoration and thus as the culmination of Judah's mortuary responses to the Babylonian crisis.

CONCLUSION

In the last two centuries both women and men have applied a 'motherist' politics to a variety of movements and for a variety of social causes. Such strategies, however, have generated both negative and positive assessments from critics. The concluding section of the thesis briefly reviews some of the reasons for the popularity of appeals to maternal grief in the ancient world in general, and in Israel in particular. First, it is suggested that since the circumstance of child loss can create a form of existential limbo for the bereft mother, this state can unlock a unique capacity in her for incessant supplications and intercessions. Thus, when ancient communities were at their most vulnerable, the perpetual destabilisation of a bereft mother and the ability to intercede as its outcome were the go-to social tools. Secondly, it is proposed that since child loss, and grief in general, can engender the maturation of thought and feeling, and of ethical insight and self-awareness, bereft mothers' intercessions have a quality of wisdom and effectiveness for personal and communal needs that cannot be gained otherwise. Thirdly, the efficacy of a grief-related 'motherist' politics can stem from the ability of grief and mourning rites 'to transgress or violate normal social expectations' and defy class differences. Consequently, within a ritual context it was possible to voice

uncensored perspectives on personal and collective suffering and on the persons and factors responsible for it. Finally, it is suggested that since ancient Israel richly used family-based metaphors for its various social structures, it was only natural to appeal to maternal agency, with its emphasis on care and protection, in times of social and political upheavals.

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The title of the thesis is based on a mother's lament from Gortynia, Greece,

Whoever lost her husband lost her respect
and whoever lost her mother lost her conversation
and whoever lost her brother lost her wings
and whoever lost her sister lost her walks
and whoever lost small children lost her heart.

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ABBREVIATIONS

- ‘At* ‘Atiqot
ÄAT Ägypten und Altes Testament
ABR Australian Biblical Review
ABS Archaeology and Biblical Studies
AE American Ethnologist
AfO Archiv für Orientforschung
AJE The American Journal of Egyptology
AO Analecta Orientalia
AoF Altorientalische Forschungen
AS Acta Sumerologica
AS Archaeological Studies
BA Biblical Archaeologist
BASOR Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research
BDB Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon: with an Appendix Containing the Biblical Aramaic
Bib Biblica
Bijdr Bijdragen: International Journal in Philosophy and Theology
BM Beth Mikra
BS Bibliotheca Sacra
BTB Biblical Theology Bulletin
BZAW Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
CJ Conservative Judaism
CQ Classical Quarterly
DCH Dictionary of Classical Hebrew
DD Dor le Dor
DDD Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible
DOTTE Dictionary of the Old Testament Theology and Exegesis
DS Death Studies
HALOT Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament
HAR Hebrew Annual Review
HBM Hebrew Bible Monographs
HKL F. E. König, *Historisch-kritisches Lehrgebäude der hebräischen Sprache mit steter eziehung auf Qichi und die anderen Auctoritäten* (Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1881)
HR History of Religions
HS Hebrew Studies
HTR Harvard Theological Review
HTS HTS Theologese Studies
HUCA Hebrew Union College Annual
IDB International Dictionary of the Bible
IDOTTE International Dictionary of the Old Testament Theology and Exegesis
IES Israel Exploration Society
IF Indogermanische Forschungen
Int Interpretation
JAC Journal of Ancient Civilizations
JAN Journal of Advanced Nursing
JANER Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Religions

JAOS Journal of the American Oriental Society
JARM Journal of the Association for Research on Mothering
JBL Journal of Biblical Literature
JBQ Jewish Bible Quarterly
JCP Journal of Constructivist Psychology
JCS Journal of Cuneiform Studies
JCSCS Journal of the Canadian Society for Coptic Studies
JEOL Jaarbericht Ex Oriente Lux
JESOT Journal for the Evangelical Study of the Old Testament
JEST Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society
JFR Journal of Folklore Research
JFS Journal of Family Studies
JFSR Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion
JHS Journal of Hebrew Scriptures
JIATAU Journal of the Institute of Archaeology of Tel Aviv University
JIH Journal of Israeli History Politics, Society, Culture
JJS Journal of Jewish Studies
JNES Journal of Near East Studies
JNMD Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease
JNSL Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages
JS Journal for Semitics
JSJ Journal for the Study of Judaism
JSOT Journal for the Study of the Old Testament
JSOTSup Journal for the Study of the Old Testament: Supplement Series
JSP Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha
KMT: MJA A Modern Journal of Ancient Egypt
Lan Language
LD Lectio Difficilior
LW Life Writing
MC Mesopotamian Civilizations
MDAIK Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts Kairo
NEA Near Eastern Archaeology
NIDB New International Dictionary of the Bible
NIN NIN: Journal of Gender Studies in Antiquity
Num Numen
OA Oriens Antiquus
OLP Orientalia Lovaniensia Periodica
OLZ Orientalistische Literaturzeitung
Om Omega: The Journal of Death and Dying
Or Orientalia
OS Oudtestamentische Studiën
OTL Old Testament Library
OTS Oudtestamentische Studiën
PBM Paternoster Biblical Monographs
PEQ Palestine Exploration Quarterly
PIA Publications of the Institute of Archaeology
Ps Psychiatry
PSBA Society of Biblical Archaeology, London, Proceedings
QJS Quarterly Journal of Speech
RAL Research in African Literatures

RB Revue Biblique
Re Religion
RE Review & Expositor
RE Revue d'Égyptologie
RQ Restoration Quarterly
SAOC Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilizations
SBL Society of Biblical Literature
SBT Studies in Biblical Theology
SHCANE Studies in the History and Culture of the Ancient Near East
SJOT Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament:
SO Studia Orientalia
SSM Social Science & Medicine
ST Studia Theologica
SubBib Subsidia Biblica
SWHC Social Work Health Care
TB Tyndale Bulletin
TCS Texts from Cuneiform Sources
TDOT Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament
TT Theology Today
UEE UCLA Encyclopedia of Egyptology
VT Vetus Testamentum
WJ Women in Judaism
WSC Women's Studies in Communication
WSIF Women's Studies International Forum
WW Word & World
ZA Zeitschrift für Assyriologie und vorderasiatische Archäologie
ZABR Zeitschrift für Altorientalische und Biblische Rechtsgeschichte
ZAW Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
Zi Zion

PREFACE

In her article ‘Motherhood and Nation: The Voice of Women Artists in Israel’s Bereavement and Memorial Discourse,’¹ Y. Guilat discusses the works produced by women in response to the obligatory conscription of their children into the army and their subsequent death in military combat. Operating from a ‘primordial maternal position that predates the nation order,’² these women advocate for the preservation and well-being of their children in the cycle of Israel’s militarism. One particular sculptural installation that expresses a clash between maternal aspirations and national claims, which is noteworthy for the thesis at hand, was created by A. Littman-Cohen and is entitled *Virgin of Israel and Her Daughters*.³ The installation consists of a large military tent (mother/state) that towers over rows of empty beehives (daughters/citizens).



Guilat explains,

The nation and homeland embodied in the expression “virgin of Israel” (Jer. 31:20–21) produced the simile of the beehive that the queen (the homeland) rules. The empty beehives bask in a red light that evokes an emptied and bleeding womb. The work exudes a sense of life and death, the ambivalence between life-giving forces and deathdealing forces that lie at the foundations of the myth of the great mother and the

¹ Y. Guilat, ‘Motherhood and Nation: The Voice of Women Artists in Israel’s Bereavement and Memorial Discourse,’ *JIH* 31 (2012), 283-318.

² *Ibid.*, 307.

³ In fact, it is a part of a two part installation called Motherland Motherhood (1994). ‘The work *Virgin of Israel and her Daughters* was first exhibited in Tel Hai 94, a contemporary art event taking place in the Galilee in 1994.’ From <http://ariane-littman.com/1994/05/virgin-of-israel-and-her-daughters/>. A powerful series of photographs capturing this installation can be seen here.

womb as a tomb, as a monument. Littman adopts this dualism and sets motherhood and homeland in confrontation.⁴

Another voice of bereft and protesting maternity is encapsulated in the Dark Elogy, a sombre ensemble of sculptures produced by S. Lowenstein in response to her son's murder in the crash of Pan Am Flight 103 in 1988.



Reflecting on this composition, Lowenstein explains,

Initially I portrayed myself, not only at that moment of hearing the heart-breaking news, but also in varying positions of grief, rage and hopelessness. Soon other mothers and widows asked to participate... There are 75 larger than life size pieces, each portraying a mother or wife at that moment when they first heard the awful news of the death of their loved one to that terrorist act... Although the concept of my sculpture, DARK ELEGY, was spawned out of this, my personal, tragedy, it has always been dedicated to all victims of terrorism... This sculpture needs no language, it is understood by all. It is not political in any partisan sense. It knows no borders.⁵

Examples of emptied, anguished and protesting motherhood can be found in every historical period marked by socio-political upheaval. Thus, for example, in the seventies and eighties of the twentieth century, civilians in Latin America were subjected to low-intensity conflicts and state-sponsored violence, and a great number of women were forced to organise themselves against the oppressive regimes searching for their children and other family members. Thus, in 1936-1979, Nicaragua underwent a period of dictatorial administration, which used assassinations, abductions, torture and disappearances to deal with its political opponents.⁶ In response to this, during the so-called Contra War, a small group of women began an operation to establish the location or fate of their children who were secretly

⁴ Guilat, 'Motherhood and Nation,' 308.

⁵ From <http://www.darkelegy103.com/about.html>

⁶ S. Tully, 'A Painful Purgatory: Grief and The Nicaraguan Mothers of the Disappeared,' *SSM* 40 (1995), 1597-1610.

detained and then disappeared.⁷ The group eventually grew and became to be known as AMFASEDEN (The Nicaraguan Association of Mothers and Relatives of the Kidnapped and Disappeared).⁸ As they were doubtful that the perpetrators of the abductions and disappearances would ever be tried for their crimes, the main goal of the organisation was, and still is, to procure reliable information regarding the remains of the disappeared and to establish the location of children born to the disappeared during their imprisonment.

Similarly, between 1976 and 1983 an estimated 30,000 people, primarily students, who voiced their disapproval of the military regime in Argentina were unlawfully detained, subjected to torture and killed in prison camps. The records of their ‘disappearance’ were subsequently destroyed and no public funerals were held for them. One of the main organisations set up by the relatives of the victims is the ‘Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo,’ which has now been in operation for more than three decades. In 1977 the Mothers began to walk every Tuesday in a non-violent demonstration around the Plazo de Mayo, the central square near the government palace in Buenos Aires. As they walked around the Plazo they chanted, ‘We want our children. We want them to tell us where they are.’ Their efforts eventually drew international attention and human rights organisations provided assistance with public speech-making and with publishing their own newspaper. In 1983 the group split and one sector continued to hold demonstrations until the laws of immunity for the ‘Dirty War’ leaders were lifted. Another group began to work with the new government seeking legislation to recover the remains of the disappeared.⁹

Likewise, the Algerian civil war in the 1990s led to the abduction and disappearance of approximately 7000 civilians by militias and government security forces. Among the many activists who unleashed war against the state-sanctioned terror, is Nassera Dutour. When her son was disappeared, she doggedly searched for information regarding his location. Eventually she became a founder of the ‘Collective for the Families of the Disappeared in Algeria.’ Operating in and outside the country, she and her partners have sought to promote public awareness of state abuses and to force the Algerian government to accountability. In addition, her organisation has been working with the families of the victims, informing them of their rights and helping them initiate official investigations into the circumstances of their loved ones’ disappearance. Furthermore, since 1998, she has rallied women, mothers and close relatives of the victims for weekly demonstrations in front of the headquarters of the National Advisory Commission for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights. When the demonstrations were banned, she created an online database with information on the victims to help the families and the general public to keep their memory alive.

Similar organisations and movements were formed in the mid-1970s in Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay, Uruguay, and later in Turkey, South Africa and Nigeria, whose authoritarian governments abducted and ‘disappeared’ their citizens.¹⁰ In addition to fighting

⁷ *Ibid.*, 1598.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 1597.

⁹ For further information about the Mothers, see for example, K. Foss, K. Domenici, ‘Haunting Argentina: Synecdoche in the Protests of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo,’ *QJS* 87 (2001), 237-258.

¹⁰ See, for example, U. Arifcan, ‘The Saturday Mothers of Turkey,’ *PR* 9 (1997), 265-272; D. Akkerman, ‘“Take Up a Taunt Song”: Women, Lament and Healing in South Africa,’ in L. Lagerwerf (ed.), *Reconstruction: The WCC Assembly Harare 1998 and the Churches in Southern Africa* (Meinema: Zoetermeer, 1998), 133-150; D. Ackermann, ‘Lamenting Tragedy from “The Other Side,”’ in J. Cochrane, B. Klein (eds), *Sameness and Difference: Problems and Potentials in South African Civil Society: South African Philosophical Studies* (Washington, D.C.: Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 2000), 231-232.

political terror and violence, women used the unfortunate circumstance of child loss for a great number of other causes. Well-attested in the modern world, such a phenomenon of grief-fuelled socio-political initiative will set the stage for the current thesis on the ANE and biblical discourse of maternal bereavement.

CHAPTER I

MATERNAL GRIEF AS AN ARCHETYPE IN THE PSYCHOLOGY OF GRIEF AND ANCIENT NEAR EAST

In his somewhat recent work on biblical mourning, Olyan makes an insightful observation that mourning for the dead is used paradigmatically for non-death related mourning rites in the Hebrew Bible. He writes,

the fact that petitionary mourning and other, non-death-related mourning behaviour is compared in several texts to mourning the dead is significant in yet another way, for the opposite is never attested. No text compares the rites of mourners for the dead to the rites of petitioners or others who have no direct connection to mourning the dead. This unidirectional mode of comparison suggests that mourning the dead and its attendant rites are somehow paradigmatic in the thought world of the biblical texts. Petitionary mourning and similar non-death-related rites appear to be constructed as secondary analogues to mourning the dead, sharing its distinct vocabulary and ritual actions, and comparable to it in a number of ways. Mourning the dead is, in other words, the model for other types of mourning.¹

Using the extant literature(s) of the ancient Orient it can be further postulated that in the taxonomy of both death-related and non-death-related types of grief and their emotive and ritual expressions it was maternal grief and the accompanying mourning behaviour that were seen as archetypal. Although both ANE and biblical materials preserve instances of equally expressive mourning performed by men and women, certain traditions intimate that maternal grief was more intense and its attendant rites served as a template for all mourning in ancient Near Eastern cultures. To use Olyan's terminology, they were viewed and implemented paradigmatically. A search for evidence in favour of the proposed attitudes towards 'mother' grief in the ancient world will benefit from a quick survey of modern day perspectives on the subject.

¹ S. Olyan, *Biblical Mourning: Ritual and Social Dimensions* (Oxford, 2004), 24.

I. Modern Day Psychology of Parental Grief.

A plethora of recent grief and death studies confirms the fact that among various types of bereavement the loss of a child occasions the deepest measure of sorrow and is the most lasting.² So much so that older studies often characterised parental grief as *pathological, abnormal, morbid, unresolved*, etc.³ In the past grief research traditionally focused on the initial phase in the grieving process seeking to find ways to sever the bond between the bereft and the deceased.⁴ In fact, according to Freud, who initiated studies in this field in the twentieth century, mourning had ‘quite a precise work to perform: its function is to detach survivors’ memories and hopes from the dead’⁵ so that they make necessary adjustments and learn to function in a new, restructured lifestyle. Although his psychoanalytic perspectives were very influential in the decades to come,⁶ Freud eventually re-evaluated his understanding of parental grief when he lost his daughter Sophie. Apparently nine years after her death he admitted to a friend that the desired detachment from the dead child never happens for the bereft parents.⁷ Similarly, more recent inquiries into the nature of parental grief show that parents maintain the bond with the deceased child throughout their life time.⁸

² D. Klass, P. Silverman, S. Nickman, *Continuing Bonds: New Understandings of Grief* (Washington DC, 1996); N. Keesee, J. Currier, R. Neimeyer, ‘Predictors of Grief Following the Death of One’s Child: The Contribution of Finding Meaning,’ *JCP* 64 (2008), 1145-1163; J. Arnold, P. Buschman Gemma, ‘The Continuing Process of Parental Grief,’ *DS* 32 (2008), 658-673; B. Mallon, *Dying, Death, and Grief: Working with Adult Bereavement* (London, 2008), 54-55, 66-67; C. Parkes, H. Prigerson, *Bereavement: Studies of Grief in Adult Life* (London, 2010), 142-145; J. Buckle, S. Fleming, *Parenting After the Death of a Child: Practitioner’s Guide* (New York, 2011), 41-71.

³ See, for example, C. Hindmarch, *On the Death of a Child*, (Oxford, 2009), 33-36.

⁴ For a helpful summary on the various perspectives on grief held in the last century or so see, for example, R. Davies, ‘New Understandings of Parental Grief: Literature Review,’ *JAN* 46 (2004), 506 -513.

⁵ S. Freud, *Mourning and Melancholia*. In *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* (London, 1957 (Original work published 1917)), 253.

⁶ See Davies for a list and analysis of his followers’ works. Davies, ‘New Understandings,’ 507.

⁷ Freud, *Mourning and Melancholia*, 239. Cited by Davies, ‘New Understanding,’ 507-508.

⁸ Klass *et al.*, *Continuing Bonds*; D. Klass, ‘The Deceased Child in the Psychic and Social World of Bereaved Parents During the Resolution of Grief,’ *DS* 21 (1997), 147-175.

Consequently grief counselling and therapy intervention programmes no longer recommend disengagement from the dead child as a coping strategy.⁹

Some of the often mentioned aspects of the experience of loss and factors that contribute to its lasting effects are: '1.) the loss of a sense of personal competence and power; 2.) the loss of a part of oneself; 3.) the loss of a valued other person whose unique character was part of the family system.'¹⁰ Admittedly, the 'loss of a part of oneself' language is very prominent in other types of bereavement but it is particularly strong in the rhetoric of bereft parents. Since this group of the bereft often speaks of child death as 'a permanent loss of a part of oneself that may be adapted to but will not grow back'¹¹ some studies identify people within it as 'existential amputees.'¹² Using this rhetoric of the new, tempered *identity* in connection with parental grief Davies, for example, notes that its 'combined biological and social dimensions produce, in general terms, individuals who have been changed through the experience of bereavement.'¹³ This change is so significant that some cultures go beyond the simple recognition of this fact and adjust their bereavement language accordingly. Thus, for instance, 'in contemporary Israeli society not only is there a phrase, *ima shkula*, meaning a bereaved mother but there are similar terms for a bereaved father, *aba sh[a]kul*, and for bereaved parents, *horim shkulim*.'¹⁴ The lack of proper grief language for this category of the

⁹ M. Field, R. Behrman (eds), *When Children Die: Improving Palliative and End-of-Life for Children and Their Families* (Washington DC, 2003).

¹⁰ R. Malkinson, L. Bar-Tur, 'Long Term Bereavement Processes of Older Parents: the Three Phases of Grief,' *Om* 50 (2005), 104.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 105. Malkinson and Bar-Tur also cite one bereft parent who says, 'It is as if you had lost a hand and had become a cripple. In the beginning, it hurts a lot, and one does not know how to manage without the hand. Later, it forms a scab and is bothersome, and then, you are fitted for a prosthesis and you begin functioning. And the prosthesis is so good that no one realizes that you are missing a hand. But in the evening, you remove the prosthesis and you are left with a void.' *Ibid.*, 112.

¹² For further bibliography on the 'amputation image,' see *Ibid.*, 105. See also D. Davies, *Death, Ritual and Belief: the Rhetoric of Funerary Rites* (London, 2002), 55.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 55.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 55. Davies further notes, 'not only do these terms have a psychological significance in relation to bereavement, but they also carry powerful social and political significance in the context of Israel's military defence strategy. To have lost a son serving in the army, in defence of the country, is deemed an honourable sacrifice for the nation.' *Ibid.*, 55. Cf. Foss and Domenici's observation regarding the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo: 'The loss of their children and the powerful social and personal implications construct a limbo

bereaved in most cultures only intensifies their state of an *existential limbo* created by child loss.

This shift in the understanding of the psychology of grief called for new research questions and approaches to the subject – new strategies were supposed to accommodate the entirety of grief landscape caused by child loss. Consequently recent grief studies adjusted their focus and began to probe into the effects of parental bereavement as they manifested themselves over the remainder of the bereft's life.¹⁵ Malkinson and Bar-Tur, for example, worked with 29 Israeli aging parents whose children were killed in military service. According to them these parents' own

descriptions of their way of life since the death of their child point to an evolution in the grieving process in all domains, particularly that of time. From the time-line perspective, it is possible to identify them as three main phases of the various expressions of bereavement. The first phase is acute grief; the second relates to bereavement over the years, and the third, grief in old age.¹⁶

The initial stage, usually described as *young grief*, tends to be 'stormy, agitated, less focused,' exhibiting 'intense reactions of grief and trauma and the shock and flooding of deep pain that permeates all spheres of life...'¹⁷ The second stage, known as *mature grief*, is marked by feelings of loss that are 'more familiar, less intense, and have become part of the

state...Elgin suggests that the lack of a term to describe someone who has lost a child only exacerbates this limbo: while we have the terms widow, widower, and orphan to describe particular relational losses, the "fact that there is no name for the one who has lost a child is of enormous consequence: The nameless live in a kind of limbo." K. Foss, K. Domenici, 'Haunting Argentina: Synecdoche in the Protests of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo,' *QJS* 87 (2001), 241.

¹⁵ Klass *et al*, *Continuing Bonds*; G. Riches, P. Dawson, *An Intimate Loneliness: Supporting Bereaved Parents and Sibling* (Philadelphia, 2000); S. Rubin, 'Psychodynamic Perspectives on Treatment with the Bereaved: Modifications of the Therapeutic/Transference Paradigm,' in R. Malkinson, S. Rubin, E. Witztum (eds), *Traumatic and Nontraumatic Loss and Bereavement: Clinical Theory and Practice* (Madison, 2000), 117-141; S. Rubin, R. Malkinson, 'Parental Response to Child Loss Across the Life-cycle: Clinical and Research Perspectives,' in M. Stroebe, R. Hansson, W. Stroebe, H. Schut (eds), *Handbook of Bereavement Research: Consequences, Coping and Care* (Washington, 2001), 219-240.

¹⁶ Malkinson, Bar-Tur, 'Long Term Bereavement,' 110. Of interest is that the acute phase of grief with its associated psychosomatic behaviours – shock, trembling, tears – can be re-lived by the bereft when they are interviewed in old age.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 123.

repertoire of reactions which are known in advance and are anticipated.’¹⁸ In the final stage, *aging grief*, the bereaved become older and normally develop coping strategies that allow them to manage their sorrow better. Nevertheless, parents admit that their preoccupation with the lost child persists and even grows with age – the child does not exist in an external world but firmly occupies the inner world of his/ her parents.¹⁹ Contributing to this phenomenon is the parents’ fear that with their own death their deceased child will die ‘the second symbolic death – the loss of the child’s inner representation’ in the psyche of their parents.²⁰

Of pertinence for this project is also the fact that ‘the space the child occupies [in their parents’ inner world] expands constantly... unlike other types of grief where the space is preserved but remains small and makes room for other kinds of relationships ...’²¹ In other words, the child is eternally present, a kind of “presence-absence.”²² Thus against Freud’s initial claims on grief and the perspectives of his followers, recent studies on child loss show that ‘parental bereavement does not involve decathexis from a deceased child. On the contrary... an emotional process which can be called recathexis ensures that the relationship continues uninterrupted.’²³

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 123.

¹⁹ See also Klass, ‘The Deceased Child,’ 147-176.

²⁰ Malkinson, Bar-Tur, ‘Long Term Bereavement,’ 105. In fact, some parents admit that their emotional involvement with the dead child eclipses ‘their emotional involvement with the surviving children.’ *Ibid.*, 105, 116-118. Arnold, Buschman Gemma, ‘The Continuing Process,’ 658-673. The sense of loss becomes even more pronounced when the living children leave home and the parents are ‘left with him (the deceased child).’ S. Rubin, ‘Death of the Future? An Outcome Study of Bereaved Parents in Israel,’ *Om* 20 (1989-90), 323-339; R. Malkinson, L. Bar-Tur, ‘The Aging of Grief in Israel: A Perspective of Bereaved Parents,’ *DS* 23 (1999), 413-431.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 114.

²² *Ibid.*, 120.

²³ *Ibid.*, 125. Davies, ‘New Understandings,’ 510-511.

A. Modern Day Psychology of Maternal Grief.

The features of parental grief outlined above – intensity of pain, a sense of loss of self, long-enduring and growing bond with the lost child – become even more pronounced in case of maternal grief. In her article, “‘Carving Tomorrow from a Tombstone’ Maternal Grief Following the Death of a Daughter,” S. Hendrick notes that traditional perspectives on psychological development were centred around ‘the male experience that emphasizes some form of autonomy or separation as the developmental path (Kaplan, 1991: 208).’²⁴ Feminist psychotherapists, however, put forward a new theoretical framework for understanding key factors in women’s development, and by extension, their unique experience of child loss. Thus, for example, Miller and Stiver claim that ‘an inner sense of connection to others is a central organizing feature in women’s development and that women’s core self-structure, or their primary motivational thrust concerns growth within relationship or what is called “the self-in-relation”.’²⁵ Consequently, when a woman’s meaningful relationship is terminated due to death it is not just a ‘loss of a relationship but as something closer to a total loss of self.’²⁶ This is particularly true when a woman loses her child. Thus writing on the subject of maternal grief and the inadequacy of cross-cultural religious responses to it, the anthropologist Sered quotes mothers who express their disbelief at the experience, “‘How can life intermingle with its antithesis, death? How can I love someone who no longer exists? Is the dead child a part of me – am I now partly dead...’”²⁷ She further explains that,

²⁴ S. Hendrick, “‘Carving Tomorrow from a Tombstone’ Maternal Grief Following the Death of a Daughter,” *JARM* 1(1999), 33.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 33.

²⁶ J. Miller, *Toward a New Psychology of Women* (Boston, 1976), 83; J. Miller, I. Stiver, *A Relational Reframing of Therapy* (Wellesley, Paper #52, 1991), 1. Cited by Hendrick, “‘Carving Tomorrow from a Tombstone,’” 34.

²⁷ S. Sered, ‘Mother Love, Child Death and Religious Innovation: A Feminist Perspective,’ *JFSR* 12 (1996), 17. On the experience of pregnancy and childbirth as identity-changing events see also Shainess who defined childbirth as a ‘crucible tempering of the self,’ and noted that if birth is unsuccessful it damages not only the woman’s ‘sense of self but also her sense of self in relation to others.’ J. Shainess, ‘The Structure of Mothering Encounters,’ *JNMD* 136 (1963), 146-161.

Miscarriage and neonatal death physically affect the mother in identifiable ways. Especially during the first year of life, the psychological boundaries between the mother and child overlap... during the pregnancy the baby is physically part of the mother; breast feeding (for many women) continues this physical bond; and social arrangements in which women have primary or exclusive responsibility for child care reinforce that connection.²⁸

Assessing gender differences in parental grief Schwab also observes that ‘the mothers’ scores were significantly higher than those of fathers on the following scales: atypical responses, despair, anger/hostility, guilt, loss of control, rumination, depersonalization, somatisation, loss of vigour, physical symptoms, and optimism/despair.’²⁹ Of interest here are also Rubin’s findings on the enduring bond between the surviving mother and the dead child. Apparently, if the disruption of a mother-child relationship happens early on in the child’s life, for example, in infancy, many women continue to think of them as developing growing children and thus suffer from the so-called ‘phantom child syndrome.’³⁰

Admittedly, an individual’s experience of grief and its expression, i.e. mourning, are shaped by many factors and the beliefs and expectations regarding these processes may and do vary from culture to culture. Consequently the perspectives on parental grief, and more specifically maternal grief, outlined here, by no means can reflect the lived reality of all people who survived child loss.³¹ Having said that, it is true that ‘the majority of published

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 6. On the effects of stillbirth see, for example, L. Layne, *Motherhood Lost: A Feminist Account of Pregnancy Loss in America* (London, 2003). In this book Layne tells of a woman who describes herself after the loss of a child in stillbirth as ‘being in limbo, questioning her motherhood, and living in a strange threshold, a place between heaven and hell, between birth and death...’ *Ibid.*, 73.

²⁹ R. Schwab, ‘Gender Differences in Parental Grief,’ *DS* 20 (1996), 103. See also W. Fish, ‘Differences of Grief Intensity in Bereaved Parents,’ in T. A. Rando (ed.), *Parental Loss of a Child* (Champaign, 1986), 415-428; I. Levav, ‘Second Thoughts on the Lethal Aftermath of a Loss,’ *Om* 20 (1989-1990), 81-90; C. Brice, ‘Paradoxes of Maternal Mourning,’ *Ps* 54 (1991), 1-12; V. Conway, J. Feeney, ‘Attachments and Grief: A Study of Parental Bereavement,’ *JFS* 3 (1997), 36-42; J. Cacciatore, ‘The Unique Experiences of Women and Their Families After the Death of a Baby,’ *SWHC* 49 (2010), 134-148.

³⁰ S. Rubin, ‘Maternal Attachment and Child Death: On Adjustment, Relationship, and Resolution,’ *Om* 15 (1984-1985), 347-52. Cited by Sered, ‘Mother Love,’ 1, 7. See also N. Gerrish, R. Neimeyer, S. Bailey, ‘Exploring Maternal Grief: A Mixed-Methods Investigation of Mothers’ Responses to the Death of a Child From Cancer,’ *JCP* 27 (2014), 162.

³¹ In fact, most, though not all, studies consulted here represent North American and Western European contexts. For ethnographic studies on the subject see, for example, D. Klass ‘Solace and Immortality: Bereaved Parents’ Continuing Bond with Their Children,’ *DS* 17 (1993), 343-368; D. Klass, ‘The Inner Representation of

findings indicate that fathers, at least in the initial phase of bereavement, are more likely to put their energies into practical issues – in supporting their partners and controlling their emotions – to rationalize the loss in terms of its wider implications for the family and to find ways of diverting their grief into practical activities. *Mothers, on the other hand, are more likely to connect directly to their raw feelings, responding to the death through the experience and expression of strong emotions*’ (italics are mine).³²

Turning to the subject of maternal grief in the ancient world, it is important to bear in mind that many anthropological studies have shown that similar experiences which occurred in disparate cultural settings do not necessarily produce comparable emotional reactions. The same event in one group may generate emotive and behavioural responses that will be altogether counterintuitive to another group.³³ Although certain variables in grief responses have been documented in anthropological studies it should not preclude us from speaking of certain ‘grief constants’ as well. In fact, a few scholarly forays into the field of emotions and their psychosomatic and ritual manifestations in ancient cultures have already been undertaken and shown some continuity with their modern day counterparts. Thus, for example, studies into the semiotics of grief and the ‘acoustics of death’ among professional lamenters and genuinely bereft women in ancient and modern day Egypt and Greece exhibit a striking similarity both in the mannerisms of their mourning and in the content of their

the Dead Child and the World Views of Bereaved Parents,’ *Om* 26 (1993), 255-273; D. Klass, *The Spiritual Lives of Bereaved Parents* (Philadelphia, 1999). See also Sered’s survey of women’s responses to child death not only in various cultures but within various religious traditions. She, for example, observes that ‘a persistent pattern in women’s religious lives is dissatisfaction with the interpretations of child death offered by what Robert Redeld calls the ‘great tradition’ and what feminist scholars call patriarchal religions. In diverse cultural situations, women reject eschatologies that send unsaved babies to hell, and modify theologies that ignore the suffering of children in this world. Sered, ‘Mother Love,’ 7. For a cross-cultural survey of beliefs and myths that attest to the enduring bond between mothers who die in childbirth and their surviving children see B. Cox, S. Ackerman, ‘Rachel’s Tomb,’ *JBL* 128 (2009), 135-148.

³² Malkinson, Bar-Tur, ‘Long Term Bereavement,’ 105 and the bibliography cited there and above. Italics are mine. But see Martin and Doka for a detailed discussion on the various factors involved in both the experience and expression of grief. T. Martin, K. Doka, *Men Don’t Cry – Women Do: Transcending Gender Stereotypes of Grief* (Philadelphia, 2000).

³³ For a helpful discussion on the anthropology of emotions in cross-cultural studies see the opening chapter, ‘Introduction: The Expression of Emotion in Cross-Cultural Perspective,’ in G. Anderson, *A Time to Mourn, a Time to Dance: the Expression of Grief and Joy in Israelite Religion* (University Park, 1991), 1-19.

laments.³⁴ These are admittedly *behavioural* and *ritual* responses to the experience of loss and may not necessarily allow for the precise extrapolation of the psychology of grief behind them. However, this survey will demonstrate that the features of parental grief, and more specifically maternal grief outlined above, cohere well with the ancients' intuition on the subject.

Dealing with child death and parental grief in the ancient world one also has to address the issue of high infant mortality in antiquity. The insights into parental grief summarised here are gained from data that represent the last few decades of the twentieth and the first decade of the twenty first centuries in North America, Britain, and Israel. Thus the contexts from which these perspectives stem differ from those surveyed below, as the mortality rate of children in the latter would have been significantly higher. Especially high would have been the numbers of neo-natal deaths,³⁵ which in turn, according to some studies, would have weakened the psychological bond between parents and their children and reduced their mourning for them.³⁶ Hence it would be impossible to apply modern day sensitivity regarding child loss and the accompanying parental grief directly to ancient contexts. However, a somewhat recent examination of a society with a high level of infant and child deaths showed that this factor does not, in fact, create 'neglectful and non-remorseful mothers. Religion, kinship, and economy shape gender relations and cultural values attributed to reproduction and motherhood, which in turn influence maternal sentiments and practice... Poverty and high expectancy of child mortality contribute to *maternal anguish and distress in*

³⁴ See, for example, N. Sultan, 'Private Speech, Public Pain: The Power of Women's Laments in Greek Poetry & Tragedy,' in K. Marshall (ed.), *Rediscovering the Muses: Women's Musical Traditions* (Boston, 1993), 92-110; G. Holst-Warhaft, *Dangerous Voices: Women's Laments and Greek Literature* (London, 1995); E. Wickett, *For the Living and the Dead: the Funerary Laments of Upper Egypt, Ancient and Modern* (London, 2010).

³⁵ E. Willet, 'Infant Mortality and Women's Religion in the Biblical Periods,' in B. Alpert Nakhai (ed.), *The World of Women in the Ancient and Classical Near East* (Newcastle, 2008), 79- 98. But see, for example, Walter's study that shows that the typical death in the twentieth century in Britain and the United States is not that of a child. T. Walter, *On Bereavement: the Culture of Grief* (Buckingham, 1999).

³⁶ N. Scheper-Hughes, *Death Without Weeping: The Violence of Everyday Life in Brazil* (Berkeley, 1992), 340-345.

relation to child delivery, diseases and death, not indifference.³⁷ With this in mind this discussion will now turn to ANE mytho- and socio-religious discourses on death and bereavement and the place grieving mothers occupied in them.

II. Maternal Grief as Paradigmatic Experience of Loss in the Ancient World.

A. Maternal Grief as an Archetype of Loss in Mesopotamian Sources.

Like the death and grief studies surveyed above, the extant sources from ancient Mesopotamia likewise support the idea that the loss of a child was viewed as the quintessence of human tragedy. Additionally, these sources almost always qualify maternal modes of mourning by such determinates as *bitter, perpetual, incessant*, etc. and portray its behavioural manifestation as highly expressive and very much kinaesthetic.³⁸

The first point can be inferred, for example, from a text in *Inanna's Descent to the Netherworld*. The catalogue of misfortunes that occasion people's wretchedness in the netherworld moves from the lack of marital embrace to infertility to violent separation of spouses and concludes this registry with the scenario of a child snatched away from its parent (*Inanna's Descent to the Netherworld*: c.1.4.1).³⁹ Although the primary caregiver subjected to grief in this section is either the father or wet-nurse of a child⁴⁰ its disappearance is nevertheless presented as the ultimate loss. A number of other texts in Sumerian sources are quite explicit about the intense quality of a mother's mourning. Thus in *The Death of Ur-*

³⁷ J. Einarsdóttir, 'Tired of Weeping': *Child Death and Mourning Among Papel Mothers in Guinea-Bissau* (Stockholm Studies in Social Anthropology, 46; Stockholm, 2000), 2-3. Italics are mine. The references to both Scheper-Hughes and Einarsdóttir are cited by Bosworth. D. Bosworth, 'Daughter Zion and Weeping in Lamentations 1-2,' *JSOT* 38 (2013), 229, n. 35. For the iconographic representation of the close relations between mother and child in ANE see, for example, S. Budin, *Images of Woman and Child from the Bronze Age: Reconsidering Fertility, Maternity, and Gender in the Ancient World* (Cambridge, 2011).

³⁸ This will be discussed in detail in ch. V.

³⁹ In some manuscripts the parent mentioned is a father, in one manuscript it is a wet-nurse. B. Alster, 'Inanna Repenting. The Conclusion of Inanna's Descent,' *AS* 18 (1996), 1-18.

⁴⁰ Who actually could be the biological mother or a hired wet nurse functioning as a main caregiver and thus viewed as a surrogate mother. The wet-nurse's distress in losing the child in her care would then qualify as pseudo-maternal grief. Stol, *Birth in Babylonia and the Bible*, 180.

Namma ((Ur-Namma A) c.2.4.1.1), for example, a bereft queen mother is pictured as inconsolable and her bitter weeping is heard in public places disrupting an orderly life of her fellow country people.⁴¹ In *Ninĝišzida's Journey to the Nether World*: c.1.7.3 the king is instructed to refrain from tears whereas individuals around are encouraged to utter laments. The greatest number of summonses to sing laments is addressed to the deceased's mother. In another text, when the hero Gilgamesh refuses Ishtar's amorous advances he reminds her that she killed her previous lovers, one of whom was Dumuzi. By killing him, says Gilgamesh, Ishtar brought Silili's, i.e. Dumuzi's mother's, '*perpetual weeping*' (Gilg. VI 57).⁴²

The extent to which maternal grief was thought to correlate to the deepest measure of sorrow is seen in the intriguing cross-cultural tendency to encode great distress in gender [mother]-specific terms regardless of the gender of the distressed. In *Letter from Lugal-nesaĝe to a King Radiant as the Moon* the supplicant lists his many misfortunes and compares himself to *a cow whose calf is not close by*, uttering pitiful cries, to *an ewe whose lamb is restrained in the milking pen*, to *a bird whose nest is taken away*, and finally to 'a boat which is not anchored to a firm quay' (c.3.3.02) (italics mine). The string of overt maternal symbolisms from the natural world is finished by an image of a drifting boat, which elsewhere is attested in contexts of unsuccessful childbirth. Thus in the elegy to a woman who died in labour, an unknown speaker asks the dying and sorrowful parturient, 'why are you adrift, like a boat, in the midst of the river? Your thwarts in pieces, your mooring rope cut?...' (K.890).⁴³

⁴¹ The section that deals with the mourning by Ur-Namm's wife is significantly longer and thus the composition is perhaps to be ascribed to his wife. E. Flückiger-Hawker, *Urnamma of Ur in Sumerian Literary Tradition* (Freiburg, 1999), 1-13, 93-182; D. Katz, *The Image of the Netherworld in the Sumerian Sources* (Bethesda, 2003), 328-336.

⁴² A. George, *The Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic: Introduction, Critical Edition and Cuneiform Texts* (Oxford, 2003), 623. Cf. Enkidu's words to Gilgamesh when he fell asleep and was not responding, 'Never let the mother who gave you birth be forced in mourning into the city square' (Gilg. V:76ff).

⁴³ E. Reiner, *Your Thwarts in Pieces, Your Mooring Rope Cut: Poetry from Babylonia and Assyria* (Michigan, 1985), 86-88. The reason to connect all these images to the supplicant's mournful state is line 12: 'In the streets

Perhaps a better window into the ancients' anthropology of mourning and the iconic quality ascribed to maternal grief within its registry can be gained from the account of the king Gilgamesh mourning over his friend Enkidu traditionally identified as a lament *par excellence*. Even though it was written by a male author for a male audience,⁴⁴ Gilgamesh's grief and the lament of his surroundings, i.e. nature, are encoded in gender specific terms, two of which are explicitly maternal. First, the king invites a long list of individuals and nature to join him in his mourning and addresses the fields as follows, 'May the pastures lament like your mother' (Gilg. VIII 13).⁴⁵ Then Gilgamesh describes himself as crying bitterly over his friend, lamenting 'like a professional mourning woman' (Gilg. VIII 45). A few lines later the text pictures Gilgamesh as highly distressed and says that the hero 'lifted his voice like a lion, like a lioness deprived of her whelps⁴⁶ he kept turning about, this way and that [before him and behind him (Enkidu's corpse)]. He was pulling out his curly [tresses]⁴⁷ and letting them fall in a heap... tearing off his finery and casting it away, [...like] something taboo.'⁴⁸ Not only is the expression of his grief overlaid with a metaphor modelled after maternal grief, albeit that of a female animal, but it is also described as highly kinaesthetic – frenzied pacing around Enkidu's body. Such psychomotor agitation in connection with grief is widely

of Nibru grief consumes me.' The image of a boat adrift appears again in the description of Ur-Namma's wife in mourning (line 182) in the Death of Ur-Namma (Ur-Namma A, Version from Nibru).

⁴⁴ R. Harris, *Gender and Aging in Mesopotamia: the Gilgamesh Epic and Other Ancient Literature* (Norman, 2000), 120-121.

⁴⁵ George, *The Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic*, 651.

⁴⁶ Some versions say 'whose cubs (are) in pits.' George, *The Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic*, 557.

⁴⁷ For a pictorial representation of the heightened maternal instinct of a lioness see, for example, the Apadana reliefs at Persepolis which depict Elamites bringing a lioness and two cubs as tribute for the Persian king. 'Clearly enraged to the point of great ferocity she [the lioness] turns her snarling face around to monitor her two babes in the clutches of the last two ambassadors in the parade.' B. Collins (ed.), *A History of the Animal World in the Ancient Near East* (Leiden, 2002), 200. It is possible that in Ancient Israel there was a similar metaphor. Thus Ez. 19 depicts a lioness as a caring mother who loses her children. The explicit grieving element is omitted in this text but the imagery is incorporated into a lament, קִיֵּן (Ez. 19:1, 14). For a discussion of a comparable biblical image from the natural world, a grieving she-bear, see Janzen who writes, '[T]he image of the she-bear bereaved of her cubs identifies rage in its most extreme form. Such rage is a measure of the mourning that finds its primal exemplar in a mother's loss of her child.' J. Janzen, 'The Root škl and the Soul Bereaved in Psalm 35,' *JSOT* 65 (1995), 69. See also A. Weiss, *Figurative Language in Biblical Prose Narrative: Metaphor in the Book of Samuel* (Leiden, 2006), 164-167.

⁴⁸ George, *The Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic*, 657. For this translation, see M. Kovacs, *The Epic of Gilgamesh* (Stanford, 1989), 71.

attested in cuneiform and biblical sources for both male and female mourners, but is particularly manifest in grief accounts of mothers, real and mythological. Thus, for example, an Akkadian omen text (Summaizbu III 76) casts a grieving mother, although in a non-death-related context, as follows, *If a woman gives birth, and (the child) has no buttock(s)-that woman ina nissati ittanallak*; a literal rendering of the last words is: ‘(she) will continually walk about in (a state of) depression [grief].’⁴⁹ Saturating the mourning for Enkidu with female grief-based symbolism, and more specifically mother-grief imagery, the author ensures an added degree of poignancy for Gilgamesh’s loss. The same logic is detectable in compositions where maternal grief is enlisted to personify inanimate, architectural structures in ruins: *‘The temple, like a cow whose calf is cut off, groans bitterly to itself; it is grief-stricken....’* (*The Lament for Nibru* (c. 2.2.4)). Another collapsing temple is pictured in graphic gynomorphic terms in a liturgical lament that describes the world in chaos: *‘Its towering brickwork is now crouching like a mother in mourning. Its reed mats are convulsing like a person in colic.’*⁵⁰

Of special interest for the discussion at hand are the compositions that accord maternal grief a role of cosmic proportions and situate it at the forefront of mytho-theological discourses on the human lot. A recent translation of the aforementioned *Inanna’s Descent to the Netherworld* pictures Ereškigala as the supreme deity of the netherworld⁵¹ allocating a

⁴⁹ M. Barré, “Wandering about” as a Topos of Depression in Ancient Near Eastern Literature and in the Bible,’ *JNES* 60 (2001), 181. For the comparability of death-related parental grief and parental grief occasioned by children’s severe disability see Hindmarch who identifies the latter as chronic grief. Hindmarch, *On the Death*, 34. For more examples of psychomotor agitation in contexts of bereft mothers see Barré, “Wandering about,” 178-179.

⁵⁰ A. Löhnert, A. Zgoll, ‘Schutzgott’ in *Reallexikon der Assyriologie und Vorderasiatischen Archäologie* 12/3-4 (Berlin, 2009), 311-314.

⁵¹ B. Alster, ‘The Mythology of Mourning,’ *AS* 5 (1983), 8.

greater scale to her motherhood and mobilising her mourning on behalf of all humanity – already dead and yet to die,⁵²

The mother who gave birth, Ereškigala, on account of her [dead] children,⁵³ is lying there. Her holy shoulders are not covered by a linen cloth. Her breasts are not full like a šagan vessel. Her nails are like a pickaxe (?) upon her. The hair on her head is bunched up as if it were leeks.

The underworld goddess Ereškigala here is portrayed in a perpetual sorrowful frenzy – lacerating herself, tearing out her hair, stripping her clothes off – ‘on account of her children’ who are ‘the dead of all humanity, the countless shades that populate her great subterranean city. Mourning, it seems, is the inescapable fate of the queen of the Netherworld.’⁵⁴ Alster explains that in the Sumerian version of *Inanna’s Descent to the Netherworld* this passage should be viewed as ‘a mythological reflection of a mourning ritual, perhaps associated with cult of Inanna, or death in general.’⁵⁵ If Alster is correct regarding this text’s function – a ritual exemplar in all things funerary – then maternal grief is not only assigned an archetypal quality in the mytho-theological imagination of Sumer but is also a mourning ideal to be replicated in the mundane funerary matters among the mortals.

Another instance of gynomorphic grief symbolism of cosmic magnitude is found in the flood account both in *Atra-ḥasīs* (III.iii.32; iv.10, 15-18) and *Gilgamesh* (XI.117-127) – the goddess Bēlet-ilī weeping over humanity destroyed in the flood and leading other gods in mourning,

⁵² See Lambert, who thinks that Ninazu, Ereškigala’s child, was the supreme ruler of the underworld. *Ibid.*, 15, n. 29.

⁵³ This sentence is shown to mean a mother who has already given birth and not a mother-to-be, i.e. a woman in labour, based on the lament of Lisin for her dead son, ‘Woe for the mother who gave birth, woe for her dead son’ (BM 29633, obv. 1-2). *Ibid.*, 14, n. 26.

⁵⁴ George, *The Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic*, 529, n. 297. Cf. the depiction of another divine mother in the Lament over the Destruction of Eridu – Damgalnunna ‘lacerating her body with dagger and sword and weeping over the destruction of her city and the suppression of her cult.’ S. Kramer, ‘The Weeping Goddess: Sumerian Prototypes of the Mater Dolorosa,’ *BA* 46 (1983), 73.

⁵⁵ Alster, ‘Mythology of Mourning,’ 1. The passage is also attested in the Sumerian and Akkadian versions of *Gilgamesh, Enkidu, and the Nether World*, where Gilgamesh advises Enkidu on his journey to the underworld. *Ibid.*, 7-8, 10-11.

The goddess, screaming like a woman in childbirth, Bēlet-ilī, the sweet-voiced wailed aloud: “Indeed the past has truly turned to clay, because I spoke evil in the assembly of the gods. How was it I spoke evil in the assembly of the gods, (and) declared a war to destroy my people? It is I that give birth (to them)! They are my people!”... The gods, the Annunaki, were weeping with her, wet-faced with sorrow, they were weeping [with her]...⁵⁶

The comparable accounts in Atra-ḫasīs (III.iii.32; iv.10, 15-18) cast the mourning of the mother goddess in a strong petitionary mode. She intercedes for her offspring and weeps incessantly for them: ‘As for me, how am I to live (?) in a house of bereavement? I have seen, and I have wept over them! Shall I (ever) finish weeping for them?’⁵⁷

Accordinging maternal grief a yet greater visibility and further exhibiting the stronghold it occupied in the ritual discourse of ancient Mesopotamia are the Sumerian and Babylonian *balags* and *eršemmas* that spanned almost 2000 years.⁵⁸ Marked by the distinct motif of a weeping goddess identified by Kramer as the Sumerian *Mater Dolorosa*,⁵⁹ these liturgical compositions hold, perhaps, the highest concentration of the symbolism under discussion via an array of metaphors and similes of grief from the natural world – cows, ewes, she-donkeys bereft of their offspring.⁶⁰ Having catalogued the laments featuring the weeping goddess Kramer states that she takes on ‘numerous and diverse guises: [she appears] as the divine queen bemoaning the destruction of her city and temple, the suppression of her cult, the

⁵⁶ George, *The Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic*, 711. In his discussion on grief in the Hebrew Bible Janzen suggests that ‘the relation, in ancient Near Eastern traditions, between maternity, compassion, intercession and lamentation’ can also be illustrated, among other episodes, by ‘the appeal of Tiamat to Apsu and against his vizier, on behalf of the young gods who, however noisy and rebellious, are their children and therefore should be attended to kindly-*tābīš*.’ Janzen, ‘The Root *škl*,’ 64, n. 14.

⁵⁷ S. Dalley, *Myths from Mesopotamia: Creation, the Flood, Gilgamesh, and Others* (Oxford, 2008), 32-33; W. Lambert, A. Millard (eds), *Atra-ḫasīs: the Babylonian Story of the Flood* (Winona Lake, 1999), 85.

⁵⁸ A. Lohnert, ‘Manipulating the Gods: Lamenting in Context,’ in K. Radner, E. Robson (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Cuneiform Culture* (Oxford, 2011), 401-402.

⁵⁹ Kramer, ‘The Weeping Goddess,’ 69-80. See also S. Kramer, ‘Lisin, the Weeping Goddess: A New Sumerian Lament,’ in G. van Driel, T. Krispijn, M. Stol, K. Veenhof (eds), *ZIKIR ŠUMIN: Assyriological Studies Presented to F.R. Kraus on the Occasion of His Seventieth Birthday* (Leiden, 1992), 133-144. See 133, 136-137 there for a list of cuneiform texts that feature the weeping goddess.

⁶⁰ On male or father deities weeping see, for example, the Eridu Lament in which Enki weeps bitter tears. M. Green, ‘The Eridu Lament,’ *JCS* 30 (1978), 133; J. Roberts, ‘The Motif of the Weeping God in Jeremiah and Its Background in the Lament Tradition of the Ancient Near East,’ in J. Roberts, *The Bible and the Ancient Near East: Collected Essays* (Winona Lake, 2002), 132-142.

suffering of the ravaged and dispersed people. Or, she is the spouse, the sister, and above all the mother, of Dumuzi, or a Dumuzi-like figure, who had been carried off into the nether world, a tragic fate that came to symbolize the death of the king and the destruction of her city and temple.’⁶¹

The usefulness of this motif for the ritual register of ancient Mesopotamia is particularly telling in these compositions as they exhibit a marked multi-layering of the symbolism in question. A survey of these laments shows that gender-specific images of bereavement were not only superimposed on collapsed communities themselves but were also applied to their representatives, i.e. divine patronesses already viewed as their mothers. It appears that such layered application of grief symbolism in the ancient rhetoric of ‘crisis’ allowed these cultic songs to achieve the density and texture of sorrow otherwise unattainable without the gynomorphic language of bereavement.⁶² Thus, for example, in the lament over the destruction of Urim the entire city is cast as an ewe whose lamb has been torn away from her, as a mother goat whose kid perished (lines 64-71) (the Lament for Urim: c.2.2.2). Such repeated personification or animalization of the city under attack is further exacerbated through the image of maternal grief – ‘mothers and fathers who did not leave their houses were consumed by fire. The little ones lying in their mothers’ arms were carried off like fish by the waters. Among the nursemaids with their strong embrace, the embrace was pried open’ (The Lament for Urim: c.2.2.2). Furthermore, the lament features the goddess Ningal who is already presented as a mother of her city⁶³ and then repeatedly is compared to *a cow bereft of her calf*, ‘Because there was bitterness in my Land, I trudged the earth like a cow for its

⁶¹ Kramer, ‘The Weeping Goddess,’ 70.

⁶² Admittedly, this language draws on the parental loss experienced both by humans and animals.

⁶³ Lines 254-255: ‘Mother Ningal, like an enemy, stands outside her city. The woman laments bitterly over her devastated house’; Lines 369-370: ‘My queen, your city weeps before you as its mother. Urim, like a child lost in a street, seeks a place before you.’

calf... My city was destroyed in its foundations;... Urim perished where it lay...' (lines 101-111).

Such surplus of grief symbolism marks the rhetoric of many, if not all, Sumerian city laments. In the Lamentation over the destruction of Ur Ningal appears again as the city's patron goddess and is described as bewailing the loss of her people who were carried away like 'kids and lambs from their mother.' Further in the text, after her extended sitting on the ground chanting laments, she treads the earth 'like a cow in search of its calf.'⁶⁴ In one of the Sumerian lamentations a goddess, either Ninsinna or Inanna, is tormented by the netherworld demon Namtar in the wake of her city's destruction. She mourns the city's calamity and her own losses saying that she gave birth to a son but now has no son, 'like a mother-goat she cherished a strange kid.'⁶⁵ In one lament Dumuzi's mother Ninsun mourns her son in the place 'where the ewe has given up its lamb, the mother-goat has given up its kid.'⁶⁶ In another text the great goddess Ninhursag searches for her lost princely son and the ancient poet describes her in grief as 'a cow lowing to its unresponding calf.' Scanning the mytho-liturgical landscape of cuneiform sources yields a well-established motif of a bereft mother whose grief and mourning are rallied on behalf of larger communities in crisis.

Given such habitual application of maternal grief to large scale catastrophes and its paradigmatic quality in the texts cited above, it is not implausible that its symbolism in Sumerian proverbs is taken even further. The statements in question have it, '*the palace - one day a mother giving birth, the next day a lamenting mother.*'⁶⁷ Admittedly the brevity of this and three other similar sayings precludes a precise identification of their meaning. Yet since

⁶⁴ Kramer, 'The Weeping Goddess,' 71.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 74.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 76.

⁶⁷ Proverbs: collection 14: c.6.1.14 'The palace: one day a mother giving birth, the next day a mother in mourning'; Proverbs: collection 25: c.6.1.25 'The palace - one day a lamenting mother, the next day a mother giving birth' (cf. 6.1.02.158, 6.1.14.22, 6.1.17.b9); B. Alster, *Proverbs of Ancient Sumer: The World's Earliest Proverb Collections* (Bethesda, 1997), 201.

two of the four sayings are found in contexts where the palace is under some nondescript attack a guess regarding their communicative thrust could be attempted. Contemplating the fragility of life and its cyclical nature the proverbs seek to capture a full spectrum of human experiences and the emotive responses they occasion. Since a bereft mother was a frequent cipher for the gravest of tragedies it is not unlikely to envisage successful child birth and the associated joy of a mother as a shorthand for its antithesis.⁶⁸ Thus for a single distillation of the ancients' taxonomy of emotions two gender-specific experiences were deemed fitting metonymies.

B. Maternal Grief as an Archetype of Loss in Ugaritic Literature.

Even though the extant Ugaritic literature does not contain extensive accounts of maternal grief, a few texts, however, are of pertinence. The first episode of interest comes from the story of Anat's mourning over Baal. Recent scholarship on this goddess has shown that since in the Ugaritic pantheon she is designated as a *btlt*, a perpetual adolescent, she is not limited by gender-boundaries and thus is free to engage in characteristically male roles of warfare and hunting.⁶⁹ Of interest for this discussion is her representation in KTU 1.6 II, when she mourns the death of Baal. In this text her representation as a deity with certain

⁶⁸ Note that Alster observes that these 'sayings are structured in two parallel, but contradictory, sentences.' And then adds another saying to illustrate his point – '*My king: How big was your pleasure! And how big was your weeping!*' B. Alster, 'Paradoxical Proverbs and Satire in Sumerian Literature,' *JCS* 27(1975), 201, 207. Contra Alster it should be noted that since the second saying contains two polar experiences and the king's emotional responses to them, these sayings do not contain contradictory thoughts but rather indicate the polarity of human experiences. Cf. Is. 49, 54, 66, where maternal grief and joy represent unexpected national resurgence after a long period of exile.

⁶⁹ P. Day, 'Why is Anat a Warrior and Hunter?' in D. Jobling, P. Day, G. Sheppard (eds), *The Bible and The Politics of Exegesis. Essays in Honor of Norman K. Gottwald on His Sixty-Fifth Birthday* (Cleveland, 1991), 326. Some scholars argue that in Ugaritic mythology Anat is depicted as an androgynous character. J. de Moor, *The Seasonal Pattern in the Ugaritic Myth of Ba'lu, According to the Version of Ilmilku* (Amsterdam, 1971), 123, 171. Wall, however, demonstrates that her depiction may combine masculine and feminine attributes in her character and clothing, but this does not necessitate her androgynous or transvestite appearance. Anat is a liminal figure, not androgynous. N. Walls, *The Goddess Anat in the Ugaritic Texts* (Atlanta, 1992), 85; P. Day, 'Anat: Ugarit's "Mistress of Animals,"' *JNES* 51 (1992), 181-190. Unless otherwise stated, KTU numbers will be used for Ugaritic textual references (M. Dietrich-O. Loretz-J. Sanmartin, *Die keilalphabetischen Texte aus Ugarit. Einschliesslich der keilalphabetischen Texte ausserhalb Ugarits. Teil I Transcription* (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1976)).

masculine components to her character crosses over into the realm of the demonstrably maternal: ‘The Damsel Anat searches for him, like the heart of a cow for her calf, like the heart of a ewe for her lamb, such is the heart of Anat after Baal.’ It is also worth noting that for the first and only time in the Baal cycle Anat is designated as *rḥm Anat*, ‘maiden Anat’ or ‘female Anat.’⁷⁰ The root of this word is that of a ‘womb’ and thus in the context of her grief over Baal’s demise and her longing for him, she is identified as the one possessing a ‘womb,’ further bringing out the maternal/feminine facet in her representation. In addition, it should be observed that this term *rḥm* is used in the context of a series of metaphors that are attested elsewhere specifically describing grieving mothers.

Another text of pertinence is KTU 1.100 which contains a ritual in mythological form.⁷¹ The text addresses the issue of bites by venomous serpents and features the Mare, ‘whose origins are cosmological,’⁷² offering pleas to Šapšu, her mother, to deliver messages to twelve gods on behalf of her son, the stallion stung by the scaly serpent (KTU 1.100). At the end of her petitions she addresses Ḫôrānu who is able to handle the problem. Line 61 mentions that the Mare turns to Ḫôrānu ‘for she is bereaved (*tkl*) of her offspring’ (KTU 1.100:61). Pardee explains that these incantations are ultimately concerned with the well-being of ‘the flesh-and-blood equids of Ugarit’⁷³ and thus the issue of *grief* in this ritual is not entirely secondary. Writing on the subject of maternal grief and compassion and commenting on Anat, as well as other sorrowing goddesses in ANE, Janzen observes that ‘a social feeling in which all may participate finds its most intense location, its radical matrix, in the compassion of “a cow for its calf, a ewe for its lamb,” and, as Tiamat primally exemplifies, a

⁷⁰ Pardee explains that ‘the title *rḥm*, “girl,” “maid” (< “womb”?) is restored from line 27; it is used of ‘Anatu only in this passage.’ W. Hallo, K. Younger (eds), *The Context Of Scripture: Canonical Compositions, Monumental Inscriptions and Archival Documents from the Biblical World* (Leiden, 2003), 270.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 295.

⁷² D. Pardee, *Ritual and Cult at Ugarit* (Atlanta, 2002), 172.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 172.

mother for her child.⁷⁴ The incantations in question appear to tap into the same mother-child nexus to assure the desired outcome. The repetitive nature of supplications in the text creates a certain degree of tenacity in the depiction of the Mare's preventive petitions, which in turn may be indicative of the intensity of her grief.⁷⁵

Another piece of evidence in favour of the archetypal nature of maternal grief in Ugarit is KTU 1.23:8-9 where the death deity Motu or a mythic hero is said to have two staffs or sceptres that carry with them two very specific ills – *widowhood* (*ūlmn*) and *[maternal] bereavement* (*tkl*).⁷⁶ The identity of this figure remains uncertain in Ugaritic scholarship,⁷⁷ yet the coupling of the roots *ūlmn* and *tkl*, observed elsewhere, is of importance. In targeting women and threatening their offspring these deadly prerogatives are suggestive of the heightened association of child loss and 'mother' grief with the ultimate human sorrow.⁷⁸ Although the extant Ugaritic sources do contain detailed accounts about bereaved males – divine and human - their mourning appears to be either superseded by, or delegated to, females who in turn are implicitly or explicitly cast in 'mother' language.⁷⁹ Such rhetoric

⁷⁴ Janzen, 'The Root škl,' 64, n. 14.

⁷⁵ But since the text does not address the issue of grief and mourning directly any observations on them here remain conjectural. Of interest here is the reconstruction of KTU 1.107:15-25 by Korpel and de Moor as a lament by the creatress (mother [?]) goddess Šapšu over the demise of Adammu, the first human being, 'Šapšu called from heaven, x [] shrieking [Woe!] Now let me recite [a lament (?)]! [] [they will answer], "How bitter!" [boi]ling liquid pours forth from Lô[tānu (?)] [] [] the bitterness of the word his [] you/ she has stripped the priests [] [] they walk on foot. [He forg]ot(?) the hand, the f[oot (?)] [Šap]šu [cried] to the Flood her [hands(?)] the locks [of her head (?)] [in weeping let me be bitter! [Why (?)] was A[dammu (?)] exalted?' M. Korpel, J. de Moor, *Adam, Eve and the Devil: a New Beginning* (Sheffield, 2014), 249-250. Reconstructed in this way, KTU 1.107:15-25 produces a motif comparable to East Semitic accounts about cosmic mothers lamenting the downfall of humanity. Unfortunately this text is too fragmented and others leave it untranslated. Cf. G. del Olmo Lete, *Canaanite Religion: According to the Liturgical Texts of Ugarit* (Bethesda, 1999), 372. For Pardee's translation see Pardee, *Ritual and Cult*, 179-191.

⁷⁶ G. del Olmo Lete, J. Sanmartín, *A Dictionary of the Ugaritic Language in the Alphabetic Tradition* (Leiden, 2003), 58.

⁷⁷ For a discussion on the divine double name *mt w šr* see, for example, D. Pardee, 'Ugaritic Proper Names,' *AfO* 36-37 (1989-1990), 390-513; Hallo, Younger, *Context of Scripture*, 276-277.

⁷⁸ It appears that the root *tkl* in Ugaritic is used only in these two texts making it hard to establish whether it was used primarily with female subjects as in Hebrew. For the usage of the Hebrew שכל see Janzen, 'The Root škl,' 56.

⁷⁹ E.g. Anat whose mourning for Baal is described in maternal images (see above).

once again relegates male or paternal mourning to an auxiliary position and coheres well with the general ANE outlook on the subject under discussion.

C. Maternal Grief in Hittite Sources.

The motif in question is interestingly modulated in Hittite sources exhibiting a vital link of mother grief, ritual, and politics.⁸⁰ Of pertinence for this survey is that in the Hittite thought world the day of one's death is customarily conceptualised as the day of one's mother. Thus, for example, in a treaty between Muwattalli II of Hatti and Akaksandu of Wilusa, Muwattalli II swears his loyalty and says, '[...When your] day of death arrives [lit. the day of your mother], Alaksandu, then [...] In regard to the [son] of yours whom you designate for kingship... if the population of the land refuses him and says as follows: "He is the progeny [...]" – I, My Majesty, will not agree.'⁸¹ Another text reads, 'If out of ten (or) twenty people for some the day of the mother [will have come], but no massive dying takes place in Hattusa...' (KUB 5.3 i 45-46). Archi explains that this expression was so widely used that it eventually brought 'the other parent into the equation: "If for someone the day of his father and mother is long" (von Schuler 1957: 13, l. 14-15)⁸² meaning if it is 'far away, when his life is long.'⁸³

Shedding light on such understanding of the day of one's death is the Royal Death Ritual where a king's or a queen's already deceased mother assumes a significant role in the

⁸⁰ To my knowledge Hittite and Egyptian sources do not contain the motif of maternal grief proper, as in other cultures surveyed here. But they are included to show that the enduring bond between mother and child discussed previously is also recognised in Hatti and Egypt.

⁸¹ G. Beckman, *Hittite Diplomatic Texts* (Atlanta, 1996), 83.

⁸² A. Archi, 'The Soul Has to Leave the Land of the Living,' *JANER* 7 (2007), 190. Note, however, that he (the father) does not appear frequently in the phrase of interest and, what is more important, is absent from the royal funerary ritual discussed below. Melchert notes that the role one's mother played in the funeral is not attested for other relatives or ancestors. H. Melchert, 'Hittite *uwaš* and Congeners,' *IF* 91 (1986), 106.

⁸³ KUB 26. L iii 14-15, H. Güterbock, H. Hoffner (eds), *The Hittite Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago* (Chicago, 1980-), v. š, 502. For those who suggest that this phrase indicates the meeting with one's ancestors see bibliography in *Ibid.*, 502.

process of her offspring's divinisation.⁸⁴ During this ritual a *patili*-priest stands on the roof of the dead person's house calling his name repeatedly and inquiring where he has gone. At the seventh time, the (underworld) gods inform him that the deceased has joined his mother, 'For him the day of (his) mother [has come and] she has taken him by hand and accompanied him.'⁸⁵

According to this source (KUB 30.28) and a somewhat fragmentary text (KUB 39.49) the mother takes the soul of the deceased by the hand and presents it to the Sun-goddess of the Earth, Queen of the Netherworld. A number of scholars have noted 'that there are some signs that death was considered analogous to birth in the Hittite mentality.'⁸⁶ Van den Hout, for example, explains that the presence of the *paliti*-priest, who is otherwise featured in birth rituals, suggests that death is thought to be a second birth by the Hittites. Rutherford in turn observes that the Hittite word for the Old Woman, a character prominent at another stage of the ritual, 'may have been *hasawas*, which could mean "midwife,"' again connecting the processes of birth and death.⁸⁷ Beckham, in his earlier treatment of birth rituals, was not sure whether the mother in the Death Ritual should be viewed as the biological mother of the deceased or as the Sun-goddess of the Earth⁸⁸ but did understand this ritual 'as a *rite de passage* marking the transition of an individual from the earthly existence to the afterlife' and thus a rebirth.⁸⁹ Van den Hout in turn theorises that the mother in this ritual comes 'to fetch

⁸⁴ See the discussion on the king's personal body and his body as body politic in Th. van den Hout, 'Death as a Privilege: The Hittite Royal Funerary Ritual,' in J. Bremmer, Th. van den Hout, R. Peters (eds), *Hidden Futures: Death and Immortality in Ancient Egypt, Anatolia, the Classical, Biblical and Arabic-Islamic World* (Amsterdam, 1994), 37-38.

⁸⁵ van den Hout, 'Death as a Privilege,' 42.

⁸⁶ I. Rutherford, "'When You Go to the Meadow...'" The Lament of the *Taptara*-Women in the Hittite *Sallis Wastais* Ritual,' in A. Suter (ed.), *Lament: Studies in the Ancient Mediterranean and Beyond* (New York, 2008), 64, n. 7.

⁸⁷ Rutherford, "'When You Go to the Meadow...,'" 64, n. 7

⁸⁸ Although he notes this with some reservation. G. Beckham, *Hittite Birth Rituals* (Wiesbaden, 1983), 236-237. But see Archi who says that here 'the soul, once freed from the body, underwent a second birth. The mother who, according to the rites, accompanies the soul towards a new life, must be the biological mother. In crucial moments, what we may call the "the motherly deep" emerges from the subconscious.' Archi, 'The Soul,' 190.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 237.

him, i.e. the king for his ascent to heaven' and appeases the Sungoddess with offerings. For him 'persons of royal descent seem to have been the only ones entitled to escape the Netherworld' and 'the mother apparently [was] able to enter and leave as she pleases.'⁹⁰ Based on KUB 30.28(+), a ritual from Kizzuwatna, and '39.23 (in 12'D Hamrisha D [x are mentioned), dupl. KBo 34.80 (Otten 1958: 96-97),'Archi thinks that 'this privileged fate was not merely reserved for the king and queen'⁹¹ and thus was more democratised. However, it should be noted that most of the surviving Hittite literature deals with individuals of a high social status.⁹²

More evidence of maternal assistance in the transition of the dead to the afterlife comes from a myth that explores the perilous journey the human soul has to undertake - the soul is unwilling to exit the world of the living and 'the Mother-goddess is tearful. She is struck with tears.' Providing a detailed analysis of this text Archi explains that 'the Mother-goddess, which brought the soul into this world, is afflicted with sorrow: she is "struck" (wrecked) by sobs because the soul must leave the world of the living (ll. 21-22). Her reaction expresses the strong emotions which accompany death.'⁹³ He states that 'the Mother-goddess ... suffers for the soul and bursts into tears as if she were the biological mother (ll. 21-22). The factual dimension is covered by the mythical and the two are mingled.'⁹⁴

⁹⁰ Van den Hout, 'Death as a Privilege,' 44.

⁹¹ Archi, 'The Soul,' 189.

⁹² Van den Hout, 'Death as a Privilege,' 38.

⁹³ H. Hoffner, Jr., G. Beckman (eds), *Hittite Myths* (Atlanta, 1998), 101.

⁹⁴ Archi, 'The Soul,' 190-191.

Another pertinent text is a lament from the so-called Puḫanu chronicle. It is sung by two soldiers who are either already dead⁹⁵ or fatally wounded⁹⁶ and are anticipating death in the upcoming Hurrian invasion of Hatti,

‘shrouds of Nesa, shrouds of Nesa, bind me, bind
‘take me down to my mother, bind me, bind
‘take me down to my wet-nurse,⁹⁷ bind me bind’(KBo 3.40 obv. 13’–14’)⁹⁸

De Martino explains that these lines belong to ‘a mourning song intoned by the Hittite warriors... expressing their wish to be at home with their ancestors.’⁹⁹ According to Weeden ‘the place-name Nesa is the Hittite name for ancient Kaneš, modern Kültepe near Kayseri, a location the Hittites regarded to a degree as their ancestral home.’¹⁰⁰ In an older study Watkins elucidates the meaning of ‘shrouds of Nesa’ as the reference to the clothes for the dead.¹⁰¹ For him, one of the dead soldiers here is ‘represented as calling for his clothes or shrouds: those of his homeland, of his mother, of his forefather.’¹⁰² He also notes that ‘the ample documentation of the Hittite rituals for the dead, edited by Otten 1958, fully confirms

⁹⁵ C. Watkins, ‘A Latin-Hittite Etymology,’ *Lan* 45 (1969), 239-240 and the bibliography cited there; M. Weeden, ‘Poetry and War among the Hittites,’ in H. Kennedy (ed.), *Warfare and Poetry in the Middle East* (London, 2013), 89.

⁹⁶ Melchert, ‘Hittite *uwaš* and Congeners,’ 104-105.

⁹⁷ This word is a Hapax and is variously translated. See Melchert who thinks that ‘a wet-nurse’ (rather an agent noun, i.e. ‘one who suckles,’ thus a ‘nurse’) does not refer to a separate individual but reinforces the one already mentioned, i.e. the mother. He states that ‘there is good evidence that the inherited Indo-European tradition was for mothers to nurse their own infants.’ Melchert, ‘Hittite *uwaš*,’ 110. Since death in Hatti was understood as a second birth and since the mother played an important role in the funerary rituals the inclusion of ‘a wet-nurse’ as a synonymous term to ‘mother’ would make sense. *Ibid.*, 110.

⁹⁸ This translation is taken from Weeden, ‘Poetry and War,’ 89. On the interpretation of this song see also J. Jasanoff, H. Melchert, L. Oliver, C. Watkins (eds), *Mír Curad: Studies in Honor of Calvert Watkins* (Innsbruck, 1998).

⁹⁹ S. de Martino, ‘Song and Singing in the Hittite Literary Evidence,’ in E. Hickmann, A. Kilmer, R. Eichmann (eds), *Studien zur Musikarchäologie III. Archäologie früher Klagerzeugung und Tonordnung / Vorträge des 2. Symposiums der Internationalen Studiengruppe Musikarchäologie im Kloster Michaelstein*, 17-23. September 2000, 2002 (Rahden, 2002), 627. For those who hold the same view see Watkins, ‘A Latin-Hittite Etymology,’ 239-240; Melchert, ‘Hittite *uwaš*,’ 105; H. Hoffner, ‘Hurrian Civilization from a Hittite Perspective,’ in Buccellati et al (eds), *Urkesch and the Hurrians: Studies in Honor of Lloyd Cotsen* (Malibu, 1998), 171-172.

¹⁰⁰ Weeden, ‘Poetry and War,’ 89; A. Gilan, ‘Der Puḫānu – Text - Theologischer Streit und politische Opposition in der althethitischen Literatur,’ *AoF* 31 (2004), 263-296.

¹⁰¹ Watkins, ‘A Latin-Hittite Etymology,’ 240. For earlier studies that hold the view that the reference here is to the clothes for the dead see also the bibliography cited on 239-241; Melchert, ‘Hittite *uwaš*,’ 106.

¹⁰² The rendering ‘father’ in this line was refuted by later scholars.

the importance of the dressing of the corpse and bier in Hittite culture.¹⁰³ For the present discussion it is of significance that the feature of ‘mother’ in this dirge may either mean the soldier’s desire to die (‘take me to the mother’)¹⁰⁴ or his desire to be properly prepared for his burial, i.e. to be clothed by his mother – the one who bore him and nursed him should be the one to prepare him for burial.¹⁰⁵

Although this brief survey of the relevant Hittite literature shows that the genre of *resisting maternity/maternal grief* is absent (or not yet discovered) in the extant Hittite sources the evidence cited nevertheless shows that ‘the motherly deep,’ to use Archi’s term, is firmly lodged in the Hittite collective psyche and that maternal grief and maternal assistance, both in this life and posthumously, were indispensable in the religio-political and cultural milieu of Hatti.¹⁰⁶

D. Maternal Grief in Egypt.

The intersection of motherhood, grief, death, and afterlife is elevated to a whole new level in the cosmology of the ancient Egyptians. The tendency to encrypt death- and grief-related matters in maternal terms, already seen in other cultures, permeates Egypt’s mytho-religious consciousness in an unprecedented way. In fact, the entirety of Egypt’s cosmos was modelled on mother-specific ontological principles and functional prerogatives with a symbiotic mingling of the biological mother and the divine progenitrix in its order.

In the mythology of ancient Egypt the weeping mother-goddess is Isis who mourns for her son Horus when he was fatally bitten by Seth who had transformed himself into a snake. When she was told what had happened to Horus she let out a great wail lamenting her

¹⁰³ Watkins, ‘A Latin-Hittite Etymology,’ 240.

¹⁰⁴ Weeden, ‘Poetry and War,’ 89.

¹⁰⁵ Due to the lack of more concrete evidence the latter reading is highly conjectural.

¹⁰⁶ On the general dominance of women in Hittite rituals see, for example, Beckman’s comments in G. Beckman, ‘From Cradle to Grave: Women’s Role in Hittite Medicine and Magic,’ *JAC* 8 (1993), 36-39.

son and imploring Re to help. Following her sister Nephthys' advice she appeals to the gods with a cry so mighty that the heavens and the earth were shaken, and the boat of the Sun god stopped in its course, plunging the whole of creation into darkness. Looking down on the grieving Isis the Sun god sends Thoth to her and he works magic that brings Horus back to life.¹⁰⁷

The earlier Egyptian evidence, e.g. funerary songs from tomb inscriptions, does not exhibit much sorrow associated with death and bereavement in general, and more specifically with child loss.¹⁰⁸ Later traditions after the Amarna period, however, do preserve themes of sadness, longing for re-joining, and pain occasioned by various losses and child loss in particular.¹⁰⁹

A mother's yearning to reconnect with a child is interestingly illustrated in the tomb of the vizier Paser. There the deceased embraces his already dead mother and she exclaims, '*How good it is! My heart is full of joy, My longing has been fulfilled.*'¹¹⁰ As the mother had preceded her son in the netherworld the inscription does not speak of maternal grief proper, yet the sadness of separation of the two brought about by death is clearly detectable. The motif of violent and lamentable snatching of a child from its mother is present in a text on a mortuary stela from the first century BC. There a deceased woman relates to her husband that death is unavoidable and no one is able to escape the sorrows it brings,

¹⁰⁷ W. Simpson (ed.), *The Literature of Ancient Egypt: An Anthology of Stories, Instructions, Stelae, Autobiographies, and Poetry* (New Haven, 2003), 97; G. Pinch, *Handbook of Egyptian Mythology* (Santa Barbara, 2002), 151. Isis was also identified with the Greek goddess Demeter who 'perpetually searched for a lost child.' *Ibid.*, 151.

¹⁰⁸ The lack of *sorrow* in earlier Egyptian materials is usually attributed to the fact that Egyptian beliefs regarding death and afterlife included the notion of immortality. H. Milde, "'Going Out into the Day.'" Ancient Egyptian Beliefs and Practices Concerning Death and Immortality,' in J. Bremmer, Th. van den Hout, R. Peters (eds), *Hidden Futures: Death and Immortality in Ancient Egypt, Anatolia, the Classical, Biblical and Arabic-Islamic World* (Amsterdam, 1994), 15-36.

¹⁰⁹ J. Assmann, *Death and Salvation in Ancient Egypt* (Ithaca, 2005), 114.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 172. See also K. Seyfried, "'Generationeneinbindung,'" in J. Assmann et al. (eds), *Thebanische Beamtennekropolen: Neue Perspektiven archäologischer Forschung* (Heidelberg, 1995), 219-231.

Death, 'Come!' is his name,
 whoever he calls to himself, they come immediately...
 Great and small alike are in his hand.
 No one staves off his curse from the one he chooses.
He steals the son from his mother,
 Rather than the old man who is drawing nigh to him.¹¹¹

The aforementioned phenomenon of imbuing grief with maternal aspects, where normally it is not expected, can also be observed in the funerary cult of Osiris. The prominent figures of the cult are the two great wailing women, Isis and Nephthys, who offer lamentations not only for Osiris himself but for all of the dead as well.¹¹² Describing the deities involved in the cult, Assmann observes that Horus, Osiris' son, does not participate in the mourning for his father. Rather, in his addresses to Osiris Horus is preoccupied with the enthronement of his father, the restoration of his honour, and his retaliation. But the actual mourning and grief occurs 'in the intimate space of the physical constellations of spouses,'¹¹³ that is they are engendered by Isis. Assmann's gender-based delineation of mourning here is particularly enlightening. For him, 'lyric, the language of emotions, is a sensuous, feminine language' which is found in the laments of Isis and Nephthys.¹¹⁴ He states that 'grief, and specifically female grief, was an unconditional form of handling death by bestowing life'¹¹⁵ in the netherworld.¹¹⁶ In light of such emphatic 'gendered' discussion of Isis and Nephthys' mourning and their outcome, that is, Osiris' regeneration, it is of interest that the sisters'

¹¹¹ Assmann, *Death and Salvation*, 124. See also S. Snape, *Ancient Egyptian Tombs: the Culture of Life and Death* (Oxford, 2011), 57.

¹¹² C. Bleeker, 'Isis and Nephthys as Wailing Women,' *Num* 5 (1958), 1-2.

¹¹³ Assmann, *Death and Salvation*, 115.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 115

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 115.

¹¹⁶ Cf. Assmann's comparison of the role of Isis in the Osiris cult with that of Mary, the mother of Jesus: 'The scene of the Pietà, in which Mary holds the corpse of the crucified Jesus on her lap and mourns, is a comparable depiction of the body-centred intensity of female grief, in which Mary is assisted by Mary Magdalene, just as Isis is assisted by Nephthys.' *Ibid.*, 116. For the similarity in the iconographies of the two women see also S. Higgins, 'Divine Mothers: The Influence of Isis on the Virgin Mary in *Lactans*-Iconography,' *JCSCS* 3-4 (2012), 71-90. Apparently, in his treatise 'Concerning Isis and Osiris' Plutarch notes that 'the all-powerful Isis allowed herself to be portrayed as a woman of sorrows to console suffering humanity.' Pinch, *Handbook of Egyptian Mythology*, 151. For the role of women in Egyptian mourning rites see, for example, D. Sweeney, 'Walking Alone Forever, Following You: Gender and Mourners' Laments From Ancient Egypt,' in *NIN: Journal of Gender Studies in Antiquity* 2 (2002), 27-48; C. Graves-Brown, *Dancing for Hathor: Women in Ancient Egypt* (London, 2010), 65-71; Wickett, *For the Living*, 159-163.

actions in the cult are also endowed with a maternal aspect.¹¹⁷ This can be inferred ‘from the name given them as early as the Pyramid Texts, viz. *hnm.t.tj*, the two female attendants, a term with the specific meaning of *divine nurses*. The deceased Osiris is in need of attendance as it is given to a baby.’¹¹⁸ Such switch from the purely sisterly and wifely aspects in the ritual actions of the Isis-Nephthys pair to that of *motherly* care may echo the trend already observed in West and East Semitic mythologies and liturgies. But since the *nursing* and thus *motherly* features in the interaction of the deceased with other goddesses is a repeated motif in Egyptian coffin inscriptions,¹¹⁹ the sisters’ care for the dead Osiris cast in maternal terms may not be entirely unusual.

However, a more obvious maternal assistance to the dead in the Egyptian death cosmology was offered by the goddesses Neith and Nut who greeted the deceased in the netherworld. Their lengthy speeches are inscribed on a great number of Egyptian sarcophagi, which, by means of these monologues, become ‘vocal’ as well.¹²⁰ In these inscriptions the coffin is represented as the body of the goddess that houses an entire divine realm¹²¹ and is prepared to welcome the dead. Assmann hypothesises that in the intimate, womb-like interior of a coffin one mother-goddess, Neith, represented ‘the outer box-shaped sarcophagus,’ while another mother-goddess, Nut, ‘embodied the inner, mummiform sarcophagus.’¹²² For him, ‘the constellation of coffin and corpse [functioned] as the union of mother and child.’¹²³

Nut, who is by far the most frequently featured goddess in coffin speeches, sometimes compares her netherworldly functions to those of the biological mother offering the deceased

¹¹⁷ S. Tower Hollis, ‘5 Egyptian Goddesses in the Third Millenium B.C.: Neith, Hathor, Nut, Isis, Nephthys,’ *KMT* 5 (1995), 48.

¹¹⁸ Bleeker, ‘Isis and Nephthys,’ 11.

¹¹⁹ Assmann, *Death and Salvation*, 171; S. Schott, ‘Nut spricht als Mutter und Sarg,’ *RE* 17 (1965), 81-87.

¹²⁰ Assmann, *Death and Salvation*, 165.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 166.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 169.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 166. For more on the goddess Nut see N. Billing, *Nut: the Goddess of Life in Text and Iconography* (Uppsala, 2002).

rebirth¹²⁴ and everlasting security in her cosmic womb.¹²⁵ ‘In coffins of the Late Period, a representation of this mother goddess often appears on the inside of the lid, sometimes even naked, spreading herself over the deceased so as to embrace him in her arms and incorporate him into herself.’¹²⁶

According to the Egyptian worldview the maternal principle permeated the entirety of death geography. For the deceased the Great mother takes on a plurality of forms - ‘she is the tomb, the necropolis, the West, and the realm of the dead; all the spaces that receive him [the dead], from the smallest to the largest, are manifestations of the womb into which the transfigured deceased enters.’¹²⁷ Based on the tomb scenes where divine and biological mothers coalesce, Assmann postulates that ‘the deceased’s own mother is also a manifestation of this ever maternal entity that is to receive the deceased in the form of the coffin, the tomb, and the West.’¹²⁸ He further explains that,

Death as return to the womb was a central concept, one that extended into every area of Egyptian culture, every bit as much as that of the Judgment of the Dead, which belonged to the other image of death, that of death as enemy. But while the concept of the Judgment of the Dead experienced considerable development over time, that of death as return to the womb exhibited an astonishing consistency... [Thus] the concept of archetype comes to mind in this connection...¹²⁹

Such prominence and excess of maternal symbolism in the cosmic topography of death and the attendant funerary practices of Egypt may very well have been informed by the general tenets of ‘mother-child’ psychology outlined above. The resisting and intercessory form of ‘mother’ grief seen elsewhere is present in the myth of Isis mourning her son Horus.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 170. On the goddess of the sky as Great Mother, see also A. Weiss, *Die Madonna Platyttera* (Königstein, 1985).

¹²⁵ ‘Your earthly mother carried you for ten months, she nourished you for three years. I carry you for an undetermined length of time. I shall never bear you.’ (*Papyrus Louvre* 3148, 11, 9-11). Schott, ‘Nut spricht,’ 81-87.

¹²⁶ Assmann, *Death and Salvation*, 170.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 171.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 172.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 172-173.

A mother's enduring emotional involvement with a child is imagined in the tomb inscription of the vizier Paser. The primal parental impulse to *nurture, protect, and ensure flourishing* is at the core of Egypt's netherworldly ontology engendered by Nut, Neith, Hathor, the goddess of the West, and other mother goddesses. Echoing comparable ANE traditions the great wailing of the Isis-Nephthys dyad in Egypt's principal death cult is likewise ascribed a maternal dimension. Thus penetrating every cultural tier of ancient Egypt a primal mother-child nexus reigned absolutely supreme in the sphere of death-related matters.

E. Maternal Grief as Paradigmatic Experience of Loss in the Hebrew Bible.

Against the background of the ANE materials surveyed above, it is possible to demonstrate that the understanding of maternal grief, and the resultant mourning as archetypal, received sufficient development in Israelite and Judahite circles too. In fact, from the texts surveyed below it will become clear that the degree of maternal bereavement produced in conquest and invasion operations served as a benchmark for assessing the level of devastation sustained in combat and the success of these operations. Additionally, in the rhetoric of warfare it contributed to the shaping of West Semitic theologies.

Before we move to discuss these texts, it is worth noting that the ANE phenomenon of using maternal grief to describe the intense distress of male sufferers is also evident in the Hebrew Bible, for example, in Ps. 35. Observing that a mother-child relationship is the primary one of all human relationships and that maternal grief is the strongest of all death-related losses, Janzen argues that it is only natural for the (male) psalmist in Ps. 35:14 to use mother-specific terms – כַּאֲבֵל־אִם¹³⁰ – to relate his sorrow. Against the conventional renderings of כַּאֲבֵל־אִם as 'the one mourns for his mother,'¹³¹ Janzen reads this statement as 'the

¹³⁰ Janzen, 'The Root škl,' 55-69.

¹³¹ See, however, Vg. (Ps. 34:14).

mourning of a mother.¹³² Since the psalmist's grief in this lament is formulated as שכול לנפשי (v. 12b)¹³³ and כאבל־אם (v. 14.b) (RSV, 'my soul is forlorn,' and 'one who laments his mother'), he argues that the second noun in כאבל־אם should be taken as a subjective rather than an objective genitive – 'like the lamenting of a mother.'¹³⁴ Therefore to give adequate expression to the intensity of his suffering, the Psalmist resorts to maternal language of grief.

1. Symbolic Use of Maternal Grief.

Although the symbolism of a bereft and mourning mother was a useful tool in the grief rhetoric of individuals, it appears to be particularly prominent in contexts of crises with a communal dimension to them. The great number of crisis accounts 'maternalised' in prophetic warfare materials indicates a calculated usage of this trope and not merely an ad hoc implementation of it. The book of Jeremiah demonstrates this really well as it exhibits a rather dense distribution pattern of gynomorphic grief episodes. Although the composition of the book is notoriously complicated, a somewhat balanced dissemination of the imagery in question in it indicates its particular effectiveness. Gaging the degree of inflicted misery, and thus augmenting the overall pathos of the Babylonian crises, the matrix of mother grief images lingers across Jeremiah chronicling Judah's sensitive history in the seventh and sixth centuries.¹³⁵

Corresponding to an earlier phase of the Babylonian invasion, Jer. 6:24-26 pictures the downfall of Judah by fusing two metaphors – a woman in childbirth – צרה החזיקתנו היל

¹³² *Ibid.*, 56.

¹³³ The root שכל 'in the Old Testament refers, with one exception, to the parental loss of progeny through miscarriage or sword. More specifically, in a great number of instances it is explicitly mothers who are bereft in one way or the other.' *Ibid.*, 56.

¹³⁴ The MT points אבל as an adjective in the singular masculine form, and thus for Janzen's thesis to work the MT's pointing should be ignored. For the suggestion to read אבל in Ps. 35:14 as a segolate noun see KG §118w.

¹³⁵ In addition to the imagery of a bereft mother(s) in Jer. 6, Jer. 15, and Jer. 50, Holladay also observes the peculiar overlap in vocabulary of these episodes. W. Holladay, *Jeremiah 2: a Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah, Chapters 26-52* (Minneapolis, 1989), 442. Thus the 'mother' grief symbolism not only marks the variety of stages in the Babylonian invasion in Jeremiah but also holds the book together.

בת-עמי חגרי-שק והתפלשי באפר אבל יחיד עשי לך מספד – כיוולדה (v. 24) and a woman in mourning – תמרורים (v. 26). The resultant synthesis is the Judean community personified as a bereft mother bitterly lamenting an only child. Dealing with the first wave of punitive deportation of YHWH's people to Babylon,¹³⁶ a later section (Jer. 14:1-15:9) similarly casts the society's demise via gender-specific losses – עצמו-לי אלמנתו (15:8a), הבאתי (15:7), שכלתי אבדתי את-עמי¹³⁷ (15:7), להם עלי-אם בחור שדד בצהרים (15:8b), אמללה ילדת השבעה (15:9). This episode in Jer. 15:7-9 is of particular interest. As pointed out earlier the powers to *bereave* (mothers) (*tkl*) and to *create widows* (*ūlmn*) were part of the deadly arsenal of either a death deity or a heroic warrior in an Ugaritic text.¹³⁸ Jer. 15:7-9¹³⁹ shows that in the context of warfare these gender specific threats were absorbed into YHWH's own profile representing his retributive strategies on domestic (Jer. 15:7-9, 16:3, 18:21, cf. Hos. 2) and international arenas (Jer. 50:9, 12, cf. Is. 47:8, 9). Either modelling the judgments against Judah after the Canaanite traditions associated with a *death god* or a *mythic hero* (KTU 1.23:8-9)¹⁴⁰ or basing them on home-grown grief paradigms the Jeremian poet boosts YHWH's status as an ANE warring deity even further. First, he maximises the number of women subjected to widowhood – עצמו-לי (Jer. 15:8, cf. Ez. 22:25 – אלמנותיה הרבו בתוכה), and secondly, he targets the proverbial mother of seven – אמללה ילדת השבעה נפשה (Jer. 15:9).¹⁴¹ The depiction of the

¹³⁶ W. Holladay, *Jeremiah 1: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah, Chapters 1-25* (Philadelphia, 1986), 231.

¹³⁷ Again, the root שכל 'in the Old Testament refers, with one exception, to the parental loss of progeny through miscarriage or sword. More specifically, in a great number of instances it is explicitly mothers who are bereft in one way or the other.' Janzen, 'The Root škl,' 56.

¹³⁸ For the Hebrew word pair *škl/ūlmn* and Ugaritic *tkl/ūlmn* see Y. Avishur, *Stylistic Studies of Word-pairs in Biblical and Ancient Semitic Literatures* (Kevelaer, 1984), 405-406.

¹³⁹ Along with other texts (cf. Is. 47:8, 9).

¹⁴⁰ Since in another death-related account Jeremiah appears to have drawn on a Canaanite tradition (Jer. 9:21), it is not unlikely that Jer. 15:7-9 does not implement an original symbolism either. On suggestions regarding Ugaritic parallels to the imagery of death climbing through the window in Jer. 9:21 see, among others, J. Day, *Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan* (Sheffield, 2000), 188-190. See also discussions on the pair *to bereave* and *to create widows* in S. Paul, *Isaiah 40-66: Translation and Commentary* (Jerusalem, 2008), 296-297; Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 443.

¹⁴¹ Cf. 1 Sam. 2:5, Ruth 4:15, Pr. 24:15, 2 Macc. 7:1-42. For the importance of having many sons, more specifically sevens sons, see also *Gilgameš, Enkidu and the Nether World: c.1.8.1.4*: "Did you see him who had one son?" "I saw him." "How does he fare?" "He weeps bitterly at the wooden peg which was driven into his

fate of ילדת השבעה is somewhat ambiguous – she either expires along with her sons¹⁴² or is perpetually grief-stricken. Since the woman is also subjected to shame and disgrace – בושה והפרה – the latter reading is more probable.¹⁴³ Regarding her plight McKane states that, ‘at what should have been the high noon of her life the light is vanquished by darkness, and this will be her environment for the rest of her days.’¹⁴⁴ Culminating a longer section, Jer. 14:1-15:9, with the images of *widowhood* and *disrupted motherhood*¹⁴⁵ the poet pictures his community completely depleted of generative power and in a perpetual state of sorrow. Along with other prophetic traditions, Jer. 15:7-9 therefore suggests that in accounts of mass casualties these two types of losses were used not only paradigmatically but also metonymically, i.e. two bereft sectors within a group functioning as a cypher for the bereavement of society at large.

The symbolism in question continues to dominate the Jeremian discourse and targets the erring Judeans throughout most of its traditions (Jer. 15:10, 16:3, 18:21, 31:15-22, cf. also 10:19-20¹⁴⁶). In the epilogue to the book, however, it turns to Babylon, Judah’s oppressor. In this section Babylon is addressed in feminine terms and is said to be subjected to an attack from an alliance of nations whose arrows will be like a גבור משכיל (Jer. 50:9). The form in the MT is from ŠKL, ‘to bereave’ – ‘a bereaving warrior,’ whereas the LXX, Peshitta, and a few

wall.” “Did you see him who had seven sons?” “I saw him.” “How does he fare?” “As a companion of the gods, he sits on a throne and listens to judgments.” Cf. also KTU 1.102 i 7ff, ii 12-19, iii 20-35.

¹⁴² Although the possessive suffix on ‘remnant’ presupposes a plural antecedent – ושארייתם להרב אתן, it could be argued that the expiring mother of seven is a composite figure used metonymically to represent society at large. For the discussion on inconsistencies in the use of suffixes in this section see W. McKane, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Jeremiah* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1986-1996), 340-341.

¹⁴³ See the summary of interpretive possibilities in McKane. *Ibid.*, 341-442.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 342.

¹⁴⁵ Cf. Holladay’s observation that Jer. 15 contains a number of allusions to the books of Samuel including the song of Hannah in 1 Sam. 2. In the song the image of the expiring mother of many is embedded in the section that speaks of YHWH who ‘kills and brings to life;... [who] brings down to Sheol and raises up,’ and where ‘Yahweh is busy with the maleficent aspect of his work.’ Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 443. Thus both in 1 Sam. 2 and Jer. 15 the archetypal mother of seven is used to underscore YHWH’s death-inflicting powers.

¹⁴⁶ See Roberts who thinks that the image here is of the city or state personified as the mother bereft of her people who are lost – בני יצאני ואינם (Jer. 10:20). Cf. Is. 54 where the language of *tents* and *curtains* (cf. 10:20) appears in an address to a nation personified as a woman who will receive her children back. Roberts, ‘The Motif of the Weeping God,’ 133.

Hebrew MSS read the form as if from $\acute{S}KL$, ‘to be successful, expert’; therefore ‘an expert warrior.’¹⁴⁷ Although the majority of scholars prefer the latter reading, the MT’s unexpected Hiphil of שכל ¹⁴⁸ may not be implausible and can be explained. First of all, however minor, the Massoretic reading does have versional support (Targ., Vulg.).¹⁴⁹ Secondly, Jer. 50:12 represents Babylon’s demise in overtly maternal terms – $\text{יולדתכם בושׁה אמכם מאד הִפְרָה}$,¹⁵⁰ which is strikingly reminiscent of the aforementioned Jer. 15 episode that features not only the root שכל , to bereave, (15:7) but also the identical vocabulary of shame and disgrace - בושׁה והִפְרָה - applied to a mother.¹⁵¹ Even if גבור משכיל was initially meant to represent *an expert warrior*, the depiction of Babylon as a disgraced and desolate mother a few verses later, as well as the plethora of comparable grief episodes before, might have prompted MT’s present vocalisation. Incidentally, biblical traditions in general attest to the attack on children (both in utero and in infancy) as a common military practice (cf. 2 Kings 8:11-12, Is. 13:16, Am. 1:13, Hos. 13:16, Nah. 3:10) but some of them imagine the fall of Babylon specifically by means of the slaughter of its babes (cf. Ps. 137:9) and, by extension, maternal grief.¹⁵² In fact, such

¹⁴⁷ W. McKane, *Jeremiah: Chapters 26-52* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1995), 1259. For the list of scholars who support this reading see *Ibid.*, 1259.

¹⁴⁸ The Hiphil form of the MT bothers some scholars, who expect a Piel, but Barthélemy (819-821) ‘rejects the argument that “makes childless” requires the Piel of שכל .’ McKane, *Jeremiah*, 1259. Cf. Deut. 32:25, Lam. 1:20.

¹⁴⁹ Kimchi also supports this reading. *Ibid.*, 1259. Note, however, that in Jer. 50:12 the Targum speaks of a disgraced assembly not a ‘mother.’ R. Hayward, *The Targum of Jeremiah Translated with a Critical Introduction, Apparatus, and Notes* (Edinburgh, 1987), 180.

¹⁵⁰ See McKane for a list of interpretive possibilities. McKane, *Jeremiah 2*, 1263-1264. Although the precise meaning of ‘your mother’ in v. 12 is debated, its identification with Babylon is most plausible (cf. Hos. 2:4, Is. 50:1).

¹⁵¹ Holladay also observes that ‘the last two cola [of this section] are a deliberate reminiscence of the opening and closing sections of 14:1-15: 9.’ Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 416. Cf. also Is. 54:4 where the roots בושׁה and הִפְרָה are used to describe Judah personified as a woman bereft, widowed, and forsaken. See also Janzen’s observation on the almost exclusive use of שכל with female subjects in the Hebrew Bible, primarily with mothers. Janzen, ‘The Root $\acute{s}kl$,’ 56. Note that the imagery of child loss, being parched, becoming a desolate wilderness is present both in Jer. 50:12 that speaks of Babylon as a mother ($\text{מזְבֵּר צִיָּה וְעִרְבָה}$) and Hos. 2:2-3 that identifies Israel as a mother ($\text{אֲרֵץ צִיָּה, מְזִבֵּר}$).

¹⁵² In ‘Ripping Open Pregnant Women’ in Light of an Assyrian Analogue,’ *JAOS* 103 (1983), 755-757, M. Cogan quotes an Assyrian poem, most likely dated to the reign of Tiglath-Pileser I (1114-1076 BC), in which the poet praises the victory of the Assyrian king against his enemy and says, ‘He slits the wombs of pregnant women, he blinds the infants, he cuts the throats of their strong ones.’ Commenting on the poem Cogan writes, ‘Out of the entire catalogue of the horrors of war, he [the poet] singled out the attack upon the defenceless women and children; and this in order to impress upon all that the cruellest of punishments awaits those who sin

depiction of Babylon's demise might have been a prophetic convention as another oracle (Is. 47:8-9) explicitly speaks of YHWH subjecting Babylon to *widowhood* and *the loss of children* – שכול ולא אדע שכול (v. 8), שכול ואלמן (v. 9). Fuelling its rhetoric of vengeance by grief anthropology, Is. 47:9, too, augments it even further – כתמם (cf. Jer. 15:8). The depiction of Babylon as a woman about to experience *child loss* and *widowhood* to the fullest measure – כתמם (cf. Jer. 50:12ff, cf. Hos. 2, Is. 50:1-3) - not only exacerbates the portrayal of its demise and suggests the reversal of destinies (Jer. 6:24-26, Jer. 15:9, 16:2, 18:21, 31:15-22), but also enhances YHWH's reputation in the discourse of foreign affairs.¹⁵³

Systematically circumscribing episodes of communal disintegration with *interrupted motherhood* as well as using it to shape its theologies, the book of Jeremiah, along with other prophets, demonstrates that this symbolism was not merely an impromptu device in Israel's rhetoric of warfare, but an indispensable yardstick in the ancient ideology of violence and retribution.

2. Maternal Mourning as a Ritual Archetype: the Book of Lamentations.

The presence of the trope in the book of Lamentations is particularly telling as it was ingeniously manipulated by the Judean elite to further their socio-religious and political interests. In his discussion of Lam. 1-2 Bosworth shows that it is precisely due to the

against Assyria's god." "Ripping Open," 756. Discussing this practice during siege, Cogan states, "Acts of horror such as these, performed during the course of war, are documented throughout history, and no specific age or people can be pointed to as having had a patent on atrocity." *Ibid.*, 755. Given other biblical traditions that depict the fall of Babylon in terms of maternal grief expressed via the root שכל (Is. 47:8-9) and given the diverse military tactics that produce bereft mothers - dashing of babes against the rocks (ש, רטץ, נפץ), giving of children to the sword or famine (כלה בחרב, נתן לרעב, כלה בחרב), disembowelment of pregnant women (בקע), etc. – the Hiphil of שכל, that elsewhere appears in the sense of *miscarrying*, may presuppose both the prenatal loss of children, i.e. in utero, and thus miscarrying, and the slaughter of children (young and grown up) in general. Admittedly, Jer. 50:9 compares *arrows* to a גבור משכיל and elsewhere the bereaving (שכל) of mothers in war is associated with *swords* (כאשר שכלה נשים חרבך כן־תשכל מנשים) – 1 Sam. 15:33). The latter, however, did not hold a monopoly in the matter of child-slaying.

¹⁵³ For the coupling of widowhood and maternal bereavement see also Lam. 1:1, 5, 16, 17, 4 Mac 16:6-10 and the literature cited below.

archetypal quality of maternal grief in the taxonomy of death-related emotions that the personification of a ruined Judean community in the opening chapters of the book had to have been strictly maternal.¹⁵⁴ Eclipsing Zion's depiction as a daughter and a young woman in chapters 1 and 2, the maternal aspect of Zion's representation allows Zion more intimate identification and solidarity with her martyred children.¹⁵⁵ By picturing Zion's weeping as 'copious and continuous'¹⁵⁶ the author(s) simultaneously augmented the poignancy of Jerusalem's suffering¹⁵⁷ and amplified its ritual and intercessory potential. Since 'mother' grief was the strongest among death-related losses, its use in a liturgical composition was a sure vehicle to wrest divine absolution and restoration. Given the identity of the group behind the fabrication of these images – the Judean nobility and thus the culprits of the Babylonian crisis – the implementation of Zion's bereaved motherhood in Lamentations was simultaneously the epitome of socio-religious genius and ethical cowardice.¹⁵⁸

Although this survey of biblical traditions that utilised the trope in question is not exhaustive, it should suffice to demonstrate the premise regarding grief archetypes put forward here. The prophetic and liturgical materials cited above do suggest that the nexus of maternal grief, ritual, and politics so well-attested among Israel's neighbours is amply represented in biblical literature too. However brief, this overview of grief narratives in the Hebrew Bible can serve as a springboard for a discussion on postbiblical Jewish traditions

¹⁵⁴ Bosworth, 'Daughter Zion,' 217-237. For bibliography on personification of Zion in Lamentation see *Ibid.*, 219, n. 2. M. Wischnowsky, *Tochter Zion: Aufnahme und Überwindung der Stadtklage in den Prophetenschrift des Alten Testaments* (Neukirchen, 2001), 90-100.

¹⁵⁵ Bosworth, 'Daughter Zion,' 228-229. He specifically notes that in the first two chapters Zion as a mother is closer to the suffering Judean populace – they are her children, her daughters, her leaders unlike in ch. five where the same groups are stripped of possessive suffixes and are denied the relational identification with Zion achieved in the first two chapters. *Ibid.*, 221.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 230-233. J. Schmitt, 'The Motherhood of God and Zion as Mother,' *RB* 92 (1985), 557-569. In fact, Bosworth observes that 'in Lam. 2:18, the incessant quality of weeping is emphasized with the expression 'let your eyes flow like a torrent,' which indicates both the copious quantity of tears and their constant flow. The addition of 'day and night' further enhances and clarifies the continuous pattern of weeping (cf. Psa. 42.4; Jer. 8.23; 14.7), and the following lines deny rest or respite to the weeping eyes.' *Ibid.*, 234-235.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 236.

¹⁵⁸ The circles responsible for the production of this composition are most likely the ones who had provoked the events described in it. Mark Boda, personal communication.

where sorrowing motherhood received a more sophisticated development and, in a way, became the official language of communal grief.

F. Maternal Grief in Jewish Apocalyptic Literature.

‘Anthropologically’ informed and rhetorically tested (cf. Jeremiah, II and III Isaiah), this grief trope takes a step further in its development with the advent of Jewish apocalyptic literature where its referents become exceedingly larger. Addressing events either from their distant or recent pasts these Jewish writings rework the biblical grief genre to reflect either on the experience of individual Jewish communities or humanity as a whole in light of the age to come. For the post-biblical apocalyptic exegetes the axiomatic symbolism of ultimate sorrow was the perfect background against which they could construct the ideal of the eschatological hope. A few scholarly studies into the use of this theme in post-biblical Jewish literature and its further adaptation in Christian circles have already been undertaken. A brief survey of these writings here will be sufficient to show the importance of the ‘mother’ grief trope for the later Jewish theologies.

The first composition worth mentioning is the book of Baruch dated roughly to the time of the Maccabean revolt, i.e. 180-100 BC,¹⁵⁹ and addressed to the exiles in Babylon. Comprised of poems of lamentation and consolation, the section of interest (4:5-5:9) serves as an exhortation to Jerusalem to take heart and wait for the salvation of God. Building on earlier prophetic traditions, primarily II and III Isaiah, this poem uses the familiar pair of *widowhood* and *interrupted motherhood* in depicting Mother Zion (4:12). Grieving inconsolably – ‘I will cry to the Everlasting all my days...’ (Bar. 4:19-20) – Jerusalem, a widowed woman and a bereft mother, offers a diatribe against her erring and exiled

¹⁵⁹ T. Bergren, ‘Mother Jerusalem, Mother Church: Desolation and Restoration in Early Jewish and Christian Literature,’ in E. Chazon, D. Satran, R. Clements (eds), *Things Revealed: Studies in Early Jewish and Christian Literature in Honor of Michael E. Stone* (Leiden, 2004), 246.

children.¹⁶⁰ In response to her plight the Lord speaks words of consolation to the Jews and their restoration in the land is cast in ‘idealised, almost eschatological terms’ (Bar. 5:2, 4, 6, 7).¹⁶¹ God’s address is first marked by ‘cautious optimism, then [it moves] to outright jubilation over the certainty of God’s redemption of the people.’¹⁶²

The symbolism of maternal grief takes on a new role in 2 Maccabees, a late second century BC book. Employing the bond between mother and child as primal to all human relations in the opposite direction, 2 Mac. 7 has a mother of seven sons *encourage* her offspring to accept martyrdom at the time of Antiochus IV only to follow their fate herself. According to Nickelsburg the original story of religious persecution involved a *father* but was later reinterpreted in line with the ‘Hasidic apocalyptic exegesis.’¹⁶³ In their retelling the authors merged ‘the “mother” image of 2/3 Isaiah and their own, relatively newly acquired belief in resurrection’¹⁶⁴ turning the parent in the story into Mother Jerusalem. Fusing the story with prophetic themes of motherhood from Isaiah and the allusions to God’s original creation, the reworked version made it possible to speak of resurrection, an ‘event of eschatological proportions,’¹⁶⁵ in terms of rebirth and recreation (2 Mac. 7:22- 23, 27-29). Dated to the first half of the first century CE and addressing the same event 4 Maccabees likewise has a mother lose all of her children and again speaks of her grief as intense and incessant, ‘Oh how wretched am I and many times unhappy’ (16:6-10). 4 Mac. 16:13 envisages the reversal of her plight and that of her children through her giving ‘rebirth for immortality to the whole number of her children.’ Although 4 Maccabees has its own distinct theological agenda and language, it nevertheless builds its discourse on religious martyrdom

¹⁶⁰ For a discussion of Zion as a desolate widow in this poem see N. Caldich-Benages, ‘Jerusalem as Widow (Baruch 4:5-5:9),’ in H. Lichtenberger, U. Mittmann-Richert (eds), *Biblical Figures in Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature* (Berlin, 2009), 147-164.

¹⁶¹ Bergren, ‘Mother Jerusalem,’ 246.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 246.

¹⁶³ G. Nickelsburg, *Resurrection, Immortality, and Eternal Life in Intertestamental Judaism and Early Christianity* (Cambridge, 2006), 74; Bergren, ‘Mother Jerusalem,’ 246.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 247.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 248.

and vindication using the same emotionally charged image, i.e. a bereft mother whose plight is overturned in the eschaton.

In 4 Ezra, a late first century CE composition, the image becomes even more emotive and its grief elements overlay not only isolated events, i.e. the Babylonian crisis and the destruction of the Temple in 586 BC and 70 CE, but also the entire history of Israel stretching, again, into its eschatological future.¹⁶⁶ In chapters 9:38-10:59 Ezra receives a vision of a woman who mourns the death of her only son. Her grief is again cast as inconsolable and she herself is seeking death (10:4, 18, 24). The vision of her plight draws on the stories of biblical and post-biblical women in fashioning the bereft and taps into the Palestinian Jewish customs in representing her mourning.¹⁶⁷ After Ezra's inquiry regarding the reason for the woman's sorrow she explains that after a long time of barrenness she had a son who grew up and was about to marry, but unexpectedly died in his wedding chamber. Her seemingly disproportionate grief angers Ezra – she is inconsolably mourning only one child whereas Zion is ravished and is in mourning over her many slain and violated.¹⁶⁸ In support of his indignation the seer gives the analogy of the Earth, the mother of all living, who is perpetually bereft as they all are destined to perdition.¹⁶⁹ As the maternal images are piled up in Ezra's chastisement of the woman, she suddenly transforms into a heavenly city,

¹⁶⁶ M. Henze, G. Boccaccini, J. Zurawski (eds), *Fourth Ezra and Second Baruch: Reconstruction After the Fall* (Leiden, 2013), 31; M. Stone, 'Reactions to Destructions of the Second Temple: Theology, Perception and Conversion,' in *Selected Studies in Pseudepigrapha and Apocrypha with Special Reference to the Armenian Tradition* (Leiden, 1991), 429-438; M. Stone 'On Reading Apocalypse,' in J. Collins, J. Charlesworth (eds), *Mysteries and Revelations: Apocalyptic Studies Since the Uppsala Colloquium* (Sheffield, 1991), 65-78.

¹⁶⁷ J. Myers, *I and II Esdras* (Garden City, 1974), 271; M. Stone, *Fourth Ezra: a Commentary on the Book of Fourth Ezra* (Minneapolis, 1990), 314.

¹⁶⁸ 'You most foolish of women, do you not see our mourning, and what has happened to us? For Zion, the mother of us all, is in deep grief and great affliction' (4 Ezr. 10:6-7).

¹⁶⁹ 'But if you say to me, 'My lamentation is not like the earth's sadness, for I have lost the fruit of my womb, which I brought forth in pain and in sorrow, but it is with the earth according to the way of the earth-the multitude that is now in it goes as it came'; then I say to you, 'As you brought forth in sorrow, so the earth also has from the beginning given her fruit, that is, humankind, to him who made her.' (10:12-14). For a helpful analysis of the Mother Earth imagery in 4 Ezra see K. Hogan, 'Mother Earth as a Conceptual Metaphor in 4 Ezra,' *CBQ* 73 (2011), 72-91; M. Knibb, 'Apocalyptic and Wisdom in 4 Ezra,' *JSJ* 13 (1982), 65-66; E. Humphrey, *The Ladies and the Cities: Transformation and Apocalyptic Identity in Joseph and Aseneth, 4 Ezra, the Apocalypse and the Shepherd of Hermas* (Sheffield, 1995), 64; J. Crenshaw, *Defending God: Biblical Responses to the Problem of Evil* (New York, 2005), 179-80.

Zion, the mother of all Jews. The angel Uriel then maps her life story onto the history of Israel correlating its grief aspects with major catastrophes, particularly, with the destruction of Jerusalem.

Of interest for this discussion is that the gynomorphic grief is not only applied here to Israel and its past, to the Earth, but, arguably, it also colours Ezra's mourning for Zion as well. As noted above the woman's sorrowful profile is fashioned on Biblical mothers or mothers-to-be and, as pointed out by many, Ezra's own behaviour in mourning the homeland is strikingly reminiscent of that of the woman. Thus it is not implausible that Ezra's response to Jerusalem's downfall was likewise modelled on maternal grief anticipating the vision of sorrowful Zion. Such surplus of 'mother' symbolism in 4 Ezra indicates that maternal grief and the associated ritual behaviours continued to hold a place of prominence among death-related mourning rites.¹⁷⁰

Perusing Jewish apocalypses for the Mother Zion motif, Bergren notes that these re-workings of the prophetic materials were marked by a 'bi-partite structure' featuring both the negative aspects of downfall, exile, and persecution of Zion and her children and the positive elements of their restoration and resurrection with the advent of the eschatological age.¹⁷¹ The expediency of such juxtaposition is easily explainable – against the background of Zion's maternal and thus archetypal sorrow, the concepts of eschatological hope and resurrection automatically gained the quality of all things longed for. By incorporating the symbolism of the bereft mother Zion as a cipher for the old age into their discourse apocalyptic writers were

¹⁷⁰ Note Stone's observation regarding the role of the husband in this vision: 'the secondary role of the husband, previously mentioned only in 9:43, is noteworthy throughout this story.' Stone, *4th Ezra*, 323.

¹⁷¹ Bergren, 'Mother Jerusalem,' 258. In a somewhat analogous manner 2 Baruch, a late first or early second century CE text, offers a picture of Mother Zion as a mournful and mourned-over figure. The text is also a reaction to the destruction of the Second Temple and in many respects is similar to 4 Ezra. When it comes to maternal images of Jerusalem in mourning it scatters them across all of its chapters. For the parallels between the two compositions see M. Stone, M. Henze, *4 Ezra and 2 Baruch: Translations, Introductions, and Notes* (Minneapolis, 2013).

able to ascribe more weight and value to the key points of the ‘new age’ theology – ‘return from exile and establishment of an ideal society; resurrection; or establishment of an eschatological situation [like “the heavenly Jerusalem”] on earth.’¹⁷²

In addition, cross-cultural studies on the so-called *valourised* maternal grief – grief that reaches out to the needs of society at large and gains political impulse – show that spaces of resistance circumscribed with maternal grief and ritual expression become, in their own way, particularly powerful when all other methods and rhetorics seem inadequate. Thus the circumstance of Zion’s *interrupted* motherhood was deemed particularly advantageous as Jerusalem’s intercession for the restoration of her people could be cast as incessant (Bar. 4:19-20, 4 Mac. 16:6-10, 4 Ezz. 10:4, 18, 24) and her chastisement of their oppressors unrelenting. It is not surprising, therefore, that this motif was ‘taken up time and again as Jews and Christians attempted to deal with and explain loss, and express their hope for the future.’¹⁷³

III. Conclusion.

At the beginning of the twentieth century Van Gennep showed that death-related rituals are a means of ‘healing’ a social group that has lost a member.¹⁷⁴ Likewise in his *Biblical Mourning* Olyan argues that ‘the social and ritual dimension of mourning are intertwined and inseparable, and... that rites in general are a context for the creation and recreation of social order and for its potential transformation.’¹⁷⁵ The overview presented above intended to demonstrate that as an archetype among other types of bereavement,

¹⁷² Bergren, ‘Mother Jerusalem,’ 258. Bergren points out that in the nascent usage of the motif in Christian circles was that of oppositional dualism (rather than transitional or continuous use) due to the initial anti-semitic spirit (Galatians, Ephesians, Revelation) but was later used to construct and explain such concepts as the ‘mother [Church] whose children were sparse at first but then dramatically increased [2 Clement].’ *Ibid.*, 259.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 259.

¹⁷⁴ A. van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage* (London, 2004), 146-166.

¹⁷⁵ Olyan, *Biblical Mourning*, 3-4.

maternal grief, ritually manifested or socially engaged, was deemed to carry the greatest potential for such transformation.¹⁷⁶

Of further pertinence for the current project on the biblical discourse of bereavement and the place of mothers in it are the ethnographic and anthropological studies that attest to a phenomenon of social, political, and religious engagement among women that stems precisely from the circumstance of child loss. Thus, for example, in her study on women in Mumbai who are normally ‘marginalized from the centers of politics’ Bedi notes that the death of a child for these women often becomes the source of their political action.¹⁷⁷ As it creates ‘the experience of profound psychological distress,... the troubled state of *garaj* (unsettled emotional state)’ [child loss] drives them to meaningful and caring engagement with their community. Deeply aware of their losses they channel their ‘emotions into the political sphere as mothers that “lack.”’¹⁷⁸ Bedi further explains that,

motherhood and loss constitute the capacity for political leadership for women in societies where access to public wisdom and respect are closely tied to women’s life cycle; its painful disruption through the loss of a child gives rise to two profoundly important processes. It creates the need for the mother to constitute a new identity that focuses on a public, service component of helping others; and the public knowledge of this loss becomes critical for the public acceptance of the woman’s wisdom and potential to become caretaker to society at large. Here, a new political identity emerges even as it remains embedded in the feminized and gendered typographies of care.¹⁷⁹

Comparable studies on maternal grief have identified other spheres where the circumstance of *interrupted* motherhood has led to social engagement and contributed to social change. In light of the main thrust of the project at hand it is worth mentioning a study by the

¹⁷⁶ Regarding professional wailing women in ancient Greece it has been also observed that ‘a mourning woman is not simply a producer of pity, but dangerous.’ H. Foley, ‘The Politics of Lamentation,’ in A. Sommerstein, S. Halliwell, J. Henderson, B. Zimmerman (eds), *Tragedy, Comedy, and the Polis: Papers from the Greek Drama Conference, Nottingham, 18-20 July 1990* (Bari, 1993), 143.

¹⁷⁷ T. Bedi, ‘Motherhood, and Its “Lack:” Personal Loss, and Political Community Among Shiv Sena Women in Mumbai,’ *WSIF* 35 (2012), 478.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 478.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 484.

anthropologist Sered. In the aforementioned work, ‘Mother Love, Child Death and Religious Innovation: A Feminist Perspective,’ Sered looks at maternal bereavement as ‘one of the most significant and cross-culturally prevalent shapers of women’s religiosity.’¹⁸⁰ Sered explains that the unique experience of child loss and the intensity of grief that ensues leave women profoundly dissatisfied with tenets of parental bereavement in mainstream religious traditions and force them to seek ‘alternatives that offer meaningful tools for interpreting or avoiding child death.’¹⁸¹ At times these efforts led to the creation of new religious movements, e.g. the Shakers and Spiritualism.

The premise of this thesis is that the wide-spread phenomenon of, or the potential for, women’s socio-political and religious initiatives triggered by the experience of child loss is evident in biblical traditions as well. In fact, building on Sered’s work, Kalmanofsky has already shown that this is true for at least two mother grief accounts, 1 Kgs 17 and 2 Kgs 4.¹⁸² Underscoring the dire circumstance of lost motherhood in the stories of the unnamed widow and the Shunammite,¹⁸³ these narratives portray the two women as ‘religious trailblazers and leaders’¹⁸⁴ who initiate their dead sons’ resurrection.

This thesis intends to take these studies further and analyse biblical mothers whose grief and the subsequent ritual zeal generated, or sought to generate, far-reaching communal benefits. More specifically, the focus in the ensuing discussion will be on four women, real and metaphorical: Hagar (Gen. 21), the woman of Tekoa (2 Sam. 14), Rizpah (2 Sam. 21), and Rachel (Jer. 31). Placed at important junctures in Israel’s history, these women renegotiate the destinies of their own children, dead or lost, and those of larger communities,

¹⁸⁰ Sered, ‘Mother Love,’ 5.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹⁸² A. Kalmanofsky, ‘Women of God: Maternal Grief and Religious Response in 1 Kings 17 and 2 Kings 4,’ *JSOT* 36 (2011), 55-74.

¹⁸³ See, for example, Elisha’s admission of the woman’s intense, bitter grief. When Gehazi intends to push the Shunammite away as she approaches the man of God Elisha states הרפה־לה כי־נפשה מרה־לה (2 Kgs 4:27).

¹⁸⁴ Sered, ‘Mother Love,’ 23. Cited by Kalmanofsky, ‘Women of God,’ 74.

i.e. family lines, ethnic groups, and nations. Capitalising on the cross-cultural assumptions of mother grief as an archetype of loss imbued with a potential for intercession, advocacy, resistance to oppressive regimes, and care for society as a whole, these four biblical traditions amplify the mothers' sorrowful circumstance and enhance their agentive role in the discourse on bereavement and social reconstitution. Addressing personal concerns and dealing with communal crises, these mothers become, to use Sered's description, 'ritual virtuosi of the personal-sacred mode'¹⁸⁵ engendering social transformation.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁵ Sered, 'Mother Love,' 22.

¹⁸⁶ Some studies that have shown the nexus between mourning rites and social restoration include R. Branch, 'Rizpah - Activist in Nation-building: an Analysis of 2 Samuel 21:1-14,' *JS* 14 (2005), 1-16; J. Claassens, 'Calling the Keeners: the Image of the Wailing Woman as Symbol of Survival in a Traumatized World,' *JFSR* 26 (2010), 63-77 and the bibliography cited there; J. Claassens, *Mourner, Mother, Midwife: Reimagining God's Delivering Presence in the Old Testament* (Louisville, 2012).

CHAPTER II

HAGAR

I. Introduction.

In his essay on ritual weeping and its functions, Ebersole has advanced a claim that tears can ‘serve a variety of social purposes, including marking out social and hierarchical relationships at times, dissolving them at others, inviting or demanding specific social relationships, or marking/protesting the abrogation of social or moral contracts.’¹ Within the biblical discourse on bereavement and concomitant ritual behaviours, Gen. 21 emerges as the first proper account of weeping and mourning that effectively illustrates Ebersole’s proposition. Containing an arresting icon of bereft and sorrowful maternity, namely Hagar, Gen. 21 showcases the power of ritual weeping not only in opposing the breakdown of a social system, but also in advocating for its restoration as well.

In this account (Gen. 21) the banished mother of Ishmael grieves over the sorry plight of her son, who, having lost his father’s patronage, nearly dies in the wilderness. In the wake of her mournful vigil and weeping over her dying child (Gen. 21:16), she is visited by a divine messenger. The messenger acknowledges her sorrow, ויקרא מלאך אלהים אל־הגֵר (Gen. 21:17), and the tears of her son, וישמע אלהים את־קול הנער (Gen. 21:17), and assures the two outcasts of their survival and of the numerous posterity to stem from them (Gen. 21:18). The causal link between the weeping of the endangered mother-child pair and the renegotiated social order within the patriarchal system – the emergence of a new clan, the Ishmaelites, with Hagar’s

¹ G. Ebersole, ‘The Function of Ritual Weeping Revisited: Affective Expression and Moral Discourse,’ *HR* 39 (2000), 214.

son as their eponymous ancestor – is clearly detected in the wilderness episode backing up Ebersole’s thesis.² The premise of the ensuing discussion is that as a mechanism of social transformation, maternal grief and its ritual manifestation in Gen. 21 serve as tools of advocacy for two fractured ancient communities and read as a counter testimony within the oppressive socio-historical changes they faced.

Pointing out the overlap in ‘issues of ethnic definition centered on marriage patterns and interrelated land claims’ in Genesis and Ezra-Nehemiah, many scholarly discussions on the formation of the former situate its final redaction in the post-exilic circles of Yehud.³ Given the general symmetry in the circumstances of the Hagar-Ishmael dyad and the banished group of women and children resulting from the marriage reforms outlined in Ezra 9-10,⁴ it is not implausible that the wilderness account in Gen. 21 was crafted with that symmetry in mind.⁵ Since the outcome of the initiatives put forward by the reformers could not have easily been welcomed by the immigrant sector, it is not unlikely that Genesis’ redactor felt compelled to provide a critique of the forced disenfranchisement within his community.⁶

² Cf. Olyan’s claim that ‘rites in general are a context for the creation and recreation of social order and for its potential transformation.’ Olyan, *Biblical Mourning*, 3-4.

³ N. Steinberg, *Kinship and Marriage in Genesis: A Household Economics Perspective* (Minneapolis, 1993), 135-143; E. Mullen, *Ethnic Myths and Pentateuchal Foundations: a New Approach to the Formation of the Pentateuch* (Atlanta, 1997), 71-86, 123-161; R. Heard, *The Dynamics of Diselection: Ambiguity in Genesis 12-36 and Ethnic Boundaries in Post-Exilic Judah* (Atlanta, 2001), 16-23, 171-184, and the bibliography cited there; also 22 and the bibliography cited there.

⁴ Cf. Heard’s discussion on Ishmael as ‘the paradigmatic product of intermarriage between an immigrant and non-immigrant, in this case an Egyptian (cf. Ezra 9:1). Even Abraham was not immune to the lure of intermarriage.’ Heard, *Dynamics of Diselection*, 175-176; Cf. M. Brett, *Genesis: Procreation and the Politics of Identity* (London, 2000), 61-72.

⁵ Note Heard’s observation that ‘As the paradigmatic product of a cross-ethnic intermarriage, Ishmael functions basically as object lesson for the “proper” Yehudian response to intermarriage.’ Heard, *Dynamics of Diselection*, 175-176.

⁶ Note that Heard observes that Ezra–Nehemiah and Genesis ‘could have been produced within the same social group,’ with Genesis, however, ‘stemming from somewhat more irenic members of the same group.’ Heard, *Dynamics of Diselection*, 22.

Given the ritual, or semi-ritual, nature of materials available to him⁷ and given the grief archetypes within the broader social discourses across the Levantine cultures, the compiler of Genesis uses the basic Hagar traditions to accomplish a few objectives. Lifting Hagar's tears from their original, more intimate context,⁸ and placing them within a larger narrative of foundational ethnic myths, the redactor ritually marks the breach within the Terahite-Abrahamic genealogy. As the latter coincides with the lethal endangerment of Ishmael, a tribal chieftain to be (Gen. 16:10, 21:13), the redactor has Hagar intercede for the emergence of a new group. According Hagar's story a secondary, post exilic context, he also uses her tears and the associated rites to challenge the abrogation of social arrangements within Yehud's ethnically diverse populace.⁹

Based on the grief paradigms outlined in the previous chapter, the following analysis of Gen. 21 will seek to demonstrate that the final compiler of Genesis stretched the communicative power of Hagar's account to the uttermost limits of ritual rhetoric. By grounding Gen. 21 in a net of mytho-religious traditions of comparable genre, he turned it into a poignant narrative lament and a counter testimony within the dominant discourse of ethnic purity in the ancestral history and his own context. To fully appreciate the transformative quality of ritual actions and, more specifically, of weeping as a ritual act within the wilderness episode (Gen. 21), we will first – to quote Ebersole – analyse 'the relative social positions of the ritual actors [in Gen. 21], their audience(s), their interdependencies, and their respective goals.'¹⁰ To that end, before turning to

⁷ Discussed below.

⁸ A simple narrative about the endangerment of a mother and child.

⁹ For a recent, anthropologically informed analysis of the intermarriage crisis within Ezra 9-10, see K. Southwood, *Ethnicity and the Mixed Marriage Crisis in Ezra 9-10: an Anthropological Approach* (Oxford, 2012).

¹⁰ Ebersole, 'The Function of Ritual Weeping,' 240-241.

Hagar and her mourning in Gen. 21, this discussion will first consider Genesis' portrayal of Ishmael in the Abraham cycle.

II. Ishmael: First Funeral in the Hebrew Bible.

There are no descriptions of burials in the Hebrew Bible before the patriarchal stories. The monotonous genealogies prior to ch. 12 focus primarily on birth, marriages, procreation, and lifespan of members within primeval generations. In these genealogies, death notices are marked by a lack of detail and it is only with the story of Terah and his household that slightly expanded accounts of death and burials begin to appear (Gen. 11:28, 32). With the divine promise of an offspring and the land of Canaan given to Abram, the issue of heirship and inheritance begins to dominate the narrator's interest, and in matters related to death within the patriarch's household, it is also a determining factor. The first description of what almost came to be a death and 'burial' among his family members is given in Gen. 21, with Ishmael's lethal endangerment in the wilderness.¹¹ Shocking then is its representation with all its loaded and evocative semantics residing in a few key lexemes of the episode, and with the verb שָׁלַח being by far the most ominous of them all. To fully understand the events in the wilderness account, Gen. 21:14-19, we need to consider its larger social and narrative contexts.

A. Overall Structure of Genesis and Gen. 21.

In her monograph *Kinship and Marriage in Genesis: A Household Economics Perspective* Steinberg demonstrates that the genealogies in Genesis have intrinsic value not only for the overall composition of the book but also for its main socio-theological stance. That is,

¹¹ Although other people do die in Genesis before Gen. 21 (e. g., Gen. 14, 19:26), their demise is not recorded in much detail as they stand outside of Abraham's family line, the primary interest of the book of Genesis.

they provide ‘boundaries of lineage’ and help its immediate and later readership identify who is an Israelite and who is not. When carefully considered, the patriarchal cycles in Genesis reveal a structure of the ancestral history that breaks conveniently into three narrative blocks framed by three pairs of genealogical segments. Thus, the stories in 12:1-25:11 are preceded by two genealogies of Shem (11:10-26) and Terah (11:27-32). The narratives in Gen. 25:27-35:29 are in turn introduced by Gen. 25:12-26, Ishmael’s genealogy. And finally, the remaining stories of Genesis are prefixed by Gen. 36:1-43, which explores Esau’s descendants. Functioning as superscriptions, or prologues, therefore, the genealogies of Shem, (11:10-26), Ishmael (25:12-18), and Esau (36:1-43) prepare the reader for the genealogies of Terah (11:27-32), Isaac (25:19-26), and Jacob (37:2). The latter in turn introduce a series of family cycles dealing with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Within this overarching frame, before the narrative transitions from one generation to another, it first provides resolution to the stories of those family members who were not included in the preferred line of succession in the Terahite-Abrahamic genealogy. Thus, before the narrative proceeds to recount the story of Isaac and his posterity, Gen. 21 informs the readership about Ishmael and his descendants who were excluded from Abraham’s lineal heir(s).¹²

Helpfully outlined by Steinberg, such arrangement of family cycles in Genesis 11:10-50:26 demonstrates a heightened concern not only with genealogical continuity within the chosen line, but also with inheritance and transmission of property, which in the patriarchal

¹² Steinberg, *Kinship and Marriage*, 39-46. Steinberg explains that the Terahite genealogy has both lineal and segmented elements to it. The vertical transmission of the Israelite family line can be traced through the genealogies of Terah, Isaac, and Jacob. Ishmael, along with Shem, and Esau, is part of the segmented, extended genealogy. *Ibid.*, 45-46; Mullen, *Ethnic Myths and Pentateuchal Foundations*, 128-161.

kinship system was closely linked to marriage.¹³ Accordingly, in Genesis, the divinely sanctioned strategy to secure heirship and inheritance of the land of Canaan is achieved through patrilineal endogamous marriage within the line of Terah.¹⁴ In addition, inheritance in early Israel was patrilocal and thus depended on the heir residing in his father's family household and on his land.¹⁵ As the retention and extension of property were both necessary to ensure the economic and social survival of a family, it is not surprising therefore that the expulsion of Hagar and Ishmael in Gen. 21 is framed by Gen 21:1-13, where Sarah initiates an argument over property claims, and Gen. 21:22-34, where Abraham argues with Abimelech over the water rights. Within this frame, the narrative settles Isaac's inheritance and economic security first inside Abraham's household (Gen. 21:1-13) and then beyond it with a larger residential group (Gen. 21:22-34).¹⁶ The overall compositional arrangement of Genesis and Gen. 21 in particular, therefore, should serve as the interpretive lens for Ishmael's misfortunes in the wilderness.

A precarious dynamic within the household that began in Gen. 16 with the issue of procreation developed further in Gen. 21, when Sarah raised the question of Isaac's inheritance. According to some scholars, within concubinage procreation and property are separated, which meant that with the maturation of Isaac, a primary heir, Ishmael's standing within Abraham's

¹³ L. Stager, 'The Archeology of the Family in Ancient Israel,' *BASOR* 260 (1985), 1-35; Steinberg, *Kinship and Marriage*, 17-17, 35-134.

¹⁴ Steinberg, *Kinship and Marriage*, 24-30; N. Steinberg, *The World of the Child in the Hebrew Bible* (Sheffield, 2013), 45-52 and the bibliography cited there.

¹⁵ Stager, 'The Archeology of the Family,' 23; Steinberg, *Kinship and Marriage*, 35-134.

¹⁶ The issue of wells as part of Isaac's inheritance will feature prominently later in the next family cycle (Gen. 26:26-31). For a discussion on this see, for example, C. Westermann, *Genesis 12-36: A Commentary* (Minneapolis, 1985), 346-350. Gen. 21:23 shows that that the arrangement in Gen. 21 is a question of the relationship of generations of peoples to each other. Note that Brett observes that Gen. 21 should be read in light of the administration of property in the Persian period and says, 'if Sarah's complaint to Abraham in Genesis 21:9-10 can be read as in some sense a political allegory of these events [Ezra's marriage reforms], then it is noticeable that the narrator has allowed Sarah's speech to render the driving away of a foreign woman in purely economic terms. There is no theological veneer to be found. Hagar and Ishmael's fate is determined solely by the question of inheritance.' Brett, *Genesis*, 61.

family was seriously compromised.¹⁷ Consequently, in the arrangement of polycoity, both Hagar, an exogamous partner, and Ishmael, a son produced by such partner, were dispensable and this status differential sent Ishmael on the trajectory from the security of Abraham's patronage to lethal endangerment in the wilderness.¹⁸

Admittedly, the core of Gen. 21:8-13 that holds the issue of inheritance as the factor that sent Ishmael on the journey to genealogical oblivion also holds resolution to this movement. The issue of inheritance that was raised in Gen. 21 and led to the displacement of Ishmael is paired

¹⁷ Steinberg, *Kinship and Marriage*, 79. Steinberg also states that the status of the child born by a concubine was linked to the status of his mother. *Ibid.*, 79. See also her discussion on the status of children in monogamous and polygamous families in Steinberg, *The World of the Child*, 53-57. But this is inconclusive; see, for example, B. Jackson, 'Gender-Critical Observations on Tripartite Breeding Relationships in the Hebrew Bible,' in D. Rooke (ed.), *A Question of Sex? Gender and Difference in the Hebrew Biblical and Beyond* (Sheffield, 2007), 39-53.

¹⁸ Note, however, that some scholars think that Abraham dismisses Hagar, not expels her, because in early Israel there is no dismissal without a blessing. See, for example, Westermann, *Genesis*, p. 341. V. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 18-50* (Grand Rapids, 1995), 82-83. Heard, *The Dynamics of Dislocation*, 96. But note Leeb's study on נֶעַר in the Hebrew Bible. Against some older discussions on the status of נֶעַר in both biblical and extra-biblical sources, Leeb argues that the shared circumstance of נֶעַרִים was not necessarily servitude whether domestic, military, agricultural or governmental, but rather that of being 'away from their father's house.' As the basic unit of production, subsistence, and cooperation the father's house guaranteed survival of its members, as well as provided them with identity and honour. Since these were not accessible to those designated as נֶעַרִים in the Hebrew Bible due to their various forms of estrangement from the father's house, they consequently constituted a category of individuals with a highly diminished social position. As presented in Gen. 21 Ishmael is part of the minority of Hebrew נֶעַרִים who come from high-status families yet is deprived of the social and economic benefits of his father's protection. At the point when Abraham is coerced to banish him and thus withdraws his patronage, Ishmael's designation changes from בֶּן (vv. 9, 10, 11, and 13) to נֶעַר (vv. 12, 17a, b, 18, 19, and 20). His disownment turns him into נֶעַר, a socially vulnerable at-risk individual. C. Leeb, *Away From the Father's House: the Social Location of Na'ar and Na'arah in Ancient Israel* (Sheffield, 2000), 95-96. See similar observations regarding the shift in the terms for Ishmael from בֶּן to נֶעַר in Hamilton, *Genesis*, 81. Although Leeb's theory can account for the majority of uses of נֶעַר in the Hebrew Bible, including Gen. 21, some of the occurrences of the noun, however, cannot be explained in terms of 'estrangement from the father's house' (e.g. Is. 7:16, Zech. 2:4 (ET)). Accordingly, this theory has been criticised in later discussions. See, for example, Steinberg's treatment of נֶעַר and יָלֵד in the Hebrew Bible and Gen. 21 in Steinberg, *The World of the Child*, 26-41, 86-95. Although Steinberg is critical of Leeb's theory she does note that 'the semantic pattern [of nouns used for Ishmael] indicates an attempt to disenfranchise Ishmael from the biological family through the use of *na'ar* in Gen. 21.12, 17 (twice), 18, 20.' *Ibid.*, 89. She further notes that when Ishmael is referred to as נֶעַר he is viewed 'from outside the family context,' that is 'the biological relationship that ties Ishmael to his parents is loosened, although in God's eyes Ishmael is still deserving of the care and support that will guarantee the fate promised him in Genesis 17.' *Ibid.*, 90. But see Ben-Reuven who argues that יָלֵד or נֶעַר are terms that denote psychological distancing, whereas בֶּן suggests affection and emotional nearness. S. Ben-Reuven, 'בֶּן in contrast to יָלֵד and נֶעַר in the Bible,' *BM* 93 (1983), 147-149. See also J. Parker, *Valuable and Vulnerable: Children in the Hebrew Bible, Especially the Elisha Cycle* (Providence, 2013), 60-63.

up with the divine promise to Abraham concerning his oldest son. Whereas the first part of the core holds death (Gen. 21:9-10), the other part negates it and promises life (Gen. 21:12, 13). Yet, before the narrative reports details of the divine intervention in the wilderness, it first thoroughly explores the dismissal of Hagar and Ishmael. Their scarce provisions run out, dehydration and starvation are imminent, and the narrative depicts their misfortune by means of the images of a premature death and burial without due honour. Borrowing from the ancients' lexical and ideological repository of violent and shameful demises, the narrative has Ishmael find his final place of 'rest' by Hagar's throwing him under one of the bushes, ותשלך את-הילד תחת אחד השיחים (Gen. 21:15).

B. Ishmael's 'Death' and 'Burial': שלך in the Hebrew Bible.

The verb שלך in Gen. 21:15 has inspired many discussions on the character of Hagar as the subject of the verb. Some, for example, have accused her of child endangerment. Thus Abarbanel in his discussion on Hagar in the wilderness says that when she saw that 'her son was expelled from the house of Abraham with contempt and indignity she almost became cruel to him in her despair. Perhaps in a great rage she cast him under one of the bushes, thinking "If he was abandoned by his father why should she have any greater feelings for him?"'¹⁹ Pinker goes even further in his rather vitriolic analysis of Gen. 21. According to him, 'The natural course for the resolution of the domestic conflict was unfortunately subverted by the fury of a scorned woman with a suicidal bent. While faith drove Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac on mount Moriah, it was hate of a scorned woman that urged Hagar to kill Ishmael in the Wilderness of

¹⁹ A. Pinker, 'The Expulsion of Hagar and Ishmael (Gen 21:9-21),' *WJ* 6 (2009), 20.

Beer-sheba.²⁰ Comparing her with Abraham he says further, ‘Hagar does not put down her weak son, but she “threw, flung” (תשלך Gen 21:15) him, as if trying with this aggressive act to destroy him.’²¹ Based on lexical dictionary entries on the verb, he then adds, ‘The standard meaning for תשלך “she threw, flung, cast” would reflect behavior of scorned women. How Hagar should have behaved can be found in 2 Kgs 4:20, in the lectionary for the weekly reading in which Hagar’s expulsion is narrated.’²² Hirsch in turn criticizes her for moving away from Ishmael, her dying son, saying that this action revealed her ‘flawed Hamitic character.’ He also says that God only responds to the distress of Ishmael because ‘her own tears were worthless in G-d’s eyes.’²³

On the contrary, others understand Hagar’s actions as demonstrating great parental care and concern for her dying son. Following White²⁴ Hamilton, for example, argues that the verb (when used with human beings as its object) almost always refers to either the lowering of a dead body into its grave (2 Sam. 18:17, 2 Kgs 13:21, Jer. 41:9), or the lowering of a person into what will be their grave (Gen. 37:24, Jer. 38:6).²⁵ Although White does not discuss the nature of such deposition, Hamilton takes White’s insightful observation further and surprisingly concludes that

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 23-24. Quoting Abarbanel he says that he, Abarbanel, ‘wisely sensed that Hagar debased her relationship to Ishmael.’ ‘She has been just a surrogate mother, Ishmael was more important to Abraham than to her. Killing Ishmael would hurt Abraham more than her.’ *Ibid.*, 19-20.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 20.

²² Pinker also explains that Hoftijzer and Jongeling ‘mention two roots šlk 1 = “to save” and šlk 2 = “to assault,” both having aggressive connotation.’ *Ibid.*, 20-21, n. 74. J. Hoftijzer, K. Jongeling (eds), *Dictionary of the Northwest Semitic inscriptions* (Leiden, 1995), 1144. Admittedly, Pinker is correct about the aggression present in the semantics of תשלך, but he is wrong in ascribing this aggressing to Hagar. See discussion below.

²³ C. Gordon, ‘Hagar: a Throw-away Character Among the Matriarchs?’ *SBL: Seminar Papers 24* (1985), 276. For more Rabbinic interpretations of Hagar see further *ibid.*, 271-277; D. Zucker, R. Gates Brinton, “‘The Other Woman’: A Collaborative Jewish-Christian Study of Hagar,” in S. Hunt (ed.), *Perspectives on Our Father Abraham: Essays in Honor of Marvin R. Wilson* (Grand Rapids, 2010), 349-359. On the interpretation of Hagar in various faith traditions see J. Thompson, *Writing the Wrongs: Women of the Old Testament Among Biblical Commentators from Philo through the Reformation* (Oxford, 2001), 18-100.

²⁴ H. White, ‘The Initiation Legend of Ishmael,’ *ZAW* 87 (1975), 267-305. In fact, White says, ‘the wording used in the description of Hagar in 21₁₅ is both unique and strong. First she “casts” the child under a bush. This verb תשלך when used with a human as its object almost always refers to the replacing of a dead body into a grave or a living person into what it is assumed will be a grave. When used in such a context as this, then, it should not be taken literally. Rather it should be seen as simply a traditional way of referring to the act of depositing the body of one who is dead or dying in its final resting place.’ White, ‘The Initiation Legend,’ 287.

²⁵ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, 83.

to throw someone's body (שלך) is to deposit it into its grave with *dignity*, and this is what, according to him, Hagar does in Gen. 21.²⁶ In fact, he adds that, 'the mother's treatment of her son parallels Abraham's treatment of Hagar. Even the verbs sound alike (*šālah*, *šālak*). Abraham sent (*šālah*) Hagar away, and Hagar placed (*šālak*) Ishmael under a bush on the ground. The care Abraham showed in giving provisions to her is matched by her watchful observance of her son.'²⁷ Hamilton's attempt to exonerate Hagar's character from the accusations of being negligent is commendable, but his analysis of the verb's use in the Hebrew Bible is not thorough and thus his conclusions about Ishmael's 'dignified' burial are not accurate. A number of scholars prefer to follow Cogan's argument that the expression in Gen. 21:15 does not necessarily involve throwing an object but is the technical term for exposure or abandonment.²⁸ This again leads some to either discuss the unworthy character of Hagar or her desperate situation. But Cogan, like Hamilton, analyses a very small number of occurrences of שלך. In fact, in one of the passages he considers, namely Ex. 1:22, he does not detect any intention to kill on the part of the verb's subject. He thinks that due to the fear of blood guilt, Hebrew boys in Egypt were simply decreed to be abandoned. Yet, the text in Exodus is explicit about the demographic explosion among the Hebrew slaves and their potential threat to the Egyptians. Besides, it is hard to imagine that infants exposed to the elements have any chance of survival.

Admittedly, the use of שלך may represent Hagar as a caring parent attempting to find a simple place for her son to die in the shade but there is definitely no dignity in placing her child under the bush involved. In fact, the verb, as it is used in the Hebrew Bible, communicates quite the opposite, namely violent and dishonorable interments. Since the initial observation by White

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 83.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 83.

²⁸ M. Cogan, 'A Technical Term for Exposure,' *JNES* 27(1968), 133-135.

is largely overlooked in connection to Gen. 21,²⁹ a detailed survey of its use in the Hebrew Bible will prove useful for the discussion at hand.

Of significance for the appearance of שלך in Gen. 21 is that in the Hebrew Bible and in the Dead Sea Scrolls, when this verb is used of human beings, it usually denotes either their *death or lethal endangerment*.³⁰ In fact, at least five categories of such usage of שלך in the Hebrew Bible may be established: 1.) Dishonorable deposition of dead bodies into their final place of ‘rest’ (not necessarily graves) following an unnatural death (Josh. 8:29, featuring the noun נבלה, ‘corpse’; 10:27; 2 Sam. 18:17; 2 Kgs 13:21; Jer. 41:9, used with פגר, ‘corpse’); 2.) The execution of people and some form of interment of their bodies (Ex. 1:22; Neh. 9:11; 2 Chr. 25:12, Jer. 22:19, 28; 26:23; 38:6, 9; 41:9).³¹ In Jeremiah’s texts the execution of individuals expressed by שלך is, without exception, followed by their posthumous desecrations; 3.) The execution without interment, or exhumation (2 Sam. 20:21, 22; Am. 8:3, again used with פגר, ‘corpse’; Is. 14:18ff, 34:3, used with חלליהם, ‘their slain’ in parallel with פגר, ‘corpse’); Jer. 14:16; 22:19; 36:30 (again specifically featured with נבלה, ‘corpse’); 1 Kgs 13:24, 25, 28 (used with the noun נבלה, ‘corpse’); 2 Kgs 9:25-26, 10:25); 4.) The lowering of a person into what might become their grave (Gen. 37:22, 24; Jon. 2:4; Jer. 38:6, 9); and finally 5.) The destruction of a nation or fatal endangerment of a nation (Deut. 29:28; 2 Kgs 13:23; 17:20; 24:20; 2 Chr.

²⁹ See also Heard’s fair criticism of Hamilton’s argument. R. Heard, *Dynamics of Diselection: Ambiguity and Ethnic Identity in Genesis 12-36* (PhD Thesis, Southern Methodist University, 2000), 117-118, n. 94. Unfortunately, his response to Hamilton was not included in the published version of his dissertation.

³⁰ To my knowledge there are only a few exceptions to such usage: Ps. 22:10 (ET 22 :11), 51:11, 71:9, 102:10, 2 Kgs 2:16, Ez. 28:17, Job 18:2, etc. In addition, in Jdg 9:17 שלך appears in an idiom with a person’s life as its object, i.e. to risk/ hazard one’s life.

³¹ Admittedly, in Jer. 22:28 and 38:6, 9 the verb governs human objects, King Coniah and Jeremiah, while they are still alive. Yet both texts present their endangerment as if they are as good as dead. Note that others also observe that Coniah’s expulsion from the land is depicted through disinterment imagery. F. Stavropoulou, *Land of Our Fathers: the Roles of Ancestor Veneration in Biblical Land Claims* (New York, 2010), 112, n. 31.

7:20; Am. 4:3; Jer. 7:15, 51:63³²; Ez. 16:5). In the Dead Sea Scrolls the verb is used again explicitly with dead bodies as its object, להשליך כול פגור־יהמה (4QM^a14-15 9).³³ From this overview, it becomes clear that שלך was part of the vocabulary employed in death and burial depictions when no dignity of the buried could be salvaged. In fact, Olyan, although not dealing with the verb in detail, notes that episodes of dishonourable burial almost without exception feature the verb. In fact, he defines the verb as ‘clearly a ritual act of disrespect and disregard.’³⁴ Olyan, however, does not include Gen. 21:15 in his register of dishonourable interments.

Of particular pertinence for this discussion on the expulsion and lethal endangerment of Ishmael in Gen. 21:15 is the fifth category in the usage of שלך. The texts cited in this group deal with punitive destruction of individuals and communities and always involve their violent relocation from the initial place of residence followed by exile. Thus, in the book of Jeremiah, for example, the verb is featured in 7:15 where it threatens Judah with exile and formulates this ominous promise in the manner of Israel’s earlier relocation and destruction: והשלכתי אתכם מעל פני כדאשר השלכתי את־כל־אחיכם את כל־זרע אפרים. In the epilogue to Jeremiah the verb again, in retrospect, speaks of Judah’s rejection by God: כי על־אף יהוה היתה בירושלם ויהודה עד־השליכו אותם. Similarly, another prophet uses שלך to express the idea of a nation’s punitive demise and deportation from its land – והשלכתנה ההרמונה נאם־יהוה – (Am. 4:3, cf. Deut.

³² Even though Jer. 51:63 uses שלך with a stone as its object, the stone there represents the destruction of a nation, Babylon.

³³ M. Baillet et al., *Discoveries in the Judaean Desert* (Oxford, 1982), vol. 7, 38-39.

³⁴ He also notes that it is an act specifically associated with animal burials in Jer. 22:19. S. Olyan, ‘Some Neglected Aspects of Israelite Interment Ideology,’ *JBL* 124 (2005), 606-607. See also S. Olyan, ‘Jehoiakim’s Dehumanizing Interment as a Ritual Act of Reclassification,’ *JBL* 133 (2014), 271-272, n. 1. Olyan, however, believes that שלך in Gen. 21:15 means ‘to abandon’ and in support cites Cogan.

³⁵ Within this frame, the rest of the uses of שלך in Jeremiah consistently appear in the contexts of deviant manipulations of dead bodies as part of Judah’s overall disintegration – from abandonment of the starved and slain Judeans with no subsequent interment (Jer. 14:16) to execution of individuals followed by their posthumous desecrations (Jer. 22:19, cf. 36:30; see also 22:28; 26:23; 38:6, 9; 41:9). Thus, the episodes in the frame can be viewed as Jeremiah’s commentary on the use of שלך in Jer. 7:15 and 52:3.

29:28, 2 Kgs 13:23; 17:20; 24:20; 2 Chr. 7:20). Another semantic dimension in the usage of שלך, which is worth highlighting for Gen. 21:15, is reflected in passages like Is. 14:18ff, 1Kgs 13:20ff., Jer. 22:19, and Jer. 36:30ff. Since the verb שלך in these texts denies its objects interment with their ancestors, they may very well be the closest parallels to Gen. 21 and indicate its communicative thrust in the Ishmael story.

C. שלך in Gen. 21:15.

In light of the overview of biblical and extrabiblical attestations of שלך the verb's feature in Gen. 21 explicitly depicts Ishmael's experience in the wilderness as a premature, violent demise. Most importantly, in its present context the verb should be understood as having legal, or at least semi-legal, connotations. Since the wilderness episode is placed between two pericopes that clearly deal with inheritance distribution and inheritance expansion within Abraham's family (Gen. 21:1-13 and 21:22-34), its current position should hold the interpretive control for שלך in Gen. 21. As Isaac's privileged status as Abraham's lineal heir secures his economic future by guaranteeing him both the patrilineal name and the patrimony, Ishmael, in his forced ejection from Abraham's household, could have only been *thrown*, שלך, in Gen. 21, i.e. thrown outside of his ancestral grave.

In fact, the reading of the wilderness episode as proposed here is also evident from the further development of the Abraham cycle. A plethora of older and recent studies demonstrate that included into Abraham's inheritance were also rights to the burial cave at Machpelah (cf. Gen. 49:31). Stager, for example, states that, 'it is in the context of family, inheritance and usufructuary rights that the family tomb... takes on added significance. A decent Israelite burial allowed the deceased to "sleep with, or be gathered to, his forefathers,"... and his happiness in

the afterlife was intimately linked to the preservation of the patrimonial estate by his descendants.³⁶ Likewise, Bloch-Smith's analysis of biblical descriptions of burials demonstrates the importance of interments for genealogical legitimation, inheritance, and one's standing in the community.³⁷ Dealing precisely with this issue in her recent monograph, Stavrakopoulou brings older analyses of the subject together and, concerning the tomb at Machpelah, argues that it excludes those who are not in the preferred line of succession. In fact, she shows that in the patriarchal narratives Israel's genealogical ancestors do not mark the land in a 'complex network of dead and buried kin, but are interred as just one household in just one tomb and in just one place Machpelah.'³⁸ According to her, in its multivalent function Machpelah stratifies Abraham's family and puts Ishmael and other low status sons into a socially and religiously disadvantaged position.³⁹ Since death did not constitute dissolution of life the dead were perceived as invisible members of the community and their interment in a family tomb was of paramount significance. Not only did proper deposition of their remains transfer and reintegrate them from their liminal stage back into the social group, the group itself received usufruct rights to the land that housed the dead predecessors. Without the latter in place the living had no claim to space, but instead suffered displacement and abandonment (cf. Is. 22:16-18).⁴⁰

³⁶ Stager, 'The Archeology of the Family,' 23.

³⁷ E. Bloch-Smith, *Judahite Burial Practices and Beliefs About the Dead* (Sheffield, 1992), 109-121.

³⁸ Stavrakopoulou, *Land of Our Fathers*, 26.

³⁹ On the importance of burial in a family tomb see Bloch-Smith, *Judahite Burial Practices*, 110-121; Olyan, 'Some Neglected Aspects,' 601-616; J. Schloen, *The House Of The Father As Fact and Symbol: Patrimonialism in Ugarit and the Ancient Near East* (Winona Lake, 2001), 343-344; Stavrokopoulou, *Land of Our Fathers*, 9, n. 32 and the sources cited there.

⁴⁰ Therefore, with no ancestral dead preceding Ishmael in the land of his banishment and with his own interment in an unspecified location beyond Machpelah, Ishmael is an outsider with no social network and land claims in this life and with no socio-religious influence in the life after death. Note that Machpelah, according to the Genesis material, holds the bones of Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Rebekah, Jacob and Leah (Gen. 23:19; 25:9-10; 35:29; 49:29-32; 50:13; cf. 47:29-30) and not the remains of the estranged Ishmael, Keturah's sons, and Esau. Rachel is not interred in the cave of Machpelah as well. Stavrokopoulou, *Land of Our Fathers*, 50. Cf. Heard, *Dynamics of Dislocation*, 174-178. See Olyan, 'Some Neglected Aspects,' 606-607 for his discussion on burial in unspecified locations and non-burials. See also Olyan, 'Jehoiakim's Dehumanizing Interment,' 271-279.

Admittedly, at the time the events transpired in Gen. 21 the cave of Machpelah had not been obtained yet and Abraham's family members had not established a core of the deceased ancestors to which successive, and genealogically appropriate, generations could be gathered. Yet, in the context of Genesis' exploration of Abraham's lineage and the transmission of his inheritable estate marked by an established family tomb (Gen. 23), the overwhelming evidence that associates שלך with violence and desecration of dead bodies by circumventing the interment with ancestors gives away the framework from which the book's final redactor operated. From his own historical location the redactor is aware of the concerns that dominated Israel's society from the patriarchal age onward. Keenly aware of the semantic possibilities of שלך, and assigning the wilderness episode a context between Gen. 21:1-13 and Gen. 21:22-34, the final editor manipulates the thrust of Gen. 21:14-16 and unequivocally casts Ishmael's expulsion and near death experience as a dishonourable demise of a rejected and disinherited son.⁴¹

The legal, or at least semi-legal, connotations of שלך in Gen. 21 are brought out not only thematically – that is through the narrative's overall emphasis on Abraham's inheritance – but also linguistically. Thus the verb גרש, 'to drive out,' featured in Sarah's speech in Gen. 21:10, is attested elsewhere as a legal, technical term for putting away of a wife by the husband (cf. Lev. 21:7, 14, 22:13, Numb. 30:9, Ez. 44:22).⁴² Therefore by expelling Hagar, Abraham is also forced

⁴¹ Cf. Bar-Efrat observation's that 'the narrator's attitude is sometimes expressed through the connotations of the loaded words used to convey the characters' actions... and thus, while giving what appears to be a factual account of events, the narrator's attitude is transmitted.' S. Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art in the Bible* (Sheffield, 1989), 33.

⁴² H. Ringren, גרש, *IDOT*, 69. See also P. Els on גרש, *IDOTTE*, 898-899. See also Heard who notes that although most English translations prefer cast out – 'drive out' (ASV, KJV, NEB), 'get rid of' (NIV), 'drive away' (NJV), the verb is the Pentateuch's preferred term for divorce.' Heard, *Dynamics of Disselection*, 83, n. 14. Likewise, Hepner associates the verbs שלח and גרש with divorce and argues that Sarah demanded that Abraham divorce Hagar. He claims that Sarah's demand is based on a clause in Lipit-Ishtar which stipulates 'if the father grants freedom to a slave woman and the children she has borne him they forfeit their share of the paternal property.' G. Hepner,

to abdicate his parental rights for Ishmael (Gen. 16:15).⁴³ Furthermore, Okoye notes that the verb *גרש* is consistently used to denote the dispossession of Canaan's indigenous nations from their home territory, and its feature in Sarah's speech (Gen. 21:10) indicates her plan to strip Ishmael of his land claims in the Promised land.⁴⁴ Ishmael's banishment is later confirmed in the report that he resided in Havilah near Shur outside Egypt and Canaan, and that he had his inheritance in the desert (Gen. 25:18).

Admittedly, in the original version of the wilderness episode the verb *שלך* may not have been loaded with such a grotesque imagery. In the initial account of what now constitutes Gen. 21:14-21 the verb may not have been linked to inheritance rights established by kinship ties. It may have simply represented a desperate parent's attempt to arrange an improvised burial for her dehydrated son in the harsh terrain of the desert of Beersheba. The final formation, however, capitalised on the semantic baggage the word had acquired. Thus, before the resolution comes in Gen. 21:17 and reverses Ishmael's dire circumstance, he is clearly presented as a disinherited son who in the face of imminent demise could only be entitled to burial via *שלך*. Such 'violent' reading of *שלך* is required not because Hagar, its subject, was overtaken by the 'fury of a scorned

'Stranger Than (Legal) Fiction and The Affliction and Divorce of Hagar Involves Violations of the Covenant and Deuteronomic Codes,' *ZABR* 8 (2002), 192-193. Cf. Targum Jonathan which says, 'and he [Abraham] divorced her [Hagar] with a letter of divorce.' But see also Pinker's unsubstantiated discussion on *שלח* and *גרש*. 'The primary difference between *גרש* and *שלח* stems from the fact that explicitly or implicitly *גרש* indicates the "departure from" and *שלח* "departure to." Consequently, *גרש* implies severance of subsequent contacts and relations, while *שלח* implies extension of reach and therefore continuation of links. Moreover, the juxtaposition of *שלח* in Gen 21:14 and the homophone *שלך* in Genesis 21:15 are intended to convey subtly the difference between the two acts. While Hagar's *שלך* was an aggressive act, Abraham's *שלח* was a gentle send off.' Pinker, 'The Expulsion of Hagar,' 16. But see Els who shows that both *גרש* and *שלח* are used in contexts of divorce (e.g. Deut. 21:14). *IDOTTE*, 989.

⁴³ Okoye argues that by naming Ishmael Abraham officially adopted Ishmael in Gen. 16:15. J. Okoye, 'Sarah and Hagar: Genesis 16 and 21,' *JSOT* 32 (2007), 163-175.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 163-175. See also M. Weinfeld, 'The Ban on the Canaanites in the Biblical Codes and Its Historical Development,' in A. Lemaire, B. Otzen (eds), *History and Traditions of Early Israel: Studies Presented to Eduard Nielsen* (Leiden, 1993), 142-160. Reading Gen. 21 from the perspective of the Persian period concerns, Brett points out that 'the story is not primarily about Sarah as a vindictive woman, it is all about the politics of dispossession. Hagar's fate stands for the dispossession of many others who have inter-married...' Brett, *Genesis*, 61.

woman with a suicidal bent,⁴⁵ but because the conventions of Israelite interment ideology demand it. Since Ishmael is the first member among Abraham's descendants to be ejected from the patriarch's lineal genealogy to the segmented branch in his family line, the tragic nature of circumstances that surround his expulsion becomes even more poignant.⁴⁶

III. Hagar in Gen. 21.

As demonstrated above, the reading of the wilderness episode in Gen. 21 as a burial scene proposed here coheres well with the development of Ishmael's saga within the Abraham cycle and the usage of *שֵׁלַח* in the Hebrew Bible. Viewed this way, however, Gen. 21 may also contribute to solving an enigmatic problem that besets the narrative of Ishmael's banishment. Once solved, the problem will help to illuminate the role assigned to Hagar in the preservation of her son and his descendants in Gen. 21, as well as the appeal of her story for a post exilic group of divorced spouses and disinherited children. Before analysing the sorrowful mother in Gen. 21 and her significance for the needs of two ancient communities, this discussion will first deal with

⁴⁵ Pinker, 'The Expulsion of Hagar and Ishmael,' 23-24.

⁴⁶ Note Steinberg's observation that 'from the "emic" or insider point of view of Israelite culture itself, the treatment of Ishmael [in Gen. 21]... conforms with dynamics associated with the child's place in the wider sphere of the family and the will of the father, but from the "etic" perspective of the UNCRC [the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child], Ishmael's rights as a child are violated and the behaviour he endures constitutes child abandonment.' Steinberg, *The World of the Child*, 95. It should be noted, however, that recent source-critical evaluations of the Genesis materials have focused on Ishmael in Gen. 17 and 25 to argue for the P's 'ecumenical' and thus positive characterisation of the figure Abraham and by extension, Abraham's positive stance towards Ishmael and his posterity. See, for example, T. Naumann, 'Ismael: Abrahams verlorener Sohn,' in R. Weth (ed.), *Bekennnis zu dem einen Gott? Christen und Muslime zwischen Mission und Dialog* (Neukirchen, 2000), 70-89; T. Naumann, 'Ismael unter dem Segen des Gottes Abrahams,' in H. Barth, C. Elsas (eds), *Religiöse Minderheiten: Potentiale für Konflikt und Frieden, IV. Internationales Rudolf-Otto-Symposium* (Schnefeld, 2004), 179-192; A. de Pury, 'Abraham: The Priestly Writer's "Ecumenical" Ancestor,' in S. McKenzie, T. Römer (eds), *Rethinking the Foundations: Historiography in the Ancient World and in the Bible* (Berlin, 2000), 163-182; E. Knauf, 'Die Priesterschrift und die Geschichten der Deuteronomisten,' in T. Römer (ed.), *The Future of the Deuteronomistic History* (Leuven, 2000), 101-118; M. Brett, 'Reading the Bible in the Context of Methodological Pluralism: The Undermining of Ethnic Exclusivism in Genesis,' in M. Carroll (ed.), *Rethinking Contexts, Rereading Texts: Contributions from the Social Sciences to Biblical Interpretation* (Sheffield, 2000), 48-74; J. Blenkinsopp, 'Abraham as Paradigm in the Priestly History in Genesis,' *JBL* 128 (2009), 225-241.

the puzzling imagery in Gen. 21:14 – a banished woman carrying an adult son on her shoulders to the wilderness where he almost dies.

A. The Aberrant Image in Gen. 21:14: Textual Issues and Previous Solutions.

The grotesque and seemingly absurd⁴⁷ image of Hagar carrying an adult Ishmael on her shoulders as she is sent away from Abraham's house in the MT of Gen. 21:14 has long been considered an exegetical crux. The summary of main issues and their solutions in the interpretation of this text was helpfully outlined by Lyke.⁴⁸ Although this discussion will in the end offer an explanation of the crux different to that of Lyke's, for the sake of convenience this section of the query will follow his summary.

The MT of Gen. 21:14 reads:

וישכם אברהם בבקר ויקח-לחם וחמת מים ויתן אל-הגר שם על-שכמה ואת-הילד וישלחה ותלך ותתע במדבר באר
שבע

The first difficulty of the MT's Gen. 21:14 stems from the odd position of the phrase ואת-הילד, 'and the child,' in Gen. 21:14. On the one hand, its present location in the text makes it hard to establish which verb in the sentence governs this phrase, and on the other, it is unclear whether the phrase should be read as a direct object, 'and the boy,' or a prepositional phrase, 'and with the boy.' The second difficulty in Gen. 21 arises from the seeming inconsistency in Ishmael's age in the larger narrative. According to Gen. 17 he was 13 years old, yet some of the verbs and phrases in Gen. 21 appear to depict him as an infant (vv. 14, 15, and 18). Traditionally most

⁴⁷ Cf. J. Skinner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Genesis* (Edinburgh, 1910), 323, n. 14.

⁴⁸ L. Lyke, 'Where Does "the Boy" Belong? Compositional Strategy in Genesis 21:14,' *CBQ* 56 (1994), 637- 648. For another helpful discussion see Heard, *Dynamics of Dislocation*, 117-118, n. 94.

medieval Jewish commentators understood Ishmael to be a young adult in Gen. 21,⁴⁹ whereas modern day exegetes argue for Ishmael to be still an infant at the time of his expulsion. The latter explain both the age discrepancy between ch. 17 and 21 and the syntactical anomaly in 21:14 as a redactional activity to reconcile the two depictions of Ishmael.⁵⁰ To solve the syntactical difficulties of Gen. 21:14, modern scholars tend to suggest various emendations of the MT. Yet, as Speiser rightly observes, ‘the various emendations that have been proposed merely substitute one set of problems for another. An acceptable solution has yet to be discovered.’⁵¹

Regarding English translations of the text, Lyke points out that KJV provides the most accurate representation of the word order of the Hebrew. This translation, as in the MT, does not connect ‘the child’ with any of the preceding or following verbs in the sentence, and thus preserves best its awkward grammar and syntax. Both NIV and Westermann’s translation deviate from the MT’s word order and reflect the most common solutions to the position of the phrase ואת-הילד. NIV takes it as a prepositional phrase linked to the following verb וישלחה, and Westermann understands it as a direct object of the participle שׁוּ. ⁵² The first reading, ‘and he sent her off with the child,’ is proposed by scholars who understand Ishmael to be an adolescent in Gen. 21 and thus too old to be carried by his mother.⁵³ This reading, however, is not without flaws. Prefixed to וישלחה, ‘and he sent her away,’ the conjunction ו separates ואת-הילד from the

⁴⁹ Thus, for example, Qimchi thinks that Ishmael was a teenager and believes that v. 14 says, ‘the bread and water he placed on her shoulder and [placed] the child so that he could walk before her, for he was fifteen years old, and when he grew tired, she could carry him on her shoulder or at her bosom.’ Ibn Ezra, Nachmanides, and later Sforno held a similar position. Abravanel interpreted ואת-הילד to mean that Ishmael carried the provisions with Hagar. But see *Gen. Rab.* 53:13 and Rashi who understand that Ishmael was an adult (27 and 25 years of age respectively) in Gen. 21 and thought that at the time of his expulsion he became ill because of Sarah’s machinations and thus had to be carried by his mother. On the rabbinic discussions of Ishmael, see C. Bakhos, *Ishmael on the Border: Rabbinic Portrayals of the First Arab* (Albany, 2006); C. Bakhos, *The Family of Abraham: Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Interpretations* (Cambridge, 2014).

⁵⁰ See, for example, H. Gunkel, *Genesis* (Macon, 1997), 227, 229-230.

⁵¹ E. Speiser, *Genesis: Introduction, Translation and Notes* (Garden City, 1979), 155.

⁵² Westermann, *Genesis 12-36*, 336-337.

⁵³ N. Sarna, *Genesis = Bereshit: The Traditional Hebrew Text with New JPS Translation*, (Philadelphia, 1989), 147; Speiser, *Genesis*, 154-155; Heard, *Dynamics of Dissection*, 117-118, n. 94.

verb that supposedly governs it and makes the reading of ואת־הילד as a prepositional phrase unsatisfactory.⁵⁴

To understand the phrase as a direct object of one of the preceding verbs is not without difficulties either, as it is not immediately clear which verb would govern it. The position of ויקח, ‘and he took,’ makes it unlikely for the phrase ואת־הילד to be understood as its true direct object as it is too far removed from ואת־הילד. A similar difficulty arises if this phrase is taken as a direct object of ויתן, ‘and he gave.’ This approach has to presuppose that ויתן takes the objects of the preceding verb ויקח and to explain the position of the participle שם between ויתן and its implied objects.⁵⁵ Lastly, the participle שם,⁵⁶ ‘placing,’ could be seen as governing ואת־הילד and thus producing a circumstantial clause, i.e. ‘he took bread and a skin of water and gave them to Hagar placing (them) on her shoulder ‘along with’ the boy.’⁵⁷ This reading appears to be more plausible on syntactical grounds and is supported by the ancient witnesses such as the LXX, the Peshitta, and Targum Onqelos.⁵⁸ Placing ואת־הילד at the end of the clause these versions reflect the word

⁵⁴ Lyke, ‘Where Does “the Boy” Belong?’ 639.

⁵⁵ Cf., for example, Hamilton’s discussion which views ואת־הילד as a direct object of ויתן, but understands it to mean not only ‘to set, place’ but also ‘to entrust, give over.’ So he interprets this statement as Abraham transferring Ishmael from his guardianship to Hagar’s. Abraham places the physical provisions on Hagar’s back and entrusts their son and his welfare to Hagar’s care. His argument, however, is not convincing. He makes one verb have two different connotations simultaneously, and thus suggests it be interpreted differently with different objects. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, 76, 82. Alter agrees with Hamilton’s discussion of the syntax of Gen. 21:14 and in his translation repeats the verb, ‘Abraham ... gave them to Hagar, placing them on her shoulder, and he gave her the child, and sent her away.’ R. Alter, *Genesis* (New York, 1996), 99.

⁵⁶ Or a Perfect.

⁵⁷ Note Pinker’s observation that, ‘the text says וישלחה not וישלחם indicating that we do not have two individual units but one unit (Hagar) of which Ishmael is a part.’ Pinker, ‘The Expulsion of Hagar,’ 13. Note also that Levenson argues that the verb שלך in v. 15 suggests that Ishmael was indeed lifted on Hagar’s shoulders. J. Levenson, *The Death and Resurrection of the Beloved Son: the Transformation of Child Sacrifice in Judaism and Christianity* (New Haven, 1993), 105.

⁵⁸ Based on two LXX MSS (minuscules G¹⁹ and G³¹⁴), however, the editors of the BHS believe that the phrase in question should be transposed before the participle שם. שם should then be understood as a Perfect form, not a participial one, and the phrase ואת־הילד – as the only object of שם moved forward for emphasis, ‘And [Abraham] gave them to Hagar. And the child he placed on her shoulder, and sent her away.’ The Vulgate rearranges the word order and reads, ‘So Abraham arose in the morning and, taking bread and a skin of water, placed [them] on her shoulder and handed over the boy and sent her away.’ Lyke, ‘Where Does “the Boy” Belong?’ 640.

order preserved in the MT. In fact, the Targum reproduces the Hebrew of the MT in a virtually identical manner.⁵⁹

If the cumulative versional evidence suggests that the MT reflects an original arrangement of the sentence in v. 14, what then is the reason behind such anomalous syntax? Furthermore, if the only grammatically sound reading of this verse is to take ואת־הילד as the object of the participle ׁש, and if according to the chronology of the Abraham cycle Ishmael is a young man in Gen. 21, what is the rationale behind the grotesque image produced by the anomalous arrangement of v. 14 – a young man being carried on his mother’s shoulders to his doom?

The majority of modern day exegetes understand the phrase as originally preceding the verb ׁש.⁶⁰ Gunkel, for example, speaks of the redactional activity that sought to reconcile the age discrepancy in Gen. 21 and Gen. 17. According to him, by moving this phrase to the end of the verse the redactor tried to avoid such a blatant disparity.⁶¹ Similarly, Westermann detects the work of a redactor in the odd placement of the phrase ואת־הילד and argues that the redactor’s intention was to present Ishmael as simply walking with his mother, and not being carried by her. He then notes that this syntax should be restored and ‘the discrepancy between the age of Ishmael in ch. 17 and 21 must be acknowledged.’⁶² Lyke, in turn, argues for a well-thought out arrangement of Gen. 21:8-21 and 22:1-14. For him, the placement of the phrase ואת־הילד reflects a ‘consistent compositional strategy of the name(s) of Abraham’s son(s) at the end of key clauses

⁵⁹ M. Aberbach, B. Grossfeld, *Targum Onkelos to Genesis: a Critical Analysis Together with an English Translation of the Text* (New York, 1982), 124-125.

⁶⁰ Skinner, *Genesis*, 323; G. von Rad, *Genesis* (Philadelphia, 1972), 228; Gunkel, *Genesis*, 229-30; R. Davidson, *Genesis 12-50* (Cambridge, 1979), 87; Westermann, *Genesis*, 337.

⁶¹ Gunkel, *Genesis*, 230.

⁶² Westermann, *Genesis 12-36*, 337; Lyke, ‘Where Does “the Boy” Belong?’ 642.

for reasons of emphasis.⁶³ According to him, the purpose of such arrangement is ‘to emphasize the similarity of the stories told in 21:8-21 and 22:1-14, and to invite comparison of these two stories.’⁶⁴ For Lyke, Ishmael was still an infant at the time of his banishment and he acknowledges the story’s chronological inconsistency which ‘was not glossed over by a redactor.’⁶⁵ In response to Lyke’s discussion, it might be noted that even though the statements in Gen. 21:14 and 22:3 do place Ishmael and Isaac at the end of their respective sentences, their syntax is not at all comparable.⁶⁶ Furthermore, if we assume that Ishmael was sent away from Abraham’s household as a young man, not an infant, and probe into the significance of the seemingly absurd image of v. 14 we may discover the trace of the redactional genius in v. 14, not its negligence. This, in turn, will significantly assist in our understanding of Hagar’s role as a sorrowful mother in the present narrative.

B. The Aberrant Image in Gen. 21:14: Alternative Solution.

Taking ואת־הילד as the object of the participle שם is indeed the only sound option from the grammatical point of view and thus Lyke’s analysis of Gen. 21:14 is extremely helpful. However, trying to untangle the syntactical and semantic oddities of v. 14 to produce a more readable text may, in fact, prove to be counterproductive. As seen from the survey above, Lyke’s solution to the difficulty in v. 14, like everyone else’s, lies in the realm of physical possibilities –

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 647.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 647.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 647.

⁶⁶ It is true though that the two stories are parallel. For more discussions on the parallels between Gen. 21 and Gen. 22 see, for example, H. White, ‘The Initiation Legend of Isaac,’ *ZAW* 91 (1979), 13-18; R. Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York, 1981), 181; P. Tribble, *Texts of Terror: Literary-Feminist Readings of Biblical Narratives* (Philadelphia, 1984), 34-35, n. 71; Levenson, *The Death and Resurrection*, 89-110; A. Shapira, ‘And He Will Be a Wild Ass of a Man,’ *BM* 145 (1996), 112-118; C. Leviant, ‘Ishmael and Hagar in the Wilderness: A Parallel Akedah,’ *Mid* 43 (1997), 17-19; C. Leviant, ‘Parallel Lives: The Trials and Traumas of Isaac and Ishmael,’ *BR* 15 (1999), 20-25, 47; S. Nikaido, ‘Hagar and Ishmael as Literary Figures: An Intertextual Study,’ *VT* 51 (2001), 219-242; D. Cotter, *Berit Olam, Genesis* (Collegeville, 2003), 87-89; M. Egger, ‘Hagar, woher kommst du? Und wohin gehst du?’ (*Gen 16,8**) *Darstellung und Funktion der Figur Hagar im Sara(i)-Abra(ha)m-Zyklus (Gen 11,27-25,18)* (Freiburg, 2011), 320-336; D. Zucker, ‘Ishmael and Isaac: Parallel, not Conflictual Lives,’ *SJOT* 26 (2012), 1-11.

a young woman can carry a young boy on her shoulders, but it is unlikely that she can carry a young adult. Staying in the realm of *physical* possibilities, however, Lyke and others do not explore what is possible *literarily* and thus does not wrestle with the ‘absurdity’ of the image in Gen. 21:14. However, if this seeming oddity is considered from the rhetorical point of view, it may yield rather rich interpretive possibilities. Given the great number of exegetical difficulties generated by ואת־הילד, the phrase may very well be qualified as what theorists on intertextuality identify as the marker, namely ‘the trace of the intertext, which often or always takes the form of an aberration on one or more levels of communication: lexical, syntactical or semantic. It is in one way or another perceived as a deviation from the norm, as an incompatibility, a “non-grammaticalité, au sens large du terme.”’⁶⁷ ‘These markers are both the problem, when seen from the text, and the solution to that problem when their other, intertextual side is revealed.’⁶⁸ The placement of the adolescent Ishmael on Hagar’s shoulders produced by the addition of ואת־הילד may come across as too strenuous of an exercise for a young woman and thus presents a semantic aberration. The resultant image, however, bears a striking similarity to extrabiblical mythological traditions in which a dead or endangered male deity is placed on the shoulders of a goddess, often a mother, and is transported either to the underworld or to his burial site.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ T. Mettinger, ‘Intertextuality: Allusion and Vertical Context Systems in Some Job Passages,’ in H. McKay, D. Clines (eds), *Of Prophets’ Visions and The Wisdom of Sages: Essays in Honour of R. Norman Whybray on His Seventieth Birthday* (Sheffield, 1993), 264. Mettinger builds his discussion on intertextual markers on M. Riffaterre, ‘La trace de l’intertexte,’ *La Pensée* 215 (1980), 4-18 and M. Riffaterre, ‘Compulsory Reader Response: The Intertextual Drive,’ in M. Worton, J. Still (eds), *Intertextuality: Theories and Practices* (Manchester, 1990), 56-78.

⁶⁸ Mettinger, ‘Intertextuality,’ 264.

⁶⁹ But see Levenson who understands the power of this image as follows: ‘the image of Ishmael’s riding on Hagar’s shoulder to an unknown fate is the more powerful. It is, in its own way, as wrenching as the image of Isaac’s carrying the wood over which his father plans to immolate him in obedience to God’s command (22:6).’ Levenson, *The Death and Resurrection*, 105. For a different approach to the age discrepancy in Gen. 17 and 21 see Cohen, who observes that there are a few individuals in the Hebrew Bible who appear to be of two ages at the same time in their life. According to Cohen, this phenomenon reflects a certain ‘view of aging’ that understands ‘our prior ages and stages as fully existent within the complex of identities we retain permanently, as part of the inviolate self.’ Thus Gen. 21 invites the readership to consider that Ishmael’s ‘terror of the unknown coupled with his indescribable anguish at being disowned and dispossessed by his own father might suddenly... result in the peeling away of the

The premise of the ensuing discussion, therefore, is that at the expense of a smooth reading and proper grammar, the phrase וַאֲתֵּהִילֵד was annexed to the original narrative at the redactional stage to reconfigure its main theological thrust. If chapters 16 and 21 are indeed ‘doublets,’ i.e. they originally existed as two separate traditions of the same event in Hagar’s saga,⁷⁰ or if they initially depicted two different matriarchs but were later absorbed into the Hagar narrative, the final redactor could have made a few adjustments to the basic material available to him to craft a new, more poignant story. Since the original tradition possessed a number of death- and mourning-related elements, they naturally determined the course of his reworking. To bring out these elements’ evocative power and to ensure easy recognition of a mourning theme, the basic text would have had to be linked to a well-known motif from the comparable thematic repertoire. In Gen. 21 the link was achieved by the addition of וַאֲתֵּהִילֵד.

By introducing yet another object to v. 14 – וַאֲתֵּהִילֵד – the final redactor tied the wilderness episode in Gen. 21 to at least two prominent ANE literary rubrics: 1.) the death and ‘resurrection’ of a god/hero in a larger context of a power struggle within his community; and 2.) the *mater dolorosa* motif. Infused with these motifs the wilderness episode in Gen. 21 became a powerful narrative eulogy. Before discussing ANE prototypes to the image in Gen. 21:14 and the reason they were recreated by its editor, we will first consider the elements already present in the narrative that cast Hagar’s experience in the wilderness as a mourning scene. In the basic, pre-redactional version of the expulsion and endangerment account, the darker side of the elements’ semantics may not have been as pronounced. However, it is not implausible that their potential

outer layers of growth and development to expose the baby within.’ M. Cohen, ‘Ishmael at Sixteen,’ *CJ* 53 (2001), 40-41. Note, however, that the use of a לֵלֵךְ, ‘child,’ does not necessarily communicate the idea of a baby or a young boy. Ruth 1:5, for example, designates Naomi’s grown up sons as her ‘boys.’

⁷⁰ Westermann, *Genesis*, 154; von Rad, *Genesis*, 232; Gunkel, *Genesis*, 230. But see Alexander who argues that the stories are not doublets of the same event. T. Alexander, ‘The Hagar Traditions in Genesis XVI and XXI,’ in J. Emerton (ed.), *Studies in the Pentateuch* (Leiden, 1990), 131-148.

for such semantics did not go unnoticed and eventually played into the redactor's vision for the final, re-worked material.

1. ותלך ותתע במדבר באר שבע: Desert in the ANE Mytho-theological World View and Gen. 21.

Immediately following the expulsion of Hagar and Ishmael from their household the narrative situates them in the wilderness of Beersheba – ותלך ותתע במדבר באר שבע (Gen. 21:14). According to Israel's social standards, life in the desert was the least desirable model.⁷¹ In some traditions, however, this already unfavorable space was further conceptualised as a place of non-existence and thus as the abode of the dead.⁷² Older and more recent studies of these traditions, as well as the analyses of comparable sources from neighbouring cultures, indicate that in the collective consciousness of ancient societies the concept of desert was variously stratified and could represent the passage to the netherworld, the netherworld itself, the place of the judgement of the dead, and the locale for mourning. Commenting on such significance attached to the desert in biblical traditions Talmon, for example, observes that,

the wilderness is synonymous with utter darkness (Jer. 2:6, 31), a place cut off from life (16:22; cf. Isa. 53:8; Ez. 37:11). In these aspects wilderness-*midhbār* blends with the Sheol-underworld, similar to Sumerian *Edin* and Akkadian *ṣēru*, which also combine both these connotations. The Mesopotamians, for whom the Arabian desert lay to the West, where the sun sets, identified the wilderness as the area which leads to the nether world. This idea appears to be reflected in scriptures in which *midhbār*, ^a*rābhâ*, and

⁷¹ Cf. Talmon who asserts that 'the ideal is an organized, fully developed society with a deep appreciation of civilization, settled in the cultivated Land of Israel. The desert motif that occurs in the Old Testament expresses the idea of an unavoidable transition period in which Israel is recurrently prepared for the ultimate transfer from the social and spiritual chaos to an integrated social and spiritual order.' S. Talmon, 'The Desert Motif in the Bible and in Qumran Literature,' in S. Talmon, *Literary Studies in the Hebrew Bible: Form and Content: Collected Studies* (Jerusalem, 1993), 222-223.

⁷² A. Haldar, *The Notion of the Desert in Sumerian-Akkadian and West-Semitic Religions* (Uppsala: Lundequistska Bokhandeln, 1950), 14.

šē māmâ contrast with the Garden of Eden, the source of life and abundant growth (Joel 2:3, Isa. 51:3).⁷³

Likewise Anderson and Hays note that in the Israelite mythic geography the desert was associated with the realm of the dead.⁷⁴ Anderson, for example, points out that in Lev. 13:45-46 leprosy-stricken individuals whose description strikingly resembles that of mourners and, in fact, the dead too are prescribed to be banished from their community and reside in the wilderness, which is perceived as the place of the dead cut off from the presence of God (Lev. 12:45-46).⁷⁵ Hays, in turn, discusses Nebuchadnezzar's affliction (Dan. 4:30) and argues that his exile in the steppe with wild animals is depicted through a complex of images from the regular depiction of the diverse malevolent populace from the underworld in Mesopotamia and related cultures, as well as in ancient Israel.⁷⁶

Accordingly, Sumero-Akkadian and West-Semitic traditions associated the desert or steppe with the underworld and by extension viewed it as a locale most suitable for mourning.⁷⁷ Thus a great number of Sumerian and Mesopotamian compositions depict inconsolable heroes and goddesses who undertake journeys to the netherworld via the steppe, or to the steppe, in search for their lost or dead loved ones.⁷⁸ Hence a well-preserved lament deals with the mourning of the goddess Ninsun over her son and is punctuated by a refrain that her 'heart has set up a dirge in the steppe.' Similarly Lissin, Ninhursag's daughter, is featured in two dying god

⁷³ S. Talmon, 'Desert,' in K. Crim (ed.), *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible: An Illustrated Encyclopedia* (Nashville, 1976), 946; Talmon, 'The Desert Motif,' 230-231.

⁷⁴ See, for example, Anderson's discussion of the desert/steppe in G. Anderson, *A Time to Mourn, a Time to Dance: the Expression of Grief and Joy in Israelite Religion* (University Park, 1991), 64-65 and the bibliography in n. 17.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 87, n. 81.

⁷⁶ For a catalogue of ANE underworld figures depicted as composite beasts and the echoes of such depiction in the Hebrew Bible see C. Hays, 'Chirps from the Dust: the Affliction of Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 4:30 in its Ancient Near Eastern Context,' *JBL* 126 (2007), 308-323 and the bibliography cited there.

⁷⁷ Katz, *The Image of the Netherworld*, 16-91.

⁷⁸ Kramer, 'The Weeping Goddess,' 69-80. For a catalogue of sources where mourners, especially bereft mothers, mourn in the steppe/desert see Barré, "'Wandering About,'" 178-179.

laments as traversing the steppe and meadow looking for her son.⁷⁹ Another unidentifiable Sumerian goddess, either Ninissinna or Inanna, journeys to the steppe driven by the destruction of her city and the loss of her family. When she is haunted by demons from the netherworld she complains that no one seeks her and she is treated as an unmentionable ghost of the steppe.⁸⁰

The assemblage of these traditions amounts to a system of mytho-theological zoning of space, in which the wilderness corresponded either to the passage to the underworld or to the region of the dead itself.⁸¹ As such, the wilderness was believed to be fraught with lethal danger for those who traversed it. Describing the route by which the concept of desert in some Israelite circles acquired a positive value, Talmon explains that it was due to ‘the infusion in it [desert] of other, originally unrelated themes. In essence the process may be described as a *mixing of motifs*, which introduces new subsidiary elements into the *desert* motif with a concomitant mutation of its original significance.’⁸² A similar process of ‘mutation,’ only in the opposite direction of value, i.e. from dangerous to fatal, can be postulated for the feature of Beersheba in Gen. 21. In the initial expulsion account the wilderness motif may not have automatically posed a lethal threat to the pair or signaled their proximity to the underworld. Careful manipulation of the text at the redactional level, however, brought out the locale’s deadly overtones and anchored the mother and child’s dire circumstance among the aforementioned ANE mourning accounts.

⁷⁹ Kramer, ‘The Weeping Goddess,’ 74.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 76. For a discussion of Baal and Damuzi finding their death in the wilderness/steppe, see M. Pope, *Song of Songs: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New Haven, 2007), 424-426. For a discussion of Gilgamesh mourning in the steppe see Anderson, *A Time to Mourn*, 74-82.

⁸¹ Anderson shows that one could enter the underworld by either direct descent or by a journey to the edge of the earth. *Ibid.*, 64.

⁸² Talmon, ‘The Desert Motif,’ 224.

2. ותשלך את־הילד תחת אחד השיחם: The ‘Burial’ Scene in Gen. 21:15.

Another element imbued with ritual significance, or at least ominous semantics, in Gen. 21 is the act of Hagar’s placement of Ishmael, שלך, under one of the bushes – ותשלך את־הילד תחת אחד השיחם (Gen. 21:15). The death imagery in this statement is effectively created not only by the root שלך, which was discussed above, but also by the location chosen for the deposition of Ishmael’s body – תחת אחד השיחם. Of pertinence for the present discussion is that in the funerary customs of ancient Israel, trees often served as burial sites and interments in proximity to a tree were well attested in the period of the patriarchs and at the time of the United Monarchy.⁸³ Although in Gen. 21:15 Hagar places, שלך, Ishmael under a bush, תחת אחד השיחם, not a tree (cf. תחת האלון (Gen. 35:8), תחת־האשל (1 Sam. 31:13)), the word שיח may, in fact, contribute to the overall ominous imagery of the wilderness episode. On the one hand, it is not unlikely that due to the scarcity of vegetation in Beersheba a שיח, a bush, was the only option available to Hagar as a simple burial site for Ishmael. On the other hand, it is, in fact, possible for שיח to mean a tree as it is linked to the Akkadian *ših̄tu*, ‘sprout’ and *šīāhu/šāhu*, ‘to grow’ (in size, e.g. trees).⁸⁴ Thus, commenting on the use of שיח in Gen. 2:5, Skinner already pointed this out suggesting that the word may very well include trees as rendered by the LXX, Peshitta and Targum of Gen. 2:5.⁸⁵ Of further significance is the Ugaritic *šh* which is used synonymously to ‘š, a tree, and is explicitly connected to death in KTU 1.100, ‘... he casts a tamarisk (from) among the trees, the “tree of

⁸³ Bloch-Smith, *Judahite Burial Practices*, 114-115.

⁸⁴ CAD Š/2, 416; CAD Š/1, 106. The word שיח is rather infrequent in the Hebrew Bible. It only appears in Gen. 2:5, 21:15, Job 30:4, 7.

⁸⁵ Skinner, *Genesis*, 54. Note that Ibn Ezra thought that שיח had to be a tree. He found it difficult to see how one could be flung under a low-growing bush. But note Brayford’s observation regarding the LXX’s rendering of the Hebrew שיחם. ‘Another oddity in LXX-G is its rendering of the Hebrew “bushes” (שיחם). Obviously the LXX-G translator was not familiar with the Hebrew word. Earlier (2:5) he had rendered it as “green plant” (χλωρὸν); here its translation as a fir tree makes no sense in a desert context...’ S. Brayford, *Genesis* (Leiden, 2007), 327.

death”/ *‘š mt* (from) among the bushes.⁸⁶ Moreover, the other two occurrences of the root שיה are found in Job 30:4, 7, which in turn are not entirely irrelevant. In fact, Job 30 discusses a scenario according to which a group of young individuals are driven from their community, מן־גו יגרשו (Job. 30:5, cf. Gen. 21:10), and are forced to scavenge among the bushes – הקטפים מלוה עלי־שיה – (Job. 30:4, cf. Gen. 21:15); and בין־שיהים ינהקו (Job 30:7). Job’s musing on their plight echoes Genesis’ depiction of Ishmael not only because שיה, in both narratives, reinforces the depiction of the expelled on the verge of extinction, but also because in Job 30:7 it is linked to the verb נהק, to bray, elsewhere attested with the word פרא (Job 6:5).⁸⁷ The latter is a prominent element of the pre-natal oracle given to Hagar regarding Ishmael’s wretched destiny (Gen. 16:12).

Regardless of whether the word שיה has a semantic field broad enough to accommodate the meaning ‘tree’ and thus be linked to interment passages in the Hebrew Bible, its proximity to the verb שלך, which is undeniably charged with death semantics, does strengthen the image of Ishmael’s demise and burial in Gen. 21. The aforementioned evidence that links שלך with deviant handling of dead bodies in by-passing the interment with ancestors shows that Ishmael’s status differential plagued him even outside Abraham’s household.

3. ותשב מנגד ותשא את־קלה ותבך: **Hagar’s Mourning ‘Ritual’ in Gen. 21:16.**

The reading of the wilderness episode in Gen. 21:14-19 as a mourning scene proposed here is also evident from the repeated mention of Hagar’s sitting down on the ground and from

⁸⁶ Pardee explains that the identification of ‘the tree of death’ (*‘š mt*) in this text is unknown. He also suggests that ‘because the tamarisk is a desert tree, it appears plausible to see in “tree of death” an epithet of the tamarisk rather than the designation of a second type of plant.’ Hallo, Younger, *The Context of Scripture*, 298. Cf. the feature of the Hebrew אשל, a tamarisk tree, in 1 Sam 31:13 as a burial site for the remains of Saul and his sons after their cremation by the people of Jabesh-Gilead.

⁸⁷ The word פרא is not mentioned in Job 30, but the poor in it are described as braying (נהקו) among the bushes (v. 7), and being whipped away from the land (נכאו מן־הארץ) (v. 8). Some choose to render נהק by a more generic ‘to cry out,’ but the verb appears again in Job 6:5 where it is clearly paired with פרא.

the pairing of her sitting down with weeping in Gen. 21:16.⁸⁸ As these actions are richly attested as distinct mourning behaviors and some of them appear as fixed word pairs in the Canaanite (Ugaritic) and Biblical sources in contexts of utter distress and funeral protocol, their presence in Gen. 21:16 turns the narrative into a ritual drama of a sorrowful mother.

Both older and more recent studies on death-related mourning rites are in agreement that these solemn behaviours produce a certain ‘convergence of the living’s identity with that of the dead.’⁸⁹ Thus, for example, Olyan explains that ‘the mourner parallels the spirit of the dead through his physical appearance and his ritual behavior (e.g. his symbolic movement to the underworld by descending to the ground)... Parallel behavior (e.g. descent), parallel appearance, and parallel status (e.g. impure, debase) create a symbolic link between the mourner, the corpse, and the spirit of the dead.’⁹⁰ In solemn solidarity with their dead loved ones, therefore, mourners often imitate the descent to the netherworld by means of a movement to the ground – sitting, lying down, or rolling in the dust or ashes.⁹¹ Thus in the Ugaritic Baal Cycle when El mourns the death of Baal his descent from the throne coincides with his exclamation, ‘(To) the place of Baal, I am descending to the underworld’ (KTU 1.5) (cf. Is. 47:1, Ez. 26:16).⁹² This notion of ritual descent to the underworld is also reflected in a liturgy for the dead king Niqmaddu III of Ugarit, in which the king’s successor is commanded to ‘descend to the underworld’ by being ‘low in the

⁸⁸ Although the LXX clearly harmonizes this statement with v. 17b and has ‘and he lifted up his voice and cried’. Brayford explains that ‘changing the subject of the verb “to cry” from the Hebrew’s feminine singular תַּבְּךְ to the masculine singular (ἐκλαυσεῖν) the LXX-G text harmonizes whose sound God hears with its source. From his place in the heaven that is even farther away, God harkens to the youngster’s crying.’ Brayford, *Genesis*, 327.

⁸⁹ B. Schmidt, *Israel’s Beneficent Dead: Ancestor Cult and Necromancy in Ancient Israelite Religion and Tradition* (Tübingen, 1994), 177-178; Anderson, *A Time to Mourn*, 66.

⁹⁰ Olyan, *Biblical Mourning*, 43-44. Hoffner suggests the same comparison in his edition of a Hittite prayer wherein grief is as a descent to the netherworld. H. Hoffner, ‘A Prayer of Mursili II about His Stepmother,’ *JAOS* 103 (1983), 190, n. 36.

⁹¹ Olyan, *Biblical Mourning*, 31 and the bibliography cited in n. 13, 41 and the bibliography given in n. 35 and 36.

⁹² B. Levine, J-M de Tarragon, ‘Dead Kings and Rephaim: The Patrons of the Ugaritic Dynasty,’ *JAOS* 104 (1984), 658 and the bibliography cited there; Anderson, *A Time to Mourn*, 65 and the bibliography there.

dust' (KTU 1.161).⁹³ Comparable behavior is observed, for example, in the Genesis' account of Jacob's mourning for Joseph. Commenting on the patriarch's words in Gen. 37:35, 'but I will descend to my son, to Sheol, in mourning,' Olyan observes that they denote Jacob's intent 'to prolong his ritual identification with the son whom he believes is dead, which is accomplished through sitting on the ground.'⁹⁴

Thus in light of West- and East-Semitic liturgical materials, as well as comparable biblical representation of mourners, a grief-stricken Hagar sitting on the ground in Gen. 21:16 should be understood in terms of a mother's ritual identification with her dying son. Arguably, the ritual dimension in her actions is further reinforced by weeping, ותבך, and lifting up her voice, ותשא את-קלה, as the exact phrase, 'to lift up one's voice and cry,' appears in death-related mourning scenes both in the Hebrew Bible (2 Sam. 3:32, 13:36, Job 2:12) and Ugaritic literature (CAT 1.16 i 13-14, 1.16 ii 35-36).⁹⁵ Given the discussion on the semantics of שלך in Gen. 21 and the formulaic language of Gen. 21:16, ותשא את-קלה ותבך, it is not implausible that Gen. 21:15-16, in fact, presents a variation on what Gruber calls 'the formula of funerary protocol.' First of all, Gruber observes that in Ugaritic, as in Hebrew, the root *bky* is often 'employed secondarily to denote the abstract idea... to mourn.'⁹⁶ Based on three Ugaritic passages, one of which comes

⁹³ Levine, Tarragon, 'Dead Kings,' 657-658.

⁹⁴ Olyan, *Biblical Mourning*, 42. See also Anderson on David's mourning in 2 Sam. 12:15-24. Anderson, *A Time to Mourn*, 82-84. On sitting on the ground, sitting in dirt, or in dust, and falling and lying prostrate on the ground as part of mourning, see also M. Gruber, *Aspects of Nonverbal Communication in the Ancient Near East* (Rome, 1980), 460-463, 463-479.

⁹⁵ For a discussion of the semantic nuances of the Hebrew root בכה, which include weeping, wailing, lamenting, mourning, eulogising, etc., and its cognates in Ugaritic and Akkadian, see Gruber, *Aspects of Nonverbal Communication*, 402-434. For the pair 'to lift up one's voice and cry' in Hebrew and Ugaritic see U. Cassuto, *The Goddess Anath: Canaanite Epics of The Patriarchal Age: Texts, Hebrew Translation, Commentary and Introduction* (Jerusalem, 1951), 39. The Ugaritic phrase 'to lift up one's voice and cry' appears, for example, in the story of King Keret when both his son and his daughter discover that he is gravely ill and is about to die (CAT 1.16 i 13, 1.16 ii 35-36). For more references see R. Whitaker, *A Concordance of the Ugaritic Literature* (Cambridge, 1972), 106-107; Del Olmo Lete, Sanmartín, *A Dictionary of the Ugaritic Language*, 220-221.

⁹⁶ He points out, for example, that the verb can function as a transitive verb and take accusative endings as seen in CTA 6.1.16-18, she [Anat] mourned him [Baal]. Gruber, *Aspects of Nonverbal Communication*, 429-430.

from the account of Anat's mourning over Baal – *tbkynh wtqbrnh tštnn bhrt ilm arš/* 'while mourning/weeping over him [Baal], she [Anat] buried him, interring him in the hole of the gods of the earth' (CTA 6.1.16-18) – Gruber points out that texts like CTA 6.1.16-18 'enable us ... to single out *ybky yqbr yšt bhrt ilm arš* "He mourns; he interrs; he places in the pits of the netherworld deities" as a stereotypical formula for describing a funeral.'⁹⁷ Of interest for Gen. 21 is that a somewhat similar set of actions could be observed in the scene of Abner's funeral (2 Sam. 3:31-32). After David instructs people to mourn for Abner (קרעו בגדיכם וחגרו שקים וספדו לפני (v. 31)), the text reports that Abner is buried and the king lifts up his voice and weeps at Abner's grave (v. 32).⁹⁸ If the root שלך in Gen. 21 is understood in terms of *burial* as discussed above, then Gen. 21:15-16 closely parallels the formulaic language from the funeral scene in 2 Sam. 3:32:

v. 32 (1) ויקברו את־אבנר בחברון (2) וישא המלך את־קולו ויבך אל־קבר אבנר

vv. 15-16 (1) ותשלך את־הילד תחת אחד השיחים (2) ותלך ותשב לה... ותשב מנגד ותשא את־קלה ותבך

Given the excess of ritually charged lexemes and symbolisms in Gen. 21– the location of the banished mother and child, מדבר באר שבע; the deposition of the dying Ishmael under a שיח and the formulation of this act via שלך; and finally, the actions of the mother following the disposal of her son, ותשב מנגד ותשא את־קלה ותבך – it becomes clear how the wilderness episode yielded itself as a material that, with some adjustment, could conveniently achieve a great number of

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 430. The exact same sequence of events is reflected repeatedly in the epic of Aqhat when his father petitions Baal to kill the hawks that devoured Aqhat. Daniel hopes that his son's remains (any 'fat,' any 'bone') will fall from the vultures' innards and he will be able to weep over his son, to bury him, and to put him in a grave (with) the gods of the earth. *Ibid.*, 428-431.

⁹⁸ Note that Zhixiong claims that 2 Sam. 3:26-39 is the only biblical text that 'records a complete ancient Hebrew funeral.' N. Zhixiong, 'The King Lifted up His Voice and Wept.' *David's Mourning in the Second Book of Samuel* (Rome, 2013), 20. It is not clear, however, how this funeral account could be seen as 'complete' if it is the only text that relates such procedure.

social aims.⁹⁹ As it will be suggested below, the text, among other things, provided a platform from which the Genesis editor offered a dissenting voice in the dominant discourse of ethnic and religious purity affecting both the patriarchal households and his own context.

C. ANE Analogues to the Image of a Heroine Carrying a Loved One on Her Shoulders En Route to Burial.

1. The Canaanite Analogue.

A brief scan of Gen. 21 for death-related images has demonstrated that as a duplicate material the wilderness episode in its basic form casts Hagar's misfortunes in Beersheba as a distinctly mourning scene. To mark the tragic shift in his ancestor's genealogy and to address the crisis within his own community, therefore, it is not implausible that the final redactor deemed it fitting to turn Gen. 21 into a narrative lament. One of the ways to do so would have been to connect the basic tradition at his disposal to a recognizable motif of the comparable genre. The Canaanite version of the motif of interest is preserved in the Ugaritic Baal cycle. According to this myth, a young god Baal, whose ambiguous status in the pantheon is contested in an ongoing sibling rivalry, is lured to the netherworld and dies. Once his demise becomes known, he is first mourned by the supreme god El and then by his closest ally, Anat. Having completed her share of rites, Anat initiates a search campaign for Baal's body. Assisted by another goddess, Shapsh, she journeys to the desert at the edge of the earth where she finds the body of her beloved.¹⁰⁰ After she 'sated herself with weeping, drinking tears like wine,' she addresses her companion and demands, 'Bear up Baal the conqueror for me.' Shapsh, the torch bearer of the gods,

⁹⁹ Cf. Ebersole, 'The Function of Ritual Weeping,' 214.

¹⁰⁰ On the role of Shapsh as an underworld deity and the descent of the two goddesses, Shapsh and Anat, to the underworld to retrieve Baal's body, see Anderson's discussion. Anderson, *A Time to Mourn*, 66 and the bibliography cited in n. 22 and 24.

lifted Baal the conqueror.
Upon Anat's shoulder(s) she placed him,
she bore him up to the heights of Zaphon.
While weeping she buried him,
Setting him in the hole of the gods of the earth. (KTU 6.1.9-18)¹⁰¹

Holding a distinct image of a dead body of a god transported on the shoulders of a goddess, *lktp 'nt*, for burial in the communal grave of the gods, this Canaanite myth could have appealed to the redactor of Genesis as material easy to allude to. Gen. 21:14 depicted a woman sent off to the wilderness with meager provisions mounted on her shoulder(s), על-שכמה. Her journey was perilous, and her son was about to face death (Gen. 21:15). To connect the two females in duress Ishmael had to go on his mother's shoulders,¹⁰² and this was achieved by the addition of the phrase ואת-הילד at the end of v. 14. However, to speak of such a redactional move more definitively we need to consider other similarities between the Ugaritic and Hebrew materials, i.e. significant themes within which the stories of the main characters are set.

The redactor's appeal to this mythological material could have been prompted not only by its elaborate sections on mourning (KTU 5.6.11-26, 6.1.9-18), but also by a number of other thematic parallels interspersed throughout the Cycle. Of pertinence for Gen. 21 is the fact that in addition to an evocative narrative about a death of a god and subsequent mourning rituals, the Cycle is likewise preoccupied with the issue of Baal's legitimation in the Ugaritic pantheon. Accordingly, the story of Hagar and her son's near death and 'resurrection' experience is embedded into the Genesis materials with an overarching concern to procure an heir for the

¹⁰¹ See the discussion of this text in Anderson, *ibid.*, 64-65.

¹⁰² It should be noted that both statements of interest, Gen. 21:14 and KTU 6.1.9-18, are formulated with rather standard terms for 'shoulder' – the Ugaritic *ktp* and the Hebrew שכמה. Although the Ugaritic *ktp* and the Hebrew שכמה are both rather infrequent in their respective corpora, their meaning is not disputed. For the Ugaritic *ktp* see Del Olmo Lete, Sanmartín, *A Dictionary of the Ugaritic Language*, 469; R. O'Callaghan, 'The Word *ktp* in Ugaritic and Egypto-Canaanite Mythology,' *Or* 21 (1952), 37-46. For the Hebrew שכמה see *BDB*, 1014; R. Haak, 'The Shoulder of the Temple,' *VT* 33 (1983), 272-278.

Terahite-Abrahamic family line. Within this dominant theme in each respective literary corpus – the Ugaritic Cycle and Genesis – lies a set of comparable elements that constitute the theme of legitimation of a god/hero in his respective divine or human community: 1.) Sibling rivalry (Baal/Mot/sons of Athirat on the one hand, and Isaac, Ishmael, sons of Keturah, on the other); 2.) Patrimony (palace for Baal, land for Abraham’s heir), and finally 3.) The lethal endangerment of a hero followed by his ‘resurrection.’

a.) Baal’s Status in the Ugaritic Pantheon: Sibling Rivalry.

Since the discovery of the Ugaritic literature, a number of approaches have been taken to understand the nature of the Baal Cycle. According to Smith, the most serious interpretations of the myth should ‘offer profound syntheses integrating the themes of kingship, temple-building and divine conflict within the Baal Cycle.’¹⁰³ Smith further observes that the Cycle does not reflect the rise of Amorites at Ugarit, but the origins of Ugaritic monarchy under the Amorite dynasty of Niqmaddu in the middle bronze age. Thus, the description of Baal’s rise to kingship might have been understood as a reflection of the emergence of the Ugaritic dynasty of Niqmaddu I.

The theory that the Baal cycle reflects the rise of a new dynasty at Ugarit may help to explain why Baal, although not a son of El and Athirat, who had seventy or eighty offspring of their own, was chosen to rule the cosmos. Although Baal eventually ascends to power, the tension between him and the family of El is an ongoing element in the Ugaritic myth. This is seen, for example, from KTU 1.1-1.2, where he is challenged by Yamm, and KTU 1.5-1.6,

¹⁰³ M. Smith, *The Ugaritic Baal Cycle. Introduction with Text, Translation and Commentary of KTU 1.1-1.2* (Leiden, 1994), 59.

where he is confronted by Mot and dies.¹⁰⁴ In the latter episode, which invites particular comparison with the Genesis story, while Baal is dead El suggests that another candidate ascend Baal's throne. In fact, Athirat, El's primary wife and Baal's enemy, takes the leading role in negotiations and nominates her sons, Athtar and *yd' yllhn*, as candidates for the throne (KTU 1.6 I 32-67).¹⁰⁵ Central to the Baal Cycle, this sibling rivalry may very well reflect the second-millennium political structures identified as 'patrimonial' regimes. Thus Schloen notes that,

in a patrimonial state the kingdom is simply the patriarchal household writ large, and the struggle for power is analogous to the factional rivalry for property and privilege between patrilineals in extended patrilineages that is so well known in Middle Eastern anthropology. Thus in Ugaritic mythology the stories of internecine warfare between Baal and his 'brothers' in the household of El - who is both patriarch and king - are not simply a picture of days gone by but a living tradition reflecting the workings of a complex patrimonial state in which the struggles between "kin" were a determinant of social relations at all levels of society, from the patriarchal household of the villager to the royal household itself.¹⁰⁶

In short, the Cycle explains how Baal the outsider came to assume kingship in the pantheon prevailing over the more genealogically appropriate candidates. Baal's marginal position in Ugarit's divine community and El's ambiguous stance toward him are matched by the circumstances of Ishmael's position in Abraham's household in Genesis. More specifically, in the context of conflict with Mot (who is one of the blood princes) Baal's death, therefore, is most comparable to Ishmael's dismissal and his subsequent endangerment in the wake of the dispute over inheritance rights and heirship.¹⁰⁷ Hence the social phenomenon of the exile of a lower-

¹⁰⁴ The continuity of episodes in KTU 1.1-1.6 is still a controversial issue. The chart representing a partial consensus of Ugaritic scholarship concerning the order of the tablets, KTU 1.1-1.6, was originally created by del Olmo Lete and provisionally reproduced by Smith. *Ibid.*, 2.

¹⁰⁵ In fact, Smith shows that the poetic structure of Baal's death and return to life episode is arranged as a concentric pentacolon (ABCBA') with the attempt to replace Baal situated in its very center. *Ibid.*, 103, n. 203.

¹⁰⁶ J. Schloen, 'The Exile of Disinherited Kin in KTU 1.12 and KTU 1.23,' *JNES* 52 (1993), 219.

¹⁰⁷ That is if the order of the tablets reflects the actual chronology in the episodes.

status son at the request of a primary wife for the benefit of her child(ren) is one of the shared elements between the Ugaritic Baal Cycle and Gen. 21.

b.) Patrimony.

The building of a palace is another motif of significance in the Baal Cycle as it takes up a considerable portion of the narrative. Under the ‘patrimonial’ regime the divine council in Ugarit was composed of four well-defined tiers of deities, with El, Athirat and their offspring constituting the first two. Inhabiting the space outside of El’s royal family, Baal had to struggle to secure his own palace and estate, Mt. Zaphon, and this struggle was key in his rise to kingship. Surveying building accounts in ancient Mesopotamia and the Levant, Hurowitz observes a few elements in the building of Baal’s palace in the Ugaritic Cycle that set this account aside from other ANE sources of the comparable genre.¹⁰⁸ First of all, in his endeavour to erect a palace, Baal is constantly assisted by his allies. Since this feature of assistance is missing from many building accounts of major ANE deities, its presence in the Ugaritic Cycle underscores Baal’s palace as a hard-won reward.¹⁰⁹ Secondly, to obtain permission to build his house Baal had to initiate long negotiations with El through the advocacy of Anat and Athirat.¹¹⁰ Supplemented with generous gifts these negotiations are also glaringly missing from other palace-building narratives of the ancient Orient. Thus, implementing the arts of shrewd lobbying and constantly relying on his political allies in the palace-building enterprise, Baal once again emerges as an outsider in Ugarit’s thoroughly-stratified and well-established community of gods.¹¹¹ Reflecting

¹⁰⁸ V. Hurowitz, *I Have Built You an Exalted House: Temple Building in the Bible in Light of Mesopotamian and North-West Semitic Writings* (Sheffield, 1992), 100-105.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 102; Smith, *The Ugaritic Baal Cycle*, 35-36.

¹¹⁰ The latter in turn had to be approached according to the appropriate divine protocol – with generous offerings. *Ibid.*, 35-36.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 47-49.

social phenomena in the middle bronze age and permeating the patriarchal stories in the book of Genesis, the patrimonial concerns in the Abraham cycle allow for some degree of comparison between Baal, an outsider in the divine family of Ugarit, and Ishmael, a lower-status disinherited son in Abraham's household.

c.) The Lethal Endangerment of a Hero Followed by His 'Resurrection.'

The final trope shared both by the Ugaritic Cycle and the Genesis account of Ishmael's banishment is the 'resurrection/ restoration' of a hero after his death or near death experience. In the Canaanite epic, after Baal falls prey to the machinations of the death god, the goddess Anat demands that Mot, Baal's archenemy, release the fallen hero. Following a violent confrontation between the two deities, in which Anat dismembers Mot and scatters his remains, Baal returns to life. The news of his resurrection comes to El in a nocturnal vision,

In a dream of the Gracious One, the kindly god,
in a vision of the Creator of creatures,
The heavens rain oil,
The wadies run with honey...
For Mighty Baal is alive,
The Prince, master of the earth, exists. (KTU 1.6 iii 10-14, 20-21)

Prompted by El's vision, Anat and Shapsh undertake another search campaign to locate Baal and the epic narrates both Mot and Baal being brought back to life only to continue their strife. Symbolising the life-giving rains on the one hand and drought, sterility, and death on the other, the two deities Baal and Mot are pitted against each other in the Epic in the perpetual life cycle of nature.¹¹² The resurrection of the hero Baal in the Ugaritic Cycle is matched by the

¹¹² On the discussion of Baal as a dying and rising deity see, for example, T. Mettinger, *The Riddle of Resurrection: "Dying and Rising Gods" in the Ancient Near East* (Stockholm, 2001), 55-70.

miraculous survival of Ishmael in the wake of a wilderness theophany (Gen. 21:17-21).¹¹³ Thus the common pattern of ‘demise/ lethal endangerment/ restoration’ of a hero in a larger context of a power struggle either in the Ugaritic pantheon or in the patriarchal household adds to the narrative elements shared by the Canaanite Epic and Gen. 21.

2. The Egyptian Analogues.

Given the great number of compatible themes in Ugaritic and Genesis mourning accounts it is not implausible that the final editor of Genesis drew on Canaanite traditions in shaping his patriarchal cycles. Alternatively, it could be argued that the pool of literary materials containing the symbolism in question was not exclusively Canaanite and was, in fact, significantly larger. Given Hagar’s Egyptian pedigree (Gen. 16:1) it is only natural to take the Egyptian route in investigating the origin of the seemingly aberrant imagery of Gen. 21:14. In fact, the Egyptian analogues to the motif of interest present themselves readily not only in Egypt’s mythological traditions, but also in their subsequent reconfigurations in texts, iconography, and furniture in royal and non-royal funerary culture.

The Egyptian trope of a heroine carrying her loved one on her shoulders, or on her back, is found in a well-known myth(s) according to which a (mother) goddess, variously identified, transforms herself into a cow and transports a male god, the sun god Re, on her back to a place of safety. In an earlier version of the myth it is the goddess Neith, or Mehet-Weret, who saves the infant sun god from her other offspring and carries him on her back through the waters of

¹¹³ Note that some scholars have already connected Gen. 21 to the motif of ‘death’ and ‘resurrection’ of a hero. White, ‘Initiation Legend,’ 267-276; Levenson, *The Death and Resurrection*, 82-110.

chaos.¹¹⁴ In a later variation of the myth, after a rebellion of humanity, it is the goddess Nut who is instructed to bear the aging god Re on her back up into the sky.¹¹⁵ On a symbolic level this motif came to represent the daily death and rebirth cycle of the sun, and was particularly associated with the concept of the solar god in “joining” his mother and entering the netherworld for regeneration.¹¹⁶ Of special pertinence for the present discussion is that some variants of these mythic traditions imbued the motif in question with allusions to the wanderings of Isis and Horus, yet another endangered mother-child dyad, through the interchange of divine names and attributes.¹¹⁷

Of further interest for the Gen. 21 episode is the fact that the motif of a flight of a goddess with a god on her back was incorporated into Egypt’s funerary culture. Thus, for example, the graphic representation of this flight scene is frequently featured in coffins of the twentieth and twenty first dynasties. Traditionally found under the feet of the deceased, at the lower end of the cartonnage, this scene depicts a celestial goddess in a bovine form carrying off the mummy of the dead placed on her back. Pinch explains that in ‘royal funerary religion, the divine cow plays an important role in the transition of the king from life through death to

¹¹⁴ G. Pinch, *Handbook of Egyptian Mythology* (Santa Barbara, 2002), 163. The goddess Neith is frequently identified with Mehetweret (or Ahetweret), a celestial cow, in which form she was supposed to have brought the cosmos into existence by means of her creative utterances. M. Smith, *On the Primaeval Ocean* (Copenhagen, 2002), 82-84 and the references cited there in n. 305, 308, 312. See also Smith’s discussion on the cow in P. Frandsen, K. Ryholt, J. Quack (eds), *A Miscellany of Demotic Texts and Studies* (Copenhagen, 2000), 105-106.

¹¹⁵ E. Wente, ‘The Book of the Heavenly Cow,’ in W. Simpson, *The Literature of Ancient Egypt: An Anthology of Stories, Instructions, Stelae, Autobiographies, and Poetry* (New Haven, 2003), 289-298. In this version of the myth the aging sun god is carried to the heavens on the back, or between the horns, of the divine cow. But the goal of the journey is to rejuvenate the god and so he is often shown as a child riding on the back of the cow or between her horns. Guilhou explains that ‘the application of the myth is twofold. First, it serves as a model, setting forth a mythological precedent, so to speak, in which the reigning king, earthly representative of the gods, will upon his death follow the example of the sun god in leaving the earth for the sky. The sun god’s departure, and by extension that of the reigning king, is not presented as his “death,” but rather as his departure for another world.’ N. Guilhou ‘Myth of the Heavenly Cow,’ *UEE* (2010), 3.

¹¹⁶ G. Pinch, *Votive Offerings to Hathor* (Oxford, 1993), 181.

¹¹⁷ Smith explains that some versions of the myth make an explicit connection between the mother of the sun god and the goddess Isis, but in such cases the counterpart of the sun god is Horus, her son. Thus the goddess carries a newly born child. For a discussion of this see Smith in Frandsen et al, *A Miscellany of Demotic Texts*, 106.

rebirth.¹¹⁸ In the tomb of Tutankhamon, for example, this concept is reflected in the king's funerary couch that is built in the form of a pair of cows.¹¹⁹ Elsewhere Pinch notes that the purpose of this, and similar funerary beds, was to ensure 'the ascent of the deceased to the heaven supported by the celestial cow,'¹²⁰ and that 'by the New Kingdom all the elite dead could hope to be helped by the cow goddess during the vulnerable period of rebirth.'¹²¹

Conceptualised as the journey to the netherworld on the back of a goddess, such assistance in the Egyptian death cosmology is also preserved in one of the tomb inscriptions where a mother goddess speaks as the coffin and greets the deceased king.¹²² The text of interest is found on 'the lid of the outermost of the three granite sarcophagi of King Merneptah, from the end of the thirteenth century B.C.E.'¹²³ Speaking as both the sky and mother, the goddess Neith offers a lengthy greeting to the deceased king.¹²⁴ The section of pertinence reads,

I [Neith] am your mother, who nurses your beauty,
I am pregnant with you in the morning,
And I deliver you as Re in the evening.
I carry you, you being on my back,
I elevate your mummy, my arms under you,
I continually take your beauty into myself.¹²⁵

¹¹⁸ Pinch, *Votive Offerings*, 181.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 181.

¹²⁰ She explains that 'from the book of the Divine cow, one of the versions of which was preserved on the interior walls of Tutankhamen's outermost shrine, that the ritual purpose of this bed is to carry the king from the earth to heaven like when "Mht-wrt" carried "Ra" on her back to heaven.' Pinch, *Handbook of Egyptian Mythology*, 163.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 163.

¹²² Assmann explains that a great number of Egyptian sarcophagi are inscribed with lengthy speeches of goddesses welcoming and ushering the dead in the netherworld, and by means of these monologues sarcophagi likewise become 'vocal.' Assmann, *Death and Salvation*, 165.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 165.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 165.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 163. This inscription is discussed in J. Assmann, 'Die Inschrift auf dem äusseren Sarkophagdeckel des Merneptah,' *MDAIK* 28 (1972), 47-73; J. Assmann, 'Neith spricht als Mutter und Sarg,' *MDAIK* 28 (1973), 115-139.

Regarding this inscription Assmann observes that it is not a traditional text, but an ‘individual composition with no parallels whatsoever on other sarcophagi or other types of monument.’¹²⁶

The imagery of interest, however – the mummy of the king being elevated and carried on Neith’s back – reflects the aforementioned mythical traditions and thus is not unique. Of further pertinence is the fact that since the sky goddess often personified the coffin of the deceased, she was regularly depicted on the floors of coffins lying beneath the body of the deceased and providing support for it. In this regard she, too, can be understood as lifting up the mummy of the deceased.¹²⁷

Apparently, the privilege of such maternal aid was not limited to the dead of royal origin only. Thus, in a non-royal twenty first dynasty coffin there is an already familiar scene, in ‘which the deceased and his *ba* are depicted riding on the back of a Hathor cow.’¹²⁸ Pinch explains that the functions of the celestial cow were distributed ‘among the group of seven cows who assisted the non-royal dead in the afterlife. So the coffin scene... might be interpreted as the deceased in the role of Re‘-Atum being carried to the heavens by the divine cow.’¹²⁹ Tracing various motifs of a mother goddess in a bovine manifestation on private funerary monuments, Pinch concludes

¹²⁶ Assmann, *Death and Salvation*, 270.

¹²⁷ For a discussion of these scenes see M. Smith, *Traversing Eternity: Texts for the Afterlife from Ptolemaic and Roman Egypt* (Oxford, 2009), 562 and references cited there. There is also an Egyptian tradition that Isis sought out the scattered pieces of the body of Osiris while in the form of a cow, and three-dimensional representations of this cow, who is called ‘the one who carries,’ were employed in temple rituals. However, in such cases the relics of Osiris were normally placed inside the figure of the cow not on top of it. A more common motif in Egyptian art and texts is the body of Osiris being transported on the back of a bull, often the Apis bull. For a discussion of this motif see D. Meeks, *Mythes et légendes du Delta: d’après le papyrus Brooklyn 47.218.84* (Le Caire, 2006), 177-178.

¹²⁸ Pinch, *Votive Offerings*, 182.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 182. One of the seven cows is identified as ‘the one who carries the god.’ *Ibid.*, 182 and the reference cited there.

that their appearance ensures that ‘through the benevolence of the divine cow the deceased will be guided past the perils of the underworld and achieve regeneration.’¹³⁰

Embedded into the varied aspects of funerary customs by means of texts, graffiti, and furniture items, this powerful mytheme showcases its lasting significance for Egypt’s death cosmology, as well as the values and practices in the corresponding mortuary culture. Its wide geographical and chronological distribution in ancient Egypt¹³¹ suggests that the pool of motifs comparable to the Gen. 21 imagery could not have been solely represented by mytho-religious sample(s) of North-west Semitic origin. The striking intersection of mythemes related to the motif in question in the repository of both Canaanite and Egyptian literatures: 1.) The endangerment of a hero in the context of a power struggle; 2.) The assistance to the hero by his close female ally, often a mother, and her carrying him off on her back; 3.) The association of the pair’s journey and its final destination with death or underworld; and finally 4.) The doomed hero’s miraculous ‘resurrection’ – would have made this trope particularly useful to the Genesis redactor.¹³²

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 183. On female deities and their assistance to the pharaohs in the passage from death to rebirth see also A. Roberts, *My Heart My Mother: Death and Rebirth in Ancient Egypt* (Rottingdean, 2000).

¹³¹ References to the myth of the celestial cow appear in texts and iconography that are ‘both earlier and later in date than the Book of the Heavenly Cow.’ Guilhou ‘Myth of the Heavenly Cow,’ 5. For a list of parallels, see E. Hornung, *Der ägyptische Mythos von der Himmelskuh: Eine Ätiologie des Unvollkommenen* (Freiburg, 1991), 88-101.

¹³² Of pertinence here is also the fact that both Neith and Anat are closely associated with warfare in their respective mythological traditions. Thus, for example, in the Anat cycle the Ugaritic goddess employs tools of combat that include, among other weapons, a bow, *qšt* (KTU 1.3 II 16). In addition, a prominent place in her material is held by the Aqhat episode that features a uniquely fashioned bow which she covets and eventually has Aqhat killed for. Of pertinence here is also Day’s suggestion that Anat may have even offered to teach Aqhat to hunt in KTU 1.18 I 29. Day, ‘Why is Anat a Warrior?’, 330. Likewise in Egyptian mythology, Neith, among her many roles, was not only a goddess of war, but was also responsible for the protection of wounded warriors and their corpses. Accordingly, her iconography in Egypt included ‘with some consistency’ a shield and crossed arrows. Tower Hollis, ‘5 Egyptian Goddesses,’ 48-49. Similarly, the word *תשק*, ‘bow,’ appears in Gen. 21:16, 20. Although this is highly conjectural, it might still be possible to assume that in light of Hagar’s single parenting she might have even had to take up hunting herself and might have passed the skill to Ishmael (Gen. 21:20).

IV. Conclusion.

Gen. 21 narrates the story of Ishmael who is disowned and subjected to a premature demise but who is not unwept for. By creating allusions to the ANE death and grief traditions via a shorthand rhetorical vehicle – a mother with her son mounted on her back – the editor shapes the episode in the form of an arresting narrative eulogy. The premise of this discussion is that by choosing to speak in a rhetorical register of recognisable grief mythologies, the final redactor of Genesis had a few agendas in mind.

As previously indicated, ritual actions and ritual weeping in particular can be ‘regarded as symbolic activity that marks out the existence or the breach of social and/or moral relationships between beings.’¹³³ In addition, ritual weeping in cross-cultural phenomena of societal injustices may, when performed publically, provide ‘a critique of the oppressive aspects of the social system’¹³⁴ and ‘implicate superiors in a [faulty] moral economy.’¹³⁵ Accordingly, at the point when Israel’s first ancestral family goes through a violent breakdown over the issues of heirship and inheritance, the narrative pictures a mother lifting up her voice and weeping, ותשא את־קלה ותבך (Gen. 21:16). Within the emergence of stratified social hierarchies in the patriarchal order, the Genesis editor has the outcast Hagar use the medium of a ritual to vigorously advocate for, if not demand, the survival of her posterity (cf. Gen. 16:10). Given the overriding discourse of genealogical purity in Genesis and Hagar’s unfavourable position in it, it is not implausible that such a medium would have been the only appropriate tool of resistance available to her. Since the link between her mourning and weeping in Gen. 21 and the rise of a new clan with her son as

¹³³ Ebersole, ‘The Function of Ritual Weeping,’ 240.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 244 and the bibliography cited in n. 84.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 244.

its chieftain (Gen. 21:17-20, Gen. 25:12-18) is undeniable, such means of advocacy proved to be effective.¹³⁶

Furthermore, on a rhetorical level, Hagar's weeping is not the only ritual act imbued with transformative efficacy in Gen. 21. By grounding his narrative in ANE traditions of maternal benevolence extended to heroes in danger, the Genesis redactor mounts Ishmael on his mother's back and directs the thrust of the re-worked Hagar materials according to the 'death-resurrection' pattern. Given the foundational nature of patriarchal cycles and Hagar's ancestral status within them (Gen. 16:10, 21:13, 18, 25:13-18), the editor also, in a way, places an entire ethnic line of Ishmael's progeny on her shoulders. Appealing to the ancient stories of sorrowful (mother) goddesses laden with the cadavers of their loved ones, he ensures that the banished matriarch and her descendants will have a hope of enduring existence. The report regarding Ishmael's survival in Gen. 21:18-20, which is given immediately after the mourning account, as well as Ishmael's extended genealogy provided in Gen. 25:12-18 decisively validate the restorative function of the ritually charged episode in Gen. 21. Arguably, for the readership of the Genesis editor such validation would have also come from the presence of the Persian-period Arabs on the Transjordanian plateau, who could have been linked to Genesis' Ishmaelites.¹³⁷

¹³⁶ It has been observed that public weeping, laments, crying may 'protest not only the personal sufferings of the singer, but the rules of hierarchy themselves.' M. Egnor, 'Internal Iconicity in Paraiyar "Crying Songs,"' in S. Blackburn, A. Ramanujan (eds), *Another Harmony: New Essays on the Folklore of India* (Berkeley, 1986), 294-344; quote from 334.

¹³⁷ Cf., for example, Blenkinsopp who explains that the status and role of Ishmael was of significant interest to the readership in the sixth- or fifth-century B.C. Judah. Kedar is a 'son' of Ishmael (Gen. 25:13), and by the Neo-Babylonian period the Kedarite Arabs had displaced the Edomites from much of their territory and had settled from the Transjordanian plateau to the Nile delta. The sheik Geshem (Gashmu), head of the Kedarite confederacy, was a leading opponent of Nehemiah (Neh. 2:19; 6:1-2, 16). Blenkinsopp, 'Abraham as Paradigm,' 237; Heard, *Dynamics of Dislocation*, 174-175.

Additionally, with his eyes fixed on the losses of his own contemporaries, the Genesis compiler conjoins Hagar's experience to the divorced and disinherited sectors within his own group and symbolically offers her tears and her back to them as well. The archetypal nature of maternal grief and its cross-cultural implementation in communal crises in ANE would have allowed for such multidirectional foci. As the reforms outlined in Ezra 9-10 that led to the termination of mixed marriages could not have been easily received by the returnees, the editor, first of all, might have felt compelled to eulogise the plight of his genealogically inferior contemporaries. Secondly, with two communities effectively mounted on Hagar's shoulders through a stroke of rhetorical genius, the Genesis compiler could have also offered a perspective of fundamental human interrelatedness and called for a response to the fractured social systems from a broader segment of Yehud.¹³⁸ Thus, discussing the concepts of complicity, responsibility, and advocacy in the post-apartheid South Africa, Sanders argues that 'advocacy is a version of the essential human foldedness whereby one can assume the place of another...'¹³⁹ Expounding on the condition of 'folded-togetherness of being' and advocacy as its logical outcome, he also says that 'the [unspecified] dead are never simply *the* dead... it is always a case of a particular dead one. There is always, necessarily, a contamination of the other with *an* other. Demanding decision, such contamination is basic to responsibility.'¹⁴⁰ A similar reasoning might be at work in the formation of the Abraham cycle and Hagar's place in it. By according the outcast a considerable amount of attention (Gen. 16 and 21),¹⁴¹ the redactor 'contaminates' the

¹³⁸ Note also Ebersole's observation that 'tears have often been found to be an effective means of locating (and, possibly, advancing) one's "self" in society, as well as a potentially powerful vehicle of social, political, and moral commentary and critique.' Ebersole, 'The Function of Ritual Weeping,' 214. He also states that ritual weeping 'may serve to (re)create a communal identity, but this is frequently a subgroup or minority identity within a larger society.' *Ibid.*, 244.

¹³⁹ M. Sanders, *Complicities: The Intellectual and Apartheid* (Durham, 2002), 11.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 17.

¹⁴¹ Note that a few scholars pointed out that Genesis, surprisingly, accords too much space to Hagar and Ishmael. See, for example, Nikaido, 'Hagar and Ishmael as Literary Figures,' 219.

genealogically objectionable partners of the Judean elite and their children with the person of one suffering mother, namely Hagar, and one ‘dead’ child, namely Ishmael, and by association imbues the circumstance of their vulnerable status in Yehud with the death overtones from Genesis’ narratives. The outcome of this endeavour is thus a commentary on the initiated marriage reforms that, via a particularised, singularised portrayal of grief and injustice, refuses to homogenise the group and discard them on ethnic grounds.¹⁴²

Thus the aforementioned understanding of mother grief as paradigmatic and the phenomenon of women’s socio-political engagement triggered by the experience of child loss, which is evident in both ancient and contemporary societies, prove potent in the Bible’s first proper account of loss and mourning. By tapping into the trope of sorrowful mothers and discarded children, the compiler of Genesis tailored the wilderness episode to address the needs of two ancient communities – an emerging ethnic line in the Terahite-Abrahamic family and the alienated immigrant sector within the Persian-period Yehud. Exploring his nation’s origins, marked by disfranchisement, and facing disintegration within his own context, the final editor creates a ritual drama with a clear ‘death-resurrection’ pattern. Through the agency of a bereft and sorrowing mother, he seeks to counteract the moral economy created by the purist movement within the first patriarchal family and his own audience, and mend the social fabric of these communities.

¹⁴² On this point cf. Brett’s argument that the book of Genesis was ‘designed to *undermine* covertly the ethnocentrism of the imperial governors of the Persian period. The editors used the traditions, whether ancient and reliable or not, to address current socio-political issues and, in particular, the debate over what constituted an authentic community’ (italics are mine). Brett, *Genesis*, i.

CHAPTER III

RIZPAH

I. Introduction.

For the current investigation into the biblical perspectives on bereavement, the book of 2 Samuel is of particular interest as the grief accounts in it heavily punctuate the rest of the book's narratives and exhibit a peculiar compositional pattern in its canonical form. Within the ritual landscape of 2 Samuel, two narratives of loss fall specifically under the rubric of *valourised* mother grief (2 Sam. 14:4-20 and 21:1-14) and powerfully illustrate the propositions advanced at the outset of this project: 1.) maternal bereavement was viewed as the most enduring of all types of loss; and 2.) ancient communities in crisis viewed sorrowing motherhood as a potent agent in actualising their preservation. Of further interest for the discussion at hand is the placement of these stories alongside other accounts of mourning that feature, unsurprisingly, King David,¹ creating a striking juxtaposition of gender-specific grief narratives in 2 Samuel. Inviting comparison with father/male grief accounts due to their canonical location and holding an assemblage of elements of interest – dead children linked to larger social groups and mothers seeking their restoration – these texts, 2 Sam. 14:4-20 and 21:1-14, will be the focus of the subsequent two chapters.²

Viewed from the perspective of grief narratives, it can be argued that the events in 2 Samuel are chronicled within a specific frame. The beginning of the book features a lengthy lament composed by David on account of the death of Saul and Jonathan (2 Sam. 1:17-27).

¹ 2 Sam. 1:17-22, 3:31-39, 12:16-24, 13:31, 37, 18:33-19:4, etc.

² Scholars tend to locate the events in 2 Sam. 21 earlier in David's reign – either as the first half of the story in 2 Sam. 9 or sometime before Shimei's curses in 2 Sam. 16:5-8. D. Firth, *1 & 2 Samuel* (Nottingham, 2009), 503 and the bibliography on 402. Thus, even though the story of Rizpah and her ritual actions in the canonical form of Samuel appear after the account of the Tekoite's speech in 2 Sam. 14, 2 Sam. 21 will be analysed first due to the chronological considerations.

Closing the book and revisiting the fate of Israel's first king and his house is the so-called Addendum (miscellanea of stories from David's reign) that contains a vigil over the unburied bodies of Saul's seven descendants (2 Sam. 21:1-14). Forming this *inclusio* and contrasting David's mourning, the account of Rizpah's watch in 2 Sam. 21 gains an ideological function in 2 Samuel. As 'the denial or disruption of royal burials represented a political action that expressed the insolvency and demise of a dynasty,'³ and as David never repatriated the royal remains from Jabesh Gilead, Rizpah's act of mourning calls into question the validity of his funerary ethics. Furthermore, as the circumstances surrounding the death of Saul, Jonathan, and Saul's seven unnamed descendants severely compromised the honour of Israel's first royal house, Rizpah's vigil ensured their burial in the ancestral tomb and thus restored their social standing. Regarding this, Ebersole writes that 'as a form of symbolic currency in a moral economy, the shedding of ritual tears [or the performance of other mourning rites] can... be used to "buy" social status and prestige. For instance, in many cultures, a woman who weeps for her deceased husband, a relative, or a neighbor thereby displays that she and/or her family embody specific cultural and moral values associated with being a proper wife, mother, and so on.'⁴ Thus the interment of the Saulides in the ancestral tomb in Zela salvaged the dynasty's dignity.

Additionally, since the demise of Rizpah's children constituted a violation of an oath (1 Sam. 24:21-22) and became intertwined with the fate of a nation, her mournful watch was thought to neutralise the penal plagues wreaking havoc in Israel (2 Sam. 21:11-14). Incidentally, according to many ethnographic and anthropological studies, ritual contexts allow women to enter the domain of male power, previously inaccessible to them, and turn these solemn occasions into public forums for pressing issues. Thus, for example, in his

³ M. Suriano, *The Politics of Dead Kings: Dynastic Ancestors in the Book of Kings and Ancient Israel* (Tübingen, 2010), 69.

⁴ Ebersole, 'The Function of Ritual Weeping,' 245.

analysis of wailing at funerals in Murako, Briggs notes that the social significance of laments is seen in how the community, in which they are produced, anxiously listens for the concerns voiced in them and acts upon them. He explains that, ‘wailers are aware that their *sana* [funerary laments] will be heard by the entire settlement... Residents who are away at the time of the death as well as the members of neighboring communities will ask men and women who heard the laments, “*What did they cry?*”’⁵ Likewise, writing on the power and social functions of Greek wailing, Holst-Warhaft observes that ‘those who have studied women’s laments from diverse areas of Greece indicate that not only are women perceived as having a natural authority over the rituals of death, but that gifted lamenters may use the opportunity of the public prominence to voice their broader concerns and to rouse others to action, particularly to avenge an unnatural death.’⁶ She further notes that ‘the exceptional intrusion of women into the public sphere and the possibility of using the opportunity of their dominion over death’ allow them to exercise their control over matters of life as well.⁷

Although Rizpah’s mountainside vigil was a private affair, 2 Sam. 21 specifically records the moment when the king was informed of what she had done (2 Sam. 21:11) and was forced to move into immediate action (2 Sam. 21:11-13). This narrative detail signals both the social significance and communicative efficacy of Rizpah’s watch and will be particularly helpful for the ensuing discussion. In fact, it will be argued that in the manner of other accounts of maternal grief, already explored and yet to be analysed, Rizpah’s deed exhibits an ethical stance that manages to encompass both personal concerns and national interests, a stance strikingly missing from the accounts of David’s mourning. Fusing critical and ethical perspectives, personal and communal interests, Rizpah’s sorrowing watch will be shown to expose David’s dubious ethics in both the royal funerary protocol and covenantal

⁵ C. Briggs, ““Since I am a Woman, I will Chastise My Relatives”: Gender, Reported Speech, and the (Re) Production of Social Relations in Warao Ritual Wailing,” *AE* 19 (1992), 353. Italics are mine.

⁶ Holst-Warhaft, *Dangerous Voices*, 53.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 53.

agreements. Incriminating the monarch in the slaughter of Saul's offspring through the Gibeonite agency and in the near demise of his own kingdom due to his own actions, her vigil mitigates the dishonourable fate of the Saulide house and counteracts the punitive effect it had on the nation. Placed within Samuel's grief *inclusio* and thus standing in opposition to David's royal mourning, 2 Sam. 21 emerges as one of Israel's critical voices advancing a potent corrective on the policies implemented by David in his domestic and foreign affairs.⁸

II. Rizpah's Mourning in Biblical Scholarship.

Either in passing or in expanded discussions both ancient and modern scholarship unanimously credit Rizpah with the unprecedented 'loving kindness'⁹ towards the dead in 2 Sam. 21:1-14. In rabbinic thought, for example, the Gibeonite episode served as a hermeneutical tool to explain the concept of true proselytism and Rizpah's labour was seen as the act of compassion of benefit to both Israelite and non-Israelite sectors.¹⁰ According to the rabbis, David's own attitude towards the royal dead was 'slack in the matter of Saul's mourning.'¹¹ Apparently almost a year had lapsed since Saul's passing and David did not see the need for a nationwide mourning ceremony. However, having heard about Rizpah's vigil over the bodies of Saul's descendants the king reconsidered his attitude. 'If she, who is but a woman, – says David according to the rabbis, – has acted with so much loving kindness, must not I, who am a king, do infinitely more?'¹² So the rabbis explain,

⁸ In chapter IV it will be shown that 2 Sam. 14 is placed at the heart of other mourning accounts that feature David (2 Sam. 12:16-24, 13:31, 37, 18:33-19:4, 13, 18).

⁹ Using the vocabulary from *Midrash Rabbah, Numbers*. H. Freedman, *et. al.* (eds), *Midrash Rabbah, Numbers* (London, 1951), 221-223.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 223.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 222.

¹² *Ibid.*, 222. See, however, Exum's observation on this, 'This act of heroism on Rizpah's part, which prevents a terrible desecration, calls to mind an earlier one, the heroism of the men of Jabesh-gilead, who rescued the bodies of Saul and Jonathan from disgraceful exposure (1 Sam. 31:11-13). When we consider the praise David had for the men of Jabesh-gilead (2 Sam. 2:5-7), we might wonder what his silence about Rizpah's heroism says about his own ambivalent role in these events.' C. Exum, 'Rizpah,' *WW* 17 (1997), 265.

How did David proceed? He rose and assembled all the elders of Israel and their most eminent men and crossed the Jordan. They came to Jabesh Gilead and found the bones of Saul and his son Jonathan.¹³ They put them into a coffin and recrossed the Jordan; as it says, *And they buried the bones of Saul and Jonathan his son... in Zela, etc* (ib. 14)... and they performed all that the king commanded (II Sam. *loc. cit.*) What had the king commanded? He ordered that Saul's coffin should be borne through the territory of each tribe. As Saul's coffin entered each territory the whole tribe came out, the men with their wives and their sons and their daughters, and showed loving respect to Saul and his sons... When the Holy One, blessed be He, saw that all Israel had shown loving kindness to him and had given the Gibeonites satisfaction, He was instantly filled with compassion and sent down rain upon the earth.¹⁴

Similarly, modern scholarship acknowledges the causal link between the burial of the Saulide martyrs after the exposure of their bodies to the elements and the restoration of a nation ravaged by a famine, crediting Rizpah with the resultant equilibrium. Thus Exum, for instance, observes that, 'as a member of the deposed house of Saul, a woman, and a widow, she [Rizpah] has no official power to oppose their [Saulides'] execution, yet the dramatic deed she performs afterwards is of such magnitude that it influences a king to give them a proper burial.'¹⁵ Thus not only is she 'responsible for the resolution to the dishonour suffered by Saul's house but also, in some impalpable, though clear enough way, for the divine receptivity to human supplication that brings the story to closure. "God heeded supplications for the land after that" (v. 14).'¹⁶

More specifically as Rizpah's vigil prevented the bodies of her sons and nephews from becoming fodder for vultures and scavengers (2 Sam. 21:10) modern scholarship views her actions as a 'highly visual reversal of the covenant curses [non-burial, exposure of

¹³ Here the rabbis hypothesise that their bones had not decayed. The parallel passage in Pirke de R. Eliezer XVII reads: '... And found the bones of Saul and his son Jonathan, over which worms and decay had exercised no power... (Ps. 34:21).' Freedman, *Midrash Rabbah, Numbers*, 222.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 223. For more praises of Rizpah's actions in rabbinic discussions see j. Sanhedrin 6.23, 3, 4; Midrash Samuel 28.

¹⁵ Exum, 'Rizpah,' 261.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 268.

corpses, consumption by predators]’ (cf. Deut. 28:26).¹⁷ Just as David’s earlier compliance with the Gibeonites’ demand for blood vengeance is understood in terms of an ANE protocol of curse reversal, i.e. alleviating the effects of the famine,¹⁸ Rizpah’s watch over the desecrated bodies of the young Saulides is, too, taken to signify a protest against the consequences of ancient imprecations.¹⁹ Thus Rizpah and her actions are hailed as ‘an icon of practical theology... People should be buried, whatever the cause of their death, divinely ordained or otherwise!’²⁰

In some discussions Rizpah is credited with the reconciliation of the two royal dynasties making David emerge from the Gibeonite affair as a ‘benefactor of the house of Saul!’²¹ Since the bodies of Saul, Jonathan, and the martyrs before her mountainside vigil had been handled by foreigners never reaching their ancestral tomb Rizpah’s actions forced David to take authority over their burial.²² Accordingly, some scholars think that David’s operation on the transference of royal remains to Zela in Benjamin appears as a benevolent act boosting the pro-Davidic stance of the episode. Since the account is given a form of royal burial

¹⁷ A. Westbrook, “*And He Will Take Your Daughters...*”: *Woman Story as Didactic Narrative in the Biblical Account of King David* (PhD Dissertation, The Claremont Graduate University, 2010), 336.

¹⁸ A. Malamat, ‘Doctrines of Causality in Hittite and Biblical Historiography: a Parallel,’ *VT* 5 (1955), 1-12; F. Fensham, ‘The Treaty between Israel and the Gibeonites,’ *BA* 27 (1964), 96-100; R. Polzin, ‘Hwqy’ and Covenantal Institutions in Early Israel,’ *HTR* 62 (1969), 227-240; H. Wolf, ‘The Transcendent Nature of Covenant Curse Reversals,’ in R. Harrison, A. Gileadi (eds), *Israel’s Apostasy and Restoration: Essays in Honor of Roland K. Harrison* (Grand Rapids, 1988), 319-325.

¹⁹ Her devotion to the dead has naturally invited comparison with other prominent mourning women from antiquity. For her comparison with Sophocles’ Antigone see M. Buber, *Kampf um Israel: Reden und Schriften* (Berlin, 1933), 114. Cf. M. Wacker, ‘Rizpah oder: Durch Trauer-Arbeit zur Versöhnung. Anmerkungen zu 2 Sam 21, 1-14,’ in K. Kiesow, T. Meurer, P. Weimar (eds), *Textarbeit: Studien zu Texten und ihrer Rezeption aus dem Alten Testament und der Umwelt Israels; Festschrift für Peter Weimar zur Vollendung seines 60. Lebensjahres* (Münster, 2003), 563. For her comparison with Niobe see a discussion in H. Winckler, *Geschichte Israels in Einzeldarstellungen* (Leipzig, 1895-1900), v. II, 241. Also cited by T. Gaster, *Myth, Legend, and Custom in the Old Testament: a Comparative Study with Chapters from Sir James G. Frazer’s Folklore in the Old Testament* (London, 1969), 482. See also Wacker who cites Catholic literature that shows parallels between Rizpah in 2 Sam. 21:1-14 and the Virgin Mary in John 19:25-28. Wacker, ‘Rizpah oder,’ 563, n. 53. For a discussion on the link between 2 Sam. 21:1-14 and Paul’s portrayal of crucifixion, see D. Schwartz, ‘Two Pauline Allusions to the Redemptive Mechanism of the Crucifixion,’ *JBL* 102 (1983), 259-268.

²⁰ A. Brenner, *I Am: Biblical Women Tell Their Own Stories* (Minneapolis, 2005), 127-128.

²¹ P. McCarter, *II Samuel: a New Translation with Introduction, Notes, and Commentary* (Garden City, 1984), 445-446, although McCarter adds that David acted out of a mixture of religious and political motives.

²² Suriano, *The Politics*, 67.

consistent with the burial epilogues in the book of Kings²³ the resolution to the episode (2 Sam. 21:12-14) suggests, to some scholars, the cessation of rivalry between the house of David and the house of Saul.²⁴ Thus this overall laudatory evaluation of Rizpah and her vigil in ancient and modern scholarship shows that in the books of Samuel, where even ‘Yhwh has purposes independent of ethic,’²⁵ she emerges as a moral force ‘galvanising a nation to do its public mourning for its fallen first king.’²⁶

Despite this highly complimentary assessment of Rizpah’s role in the Gibeonite episode a cursory survey of critical pursuits regarding 2 Sam. 21:1-14 indicates that their primary focus lies elsewhere²⁷ leaving, according to some, substantial lacunae in the understanding of Rizpah and her actions.²⁸ Whether she has received enough scholarly attention or not, there might be one such lacuna that remains to be filled. Once restored, it has the potential of illuminating the true significance of Rizpah’s vigil in the affair that brings Israel’s first royal house to an end. To define the parameters of this lacuna we need to re-visit vv. 11, 12a, 13, and 14 and the causal nexus between them. According to these verses, when David is informed about Rizpah’s watch he immediately initiates ‘the long journey to Jabesh Gilead... to retrieve the bones of Saul and Jonathan from its citizens’²⁹ and gives them, and

²³ *Ibid.*, 69.

²⁴ See, for example, Buber who argues that it is through the burial of the Saulides that the two houses finally reach reconciliation, and as a result, YHWH pities the land. Buber, *Kampf um Israel*, 113-114. Cf. Wacker who argues that Rizpah’s vigil forces David to realise that he is part of Saul’s house and thus owes him proper burial. Thus Rizpah assists in the bringing of the two royal houses together. Wacker, ‘Rizpah oder,’ 565. Note, however, that Josephus chooses to remove Rizpah from the episode in 2 Sam. 21:1-14 because, apparently, her vigil reflects badly on David.

²⁵ D. Bosworth, ‘Evaluating King David: Old Problems and Recent Scholarship,’ *CBQ* 68 (2006), 210.

²⁶ Branch, ‘Rizpah,’ 74-75.

²⁷ To name a few – Israel’s policy regarding non-Israelite sectors under Saul and David, human immolation in YHWH-ism, the precise mode of execution implemented by the Gibeonites, the ideology behind Saul’s death notice, etc.

²⁸ Exum, ‘Rizpah,’ 260. Cf. Brenner who notes that summaries on Rizpah are very brief and uses Edeleman’s dictionary article as an example (D. Edeleman, ‘Rizpah,’ *ABD CD-ROM*, 1997 (=1992)). A. Brenner, ‘Rizpah [Re]membered: 2 Samuel 1-14 and Beyond,’ in A. Brenner, F. Polak (eds), *Performing Memory in Biblical Narrative and Beyond* (Sheffield, 2009), 208-209.

²⁹ F. Gaebelain, J. Douglas, D. Polcyn (eds), *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: with the New International Version of the Holy Bible. Vol. 3, Deuteronomy- 2 Samuel* (Grand Rapids, 1992), 1055-1056.

presumably the seven young men,³⁰ burial in their ancestral tomb. The link between vv. 11 and 12-14 is undeniable, and is unanimously acknowledged by scholars, yet the striking expedience of David's resolution to provide interment to the Saulides, slain and executed a long time ago, is yet to be explained. In fact, given the ritual, expiatory nature of the execution in 2 Sam. 21:1-14³¹ David's response strikes as unexpected and 'even inconceivable as part of the atonement arrangement.'³² In fact, by collecting the remains of the immolated victims he was running the risk of compromising the efficacy of their death, allowing the famine to keep on wreaking havoc in the already weakened land of Israel. And since, as a king, he was under an obligation to neutralise the plague to save his subjects his decision to inter the martyrs was indeed scandalous.³³

The premise of this discussion, therefore, is that the reasons behind such scandalous resolution constitute the aforementioned lacuna in discussions on Rizpah in the Gibeonite episode and that these reasons could be deduced from the report delivered to the king in v. 11. Since the report on Rizpah's actions is very succinct yet features the full-fledged designation for Rizpah – רִצְפָה בַת־אִיהַ פְּלִגֵּשׁ שְׂאוּל – the woman's name should be deemed worth an investigation.³⁴ Tapping into the field of biblical scholarship that occupies itself with midrashic derivations of Hebrew proper names, this investigation will demonstrate that the

³⁰ Cf. LXX's expansion.

³¹ Cf. J. Tatlock, *How in Ancient Times They Sacrificed People: Human Immolation in the Eastern Mediterranean Basin with Special Emphasis on Ancient Israel and the Near East* (PhD Dissertation, University of Michigan, 2006), 176-177.

³² J. Fokkelman, *Narrative Art and Poetry in the Books of Samuel: a Full Interpretation Based on Stylistic and Structural Analyses* (Assen, 1981-1993), v. III, 288-289. See Youngblood who says that upon hearing about Rizpah's vigil David feels 'conscience-stricken' and is moved to follow her example. Gaebelein, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 1055-1056.

³³ Based on Greek materials, Doak and Darshan argue that the Saulide remains were transferred to stop the famine. B. Doak, 'The Fate and Power of Heroic Bones and the Politics of Bone Transfer in Ancient Israel and Greece,' *HTR* 106 (2013), 201-216; G. Darshan, 'The Reinterment of Saul and Jonathan's Bones (II Sam 21,12–14) in Light of Ancient Greek Hero-Cult Stories,' *ZAW* 125 (2013), 640-645. But Greek sources seem to be too far afield.

³⁴ Cf. Wacker who observes that in v. 11 Rizpah's full name, רִצְפָה בַת־אִיהַ פְּלִגֵּשׁ שְׂאוּל, is contrasted with a very generic designation for David, הַמֶּלֶךְ, underscoring her prominent role in caring for the dead. Wacker, 'Rizpah oder,' 563, n. 53. See also Branch who notes how Rizpah's name features prominently in 2 Sam. 21 yet she herself is muzzled. Branch, 'Rizpah,' 75.

report concerning Rizpah's watch overlaid with the telling symbolism of her name is the driving force behind David's scandalous initiative to repatriate the remains of the Saulide dead.

III. Midrashic Derivations of Hebrew Names: Previous Views on the Significance of

רצפה בת־איה

Having done substantial work on midrashic derivations of proper names (MDNs) in the Hebrew Bible, Garsiel observes that 'the literary technique of fitting one of the possible senses of a name to other materials in a literary unit has been well documented both in biblical and in extrabiblical literature, both ancient and modern, and scholars have been increasingly inclined to regard puns, and particularly puns upon names, as a significant motivation in the working of literary discourse.'³⁵ Regarding the Hebrew literary corpus he argues that it abounds in puns on proper names 'overt and recognizable within the context,' and those that are 'worked into the context in a clandestine manner.'³⁶ The category which Garsiel focuses on, and which is of pertinence here, is identified as midrashic derivations of names, signifying interpretations of a 'midrashic (homeletic) nature applied to the names of people or of places on the basis of sound or semantic potential. Such an interpretation infuses a name with meaning in relation to past events, or looks forward to some futures incidents.'³⁷ Garsiel explains that 'the MDN does not supply any reason why a person or a place has gained a particular name. Here we are dealing with a wider scope of potential derivations: sound effects (i.e. alliterations), word play, subtle riddles, concealed meanings, key motifs, etc. – all are derived from names regardless of their reasonable etymology... In this area of investigation, it is clear that the biblical authors are very imaginative, pushing their MDNs far

³⁵ M. Garsiel, *Biblical Names: a Literary Study of Midrashic Derivations and Puns* (Ramat Gan, 1991), 9. For a helpful bibliography on MDNs, in addition to Garsiel, see also the bibliography in H. Marks, 'Biblical Naming and Poetic Etymology,' *JBL* 114 (1995), 21, n. 1.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 9.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 19.

beyond any norms of the spoken language. Here *licentia poetica* is indeed the name of the game.³⁸

Previous studies on the midrashic function of Rizpah's name in her two biblical attestations (2 Sam. 3 and 2 Sam. 21:1-14) have not yielded any expanded or persuasive discussions. Noth in his treatment of personal names, for example, briefly mentions that רִצְפָה means *a glowing coal* but adds that it is not clear to him what its symbolic significance is.³⁹ Discussing 2 Sam. 21:10, Garsiel bypasses the name רִצְפָה and focuses instead on her patronymic. According to him 'the name of the father is the basis for an MDN in 2 Sam 21:10, which describes how Rizpah watches over her impaled sons... The writer creates a correlation between the name Aiah ('*yh*) and "the birds of the sky," since this name is also the name of one species of bird.'⁴⁰ Prompted by Garsiel's insight regarding the name אִיָּה, Chavel takes a step further and adds on רִצְפָה, saying that 'perhaps some midrashic relationship exists between the names Rizpah and Aiah, on one hand, and Rizpah's action of pitching her tent on *the rock* to keep *the vultures* at bay, on the other, since the name Rizpah could refer to a stone, as in 1 Kgs 19:6; Is. 6:6; Ez. 40:17, 18; 42:3, Esth. 1:6; 2 Chr. 7:3.'⁴¹

In his entry on Rizpah in *TIDBP* Vanzant does not consciously try to argue for any symbolism of רִצְפָה yet he finishes his paragraph on her with a remark that may indicate the name's telling function in Ishbaal's confrontation of Abner (2 Sam. 3). He writes that Abner's 'affair' with Rizpah was 'a claim to the throne or at best an act of treason (see 1 Kgs 17-25). When Ishbaal questioned Abner's loyalty to Saul's house, Abner responded by

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 20. For a proper name serving as a commentary on the events it finds itself in see, for example, Ez. 11:13. The text does not supply an etymological note on the name *Pelatiah* (God has let him escape), but it is obvious that Ezekiel understands the name as a communicative vehicle, and based on it, inquires of the Lord, 'Will You bring the remnant of Israel to a complete end?'

³⁹ M. Noth, *Die israelitischen Personennamen im Rahmen der gemeinsemitischen Namengebung* (Stuttgart, 1928), 232 (on Rizpah), 230 (on Ayah).

⁴⁰ Garsiel, *Biblical Names*, 51.

⁴¹ S. Chavel, 'Compositry and Creativity in 2 Samuel 21:1-14,' *JBL* 122 (2003), 29. Chavel also cites Zadok who lists the name Rizpah as meaning 'a coal.' R. Zadok, *The Pre-Hellenistic Israelite Anthroponymy and Prosopography* (Leuven, 1988), 91-92.

defecting to David (2 Sam. 3:17-21)... Rizpah literally means 'hot coals' and proved to be so for Ishbaal.⁴² The theme of *coals* latent in the name of the woman is expounded by Brenner in yet another way in a chapter on Rizpah written as a first-person narrative,

My name means 'glowing coal,' much like 'the glowing coal' from the sacred altar that a heavenly winged body puts to the mouth of Isaiah in his vision, presumably to expiate his sinning lips and prepare him for his prophetic mission (see Is. 6:1-6, especially verse 6). What are your associations when 'a glowing coal' is mentioned? Mine would be a slow long burning fire, barely visible perhaps - capable of glowing, but after all a remnant, an ember, not a fully developed fire. Hence, by implication, my name refers to a quiet but enduring passion, and also purification by fire, as in the example cited. And these implications of passion, endurance, purification, or expiation suit me well. They sum up my emotions and activities within the framework of my sorry life. Another example of a telling symbolic name...⁴³

In connection with the vigil in 2 Sam. 21, Brenner's Rizpah states, 'I am a glowing coal... My anger, my fire, is subdued, albeit enduring. What I did was in line with a long and time-honoured tradition of non-verbal protest.'⁴⁴

IV. Alternative View on the Symbolism of רִצְפָה בַּת־אִיָּה.

These discussions, however abbreviated, might be valuable, yet, as it will be shown below, they could be improved. Due to the scarcity of narrative details in 2 Sam. 3 Brenner's hypothesis regarding the symbolism of רִצְפָה in it appears too conjectural, and her discussion of the woman's name in 2 Sam. 21 cannot be assessed because of its brevity. The ornitho-petrological take on רִצְפָה בַּת־אִיָּה may situate the woman well in the physical landscape of her vigil and thus might be legitimate, yet it does not tie her to the sensitive matter of one royal house replacing another and thus does not make proper use of the midrashic potential of the

⁴² M. Vanzant, *TIDBP*, 825.

⁴³ Brenner, *I Am*, 121. This highly imaginative monologue also connects the names Rizpah, *a glowing coal*, and Abner, *a father of lamp*, as signifying a passionate union of 'two fires.'

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 126.

name.⁴⁵ While agreeing with the intuition of these scholars on the metaphorical significance of רִצְפָה בַת־אִיהָ in 2 Sam. 21, this analysis, however, will take a different route in investigating its symbolism. Against the theories cited above it will argue that רִצְפָה בַת־אִיהָ – a *glowing coal*, a daughter of *light/lamp* – taps into the registry of ominous cross-cultural idioms related to *endangered heirs* and confronts David regarding his flagrant breach of an oath given to Saul to protect his male descendants (1 Sam. 24:21-22). Since the focus of the vow exacted from David addressed the perpetuity of Saul’s house formulated as his *seed* and his *name*, concepts that in their socio-religious significance overlap with those subsumed under the *glowing coal* metaphor, or associate light-based images, its violation is exposed by Rizpah’s extended vigil. Overlaid with רִצְפָה בַת־אִיהָ, a double cryptonym for *annihilated offspring*, the mount-side solitary mourning implicates the king in the Saulicide, and thus in the act of oath breach, becoming an urgent impetus to take measures against punitive cataclysms on David’s own house and a second wave of penal plagues on his nation.

This reading of רִצְפָה בַת־אִיהָ will become evident when the following issues have been given consideration: 1.) The development of 2 Sam. 21:1-14 around the issue of *remnants* and *broken oaths*; 2.) *Glowing coals* as a cross-cultural cipher for human life, and more specifically for *endangered heirs* in ANE; 3.) Archaeological evidence on the cultic significance of lamps; and 4.) The use of the נֶר ideology in connection with David and his dynasty in Samuel-Kings. Thus it will be argued that in the precarious matter of regal succession in 2 Sam. 21:1-14 the use of רִצְפָה – a fossilized formula for *heirs/remnants* in jeopardy – is uniquely correlated with the concerns of the Gibeonite episode and thus is not accidental. In the absence of legal tools available to a concubine of a defeated king, Rizpah’s mourning watch coupled with the ominous semantics of her name becomes her only

⁴⁵ See discussion below.

ammunition against an oath-breaking monarch and punitive pandemics his actions might incur.

A. Compositional Structure of 2 Sam 21:1-14 Organised Around the Issue of Remnants and Oaths that Guard Them.

The definitive agenda of the name's midrashic thrust cannot be established with certainty without the control supplied by the immediate context of 2 Sam. 21:1-14 and its wider setting. 2 Sam. 21:1-14 that features Rizpah and her vigil presents a series of events that deal with endangered *remnants*, whose presence in the narrative is indicated either in an explicit formulation (v. 2) or 'implicitly by circumstance.'⁴⁶ Dealing with a remnant of an ethnic group (Gibeonites), a remnant of a royal house (Saulides), and a soon-to-be-remnant of a nation (Israel) the succession of narrative details in 2 Sam. 21:1-14 focuses on the mechanisms by which these groups' disintegration or survival are accomplished, i.e. *loyalty to treaty arrangements or their violation*. This overall thematic uniformity of 2 Sam. 21:1-14 matched with the ideologically loaded symbolism of Rizpah's name will be shown to activate its communicative force and motivate David's scandalous enterprise in vv. 12-14.

The first *remnant* in focus in 2 Sam. 21:1-14 are the Gibeonites, who in a parenthetical statement in v. 2 are designated as יתר האמרי. Even though the present text connects them to the Amorites their ethnic origin remains uncertain.⁴⁷ Of pertinence for the discussion at hand, however, is the formulation of their *remnant* status – יתר האמרי. The conventions of biblical usage of the root יתר, in its various derived forms, indicate that it is

⁴⁶ Cf. Hasel's discussion on the concept of *remnant* present in biblical and extrabiblical materials explicitly and implicitly by circumstance. G. Hasel, *The Remnant: the History and Theology of the Remnant Idea from Genesis to Isaiah* (Berrien Springs, 1972), 50.

⁴⁷ Regarding the ethnic origin of the Gibeonites the Hebrew Bible preserves divergent traditions. 2 Sam. 21:2 accords them an Amorite origin and in Josh. 9:17, 11:19 they are recorded as Hivites, possibly related to Hittites or Hurrians, cf. the LXX. For the discussion of these traditions and the bibliography on them see J. Day, 'Gibeon and the Gibeonites in the Old Testament,' in R. Rezetko, T. Lim, W. Aucker (eds), *Studies in Biblical Historiography in Honour of A. Graeme Auld* (Leiden, 2007), 114-116.

featured in reference to *survivors* and thus *remnants* of groups eradicated in ethnic and religious cleansing operations, such as, for instance, the Conquest.⁴⁸ Although Biblical traditions remain silent on this point, 2 Sam. 21:1-14 indicates that some time in the reign of Saul, the Gibeonites, already a *remnant*, were exposed to a genocidal attack due to Saul's zeal for Israel, YHWH's inheritance.⁴⁹ Regardless of the initial route by which the Gibeonites had reached their *remnant* status Saul's attempt to eradicate them was deemed reprehensible by the author of Samuel. Since their survival in the land of Canaan depended on a covenantal arrangement with Israel (2 Sam. 21:2, cf. Josh. 9) Saul's disregard for this arrangement was penalised by an outbreak of a severe famine.

The second *remnant* featured in the narrative is represented by the seven descendants of Saul whose execution to expiate the sins of their father is demanded by the Gibeonites.⁵⁰ Scholars almost in unison speak of the importance of *oaths* for this narrative and understand that the attitudes of two kings towards them are juxtaposed in the pericope. Chavel, for example, observes that 'ultimately... the story pits Saul against David on the issue of vows. Saul violates them, bringing death to his family; David upholds them, saving Saul's family.'⁵¹

⁴⁸ Cf. Josh 11:22 (cf. v. 11), Josh. 12:4, 13:12, Josh. 23:12, Deut. 3:11, 28:54, Judg. 9:5, 2 Sam. 9:1, 1 Kgs 9:20, (cf. Is. 1:8, 4:3, Am. 6:9, Zech. 13:8, 14:16), 1 Kgs 18:22, 19:10, 14, 2 Kgs 25:11, Jer. 52:15, Ez. 34:18, Mic. 5:2 [3], Zeph. 2:9.

⁴⁹ The massacre cryptically referenced in 2 Sam. 21 has been identified in scholarship in a variety of ways. Hertzberg believed it was the Nob episode in 1 Sam. 22:9-19. H. Hertzberg, *I & II Samuel: A Commentary* (Philadelphia, 1964), 382. Blenkinsopp hypothesises that Saul made Gibeon his capital, which could have resulted in a conflict similar to the events in Judg. 9. J. Blenkinsopp, 'Did Saul Make Gibeon His Capital,' *VT* 24 (1974), 7. Davies connects 2 Sam. 21:1-14 with Saul's endeavour to recover the lost ark. Davies, 'Ark of the Covenant,' *IDB*, 224. See McCarter who believes that this massacre belonged to a text no longer extant. McCarter, *II Samuel*, 441. Cf. J. Wellhausen, *Die Composition des Hexateuch und der historischen Bücher des Alten Testaments* (Berlin, 1899), 260. For those who think that it was simply a pretext for David to get rid of Saul's descendants see, for example, M. Malul, 'Was David Involved in the Death of Saul on the Gilboa Mountain?' *RB* 103 (1996), 523, n. 25. For a summary of rabbinic views on this and references to rabbinic sources see Chavel, 'Compositry and Creativity,' 35, n. 36.

⁵⁰ Scholars observe that some linguistic features present in 2 Sam. 21:1-14 symbolically depict this group of young men as representing *all* of his descendants. 'In long sentences so full of names that the gruesome outcome becomes inevitable we encounter the numerical series of one (saved), and two (sons of Saul) plus five (grandsons) is seven. The series ends with the appearance of the root for 'one' in the text, the yahad of v. 9, but only to indicate one and the same death for all: 'all seven of them perished at the same time.'" Fokkelman, *Narrative Art*, 274. Cf. Chavel, 'Compositry and Creativity,' 27, n. 11.

⁵¹ Chavel, 'Compositry and Creativity,' 35. Cf. also B. Peterson, 'The Gibeonite Revenge of 2 Sam. 21:1-14: Another Example of David's Darker Side or a Picture of a Shrewd Monarch?,' *JESOT* 1 (2012), 23; Fokkelman,

Admittedly, the fate of immolation indeed bypasses one of the Saulides, Mephibosheth, due to David's oath(s) to Jonathan (2 Sam. 21:7, cf. Sam. 18:1-4, 20:42, 23:18) providing grounds for scholars' laudatory remarks about David's loyalty to covenantal agreements in 2 Sam. 21. Surprising, however, is that the seven Saulides extradited to the Gibeonites for execution were also under the protection of a vow (1 Sam. 24:21-22), yet David is hardly ever charged with its violation in 2 Sam. 21:1-14. Yet since the famine occasioned by Saul's breach of Israel's oath to the Gibeonites does not come to an end after his descendants' demise the agreement made in 1 Sam. 24:21 is of an obvious hermeneutical significance.⁵² Those few scholars who do bring up 1 Sam. 24:21 in connection to the Gibeonite episode either do so in passing⁵³ or argue that David manages to stay within the constraints of his promise to Saul.⁵⁴ Thus Peterson discusses the rationale for David's singling out the children of Rizpah and Merab⁵⁵ and states that, 'in 1 Sam. 24 the context leads one to believe that descendants who had a right to the throne is what is in view when David made his vow to Saul.'⁵⁶ Since

Narrative Art, 282. Scholars also observe that with David's reign there was a significant shift in overall policy regarding the treatment of Canaanite inhabitants, including the Gibeonites. See M. Weinfeld, 'Zion and Jerusalem as Religious and Political Capital: Ideology and Utopia,' in R. Friedman (ed.), *The Poet and the Historian: Essays in Literary and Historical Biblical Criticism* (Chico, 1983), 79-81; H. Cazelles, 'David's Monarchy and the Gibeonite Claim (2 Sam xxi, 1-14),' *PEQ* 87 (1955), 170-174. G. Ahlström claims that the ark of the Lord was brought from the Gibeonite cult. G. Ahlström, 'The Travels of the Ark: A Religio-Political Composition,' *JNES* 43 (1984), 141-149, especially 146, n. 22, 149. But for the possibility of treachery in David's public speeches, and by extension in oaths, see L. Perdue, "'Is there anyone left of the house of Saul?': Ambiguity and the Characterization of David in the Succession Narrative,' *JSOT* 30 (1984), 67-84.

⁵² In 1 Sam. 24:21 Saul made David take a very specific oath, i.e. not to cut off his descendants (זרע) and not to destroy his name (שם) from his father's house. Regarding the significance of *name IDB* states that 'personal existence is regarded as continuing posthumously in the name which is perpetuated by a man's descendants (1 Sam. 24:21, II Kings 14:27, Job 18:17, Ps. 83:4, Is. 14:22, Zeph. 1:4).' *IDB*, 501. On זרע and שם in biblical and extrabiblical sources used as synonyms and expressing the continuation of one's line see further D. Tsumura, *The First Book of Samuel* (Grand Rapids, 2007), 573. Interestingly enough the covenants between Jonathan and David are very generic and do not address the issue of protection of Jonathan's heirs (1 Sam. 18:1-4, 20:42, 23:18). Saul's vow being very specific is, for the most part, overlooked in connection with 2 Sam. 21:1-14.

⁵³ Firth, for example, briefly notes that David is very selective in his loyalty to oaths and that the vow given in 1 Sam. 24:21-22 does not prevent him from killing a significant number of Saul's descendants in 2 Sam. 21:1-14. Firth, *1 & 2 Samuel*, 260. Cf. M. Bittenwieser, 'Blood Revenge and Burial Rites in Ancient Israel,' *JAOS* 39 (1919), 303-321; R. Carlson, *David, the Chosen King: a Traditio-historical Approach to the Second Book of Samuel* (Stockholm, 1964), 199; cf. M. Steussy, *David: Biblical Portraits of Power* (Columbia, 1999), 67; T. Simon, *Identity and Identification: an Exegetical and Theological Study of 2 Sam 21-24* (Roma, 2000), 66-67.

⁵⁴ For this see Z. Weisman, 'Legal Aspects of David's Involvement in the Blood-Vengeance of the Gibeonites,' *Zi* 54 (1989), 149-160.

⁵⁵ Following the LXX witness. See further Peterson, 'The Gibeonite Revenge,' 209-210, n. 29.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 211.

Rizpah's boys were the children of a concubine and possibly, according to Peterson's theory, born to Abner (2 Sam. 3:7),⁵⁷ they could not have succeeded Saul to the throne and their death could not have constituted *the cutting off of his offspring* (cf. 1 Sam. 24:22). Similarly Merab's sons, according to Peterson, were illegitimate and were of no consequence for the Israelite monarchy. Since Merab had been previously promised to David yet was eventually married off to Adriel she, too, in David's eyes, could not have produced proper heirs to Saul. Thus Peterson concludes that their choice was not arbitrary. By singling them out David manages to rectify 'the past wrongs of being denied Merab as a wife'⁵⁸ yet does not break a promise of 1 Sam. 24.⁵⁹

A few objections, however, are in order. Regarding Rizpah's concubinage and its implications for her children's eligibility for the Israelite throne Peterson cites Judg. 9:18 and 11:1-2 where the sons of a female slave, אַמֶּלֶךְ (Abimelech) and a prostitute, אִשָּׁה זֹוֹנָה (Jephthah) are not viewed as their fathers' heirs.⁶⁰ In response to that it should be noted that in her relationship to Saul Rizpah is qualified as a פְּלִגְשָׁה, a concubine or a second wife, not a female slave or a harlot, and the precise nature, or rather legal implications, of concubinage in Israel and ANE has not yet been determined in biblical scholarship.⁶¹ What could be of pertinence,

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 212.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 215.

⁵⁹ Cf. Brueggemann's brief observation that 'David has made an oath concerning the family of Jonathan and the name of Saul, but he has made no such promises concerning the "sons of Rizpah" and the "sons of Merab" (v. 8). Thus David is technically free to take action against other members of Saul's house without violating his explicit oaths.' But Brueggemann believes that this episode portrays David as a 'ruthless opportunist who has found a way to eliminate the Saulide threat, ... in the guise of religious legitimacy and political necessity.' W. Brueggemann, *First and Second Samuel* (Louisville, 1990), 337.

⁶⁰ Peterson, 'The Gibeonite Revenge,' 211.

⁶¹ For an extensive bibliography on polygyny and concubinage in the ancient Near East, see G. Hugenberger, *Marriage as a Covenant: a Study of Biblical Law and Ethics Governing Marriage Developed from the Perspective of Malachi* (Leiden, 1994), 107-108, n. 96. It should also be noted that in the Abimelech incident (Jdg 9) Gideon's 70 full sons, as Petersons call them, and thus his heirs could not have been borne by one woman and so it is natural to assume that wives of various ranks were involved in producing them. See also Engelken who does not discuss the legal status of concubines' children in detail but does note that they were not necessarily subordinate in status and discusses the case of Tamar, a daughter of one of David's concubines. He also adds that 'in the eyes of the OT, the function of concubinage clearly derives from the desire for many descendants.' Engelken, *TDOT*, 550-551. In addition, connecting the office of a king and fertility in the land Kapelrud argues that the jeopardised fertility cast David in a bad light and to restore the land 'a sacrifice of the

however, is that in some biblical texts the word פלגש is used interchangeably with אשה and, according to some, the status of a royal concubine was of a special, sacral nature.⁶² Besides, 1 Kgs 1:1-2:9 clearly indicates that of primary significance in the matter of regal succession was YHWH's election of a contender and not the legal standing of his mother.⁶³ Furthermore, even if the legitimacy of Rizpah's sons in relation to their eligibility for the throne was a determining factor, Peterson's speculations about Rizpah's sons being fathered by Abner could not affect their legal status. On the one hand, even if the 'affair' noted in 2 Sam. 3:2 resulted in the birth of (an)other child(ren) 2 Sam. 21:1-14 twice ties Rizpah to Saul (vv. 8, 11) and unequivocally states that the two sons chosen for execution were born to him (v. 8).⁶⁴ On the other hand, since Abner was biologically related to Saul (1 Sam. 14:50) any children produced by him and Rizpah would have still been part of the royal house. Furthermore, it should be noted that Peterson's treatment of the arrangement of materials in the succession to the throne narratives lacks consistency. Discussing the actual transition of power from David to Solomon in 1 Kgs 1:1-2:9 he claims that these chapters return to the motifs preserved in 2

highest rank was necessary.' A. Kapelrud, 'King David and the Sons of Saul,' in *La Regalità Sacra/The Sacral Kingship: Contributions to the Central Theme of the VIIIth International Congress for the History of Religions* (Leiden, 1959), 300.

⁶² See Cazelles who thinks that a royal concubine was a sacral persona, and that is precisely the reason why Rizpah's sons are singled out for ritual execution. Cazelles, 'David's Monarchy,' 173. But note that Hugenberger concludes his discussion on concubinage by saying that 'it is true that in occidental practice a concubine was in general a sexual consort and was not considered to be a member of her partner's household. Because her relationship was not one of marriage, it is protected neither by the laws of adultery, nor by the requirement of some sort of formal divorce for its dissolution. Such an understanding, however, fails to do justice to the complex phenomena of concubinage both in the Bible and elsewhere in the ancient Near East (cf., e.g. the following texts which identify concubines as wives: Gen. 16:3; 25:1, 6; 1 Chr. 1:32; 2 Sam. 16:22; and Judg. 19:1-5).' Hugenberger, *Marriage*, 107. See also Exum who observes regarding פלגש in 2 Sam. 21, 'The English translation "concubine" (so NRSV) is misleading in my opinion, since it suggests that Rizpah was not Saul's lawful wife; the Hebrew term, however, refers to a legal wife of secondary rank.' Exum, 'Rizpah,' 261. Cf. A. Anderson, *2 Samuel* (Dallas, 1989), 250. Note also that Abner's actions towards Rizpah in 2 Sam. 3 are traditionally understood as his attempt to usurp the Israelite throne. If Rizpah's status as a פלגש had been completely devoid of legal weight it is unlikely that Abner would have slept with her. Cf. Absalom's actions in 2 Sam. 16:22.

⁶³ Cf. Knoppers' discussion on how the Chronicler systematically decouples right of birth from firstborn status and delights in divine election that 'circumvents, if not subverts, expectations' regarding succession. G. Knoppers, 'The Preferential Status of the Eldest Son Revoked?,' in S. McKenzie, T. Römer, H. Schmid (eds), *Rethinking the Foundations: Historiography in the Ancient World and in the Bible: Essays in Honour of John Van Seters* (Berlin, 2000), 121-125.

⁶⁴ Scholars also have noted that there is a heightened focus on Saul in this story as his name is mentioned ten times in it (vv. 1, 2, 6, 7, 8, 11, 12, 13, 14).

Sam. 21:1-14 – ‘rivals to the throne are killed (i.e. Adonijah and possibly Joab) and the wrongs done to David by Shimei and Joab are resolved by their executions.’⁶⁵ Thus, according to Peterson, the removal of internal and external enemies allows the smooth transference of power to Solomon within the conventions of ANE throne transitions. If, however, he sees the execution of Merab’s children as a thematic parallel to the assassination of Shimei and Joab, then the ritual slaughter of Rizpah’s sons should serve as a thematic counterpart to the demise of Adonijah and Joab. But if Peterson questions the legitimacy of the seven Saulides in 2 Sam. 21 to begin with why would he deem them comparable to Solomon’s rivals in his succession to the throne in the Kings account? It should be therefore concluded that the young men extradited to the Gibeonites did present a political threat to David’s successor, Solomon, and by extension did fall under the category of Saul’s offspring in 1 Sam. 24:21.⁶⁶ Thus so far two groups in 2 Sam. 21:1-14 have been cast as endangered, or eradicated, *remnants* and two sworn oaths to protect them have been flagrantly violated.

The final *remnant* whose survival is at stake in 2 Sam. 21:1-14 and, in fact, in the Addendum (2 Sam. 21-24) in general is the nation of Israel itself. Regarding the structure of chapters 21-24 scholars observe that its clear chiasmic arrangement brings the episodes in 21:1-14 and 24:1-25 into a close thematic correlation.⁶⁷ Located at either end of a chiasmically

⁶⁵ Peterson, ‘The Gibeonite Revenge,’ 220.

⁶⁶ Cf. Chavel who states that ‘Rizpah, in these two stories [2 Sam. 3 and 2 Sam. 21], serves as the linchpin joining the various parts that make up the plot’s structure. In both, whoever has Rizpah, whether as wife/concubine or as mother, marks himself as an heir and potential rival to David, which amounts to slating himself for an early execution; and in both, the execution of those tracing their claims through Rizpah leads or should lead to a united territory for David to rule.’ Chavel, ‘Compositry and Creativity,’ 43. Cf. Steussy, *David*, 67. McCarter, *II Samuel*, 445. Although not discussing this directly Day seems to understand them as descendants. Day, ‘Gibeon and the Gibeonites,’ 126-127. The importance of 1 Sam. 24:11 and David’s actions in 2 Sam. 21 can also be seen in the mention of the burial of the executed in the country of Benjamin in Zela, in the grave of Kish his father (2 Sam. 21:14, cf. 1 Sam. 24:22). For the understanding of Zela as a chamber in a family tomb see McCarter, *II Samuel*, 437. Cf. K. Budde, *Die Bücher Samuel* (Tübingen, 1902), 309. The statement in 2 Sam. 21:6 regarding the site of execution also could have served as a reminder of the vow in 1 Sam. 24:21-22.

⁶⁷ For a bibliography, although not exhaustive, on those who accept the chiasmic arrangement of materials in the Appendix see, for example, Peterson, ‘The Gibeonite Revenge,’ 204-205, n. 14. For the corresponding elements between ch. 21 and 24 and the reasons why they should be read together see, for example, Firth, *1 & 2 Samuel*, 502-503.

structured section (2 Sam. 21-24) these two episodes deal with the threat to and survival of the kingdom of Israel due to severe natural cataclysms, famine and pestilence. The oaths taken by the two Israelite monarchs and subsequently broken by them bring the nation under retributive catastrophes and through this circumstance move it to the status of a *remnant*.⁶⁸

As the semantics of רצפה בת־איה coalesces with conventions in the international nomenclature for punitive treatment of heirs/remnants in response to breached covenant obligations Rizpah's vigil gains a dimension that brings David's broken oath to the forefront of the narrative. Placing the woman named Rizpah into the story about remnants, the narrator extracts and exploits the maximum of its underlying ideology turning her vigil into a social commentary on David's actions, a commentary he clearly understands. For as soon as he hears what she, רצפה בת־איה פלגש שאול, has done – he immediately responds. Questioning the exigency of the young men's immolation and bringing the king's flawed remnant theology and dubious ethic in relation to oaths to the public focus, Rizpah's mortuary vigil calls for measures to mitigate her sons' shameful fate and alleviate penal plagues ravaging the nation.

B. רצפה בת־איה

Although רצפה's midrashic function in 2 Sam. 21:1-14 is variously understood there seems to be a scholarly consensus regarding its semantics, i.e. *a glowing coal* (Is. 6:6, 1 Kgs 19:6).⁶⁹ The second element of Rizpah's designation in 2 Sam. 21:1-14, i.e. איה, as has

⁶⁸ The nation is threatened with extinction in ch. 21 due to famine and in ch. 24 due to plague. On remnants see further Carlson, *David*, 198ff. For a discussion on the causal connection between a king's deviant behaviour and the demise of his subjects see, for example, J. Hoftijzer, 'David and the Tekoite Woman,' *VT* 20 (1970), 430-438; K. Hanson, 'When the King Crosses the Line: Royal Deviance and Restitution in Levantine Ideologies,' *BTB* (1996), 11-25.

⁶⁹ *BDB*, 954, *DCH*, v. VII, 547-548. *Encycl. Bibl.*, 4125. The dictionaries base this name on the Arabic verb *radafa*. Cf. *HALOT* on *rsp*, etc. which accepts Ar. *radafa* and again explains רצפה as meaning 'glowing fire, coals', 1285. Cf. also D. Harvey, *IDB*, 101. Cf. J. Stamm, 'Hebräische Frauennamen,' in B. Hartmann, *et al.* (eds), *Hebräische Wortforschung: Festschrift zum 80. Geburtstag von Walter Baumgartner* (Leiden, 1967), 324. Cf. Zadok, *The Pre-Hellenistic Israelite Anthroponymy*, 92. Even if the exact etymology of רצפה was not confirmed the proposed reading of רצפה בת־איה in 2 Sam. 21:1-14 could still be legitimate. For in addition to proper scientific etymology biblical writers apparently utilised what is traditionally labelled as folk etymology.

already been noted, is traditionally connected to some kind of a predatory bird, i.e. a hawk, a kite, a falcon.⁷⁰ However, in light of the discussion below it could be argued that it, too, even if indirectly, is associated with light-based symbolism. According to *DDD* this OT name is linked to the name of a syncretistic deity in Ugarit, which is equated with the Mesopotamian deities Aya and Ea.⁷¹ The goddess Aya was the spouse of the sun-god Shamash, and like Shamash, was a deity of *light*, and was one of the oldest Semitic deities known from Mesopotamia.⁷² *TDOT* adds more on this hypocoristic form and states that ‘the fact that *nr* appears in an enumeration of gods in the Aramaic inscription of Sefire may not be adduced as a witness to the presence of an independent deity *nr*; since this constitutes secondary deification of the concept *nuru*, ‘light, lamp’ referring to the spouse of Shamash, Aya.’⁷³

As the potent symbolism of glowing coals/ light/fire/lamp has long been connected to human life in general and descendants who guarantee the existence of a family line in particular, it will be argued that the appearance of רצפה בת-איה, a double, light-based cipher, at the hostile intersection of two dynasties, is an indispensable gloss on the events in 2 Sam. 21:1-14. Since the matrix of these images encompassed such contrasting dimensions of life as vitality and transience and thus were befitting in mourning rites, i.e. funerary laments, the

Thus Garsiel explains that, ‘one should make a clear-cut distinction between linguistic etymology and the name explanations provided by the biblical texts.... The Biblical writers, in most cases, provided explanations which are based upon the assumption that name is unique and it was given in accordance with a specific occasion. This is why the name explanations in the Bible are far more pliable. Both in their morphological and in their semantic rules.’ Garsiel, *Biblical Names*, 18. ‘The names Moses and Babel,’ he continues, ‘are a demonstration of how far the biblical narrator may exploit his freedom of creativity, for as is well known, these are not Hebrew names. Nevertheless, they are dealt with as though they were (see Gen. 11:9, Ex. 2:10), and a correlation between them and certain incidents is established.’ *Ibid.*, 18. Garsiel also expresses frustration with the term ‘folk etymology’ since ‘such a definition misses the point: the explanations function as a literary device and are designed to enrich the literary unit.’ *Ibid.*, 18. On folk etymology vs. linguistic etymology see also J. Barr, ‘Etymology and the Old Testament,’ in *Language and Meaning: Studies in Hebrew Language and Biblical Exegesis* (Leiden, 1974).

⁷⁰ *Encycl Bibl.* 105. Noth, *Die israelitischen Personennamen*, 230. Brenner, *I Am*, 122. Brenner speculates that Rizpah, daughter of Aya, could converse with birds of prey and thus keep them away from the bodies of her sons and nephews. *Ibid.*, 128. Garsiel, *Biblical Names*, 51. Some think that it is an interrogative pronoun ‘where is...?’ W. Albright, ‘Northwest-Semitic Names in a List of Egyptian Slaves from the Eighteenth Century B.C.,’ *JAOS* 74 (1954), 225-227.

⁷¹ *DDD*, 236-237.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 236.

⁷³ Kellermann, *TDOT*, 19. Note that Brenner speculates that in 2 Sam. 21:1-14 the name Aya is a matronymic, not a patronymic. Brenner, *I Am*, 122.

feature of רצפה בת־איה in an expanded death notice for the Saulide house is particularly appropriate. Moreover, since the books of Samuel and Kings exhibit familiarity with idioms of comparable symbolism and consistently apply them to the enduring Judean kings (2 Sam. 21:17, 23:4, 1 Kgs 11:36, 15:4, 2 Kgs 8:19 (cf. 2 Chr. 21:11, Ps. 132:17), the metaphorisation of the demise of the Saulides in 2 Sam. 21:1-14 (possibly 2 Sam. 23:7) via the glowing coals/dying embers idiom signals the author's disapproval of the deposed house.

1. Light-related Imagery as a Cipher for Human Life.

The precise extent of the metaphor's proliferation, either geographical or chronological, in ancient Israel is hard to establish but its attestation in a variety of genres, and strikingly comparable usage to that in Akkadian sources (discussed below), is certainly suggestive of its popularity. The general picture of its distribution in the Hebrew Bible indicates that its appearance in negative contexts is disproportionately higher. The few positive occurrences of the metaphor are found in traditions connected to David, where his enduring dynasty is represented by the formula ניר לדויד (1 Kgs 11:36, 15:4, 2 Kgs 8:19, 2 Chr. 21:7⁷⁴) and in Pr. 20:27, where the general concept of light as human life is further nuanced to indicate the idea of a human soul - נר יהוה נשמת אדם (Pr. 20:27).⁷⁵

Since the rest of the biblical occurrences of the full metaphor or its adjacent variants are found either in contexts where familial survival is compromised or in laments, they will be discussed separately. For the time being, we turn to a few Akkadian sources that cast violence administered on a local or international level via the picture of extinguished coals or fire. In Babylonian wisdom texts, for example, the oppression of a socially disadvantaged

⁷⁴ Even though the metaphor itself is used positively in these texts the contexts in which it is featured are still negative. See discussion below.

⁷⁵ Ch. Gevarjahu, 'The Return of the Exile of God's Estate in the Parable of the Wise Women of Tekoa,' *BM* 36 (1969), 16. But see Kellermann who shows that this phrase rather represents human conscience. Kellermann, *TDOT*, 23.

individual is formulated as follows, ‘they make him suffer like a criminal, because he has no protection, terrifyingly they bring him to his end, and extinguish him like a flame/glowing ashes[*ú-bal-lu-šú kīma la-a-mi*].’⁷⁶ A wall inscription from the first half of the eighth century B. C. records the rebuilding of a storehouse by Nabuf-sum-imbi, a commander of Borsippa. The final section of the text contains the traditional set of requests to the gods for a blessing on their benefactor. One of the blessings requested is to prevail over the enemies whose destruction is again metaphorised as extinguishing, ‘[May he succeed] in extinguishing the wicked enemies like flame [*bul-l[a-šú]n kīma la-’-mi*].’⁷⁷

Neo-Assyrian loyalty oaths demonstrate the usefulness of the fire/glowing coals symbolism within the rubric of royal retributive ambition and contain partial references to the metaphor of extinguished coals. Essarhadon’s succession treaty invokes a series of curses on the one who will destroy or otherwise tamper with the text of the treaty and features an imprecation involving Nergal, ‘May Nergal, hero of the gods, extinguish your life with his merciless sword [*ina patrišu la gāmili napšatku[nu] li-bal-li*], and send slaughter and pestilence among you.’⁷⁸ Similarly in Assurbanipal’s treaty with Babylonian allies the vassals invoke curses on themselves in case of their transgression of the treaty or erasing its text. One of the self-imprecations again features Nergal, ‘May Nergal, the strongest among the gods, with [his (merciless) sword extinguish our lives].’⁷⁹ Interestingly enough this underworld deity Nergal made appearance in imprecations of various scenarios of lethal danger,⁸⁰ but

⁷⁶ W. Lambert, *Babylonian Wisdom Literature* (Winona Lake, 1996), 88-89; CAD B, 73-74.

⁷⁷ W. Lambert, ‘Literary Style in First Millennium Mesopotamia,’ *JAOS* 88 (1968), 127, 129; CAD L, 69.

⁷⁸ S. Parpola, K. Watanabe, *Neo-Assyrian Treaties and Loyalty Oaths* (Helsinki, 1988), 48; CAD B, 74.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 67. On the curse that targets a royal offspring via *extinguishing* see below.

⁸⁰ On the personality of Nergal and the catalogue of curses associated with him see J. Curtis, ‘An Investigation of the Mount of Olives in the Judaeo-Christian Tradition,’ *HUCA* 28 (1957), 151-167. Interestingly enough, the mode of execution of the Saulides, which is debated in scholarship and remains uncertain, is once compared to an episode in an Ugaritic myth where Anat kills Mot by dismembering/cleaving him into pieces. Kapelrud, ‘King David,’ 294-301. Also, A. Kapelrud, ‘King and Fertility: A Discussion of II Sam 21:1-14,’ in A. Kapelrud (ed.), *Interpretationes Ad Vetus Testamentum Pertinentes Sigmund Mowinckel Septuagenario Missae* (Norway, 1955), 113-22, followed by Cazelles, ‘David’s Monarchy,’ 165-75. See also comments by Carlson, *David*, 177, 218-222. In connection with these discussions on the immolation of Saul’s descendants it is,

quite often he was called upon, with other deities, to specifically destroy people's offspring. According to some Babylonian boundary stones, the one who rejects the agreement preserved on the stone is to be penalised by various gods in ways complementary to the personality of each god. Nergal, for example, is asked in one inscription 'in his destruction not to spare (?) the violator's offspring'⁸¹ and in another he is invoked in the company of other deities as follows, 'May Anu, Enlil, and Ea, Nannar, Shamash, and Marduk, Nusku and Sadarnunna, Nergal and Laz tear out his foundation, and his seed may they snatch away!'⁸² Even though the attested imprecations that invoke Nergal never exactly pair up *extinguishing* and *heirs* it is of interest that this deity is perceived as threatening the latter and is associated with the former as a pet mode of execution.⁸³

2. Light-related Imagery Associated with Endangered Heirs/Extinct Families.

The symbolism and intent of glowing coals remain essentially the same in the sources that will be presently discussed yet they target a group whose real or perceived familial or societal value is substantially greater – heirs. The principal biblical text on glowing coals that on a symbolic level represent children, and more specifically endangered heirs, is 2 Sam. 14:1-20. This fictional story taps into the legal vocabulary of such issues as succession, inheritance distribution and maintenance of ancestral landed property and connects them to the person and duties of a surviving heir metaphorised in a single distillation – גחלתֵי אִשׁר

perhaps, of interest to note that Nergal also appears at the end of the Code of Hammurapi in a curse for a king who effaces the name of Hammurapi and replaces it with his own, 'May Nergal, mighty amongst the gods, the warrior whom none can resist, who has fulfilled my eager desire, by his great power *consume his people like a fire raging amongst the rushes, may he cleave him asunder with his mighty weapon and shatter his limbs as of a statue of clay.*' G. Driver, J. Miles, *The Babylonian Laws* (Oxford, 1955-1956), 104ff.

⁸¹ K. Slanski, *The Babylonian Entitlement narûs (kudurus): a Study in Their Form and Function* (Boston, 2003), 78.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 102.

⁸³ On the connection between Aya, destruction of one's name, seed, falling/dying and non-burial see an imprecation, 'by the command of Shamash, Aya, and Bunene, lords of judgement, great gods, may his name disappear! May his seed be plucked up! Through hunger and want, may his life come to an end! May his body fall yet may he have no one to bury him (may he acquire no burier)!' *Ibid.*, 208. For more references where the verb 'to extinguish'/'*bullû*' is used with 'human life' see CAD B, 74.

יורש , a glowing coal which is left.⁸⁴ It is preceded by a more precise designation שם ושארית על־פני האדמה – שם ושארית על־פני האדמה – name and remnant on the face of the earth. The fatal scenario created around it – נמתהו – let us kill him, נשמידה, let us destroy him, and more specifically, כבו, they will extinguish him – gives away the metaphor’s strong affinity to the subjection of heirs to a violent treatment. Since the concept of family encompassed ‘its first ancestors and all future progeny in a complex, yet real and enduring entity,’⁸⁵ the metaphor is uni- and multi-referential at the same time, heightening the value of its primary referent.⁸⁶ Its connection to such loaded concepts as יורש, heir, שם, name, and שארית, remnant,⁸⁷ is of particular pertinence to 2 Sam. 21:1-14.⁸⁸

The symbolism of the compromised familial or genealogical integrity attached to גזלה in 2 Sam. 14:7 is consistent with the usage of other images semantically adjacent to it – אש – in Job 18:5-6, 21:17, Pr. 13:9, 24:20, 20:20,⁸⁹ and 2 Sam. 21:17.⁹⁰ The feature

⁸⁴ 2 Sam. 14:7 is the principal text in the discussions on *glowing coals* as a cipher for human life. It should be noted that the word גזלה in it appears to be synonymous with רצפה in biblical texts. The word גזלה (ש) is used in Lev. 16:12 as coals used on the altar before the Lord. Similarly Is. 6:6 utilises רצפה in a cultic context and pictures a seraph retrieving it from the altar. In 1 Kgs 19:6 a bread cake is prepared on hot stones – עגת – and in Isaiah 44:19 bread is baked over the coals – אפיתי על־גזליו לחם.

⁸⁵ H. Brichto, ‘Kin, Cult, Land and Afterlife - A Biblical Complex,’ *HUCA* 44 (1973), 5.

⁸⁶ Conroy understands גזלה to be one of the most striking metaphors in 2 Samuel. C. Conroy, *Absalom, Absalom!: Narrative and Language in 2 Sam., 13-20* (Rome; 1978), 125-126, n. 50.

⁸⁷ The root שאר is used twice in 2 Sam. 14:7 and is one of the primary roots in discussions on the remnant theology in the Hebrew Bible. On שאר see Clements, *TWAT*, and the bibliography on 934. Cf Kronholm on יתר, *TWAT*, 1080.

⁸⁸ Note that in 2 Sam. 14:7 the person who wants to extinguish the widow’s son is an avenger of blood, גאל הדם (v. 11). Cf. 2 Sam. 21:1 where Saul’s family is described as a house of blood, בית הדמים, turning the execution/ extinguishment of his descendants into *blood revenge*. Of significance here is also the fact that the ultimate referent of גזלה in 2 Sam. 14:7 is Absalom, a royal heir.

⁸⁹ In Pr. 24:20 נר is explicitly used as a synonym to אחרית, posterity, descendants.

⁹⁰ Cited both by Gevarjahu and Gaster. Gevarjahu, ‘The Return,’ 16; Gaster, *Myth*, 479-480. The verbs used for *extinguishing* in these texts are דעך, נגה, כבה. Cf. Kellermann who says that ‘profuse archaeological evidence has been found for lamps in tombs. The burning lamp was understood as a symbol for the continuation of the family or clan.’ Kellermann, *TDOT*, 21. For the discussion of the light/ fire idiom in these texts and their connection to the fifth commandment see Brichto, ‘Kin, Cult, Land,’ 32-34.

of glowing coals or its semantic associates in these texts and comparable Babylonian sources (cited above) indicates a pattern of its wide dissemination in wisdom circles,⁹¹ which probably predates the elevation of the metaphor's status and its usage in administrative and legal documents. 2 Sam. 14 and 1 Kgs 11:36, 15:4, 2 Kgs 8:19, 2 Chr. 21:7 that deal with the concept of נִיר לְדוֹיֵד presuppose a covenantal, and thus a legal (or at least semi-legal), background, but the evidence in favour of the metaphor's proper legal function comes from Akkadian sources.⁹² Thus in an Old-Babylonian document a petitioner lodges a number of complaints regarding a wrongful expropriation of his land and uses the formula *ālik idiya ša kinūnšu belū*, 'my assistant whose brazier has gone out,' i.e. who has no family,

¹²He did not give me the money ¹³and even wronged me (by taking) (my) house (away). ¹⁴⁻¹⁷The city gave me (a field) twelve iku in extent *held by a redû-soldier, a fellow of mine, who had died without issue (lit. whose hearth/brazier was extinguished)* and ¹⁸I have had the use of the field for thirty years.⁹³

Similarly a document from a collection of contracts from Larsa concerned with the business affairs of a certain Ur-Šulsigea deals with a transfer of property and states, 'Before these witnesses 1/3 sar of land with house which Kinunibilim unto Ur-Šulsigea... Seal of Ur-Šulsigea.' Langdon leaves 'house which Kinunibilim' untranslated,⁹⁴ but CAD renders it as 'a house of one-third sar belonging to extinct family (lit. an extinguished brazier of coals).'⁹⁵

⁹¹ Note that 2 Sam. 14:7 is part of a parable embedded into a narrative.

⁹² Hoftijzer mentions a few references in a footnote but does not discuss them in detail. Hoftijzer, 'David,' 422, n. 2. Cf. B. Landsberger, 'Das erloschene Herdfeuer,' *OLZ* 19 (1916), 39.

⁹³ The remainder of the text makes it even clearer that it is a formal complaint and thus the metaphor has acquired the status of a legal term: 'You, my Lord, claim the lot in court and take possession of it!... Let the city elders repossess the field which they took away unlawfully from me and return the field to me, in order that I shall not die with hunger. You, my Lord, intervene [take legal steps] for me!' R. Frankena, *Briefe aus dem British Museum (LIH und CT 2-33)* (Leiden, 1966), no. 111, 77-79; CAD K, 394-395.

⁹⁴ S. Langdon, 'Contracts from Larsa,' *PSBA* 34 (1912), 109-110.

⁹⁵ CAD B, 73, 191. Gaster mentions that Sumerian, IBILA, heir, is understood by some scholars (e.g. Thureau-Dangin) as a compound word, IA or I, 'oil,' and BIL, BILa, 'to burn,' and refers to a worship of ancestors. In his endnotes, however, he says that 'the interpretation is uncertain, and some think that the reference is to the evocation of the father's ghost in the form of a wisp of smoke.' Gaster, *Myth*, 479-480. Koschaker brings this

The symbolic landscape represented by glowing coals and encompassing heirs as the centre of socio-religious and political concerns becomes strikingly focused in the curse rhetoric of Tiglath-Pileser I's Cylinder Inscription. In it Tiglath-Pileser I threatens a transgressor and breaker of his memorial tablets and cylinders with curses and promises a thorough annihilation of his sphere of existence, 'may Anu and Adad... overthrow his [transgressor's] kingdom, uproot the foundations of his royal throne, may they destroy/ lit. 'extinguish' his royal offspring/seed.'⁹⁶ Later the curses continue 'May Adad blast his land with... hunger, famine, and want, and bloodshed may he cast upon his land, may he decree that he shall not live one single day, and may he destroy his name and his seed in the land.' Coming from the time immediately before Israel's first monarchs, Saul and David, this inscription not only indicates that the metaphor operated on an international arena, but also schematises a destruction of a royal offspring comparable to the circumstances behind the Saulicide in 2 Sam. 21.⁹⁷ The inscription outlines a scenario according to which a broken oath will incur a series of large-scale plagues (hunger, famine, want, and bloodshed) in the

derivation into connection with the already mentioned expression 'whose charcoal-stove is extinguished' (no. 229) in A. Ungnad, *Babylonische Briefe aus der Zeit der Hammurapi-Dynastie* (Leipzig, 1914), 192-193; *ša kinunim bilim* (no. 1741) in J. Kohler, P. Koschaker, F. Peiser, A. Ungnad, *Hammurabi's Gesetz* (Leipzig, 1904), 73. Cf. also Schloen who discusses the eldest son's role in ancestor worship and his designation as 'the burner of incense to his father.' J. Schloen, *The House of The Father As Fact and Symbol: Patrimonialism in Ugarit and the Ancient Near East* (Winona Lake, 2001), 343-344; L. Woolley, M. Mallowan, T. Mitchell (eds), *The Old Babylonian Period* (London, 1976), 38-41.

⁹⁶ CAD B, 74. For the rendering 'may they terminate his noble line [*pir'u* = offspring]' see A. Grayson, *Assyrian Rulers of the Early First Millennium BC, I (114-859 BC)* (Toronto, 1991), 31.

⁹⁷ Malamat compared the events in 2 Sam. 21 with a prayer of Murshili II, the Hittite king (c. 1340-1310), concerning a plague in the Hittite Empire that had broken out during the reign of his father, Shuppiluliuma (c. 1375-1340) due to the violation of an agreement between the people of Kurushtama and the Hattians. Malamat, 'Doctrines of Causality,' 1-12; Hallo, Younger, *The Context of Scripture*, 157-159. Malamat points out that the events surrounding the Plague Prayer and the Gibeonite affair in 2 Sam. 21 exhibit a matching 'phenomenological structure of cause and effect,' i. e. conclusion of treaty, violation of treaty, and consequent national catastrophe. Malamat, 'Doctrines of Causality,' 12. Malamat's parallel obviously predates the events narrated in 2 Sam. 21, but the curse in Tiglath-Pileser I's inscription not only predates the Gibeonite episode, but also comes closer to them chronologically. Malamat also notes that the demand of the Gibeonites is comparable to the retribution clauses in the Hittite treaties, which understand that in the case of the violation of treaty arrangements the entire family of the violator is liable. *Ibid.*, 8, n. 2. In connection with that it should be noted that Tiglath-Pileser I's inscription demonstrates similar expectations in its curse clause. Cf. Suriano's observation that 'that the execution in 2 Sam. 21 is meant to be the realisation of a curse (exposed corpses) described elsewhere in Deut. 28:26 and Assyrian vassal-treaties. The parallel, however, is unusual in that the account in 2 Sam. 21 involves royal progeny, while the curse involves (by implication) the mortal remains of royal forbears.' Suriano, *The Politics*, 67. The inscription in question, however, is of interest precisely because it threatens the royal offspring.

offender's land, featuring the extinguishing of a royal offspring, which subsequently results in the loss of the violator's name and seed. Similarly, against the background of two broken oaths 2 Sam. 21:1-14 generates an entangled complex of punitive ramifications for the offending monarchs – Israel's land is ravaged by a prolonged famine (2 Sam. 21:2) and Saul's royal offspring, זרע and שם (1 Sam. 24:21), is extinguished.⁹⁸

Comparable symbolism is also found in Hittite oaths. Thus the so-called First Soldiers' Oath reads, 'He sprinkles water on the fire and says to them as follows, "As this burning fire was extinguished, who[ever] breaks these oaths, let these oath deities seize him, and also may his life, his youth and his prosperity in future - together with his wives and his sons – be extinguished in the same way..."' (1.66). Similarly, the Second Soldiers' Oath states, '[Afterwards] they extinguish [the torches], [and he says] to them [as follows:... "just as] the torches [...] and no one [...] him/it, [...] in the same way who transgresses these words may] no one [...] him...]. [Just as you have] extinguish[ed the torches,...] may he [who transgresses] these wo[rds b]e extinguished [in the same way along with] his [progeny,] his house, his wife [...] and to you (pl.)..."' (1.67)⁹⁹

3. Light-related Imagery in Funerary Laments.

This metaphor's rhetorical poignancy and its socio-religious implications have proven particularly appropriate in the sphere of public and private mourning rites, i.e. funerary laments. Thus in a striking Old Babylonian lament to Ishtar, which is identified as a prayer

⁹⁸ For the metaphorisation of royal personas via the light related imagery cf. 2 Sam. 21:17, where David is cast as נר ישראל that can be extinguished (כבה), and Ez. 32:7, where the Egyptian pharaoh is threatened to be extinguished (בכבותך), see discussion below. Cf. also an imprecation in a fragmented treaty imposed by Sinshumu-lishir on three private individuals regarding the sovereignty of Ashur-etel-ilani, son of Ashurbanipal, 'They (gods) will throw their offspring (and) their statues into the fire (and) extinguish their torches with water.' A. Grayson, 'Akkadian Treaties of the Seventh Century B.C.,' *JCS* 39 (1987),153.

⁹⁹ Hallo, Younger, *The Context of Scripture*, 167.

for the preservation of life,¹⁰⁰ the supplicant enumerates the disasters that befell his family and his land and pleads with the goddess, ‘May my fireplace, sombre and smoking, lighten up again; May my extinguished torch take flame. May my scattered clan come together; may my cattle pen expand, may my fold become wide.’¹⁰¹ Van der Toorn argues that since the earlier part of the petition deals with the departure of the deified ancestors, its present portion envisages a multigenerational restoration of a household. Connecting the presence of the fireplace and torch with the ceremonial room inhabited by the ancestors,¹⁰² he observes that ‘peace with the ancestors will be followed by the reinvigorated fire in the fireplace (*kinūnu*) and on the torch (*dipāru*), images of the warmth and light that characterize a thriving and lively household; as such they anticipate the imminent reunion of the ‘scattered clan’ (*sapihtu illatī*).’¹⁰³ Although he is hesitant to determine a truly cultic significance of the fireplace in this text, he hypothesises that the grouping of ideas such as the cult of the ancestors, a continuously reignited fireplace, and the blessing of the gods, i.e. an offspring, in first millennium behavioural omens may at least suggest its link to the ancestral worship.¹⁰⁴ What is certain from these texts, however, is that ‘a ‘burning fireplace’ indicates the presence of inhabitants and, more or less as a matter of consequence, the continuation of the ancestor cult. Its reverse is the – among the Babylonians proverbial – ‘extinguished fireplace’ (*kinūnu belū*), the symbol of a family without a future because of being without offspring.’¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁰ L. King, *The Seven Tablets of Creation: or, the Babylonian and Assyrian Legends Concerning the Creation of the World and of Mankind* (London, 1902), 237. Regarding this prayer van der Toorn states that ‘though the relevant passage is known only from a first millennium copy, the existence of two 13th century versions from Boghazköy (Turkey), one in Akkadian and one in Hittite, warrants the supposition that the prayer goes back, ultimately, to Old Babylonian times.’ K. van der Toorn, *Family Religion in Babylonia, Syria, and Israel: Continuity and Changes in the Forms of Religious Life* (Leiden, 1996), 128.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 128. Also E. Reiner, H. G. Güterbock, ‘The Great Prayer to Ishtar and Its Two Versions from Boğazköy,’ *JCS* 21 (1967), 255-266.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 129.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 128.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 130. Elsewhere, however, he writes, ‘The “extinguished brazier” is a standing expression for a family without offspring. The image derives its force from the association between the brazier and the room of the ancestor cult. Though not divine in its own right, the fireplace has a cultic significance that is not to be underestimated.’ K. van der Toorn, ‘Family Religion in Second Millennium West Asia (Mesopotamia, Emar, Nuzi),’ in J. Bodel, S. Olyan (eds), *Household and Family Religion in Antiquity* (Oxford, 2008) 27.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 130.

Although this prayer to Ishtar is not technically a funerary lament, its supplicant's responses to his cumulative trauma are expressed through an explicit language of grief,¹⁰⁶ casting him as having experienced death and as going through an extended period of mourning.

Exploring a complementary cultic origin of the glowing coal metaphor in Israelite literature,¹⁰⁷ scholars similarly locate the imagery of extinguished hearth fire as a symbol of the end of human life in biblical texts of comparable genre, i.e. laments. Gevarjahu, for example, suggests that in Is. 47:14, which is part of the lament over the collapse of Babylon, the mention of the absence of coals for heating is not accidental, but was, again, predicated on the assumption that their extinguishing commonly represented a destruction of a household in Akkadian literature.¹⁰⁸ Discussing the speech of the Tekoite woman he argues that a dramatic picture of a soon-to-be-extinct family imaged as dying embers was part of the professional treasury of metaphors of mourning women.¹⁰⁹ Drawing from the comparative evidence, he further states that perhaps the speech of the Tekoite suggests that in the spectrum of domestic responsibilities conferred on individual family members keeping the family hearth fire going was specifically a female task.¹¹⁰

Supporting Gevarjahu's hypothesis regarding the coal imagery intrinsic to the lament repertoire is also Ezekiel's dirge over the destruction of Egypt in Ez. 32,¹¹¹ which in vv. 7-8 creates a strong allusion to a funerary and mourning scene. In fact, it creates an atmosphere of

¹⁰⁶ See lines 42, 49, 64, 66, 72-74. King, *The Seven Tablets of Creation*, 235-237.

¹⁰⁷ Archaeological evidence is discussed below.

¹⁰⁸ Gevarjahu, 'The Return,' 16.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 16-18.

¹¹⁰ Apparently in Greece, Rome, India, and many other cultures through a variety of ceremonies young brides were initiated into the mystery of watching over the fire of the house. Gevarjahu, 'The Return,' 17. Cf. Smith who comments on the ancient women's responsibility to keep 'a banked fire or pilot light burning continuously' and in connection with it cites Pr. 31:18. R. Smith, 'Household Lamps of Palestine in Old Testament Times,' *BA* 27 (1964), 7.

¹¹¹ It is twice classified as a dirge, קִינָה (Ez. 32:2, 16), and incidentally, was supposed to be chanted by the daughters of the nations (Ez. 32:16).

‘the lightless realm of death itself,’¹¹² ‘כסה’ alludes to putting on the black of mourning (Ez. 31:15, Num. 16:33, Ps. 106:17, Qoh 6:4); כבה refers to the quenching out of a wick; קדר is used of the black garb of mourning; while השך and ענן form components of the doom of the Day of the Lord.¹¹³ A one word summary for the calamities befalling the king of Egypt cast as a cosmic reptile is כבותך, your extinguishing (v. 7), regarding which Zimmerli observes,

It is striking that the day of judgment is described as the day of ‘your extinction’... The reference is hardly, as Smend suggests, to the constellation of dragon, which Yahweh extinguishes. One thinks, rather, of the concept of the ‘lamp’ (נר) which goes out. This idea has already occurred in the speech of the woman of Tekoa to David in 2 Sam 14:7 and in 2 Sam. 21:17. Approximately contemporary with the Ezekiel passage is the phrase in Is. 43:17 which describes the defeat of the enemies by means of the wick which is extinguished (see also Is. 42:3).¹¹⁴

The cumulative assessment on the mode of Egypt’s punitive demise is formulated as ‘extinguishing’ and thus, along with Is. 43:17, ישכבו בלי־יקומו דעכו כפשתה כבו, and possibly 47:14, אין־גהלת לחמם אור לשבת נגדו, echoes not only the punitive rhetoric of Mesopotamian imprecations but also common ANE lament motifs. It may not be possible to establish the chronological distribution of this imagery in such ominous contexts, but its operation in Jewish wisdom traditions continues at least into the second century B.C. as seen from Ben Sira 22:11, ‘weep for the dead, for he has left the light behind.’ A similar idea is present in 4 Ezra 10:2, where a mother extinguishes lights upon the death of her son. Commenting on this, Stone explains that ‘the night of the second day was the end of a first period of mourning

¹¹² L. Boadt, *Ezekiel’s Oracles Against Egypt: a Literary and Philological Study of Ezekiel 29-32* (Rome, 1980), 118.

¹¹³ Am. 5:18ff, Is. 13:10, Ez. 7:7-12, Mic. 3:6, Joel 2:2, 10, 4:15. *Ibid.*, 118. (cf. Qoh. 12:2-5).

¹¹⁴ W. Zimmerli, *Ezekiel: a Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel* (Philadelphia, 1983), 160. On Is. 43:17 which uses both דעך and כבה, ‘they shall lie down together, they shall not rise; they are extinguished, they are quenched like a wick,’ Koole writes: ‘the image describes the ease with which Yahweh has brought down the enemy army. As in 42:3, it suggests a smouldering wick which is on the verge of extinction, and so the casual way in which this destruction was to be expected. The comparison with 42:3 is obvious because the image does not occur elsewhere in this elaborate form. It makes for a certain tension between the two places: Yahweh extinguished the wick, but one can look forward to the arrival of the servant, who will not quench the wick but will spare it.’ J. Koole, *Isaiah* (Kampen, 1997-2001), 328. Cf. Block’s observation on כבה and its figurative use in reference to death (cf. Is. 43:17). D. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel* (Grand Rapids, 1997-1998), 206.

according to a later Jewish mourning custom. The turning over and extinguishing of the light... was also customary, as Lieberman points out: “How do men mourn?... The mourner rends his garments... the mourner sits by himself and shows his face... the mourner turns over his bed... the mourner extinguishes the lamps.”¹¹⁵

4. The Use of Light-related Imagery in Later Sources.

As a cross-cultural symbolic currency for human life or its cessation this metaphor, variously nuanced, appears to have spanned across large time periods and territorial zones. Gaster claims that it was well known to Classical writers and cites Ovid who imaged an experience of exile as ‘extinguished hearths.’¹¹⁶ In connection with 2 Sam. 14:7 Driver cites Plato, Legg, 677B that says that, ‘the men who then escaped destruction must have been mostly herdsmen of the hills, scanty embers of the human race preserved somewhere on the mountain-tops.’¹¹⁷ Inverting this metaphor and using it positively both ‘Tibullus and Martial spoke of the ever-burning fire on the hearth as expressing ‘bliss and contentment.’¹¹⁸

In modern-day parallels the conceptualization of children as glowing coals/embers apparently became embedded into theories of procreation. Delaney, for example, observes, ‘The seed carries the spark of life which is theoretically eternal but demands that men produce sons to carry it down the generations. In Turkey women continue to bear children until a son is born. The son is the incarnation of the father and the one who can continue the patriline. *Sülale*, the Turkish word for patriline, is derived from the Arabic and means something like reproductive semen... There is a saying, ‘A boy is the flame of the line, a girl

¹¹⁵ Stone, *Fourth Ezra*, 314. In n. 16 he mentions *Eka Zuta vers. I* with parallels in *Pes. R.K.* 15:3 and *Eka Rabbati* 1:1. *Ibid.*, 314.

¹¹⁶ Gaster, *Myth*, 480. Cf. Jer. 25:10 and Grossberg’s explanation of it, ‘the work of the grindstones, crucial for sustenance will be stilled; the light of the lamp, symbol of survival and wellbeing will be extinguished.’ D. Grossberg, ‘Pivotal Polysemy in Jeremiah xxv: 10-11,’ *VT* 36 (1986), 481.

¹¹⁷ S. Driver, *Notes on the Hebrew Text of the Books of Samuel* (Oxford, 1913), 306. Cited by Gaster, *Myth*, 480.

¹¹⁸ Gaster, *Myth*, 480.

the embers of a house.’ In other words, seed is imagined as a kind of living torch passed from father to son, ad infinitum, while women are the fuel consumed in the process. If a man has no sons, it is said: *ocaği sonmus*, his hearth has been extinguished. The flame and the name of the line have died out.’¹¹⁹ The degree to which this cross-cultural understanding of human life as light was wide spread can be seen from studies that attest ‘multiple parallels (...) from various languages in which words for putting out, that is, killing, a fire are avoided as taboo and replaced by words for honouring, protecting.’¹²⁰

5. Archaeology of Lamps in Palestine.

A cultic significance of the light-related imagery stemming from the textual materials analysed above is also supported by archaeological evidence, as rich depositions of lamps have been attested in the Late Bronze and Iron Age Israelite-Judean tombs.¹²¹ Discussing the use of saucer lamps in religious contexts, Smith explains that ‘most notable of all rites, so far as archaeological evidence is concerned, was that of burial... like Canaanites before them and in common with many other peoples of the ancient world, they [the early Hebrews] deposited offerings of food and drink in tombs, hoping to revivify the dead. Lamps seem to have been an important concomitant of these offerings.’ Based on 2 Sam. 21:17 he adds that ‘to light a lamp at a tomb, was, then, to perform an act of sympathetic magic whereby the smouldering flame of life in the deceased would be rekindled. Together the lighting of a lamp and the offering of food caused the deceased to revive from his half-sleep in the gloom of the

¹¹⁹ C. Delaney, ‘The Meaning of Paternity and the Virgin Birth Debate,’ *Man* 21 (1986), 498. For a catalogue of modern day beliefs that connect fire and human life see Gaster, *Myth*, 480. Similarly Wickett catalogues themes employed in Egyptian funerary laments and under the rubric of description of the state of death mentions that ‘death snuffs out the fire of life.’ Wickett, *For the Living*, 253. She also lists the following theme – the ‘lantern’ of the deceased was lit (D II 11).

¹²⁰ See E. Reiner, ‘Dead of Night,’ in H. Güterbock, J. Thorkild (eds), *Studies in Honor of Benno Landsberger on His Seventy-Fifth Birthday* (Chicago, 1965), 251.

¹²¹ Smith explains that lamps constitute ‘one-fourth to one-half of the vessels in many Iron I period tombs, far more than necessary to meet the actual lighting needs of the tombs.’ *Smith*, ‘Household Lamps,’ 12. For a discussion on the proliferation of burial deposits that contained pottery and lamps see Bloch-Smith, *Judahite Burial Practices*, 72-81.

underworld... The lamp-lighting was essentially a symbolic act.’¹²² Although in her monograph on Judahite burial practices Bloch-Smith does not discuss the use and symbolism of lamps her inventory of lamp depositions indicates that a significant number of them was found in cave, bench, and chamber tombs.¹²³ The size of these tombs would have naturally permitted the performance of post-burial funerary rites inside them, which in turn would have made use of deposited lamps.¹²⁴ Regarding the significance of lamps in funerary contexts of later periods, i.e. in Jewish tombs of the Second Temple Period, Hachlili observes that they were lit to illuminate the tomb during the time of burial, or funerary rites, or transference of bones to an ossuary.¹²⁵ In addition to the physical necessity of having light in a tomb, the lamps were lit out of ‘respect and commemoration of the dead, as indicated by lamps placed beside a burial or inside the ossuary.’¹²⁶ She further explains that the lamp in a funerary context may be considered a ‘symbol of life and of a person’s soul (Prov. 20:27).’¹²⁷ Arguing for the symbolic meaning of lamps, she writes that in Jericho Tomb A2 a lamp was found placed on the deceased’s skull.¹²⁸ Citing Rubin, she further notes that a lamp could be placed above the deceased’s head or bed, symbolizing both life and death.¹²⁹ Thus stemming from

¹²² Smith, ‘Household Lamps,’ 12.

¹²³ Although not exclusively.

¹²⁴ Bloch-Smith, however, cautions that ‘chronological changes in body treatment and mortuary provisioning are obscured by the fact that the majority of the osteological remains and objects were found in cave and bench tombs which were used over extended periods of time.’ Bloch-Smith, *Judahite Burial Practices*, 62. Of interest for the present discussion are also scholarly debates regarding the possible cultic significance of saucer lamps that were found in the Canaanite cities of the Late Bronze Age in the foundations of buildings. Some scholars believe that the presence of a lamp in such context may have been a ‘substitute for the more primitive practice of child sacrifice, the sealing up of the lamp being equivalent to the slaying of the child.’ Smith, ‘Household Lamps,’ 12 and the bibliography in n. 23. If this hypothesis is correct than it would provide an extraordinary connection of human life and light.

¹²⁵ R. Hachlili, *Jewish Funerary Customs, Practices and Rites in the Second Temple Period* (Leiden, 2005), 388. See also Smith, ‘The Household Lamps in Intertestamental Times,’ *BA* 26 (1964), 108-109.

¹²⁶ Hachlili, *Jewish Funerary Customs*, 388. She also explains that as far as the funerary context is concerned, lamps were found in the courtyards, chambers, and loculi of graves. In some tombs a special niche for the lamp was provided. *Ibid.*, 387, 388. Cf. Smith, ‘Household Lamps,’ 8, and the bibliography in n. 13. See also S. Weksler-Bdolah, ‘Burial Caves and Installations of the Second Temple Period at the Har-Hazofim Observatory (Mt. Scopus, Jerusalem),’ *At* 35 (1998), 23-54.

¹²⁷ Hachlili, *Jewish Funerary Customs*, 389.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 389. See also R. Hachlili, A. Killebrew, *Jericho: the Jewish Cemetery of the Second Temple Period* (Jerusalem, 1999), 8.

¹²⁹ N. Rubin, *Ḳets ha-ḥayim: tiḳse ḳevurah ya-evel bi-meḳorot Ḥazal/ End of Life: Rites of Burial and Mourning in the Talmud and Midrash* (Tel Aviv, 1997), 124. Hachlili also notes that the sages differentiated between the

Israelite-Judean funerary contexts archaeological evidence complements and further nuances discussions on light-related beliefs deduced from the textual sources cited above.

C. David as a Recipient of the Light-based Ideology in the Addendum (2 Sam. 21-24) and Samuel-Kings.

If the premise of this chapter is correct and the proposed metaphorisation of the Saulides' demise is legitimate, then it is of ironic significance that against David's systematic disregard of covenantal obligations and an annihilationist policy towards his rivals, Samuel-Kings utilise light-based symbolism for YHWH's loyalty to David's descendants, particularly when they find themselves in the remnant status.

First of all, collecting miscellaneous accounts of David's military campaigns in the Addendum (2 Sam. 21-24) and placing them dangerously close to the Gibeonite episode, the author records another oath-making incident where David himself is identified as נר ישראל embodying the survival and flourishing of his subjects (2 Sam. 21:17). Scholars speculate that this designation indicates a vital nexus that exists between a nation and its monarch¹³⁰ and note that 'should David unexpectedly perish in battle [become extinguished, כבה, v. 17], then night will fall on all Israel.'¹³¹ This scenario, they observe, is 'the counterpart of the perilous situation at the beginning of 1 Samuel when the corruption at Silo endangered the nation and the lamp of the temple almost went out.'¹³² Secondly, supplementing the Appendix with liturgical materials (2 Sam. 22) and assigning their authorship to David, the author has David proclaim that YHWH is his lamp, כִּי־אֵתָהּ נִירֵי יְהוָה וַיְהוּהָ וַיְהוּהָ יִגִּיהָ חֲשָׁכִי (2 Sam.

lamps for the dead and those for the living. *Ibid.*, 388. On the cultic significance of lamp in Babylonia see Van der Toorn, *Family Religion in Babylonia*, 130.

¹³⁰ Smith, 'Household Lamps,' 12. See Johnson's brief discussion on 'the ruling member of the House of David being regarded in some way as the light and life of his people.' A. Johnson, *Sacral Kingship in Ancient Israel* (Cardiff, 1967), 1-2.

¹³¹ Fokkelman, *Narrative Art*, 297.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 130.

22:29), and his own dynasty is like the light of the morning, *כאור בקר יזרח־שמש בקר* (2 Sam. 23:4). Whatever was intended by the original thrust of the *אתה נירי* proclamation, sealing the collection of 2 Sam. 21-24 at the outer ends by two episodes of *remnants in jeopardy* (2 Sam. 21:1-14, 24:1-25), the author, most likely, brings out new dimensions in it. Given the overall thematic uniformity of the Appendix, the *אתה נירי יהוה* confession may project the familiar light-based imagery into the divine sphere and indicate David's hope that YHWH, his *נר*, will act as a guarantor of his enduring dynasty (2 Sam. 22:29). The statement in 23:4 that conceptualises David's dynasty as *אור בקר* and supplements it with the reference to the eternal covenant with his house, *ברית עולם* (v. 5) strengthens this possibility.¹³³ Of further, and again ironic, significance is David's remark in his *דברי דוד האחרנים* regarding the anonymous *בליעל*¹³⁴ that 'they are completely burned up right where they lie,' *באש שרוף ישרפו בשבת* (v. 7).¹³⁵ Given the relative literary proximity of chapters 21 and 23 in the Appendix, it is possible that David's final words are further reflexes of the trauma incurred in the Gibeonite affair. Having almost lost his house and his nation due to the hasty extinguishing of Saul's descendants, David now claims the inalienable rights to the Israelite throne for his own posterity.

The Addendum's proclamations regarding the Davidic dynasty having the prerogative to exercise kingship in Israel (cf. 2 Sam. 7:12-15) become almost programmatic for the books of Kings, as the *נר/ניר* metaphor¹³⁶ continues to appear at perilous junctures in Israel's history

¹³³ By transposing liturgical materials that cast YHWH as *נר*, and as the one who walks/rides on *coals* and *pavements of coals* (2 Sam. 22:9, 13) into the frame the author further boosts the concern for national and dynastic survival in these episodes and claims David's familiarity with the light-based symbolism.

¹³⁴ *בליעל* is traditionally rendered as 'sons of rebellion' to harmonize with the plural verbal forms in v. 7.

¹³⁵ NET Bible. Cf. ISV's rendering of v. 7 – 'whoever handles them... *burns them to ashes on the spot!*'

¹³⁶ The *נר* metaphor as applied to the Davidic dynasty in 1 Kgs 11:36, 15:4, 2 Kgs 8:19 has received much scholarly attention and generated a few divergent suggestions for its meaning. Traditionally, the word *נר* is understood as a *lamp, candle, flame or light*, but with the help of cognate languages *yoke/dominion, field/ground/new beginning, dominion/power* have also been proposed, all with a metaphorical meaning. For a helpful bibliography on each suggestion see E. Ben Zvi, 'Once the Lamp Has Been Kindled: a Reconsideration of the Meaning of the MT *nîr* in 1 Kgs 11:36; 15:4; 2 Kgs 8:19 and 2 Chr 21:7,' *ABR* 39 (1991), 19, n. 2 and 3.

(1 Kgs 11:36, 15:4, 2 Kgs 8:19¹³⁷). The feature of נִיר in 1 Kgs 11:36, 15:4, and in the Chronicler's version of 2 Kgs 8:19 (21:11) are of particular interest, as indicating the presence of David's descendants in Jerusalem; these texts, or their translations, show awareness of the *remnant* dimension of the נִיר – based imagery.

Thus against the background of the division of monarchy with ten tribes given to Jeroboam and only *one* tribe¹³⁸ pledged to Solomon's successor, 1 Kgs 11:36 promises the perpetuity of the Judean monarch in Jerusalem via the use of נִיר underscoring the remnant facet of its symbolism (vv. 32, 34, 36).¹³⁹ Assuring him of the continuing existence of his descendants in Jerusalem, due to a covenant with the dynastic founder, Ahijah interlinks his kingship with the guarantor's, YHWH's, own name (שם), a combination that makes the reading of נִיר imagery in terms of Davidic successors even stronger.

1 Kgs 15:4, too, echoes the covenant in 2 Sam. 7:12 and equates the symbolism of נִיר with a Davidic descendant, i.e. Asa, Abijah's son.¹⁴⁰ Of interest here is the LXX's rendering

See also Wiseman's very brief and odd article where Wiseman argues that the lamp imagery refers to Torah as adhered to by David's descendants. D. Wiseman, '2 Sam 21:17 Light from the East,' in M. Mori, H. Ogawa, M. Yoshikawa (eds), *Near Eastern Studies: Dedicated to H.I.H. Prince Takahito Mikasa on the Occasion of His Seventy-Fifth Birthday* (Wiesbaden, 1991), 485-490. See also N. Na'aman, 'A נִיר for David in Jerusalem,' *JNSL* 39 (2013), 29-38. It should be noted, however, that Na'aman does not consider the versional evidence. Ben Zvi rightly observes that etymologically related words from cognate languages do not necessarily have the same meaning. Ben Zvi, 'Once the Lamp Has Been Kindled,' 22, n. 13. Since his own suggestions ('fertile field'/'fief'/dominion or 'yoke'/dominion, although less likely) and those previously proposed are not without problems (the symbolism ascribed to them is not attested either in biblical or extrabiblical sources) this essay will follow the traditional understanding of נִיר.

¹³⁷ Cf. 2 Chr. 21:7, Ps. 137:17.

¹³⁸ Note that the LXX, however, makes what DeVries calls an ideological correction and turns it into two tribes. S. DeVries, *1 Kings* (Waco, 1985), 147. Cf. Knoppers for a discussion on the textual variants in this section and arguments to follow the LXX. G. Knoppers *Two Nations Under God: the Deuteronomistic History of Solomon and the Dual Monarchies* (Atlanta, 1993), 187-190. See also Linville, who argues that the use of נִיר in Kings signifies the representation of Judah in Jerusalem, a divinely chosen city, where 'all the tribes of Israel are at least ostensibly represented.' J. Linville, *Israel in the Book of Kings: the Past as a Project of Social Identity* (Sheffield, 1998), 158-161.

¹³⁹ Cf. Gray who agrees that light here symbolizes the living representative of the house of the dynastic founder David. J. Gray, *I & II Kings: a Commentary* (London, 1964), 275. Mulder thinks that it could point both to the tribe and its Davidic patron. M. Mulder, *1 Kings* (Leuven, 1998), 594-596. For the presence of fire and furnace in Jerusalem cf. Is. 31:9.

¹⁴⁰ נִיר בִּירוּשָׁלַם לֵהקִים אֶת־בְּנוֹ אַחֲרָיו echoes 2 Sam. 7:12 where David's seed is promised to be *established*. Of note here is Gray's translation of נִיר בִּירוּשָׁלַם לֵהקִים אֶת־בְּנוֹ אַחֲרָיו as 'the Lord gave him a light in

of ניר in this text as κατάλειμμα, which is normally used for remnant, שארית. DeVries notes that κατάλειμμα cannot render the MT's ניר, light,¹⁴¹ but Wevers understands the LXX's three choices for the MT's ניר¹⁴² as theological variations and explains that by the time of the LXX the word ניר/נר had become a Messianic term as seen from the Jewish prayer book that in the blessings after the Haphtarot has: נרו לעולם ועד שלא יכבה.¹⁴³ He further adds that like Targum which renders the word ניר by מלכו the LXX avoids any possible Messianic connotations in its renderings.¹⁴⁴ But if the LXX was familiar with the *remnant* dimension of the light symbolism, its translation of ניר with κατάλειμμα can indeed be seen as a proper theological variant that does not compromise ניר's ideology.

Similarly, 2 Kgs 8:19 uses the ניר language of royal propaganda and now connects it to Jehoram.¹⁴⁵ Of relevance to this discussion is its expansion in 2 Chr. 21:11. Even though it stands outside of the Deuteronomistic collections and the use of ניר in it may not have carried the same symbolism,¹⁴⁶ of interest here is that it develops 2 Kgs 8:19 and again underscores the *remnant* status of ניר's referent. 2 Chr. 21:4ff gives a record of Jehoram's slaughter of all his brothers, משרי ישראל, and some of the state officials, ויהרג את-כלי-אחיו בחרב, and even though the massacre in this text is carried out to secure Jehoram's position as a ruler over his father's kingdom, ויקם יהורם על-ממלכת אביו ויתחזק, and he himself is a fratricide, this circumstance casts him as a survivor or a *remnant* of the Davidic dynasty, who in turn is spared by YHWH (cf. 2 Sam. 14:7 and the Absalom saga). The Chronicler too supplements

Jerusalem in raising up his son after him.' This rendering understands להקים את-בנו as an *exegetical* infinitive and thus equates ניר with Abijah's posterity (בנו). Gray, *I & II Kings*.

¹⁴¹ DeVries, *I Kings*, 186.

¹⁴² 1 Kgs 11:36 – deposit, security, pledge; 1 Kgs 15:4 – remnant; 2 Kgs 8:19 – lamp.

¹⁴³ J. Wevers, "Exegetical Principles Underlying the Septuagint Text of I Kings ii.12-xxi.43," *OTS* 8 (1950), 316, n. 14.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 316.

¹⁴⁵ Gray, *I & II Kings*, 480-481. Some translations want to emend לבניו to לפניו saying that the sons themselves are 'the lamp,' yet others accept the MT and render it, correctly, 'to him through his sons always,' making proper use of the metaphor that signals generational perpetuity and echoing 2 Sam. 7:12-17.

¹⁴⁶ See, for example, Williamson who says that it is not certain that the Chronicler used the metaphor in the same way. H. Williamson, *1 and 2 Chronicles* (Grand Rapids, 1982), 305.

this account by an allusion to the Davidic covenant, equating the familiar lamp idiom with the seed of David that will never be destroyed (2 Sam. 7:12-15).¹⁴⁷

If the proposed metaphorisation of the Saulides' demise in 2 Sam. 21:1-14 is valid, then in the rhetoric of Samuel-Kings the light-based imagery becomes a tool of perpetuation of the Davidic dynasty at the expense of the rejected house of Saul. Surveying the distribution pattern of this symbolism in Samuel-Kings in reference to monarchy makes it clear that hinged on it is either the validation or disapproval of a king and the dynasty he sought to establish. Saul's descendants are *extinguished* and thus are of no consequence to the monarchy (2 Sam. 21:1-14, 23:7). David's successors are conceptualised as נִיר and are firmly secured in Jerusalem through divine patronage (2 Sam. 22:29, 23:4-5, 1 Kgs 11:36, 15:4, 2 Kgs 8:19, cf. 2 Chr. 21:7, Ps. 137:17). Used as a diagnostic determinant in the Gibeonite episode, however, this symbolism exposes the assisted nature of the endurance of David's line. For David endangered his house and his nation by breaking a vow exacted by Saul in 1 Sam. 24:21-22 and it took Rizpah, *a glowing coal*, a daughter of *light/lamp*, to rectify the situation at the inter-dynastic and national levels.

V. Conclusion.

As previously suggested, the two key accounts that address the insolvency of Saul's dynasty form an intriguing *inclusio* for David's reign in 2 Samuel and create a critical dialogue between them in the fashion of an antiphon. In her analysis of the performance of Greek laments, Seremetakis shows that 'the antiphony of performance, expressed in the interchange between soloist and chorus, underscores a broader relationship of small female lament group to the community, and of women to men. The interchange becomes "a formal

¹⁴⁷ Cf. E. Curtis, A. Madsen, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Books of Chronicles* (Edinburgh, 1910), 414.

procedure for the production and reception of jural discourse and for the cultural construction of truth [as well as] a political strategy that organises the relationship of women to male-dominated institutions.”¹⁴⁸ She further explains that the antiphonal representation of pain and loss in these solemn compositions also serves as a conscious means of ‘social manipulation.’¹⁴⁹ Arguably, the canonical position of two narratives dealing with mourning over the cessation of a dynasty, and the near demise of Israel as collateral damage, similarly manipulates the readership into assessing David’s inter-dynastic and domestic politics.¹⁵⁰ Positioning Rizpah over and against the monarch within the broader context of 2 Samuel, as well as in the Gibeonite episode, the author creates a platform for the maternal construction of truth regarding the king’s faulty remnant theology and dubious ethics in covenantal pacts.¹⁵¹ Given the precarious social position of a sorrowing interlocutor and David’s notorious vengefulness in dealing with his subjects, the author uses Rizpah’s *name* as a polemic against the erring ruler.

Concerning the use of Hebrew names in biblical texts, Marks observed that the ‘contest of pun and etymology, of phonetic coincidence and semantic entailment, reverberates across an emptiness our criticism cannot fill.’¹⁵² ‘Pause long enough – he writes – upon even the simplest word (consider its etymology, for instance) and it “changes into enigma, an abyss, a torment to thought.” The names in the biblical narratives force us, with their disjunctive glosses, to enter this abyss; they generate what Kenneth Burke would have called “perspective by incongruity,” but raised to a higher power.’¹⁵³ Admittedly, a triple mention of רִצְפָּה בַת-אִיָּה in 2 Sam. 21:1-14 is stripped of accompanying disjunctive glosses,

¹⁴⁸ C. Seremetakis, *The Last Word: Women, Death, and Divination in Inner Mani* (Chicago, 1991), 13.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 13.

¹⁵⁰ *Contra* McCarter who thinks that 2 Sam. 21 is produced by David’s apologists to portray him as a ‘benefactor of the house of Saul!’ McCarter, *II Samuel*, 445-446.

¹⁵¹ Since the episodes in 21:1-14 and 24:1-25 are thematically correlated, and the Addendum (2 Sam. 21-24) in general has a chiasmic structure, Rizpah’s mourning not only looks backwards to 2 Sam. 1 but also forward to 2 Sam. 24, and thus challenges David’s actions in yet another episode of Israel’s endangerment.

¹⁵² Marks, ‘Biblical Naming,’ 42.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 33.

i.e. etymological notes; yet given the saturation of the pericope with themes of endangered or disintegrated remnants – of an ethnic group, a dynasty, and a nation – רִצְפָּה בַת־אִיָּה itself becomes a recurrent, disjunctive gloss creating a torment to David’s thought and levelling charges against him as an oath-breaking regicide. Vanzant said that ‘Rizpah literally means “hot coals” and proved to be so for Ishbaal.’¹⁵⁴ The evidence presented above advances a reading that, gaining a confrontational momentum from רִצְפָּה בַת־אִיָּה, the woman’s vigil implicates David¹⁵⁵ not only in the *Sauli-cide* accomplished through the Gibeonite agency, but also in the near *Israel-cide* brought about by his own actions. Thus, in the episode of heightened concern with violated oaths and multiple occasions of heir-slaughter as their outcome, the presence of רִצְפָּה בַת־אִיָּה, whose symbolism intersects with both, became a culturally potent tool of social manipulation and chastisement.

In her *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*, Butler suggests that grief can generate ‘a sense of political community of a complex order, and it does this... by bringing to the fore the relational ties that have implications for theorising fundamental dependency and ethical responsibility.’¹⁵⁶ The foregoing analysis of 2 Sam. 21 has demonstrated that in the matter of cessation of Israel’s first royal house, David, as a mourner and monarch, exhibits a clear inaptitude for such insight. Marked by repeated transgressions within domestic affairs (2 Sam. 11, 13, 14-18, 21, 24) and many wars and much spilled blood on the international arena (cf. 1 Chr. 22:8, 28:3), his reign continually comes under attack from both human and divine agencies. Cohering with policies of communal survival and reestablishment attested in other Levantine cultures, the author of Samuel, too, methodically

¹⁵⁴ Vanzant, *TIDBP*, 825.

¹⁵⁵ Cf. Gary Rendsburg’s observations regarding Job 3:6 and Gen. 49:6 that, ‘it is important to observe that the original reader... did not have to choose between the two double meanings. Faced with a purely consonantal text, the reader was readily able to discern the double polysemy.’ G. Rendsburg, ‘Double Polysemy in Genesis 49 6 and Job 3 6,’ *CBQ* 44 (1982), 51. By the same token, the רִצְפָּה בַת־אִיָּה symbolism could have a double function in 2 Sam. 21:1-14.

¹⁵⁶ J. Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (London, 2004), 22.

injects maternal voices into its chronicles of David's times. Thus, planted in the core of 2 Samuel, densely saturated with child death and grief incidents (2 Sam. 12:16-24, 13:31, 37, 18:33-19:4, 13, 18), another narrative conscripts a mother, a sage from Tekoa, to challenge David and does so by couching her speech in the rhetoric of ancient maledictions (2 Sam. 14). Offsetting the non-power of their social location with the potency of their status as bereft, and thus disquieted mothers, 2 Samuel produces a comprehensive critique on Israel's early monarchy through their combined effort. Against the systematic routinisation of violence under David and among the array of critical perspectives stemming from the administrative cabinet (Ahitophel (cf. 2 Sam. 16:23), Joab (2 Sam. 14, 18-19), etc.) or the religious 'establishment' (Nathan (2 Sam. 12), Gad (2 Sam. 24), etc.), a non-institutionalised perspective of mother grief in 2 Samuel, genuine or fictitious, carries a raw ethics of the value of human life. Unequivocally articulated in 2 Sam. 14, this outlook will be the focus of the ensuing chapter.

CHAPTER IV

THE WOMAN OF TEKOA

I. Introduction.

In the aforementioned article on Israeli women/mother artists Guilat argued that one of the main functions of their work in the cycle of national militarism and commemoration is to provide ‘resistance that anticipates loss – the active resistance of an artistic endeavour that uses memorial strategies *to dispense with the need to memorialize*, a sort of fetishist practice of protectiveness on the one hand and protest on the other.’¹ In another aforesaid study on ritual weeping and its functions, Ebersole observes that it is ‘precisely because mourning rites are scripted as emotionally charged, they can at times provide “cover” for individuals to transgress or violate normal social expectations and prohibitions without fear of serious reprisals.’² He further notes that within certain ritual boundaries the mourner, either real or professional, is ‘not held to be responsible for her [or his] actions or words’ and thus ‘is free to say what otherwise could not be voiced publicly.’³ Of further pertinence for the ensuing discussion are ethnographic and anthropological studies on the ability of female ritual responses to a crisis, e.g. funerary laments, to ‘penetrate the domains of men’s discourse that are most closely associated with power and domination’ and to lay constraints on their authority and actions.⁴

A biblical example of daring maternal resistance to a mass casualty crisis, which was actualised in an act of anticipatory mourning, is found in the speech of an unnamed sage from Tekoa (2 Sam. 14). Although 2 Sam. 14 contains an account of fabricated mother grief, the

¹ Guilat, ‘Motherhood and Nation,’ 286. Italics are mine.

² Ebersole, ‘The Function of Ritual Weeping,’ 243.

³ He cites numerous examples of this phenomenon from Greece and elsewhere. *Ibid.*, 243 and the bibliography given there.

⁴ Briggs, “‘Since I Am a Woman,’” 352, but see also 337-361.

very fact of its fabrication substantiates the premise of this investigation. Summoned for a precarious task (namely to address the issue of unresolved inner-dynastic feuds threatening a nation) at a precarious time (that is David's reign marked by habitual misconducts and generally identified as 'bloody' (cf. 1 Chr. 22:8, 28:3)), a wise woman poses as a mother to deliver a bold appeal to the king as a pre-emptive act of mourning for his endangered children and subjects. Accompanying her speech with grief-related features – from the conventional paraphernalia associated with bereavement (בגדי־אבל), to neglect of hygiene (אל־תסוכי שמן), to the overall impression of an extended period of mourning (והיית כאשה זה ימים רבים מתאבלת) (על־מת (2 Sam. 14:2) – the author of Samuel creates a platform that allows for an audacious address to prevent a large-scale catastrophe due to the monarch's failure to rectify long-standing vendettas in his family.

Meticulously orchestrating a ritual background for the sage's petition (2 Sam. 14:2) and encoding her act of anticipatory resistance in maternal terms (2 Sam. 14:4), the author of Samuel has the Tekoite use a variety of rhetorical tactics to warn the king of a bloodshed doomed to befall Israel. Operating from an ethics of the interconnectedness and interdependence of ancient social groups and their leaders, the woman unequivocally points out the group repercussions of David's inaction in the Tamar-Amnon-Absalom crisis (2 Sam. 14:13-14). Linking her speech to ancient maledictions (2 Sam. 14:14), the sage displays before David the awful fate of a nation resulting from his faulty judgments. Since in the larger narrative context of Samuel the woman's speech echoes the confrontational nature of Nathan's appeal to the erring David two chapters prior, the staged act of maternal mourning in 2 Sam. 14 gains the quality of a prophetic word. Its failure to prevent the tragedy and achieve long-term restoration of a fractured kingdom (2 Sam. 15-18) should be understood as lying solely with David's political and moral short-sightedness.

II. The Speech of the Tekoite: The Syntax of Anguish.

The speech of the Tekoite woman in 2 Sam. 14 has received both highly laudatory⁵ and highly harsh assessments⁶ in biblical scholarship. Of all of the Tekoite's critics, P. Willey seems to be the most unforgiving. Since some of her disparaging remarks are of value they will be used as a springboard for the present discussion. In surveying the events of 2 Sam. 11-14 – David's affair with Bathsheba, the murder of Uriah, Nathan's oracle regarding it, the death of Bathsheba's child, the rape of Tamar, Amnon's murder and Absalom's flight – Willey observes that by chapter 14 'all clarity has dissolved' not only for the main protagonist, David, but also for Samuel's readership: 'We think Joab will speak to the king, but instead he sends a woman. We are told she is wise, but she does not play the part. We are led to think she will convince the king, but she does not. She prepares to accuse the king, but her accusation floats away in the flotsam and jetsam of unconnected words, and she ends up blessing him...'⁷ If Willey is critical about the overall rhetorical strategy implemented by the Tekoite then she is absolutely condemnatory about the woman's grammar. Assessing it against the appeal delivered by Nathan two chapters prior (2 Sam. 12), Willey writes,

⁵ Some of the scholars in this category are U. Simon, 'The Poor Man's Ewe-Lamb: An Example of a Juridical Parable,' *Bib* 48 (1967), 207-242; R. Whybray, *The Succession Narrative: a Study of II Samuel 9-20; I Kings 1 and 2* (London, 1968), 86; Hoftijzer, 'David,'; 419-444; G. Ridout, *Prose Compositional Techniques in the Succession Narrative (2 Sam. 7, 9-20; 1 Kings 1-2)* (Ph.D. Dissertation, Graduate Theological Union, 1974); H. Hagan, 'Deception as Motif and Theme in 2 Sam 9-20; 1 Kgs 1-2,' *Bib* 60 (1979), 301-326; C. Camp, 'The Wise Women of 2 Samuel: A Role Model for Women in Early Israel,' *CBQ* 43(1981), 14-29; McCarter, *II Samuel*, 351-352; N. Waldman, 'Two Biblical Parables: Irony and Self-Entrapment,' *DD* 15 (1986-87), 11-18; I. Spangenberg, 'Who is the Wise One in 2 Samuel 14:1-24?,' in W.C.van Wyk (ed.), *Studies in the Succession Narrative* (Pretoria, 1986), 272-278; S. Mann, *Run, David, Run!: an Investigation of the Theological Speech Acts of David's Departure and Return (2 Samuel 14-20)* (Winona Lake, 2013), 58-70.

⁶ Some of the scholars who seemingly give the wise woman of Tekoa no credit or focus solely on Joab's efforts in this passage include G. Nicol, 'The Wisdom of Joab and the Wise Woman of Tekoa,' *ST* 36 (1982), 97-104; P. Willey, 'The Importunate Woman of Tekoa and How She Got Her Way,' in D. Fewell (ed.), *Reading Between Texts: Intertextuality and the Hebrew Bible* (Louisville, 1992), 117-118; A. Bellis, *Helpmates, Harlots, and Heroes: Women's Stories in the Hebrew Bible* (Louisville, 1994), 156; H. Pypers, *David as Reader: 2 Samuel 12:1-15 and the Poetics of Fatherhood* (Leiden, 1996), 126; S. Schroer, 'Wise and Counselling Women in Ancient Israel: Literary and Historical Ideals of the Personified Hokma,' in A. Brenner (ed.), *The Feminist Companion to Wisdom Literature* (Sheffield, 1995), 81. See also Schipper who thinks that the Tekoite's parable was not meant to bring any restoration, but to escalate conflict at the court. J. Schipper, *Parables and Conflict in the Hebrew Bible* (Cambridge, 2009), 72-73.

⁷ Willey, 'The Importunate Woman,' 128.

Nathan's sentences are clear and direct. Twenty-one independent clauses can be counted, using twenty finite verbs and one nominal sentence. Only four dependent clauses are used. Of the three infinitive verbs in the speech, one refers directly to David and two are added for emphasis. But the woman's speech is characterised by incomplete sentences and dangling infinitives. At the most, she has only eight complete sentences, mixed with four incomplete sentences and thirteen dependent clauses. Though she uses twenty-four verbs, only fourteen of these are finite. The rest are verbal adjectives and infinitives, sometimes dangling without referents. All of Nathan's sentences employ very standard syntax. Even his longer sentences remain straightforward. But the woman's sentences often employ obscure even incorrect syntax. Particles and prefixes present more difficulties than usual in translation... *This adds up to an oppressive clarity for Nathan's speech, and an impenetrable fog for the woman's speech. While Nathan's sharp words sliced through the king's defences, her speech threatens to drown the king in confusion.*⁸

Thus Willey describes the woman's appeal as highly disjointed and convoluted and attributes such rhetorical incoherence to the woman's fear to be confrontational with David, her superior.⁹ Contrasting the woman's pitiable rhetoric with other speeches made by women in the Court History, which happen to be more sophisticated than those delivered by male characters and the narrator, she, however, makes a very insightful aside. Scanning Samuel's women for elocutionary aptitude she notes that the only other time when sentences break down in a woman's speech is in 2 Sam. 13 where a violated Tamar addresses Amnon, her rapist.¹⁰ Willey admits that before her rape the princess is 'relentlessly logical and rhetorically masterful. But after the rape, her words are urgent, marginally grammatical, condensed, just as we might expect from a person in her situation.'¹¹ Having made this astute observation on Tamar's words after her assault Willey, however, does not develop it further to recognise that the broken syntax taints both 2 Sam. 13:16 and 2 Sam. 14:4-20, precisely because both women speak from the position of distress – one is violated and thus is genuinely in mourning (13:19), and the other is commissioned 'to mourn' for a king (2 Sam.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 124-125. Italics are mine.

⁹ She does compare her to a 'shrewd politician' or to someone who is afraid of their superior. *Ibid.*, 121. Cf. N. Zahavi-Ely, "'Turn Right or Left': Literary Use of Dialect in 2 Samuel 14:19?" *HS* 53 (2012), 43-53.

¹⁰ Willey, 'The Importunate Woman,' 117-118.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 121. It might be noted that after her rape Tamar delivers only one sentence, yet it is indeed difficult. On the difficulties in this sentence, see discussion in S. Driver, *Notes on the Hebrew Text of the Books of Samuel* (Oxford, 1913), 298-299.

14:2) and thus pretends to be a bereaved widow. In fact, it could be argued that crippled grammar occasioned by grief in these two episodes is part of the authorial intent as disordered speech and disordered storytelling are attested in moments of confusion and distress both in the Bible and ANE literature.¹²

Using Willey's unwitting intuition regarding the Tekoite's disjointed speech-making and studies on the deliberate distortion of grammar in ancient rhetoric¹³ as a diagnostic tool, this discussion will focus on 2 Sam. 14:13-14. Regarding v. 13 Willey says that is not a sentence – 'there are no finite verbs at all, but only three infinitives governed by prepositions' – and thus no translation is adequate for it.¹⁴ Commenting on v. 14, she states that here 'the woman retreats into aphorisms and God-talk' and generally dissolves 'into infinitives, incomplete sentences, garbled grammar – and nearly subliminal impressions.'¹⁵ However, given such scandalous collapse of syntax in the elocution of a sage (אשה חכמה, 2 Sam. 14:2) and given that her debut at the court was orchestrated to have an appearance of genuine bereavement (2 Sam. 14:2),¹⁶ this rhetoric should rather be seen as intentional, signalling of the most urgent plea in 2 Sam. 14:4-20. Incidentally, since in the entire appeal the protective

¹² For extra-biblical examples of intentionally broken syntax, see N. Veldhuis, 'The Fly, the Worm, and the Chain: Old Babylonian Chain Incantations,' *OLP* 24 (1993), 41-61. For biblical narratives with the same phenomenon, see G. Rendsburg, 'Confused Language as a Deliberate Literary Device in Biblical Hebrew Narrative,' *JHS* 2 (1999) <www.purl.org/jhs> (accessed September 2013) and the bibliography cited in n. 10, 15.

¹³ Note Veldhuis' observation regarding grammar, 'The rules of grammar are not laws of nature – the existence of which, after all, is generally doubted. Ungrammaticality, or deviant grammar, is often a mark in that it draws our attention to something special as readers of modern poetry well know. Therefore the object of our interest must be the deviation as well as the rule.' Veldhuis, 'The Fly,' 46.

¹⁴ Willey, 'The Importunate Woman,' 119-121. Although מדבר is a participle.

¹⁵ Again unlike that of Nathan whose speech is 'grammatical,' 'fully fraught with structure.' *Ibid.*, 119, 121. Cf. other scholars' assessment of these verses as among 'the most obscure in Hebrew biblical narrative.' Fokkelman, *Narrative Art*, 127; L. Lyke, *King David with the Wise Woman of Tekoa: the Resonance of Tradition in Parabolic Narrative* (Sheffield, 1997), 175.

¹⁶ Moreover, the Tekoite's disposition of sorrow was meant to match David's own lingering grief, כל־הַיָּמִים (2 Sam. 13:37). Note also that she prostrates herself before him on the ground, ותפל על־אפיה ארצה ותשתחו (v. 4), which is reminiscent not only of David's response to Amnon's death, ויקרע את־בגדיו וישכב ארצה (13:31), but also that of Bathsheba's child, ולן ושכב ארצה (2 Sam. 12:16). Thus the Tekoite, in her semiotics of mourning, represents a longer history of child loss in David's family. Note that scholars observe that between 2 Sam. 12:26, where David says that the offender in Nathan's parable should restore the lamb fourfold, and the end of 1Kgs 2, four of David's sons die. Fokkelman, *Narrative Art*, 413-414; R. Alter, *The David Story: a Translation with Commentary of 1 and 2 Samuel* (New York, 1999), 258-259.

façade of a charade is lifted only here, vv. 13-14 could be viewed as a place of the woman's bona fide brokenness and thus warrant another investigation into their significance.

The premise of this chapter, therefore, is that by channelling most of her solemn energy into the cluster of crippled accusations, the Tekoite in these verses points out a pattern of David's misconduct, profiled in ANE literature as the royal deviance principle,¹⁷ endangering not only his family but YHWH's inheritance, עַם אֱלֹהִים, as well.¹⁸ Since biblical traditions attest to the use of parabolic utterances in the contexts of crises as a tool of public chastisement of the guilty the Tekoite too confronts David regarding his vendetta against Absalom. Outlining an ominous prognosis of an unresolved inner-dynastic feud via a strong curse-based imagery she pleads for Absalom's restoration. As David disregards her appeal to revoke his son's exile the tragedy predicted by the woman ensues. To unpack the dynamics that hold David, his son, and the people of God in a deadly entanglement and to understand the Tekoite's strategy to neutralise it, this discussion will consider 1.) David's overall hostile disposition towards Absalom; 2.) The royal deviance principle operative in ANE cultures and 2 Sam. 14; 3.) David's oath in 2 Sam. 14:11; 4.) The portentous imagery in 2 Sam. 14:14 signalling group repercussions of David's failure to restore Absalom - וְכַמִּים הַגְּנִימִים אֲרֻצָּה אֲשֶׁר - לֹא יֵאֲסֹפוּ;¹⁹ and 5.) The consequences of David's disregard for the woman's appeal (2 Sam. 18). Since the entirety of the narrative is supplemented with grief-related artifices, both internally and externally,²⁰ and in view of its double foci – looking at the losses incurred by

¹⁷ Hanson, 'When the King,' 11-25. On David's general inaptness in dealing with conflict, see Schipper, *Parables*, 57-73.

¹⁸ Note that it has been observed that the two women designated as wise in the books of Samuel both advocate the preservation of their communities. Camp, 'The Wise Women,' 26-28. Cf. Ackroyd's brief comparison of 2 Sam. 14 and 2 Sam. 20 in P. Ackroyd, *The Second Book of Samuel* (Cambridge, 1977), 129.

¹⁹ Note Fokkelman's observation on the Book of Samuel that 'in this narrative art, metaphors are scarce and therefore particularly of significance.' Fokkelman, *Narrative Art*, 137.

²⁰ In addition to the delivery of the speech itself, i.e. the posture of sorrow supplemented by the grammar of distress, the form of the Tekoite's appeal coheres well with her general task of mourning. In the past the genre of 2 Sam. 14 was identified as 'a narrative that elicits a judgment,' D. Gunn, *The Story of King David: Genre and Interpretation* (Sheffield, 1978), 40- 43; as an 'oath-provoking narrative,' Pyper, *David as Reader*, 129; as 'an anecdote,' G. Coats, 'Parable, Fable, and Anecdote: Storytelling in the Succession Narrative,' *Int* 35 (1981),

David's deviance in the past and anticipating them in his future - the woman's speech in 2 Sam. 14 will be shown to function as an act of mournful protest against the cumulative death toll of God's people under David's kingship.²¹

III. David's Disposition Towards Absalom.

To justify the proposed line of investigation of the Tekoite's appeal it is, first of all, essential to establish the nature of David's disposition towards Absalom in the wake of his fratricidal attack (2 Sam. 13:23-30). Regarding the king's reaction to the murder of Amnon, his first born, the text is very clear, depicting both him and his extended family in a state of shock and grief (vv. 31, 36, 37).²² His disposition towards Absalom, however, ותכל דוד המלך, לצאת אל־אבשלום כִּי־נחם על־אמנון כִּי־מת (v. 39), is not as straightforward, generating a variety of views sometimes of opposite meanings: 1.) 'the spirit of the king longed to go out to Absalom, because he was comforted concerning Amnon for he was dead;'²³ 2.) 'the spirit of king was determined to go out against Absalom, because he was grieved over Amnon for he was dead;'²⁴ and 3.) 'the spirit of the king was spent with regard to going out against Absalom, because he was comforted over the death of Amnon.'²⁵ The first obvious difficulty

368-382; or as 'a woman with a cause motif,' Lyke, *King David*, 92. However, a comparative analysis of biblical and extra-biblical materials of analogous rhetorical strategies has classified 2 Sam. 14 as a *petitionary* narrative. S. Parker, *Stories in Scripture and Inscriptions: Comparative Studies on Narratives in Northwest Semitic Inscriptions and the Hebrew Bible* (New York, 1997), 26-30; Schipper, *Parables*, 57-73.

²¹ Cf. Fokkelman's observation that 'it is neither accident nor coincidence that the conversation depicted in 2 Samuel 14 is the longest dialogue in the CH.' Fokkelman, *Narrative Art*, 127.

²² Although v. 37 is ambiguous and some scholars see this ambiguity as intentional, meaning that the king might have mourned both sons, Amnon and Absalom. R. Polzin, *David and the Deuteronomist: 2 Samuel* (Bloomington, 1993), 133; Lyke, *King David*, 162.

²³ H. Smith, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Books of Samuel* (Edinburgh, 1899), 333; Driver, *Notes*, 305; J. Baldwin, *1 and 2 Samuel: an Introduction and Commentary* (Leicester, 1988), 252.

²⁴ K. Jongeling, 'Joab and the Tekoite,' *JEOL* (1987-1988), 121; cf. Fokkelman's translation: 'and it [i.e. previous events] made David, the king, long to set out on a military expedition against Absalom, because he still deplored Amnon's death.' Fokkelman, *Narrative Art*, 126-127.

²⁵ McCarter, *II Samuel*, 338. Cf. Anderson's reading 'the king's anger ceased to be actively directed against Absalom.' Anderson, *2 Samuel*, 182-184; Hertzberg, *I and II Samuel*, 328. See also Polzin's reading of v. 39b, 'because he had changed his mind about Amnon, seeing that he was dead.' Polzin, *David*, 140. It should be noted that the integrity of the MT is questioned by the majority of scholars in the earlier verses too. S. Pisano, *Additions or Omissions in the Books of Samuel: the Significant Pluses and Minuses in the Massoretic, LXX and Qumran Texts* (Freiburg, 1984), 225-32.

in this verse lies in the gender disagreement of the finite verb, ותכל, and its subject, דוד המלך. Given that the phrase דוד המלך is somewhat unusual due to the order of nouns in it²⁶ the expected feminine subject was sought by scholars in the first element of this collocation, i.e. דוד. Between the two nouns postulated as the subject of ותכל, חמה and רוה, the latter is graphically closer to דוד and, more importantly, is supported by versional evidence (LXX^{LMN}, cf. 4QSam^a).²⁷ But what attitude towards Absalom is envisaged by the combination of כלה and לצאת אל – David’s pursuit of retaliation or his parental affection?

As stated earlier, some scholars understand the MT’s ותכל in a positive way, i.e. ‘[the spirit of] the king longed’ to go out to his estranged son, that is David was seeking ways to reconcile with Absalom. This reading is usually based on the premise that the second clause - כִּי־נָחַם עַל־אֲמֹנֹן - presupposes that David had come to terms with Amnon’s death and was no longer grieving.²⁸ Willey, however, helpfully observes that כלה in the sense of ‘longing’ or ‘pining’ is frequent in Psalms yet is never attested with this meaning in the Deuteronomistic writings.²⁹ In fact, in the books of Samuel it is used almost idiomatically with either רעה or the Hiphil Infinitive of מות and describes Saul’s determination to kill David (1 Sam. 20:7, 9, 33; 25:17, cf. Esth. 7:7).³⁰ In addition, Fokkelman and Smith show that לצאת אל with the preposition אל is attested with the negative meaning, ‘to go out against’ (Deut. 28:25, Judg. 9:33).³¹ In fact, if כלה with רעה in Samuel is used idiomatically then 1 Sam. 20: 9 where this

²⁶ דוד המלך is used everywhere else. Driver, *Notes*, 305.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 305; McCarter, *II Samuel*, 338; Smith, *The Fate of Justice*, 158.

²⁸ They also tend to re-vocalise MT’s Piel of כלה as Qal. Cf. LXX ἐκόπασεν, Targ. והמידת.

²⁹ Willey, ‘The Importunate Woman,’ 129-130, n. 3.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 130, n. 3. Cf. Smith who also argues that ותכל can be understood in terms of David’s determination to do something concerning Absalom, and shows that both Piel of כלה (Pr. 16:30) and Qal (1Sam. 20:7, 9, 33; 25:17, Esth. 7:7) can have the meaning ‘to be determined,’ ‘to decide’ to do something. He also notes that when this root implies someone’s determination to do something the role of pathos rather than rationality is in view and thus would explain the presence of the king’s spirit as the subject of the verb in 2 Sam. 13:39. Smith, *The Fate of Justice*, 162, n. 47.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 158. Fokkelman also shows that לצאת אל in the books of Samuel is used in a military sense, to march against, to set out on a military expedition. Fokkelman, *Narrative Art*, 127. It is also important to note that על and אל are used in Samuel interchangeably. McCarter, *II Samuel*, 338.

combination is paired with ‘to come against you’ (לבוא עליך), כִּי־כִלְתָהּ הָרְעָה מֵעַם אֲבִי לְבוֹא עֲלֶיךָ, could be a variant parallel to 2 Sam. 13:39a, וְתָכַל [רוּחַ] הַמֶּלֶךְ לִצְאָת אֵל.³² But to establish the negative reading of v. 39a, i.e. ‘the [spirit of] the king was determined to go against Absalom,’ with greater certainty it is important to consider the rest of the sentence. Unfortunately, v. 39b, כִּי־נָחַם עַל־אֲמֹנֹן כִּי־מָת, is similarly ambiguous since נָחַם, like כָּלָה, can represent a variety of attitudes or emotional states – grief, regret, contrition, comfort, etc. However, Smith persuasively demonstrates that whenever the sequence כִּי כִי־נָחַם appears in the Bible the second כִּי usually introduces a causative clause and thus ascribes negative connotation to נָחַם, i.e. to regret, to grieve (cf. Gen. 6:7).³³ Based on Jongeling’s analysis of the use of עַל נָחַם,³⁴ which with one exception (Jer. 31:15) represents ‘unpleasant feelings toward someone/something,’ i.e. to be sorry, to grieve,³⁵ Smith concludes that this clause is best understood as ‘because he [David] was grieved over Amnon for he was dead.’ Thus in view of David’s lingering grief on account of Amnon’s murder (v. 39b) the negative reading of וְתָכַל דָּוִד הַמֶּלֶךְ לִצְאָת אֵל־אֲבִישָׁלוֹם, i.e. ‘the [spirit of] the king was determined to go against Absalom,’ (v. 39a) as opposed to a positive one, i.e. ‘the spirit of the king longed to go out to Absalom,’ is more favourable.

In fact, David’s hostility towards his fratricide can also be supported by the immediate context of 2 Sam. 14 and its wider setting. First of all, if the statement in v. 39 was meant to be read positively, then Joab’s ruse involving a sage from Tekoa would have been redundant and logistically taxing. Secondly, to read v. 39 positively one has to explain: 1.) why after Absalom’s quasi-restoration in 2 Sam. 14:21, David withholds his own audience from

³² Besides, the variant reading of the preposition as עַל in v. 39a is supported by two MSS, Targ., and LXX^L. Smith, *The Fate of Justice*, 158.

³³ *Ibid.*, 159-161.

³⁴ Jongeling, ‘Joab,’ 118.

³⁵ Smith, *The Fate of Justice*, 159-161.

Absalom for two more years;³⁶ and 2.) why after 2 years of his supposed ‘reconciliation’ with the king Absalom thinks that David wants to execute him (2 Sam. 14:32). Furthermore, although indirectly, 2 Sam. 14:13 may also speak in favour of the negative reading of v. 39, and, for that matter, of 2 Sam. 14:1, ‘the king’s heart was against Absalom’/ כִּי־לֵב הַמֶּלֶךְ עַל־אַבְשָׁלוֹם. In 2 Sam. 14:13 the Tekoite connects the fate of Absalom with the fate of the king’s subjects and asks David, ‘why have you devised (הִשָּׁב) this against the people of God...?’ If the present episode has no hint of David’s hostility towards his murderous son, and by extension toward his people, then the woman’s question, which is undoubtedly negative (cf. 2 Sam. 14:14), is left without a proper antecedent and as such is ungrounded. If, however, both כִּי־לֵב הַמֶּלֶךְ עַל־אַבְשָׁלוֹם (14:1b) and וְתָכַל דָּוִד הַמֶּלֶךְ לְצַאת אֶל־אַבְשָׁלוֹם (13:39a) speak of David’s vengeful intentions towards Absalom, then the narrative does give a window into the king’s heart, creating a legitimate platform for the woman’s fiction of an *endangered* fratricide in vv. 5-11, 15-17³⁷ and the charges of malicious scheming she levels against the king in v. 13.³⁸

It is against this background of David’s determination to take punitive actions against Absalom, a son who avenged the honour of his sister by murdering her rapist, David’s firstborn, that the Tekoite is recruited to deliver her story. Embedded into her lengthy

³⁶ Smith shows that in the Hebrew Bible ‘when a superior refuses to allow an inferior “to see his face,” ... , it is because the inferior person is considered morally unworthy.’ *Ibid.*, 177. Cf. McCarter, *II Samuel*, 349.

³⁷ Cf. Smith’s observation that in 2 Sam. 13 there is no paternal affection for Absalom in view, only for Amnon. If Joab had perceived affection in David for Absalom, then the woman’s appeal would have capitalised on it. She instead uses other tactics. Smith, *The Fate of Justice*, 162-163.

³⁸ Of pertinence for this point is that Pr. 16:30 not only features the Piel of כָּלָה (cf. 2 Sam. 13:39a) as a parallel to הִשָּׁב (cf. 2 Sam. 14:14), but also links these verbs with explicitly negative nouns, i.e. ‘perverse things,’ תְּהַפְּכוֹת, and ‘evil,’ רָעָה. Interestingly enough, in 1 Sam. 20:33 Saul’s determination to bring evil against David by killing him, כִּי־כָלָה הָיָא מֵעַם אֲבִיו לְהַמִּית אֶת־דָּוִד, is noticed by Jonathan, וַיִּדַע יְהוֹנָתָן, and he attempts to save David. In 2 Sam. 14:1 David’s hostility towards Absalom, כִּי־לֵב הַמֶּלֶךְ עַל־אַבְשָׁלוֹם, is perceived by Joab, וַיִּדַע יוֹאָב בְּנִצְרֵיהָ, and he recruits a wise woman to ensure his safety. Oddly enough, 1 Sam. 20 provides another parallel, although on a conceptual level (and partly syntactical), not on a linguistic one, to the David/Absalom story, i.e. 1 Sam. 20:34 where Jonathan grieves on account of his father’s plan to kill David - כִּי כִי־נָחַם עַל־אַמְנוֹן כִּי־מָת (2 Sam. 13:39b). It might be noted that in 1 Sam. 20:34 the first כִּי clause has a negative meaning, and the second כִּי has a causative function.

supplication and highlighted via the broken syntax of distress is the advocacy for the preservation of YHWH's people (vv. 13-14). Placed at the heart of her speech and delivered without the protective guise of a fiction this outcry becomes the principal point in the woman's appeal.

IV. Royal Deviance Narratives and 2 Sam. 14.

A few studies, variously focused, have been undertaken on ancient Levantine materials in all of which the common denominator is a king who infracts some sacral agreement and jeopardises his subjects.³⁹ These studies have established a direct correlation between the actions of an errant monarch and the outbreak of supernatural or natural cataclysms (plagues, famine, storms, etc.) that compromised the wellbeing of his people.

Offering systematisation to these materials and looking particularly at the Mediterranean region (Israel, Hatti, and Greece), Hanson identifies a more pronounced pattern of royal deviance which develops along a noticeable clustering of motifs: '1.) a breach of the sacred by the king; 2.) punishment by the deity in the form of plague, famine, or drought; 3.) consultation of an intermediary and the intermediary's interpretation; 4.) return of confiscated property or other restitution; 5.) sacrifices offered to the offended deity; 6.) the deity's appeasement and abatement of catastrophe.'⁴⁰ Surveying texts produced in a variety of genres, Hanson explains that they are undergirded by the overlap in cultural assumptions that the right equilibrium between the divine and human worlds was largely maintained by ancient Levantine kings.⁴¹ As a corollary to this dynamic, an offset of the equilibrium by a

³⁹ On this subject see, for example, Malamat, 'Doctrines of Causality,' 1-12; S. Mowinckel, *He That Cometh* (Oxford, 1956), 69-71; K. Bernhardt, *Das Problem der altorientalischen Königsideologie im Alten Testament unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Geschichte der Psalmenexegese dargestellt und kritisch gewürdigt* (Leiden, 1961), 85; Hoftijzer, 'David,' 433; K. Hanson, 'Sin, Purification, and Group Process,' in H. Sun *et al* (eds), *Problems in Biblical Theology: Essays in Honor of Rolf P. Knierim* (Grand Rapids, 1997), 167-191.

⁴⁰ Hanson, 'When the King,' 11.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 19.

king would normally provoke divine wrath and lead to severe group repercussions. Such tight correlation between the poor decisions and/or actions of a leader and their detrimental implications for his society is ‘comprehensible in cultures where the group is the focus rather than the individual: sociality over individuality.’⁴² Hanson further explains that ‘unlike modern, dominant, North Atlantic cultures, ancient Mediterranean cultures socialized individuals to be embedded in the group; in ancient documents, individuals are virtually always oriented to some larger grouping: guild, clan, village, ethnic group, or region.’⁴³ As a result of such group-orientation the community could either benefit or suffer from the policies of its leaders. Kings, chieftains, and figures in other key roles of leadership ‘not only represent the people in some abstract way, they embody the whole people.’⁴⁴ Hanson notes that even in cases when the policy of the group was questioned (e.g. Gen 18:22-33; Num 16:20-22), communities nevertheless paid the consequences for an individual’s poor judgments (e.g. Josh 7:1-26).⁴⁵ ‘As Malina observes about ancient Mediterranean cultures, the primary emphasis is on dyadic personality, on the individual as embedded in the group, on behavior as determined by significant others.’⁴⁶

As has already been mentioned, at the heart of all the incidents analysed by Hanson, and identified by him as the Royal Deviance Narratives,⁴⁷ are offences committed by royal personas, which take on a variety of forms: a challenge to a god’s power (1 Sam. 5:1-7:1), an insult to a god’s representative (Iliad 1), violation of a moral code (2 Sam. 21:1-14; KUB xiv, 8; Oedipus Tyrannus), a failure to sacrifice (KUB xiv, 8), and an irrational/unexplained offense (2 Sam. 24:1-25).⁴⁸ Considered against these full-fledged accounts of the Royal

⁴² *Ibid.*, 19-20.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 19-20.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 20.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 20.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 20.

⁴⁷ This term as well as its abbreviation, RD, will be adopted in the present discussion.

⁴⁸ Hanson, ‘When the King,’ 11, 20.

Deviance schema,⁴⁹ 2 Sam. 14 and its development in the subsequent chapters can also be seen as an RD episode, even if it is only a variation modulated on the established template.⁵⁰ Admittedly, some of the characteristics of the RD genre are missing from 2 Sam. 14, yet its essentials are still detectable: 1.) a breach of the sacred by a king - a.) the failure to uphold justice in the case of a royal rape and in its subsequent vindication (2 Sam. 13); b.) taking an oath (2 Sam. 14:10-11), hearing the outcome of its breach (2 Sam. 14: 13, 14) and yet violating it (2 Sam. 14:23, 24)); 2.) the consultation of an intermediary and the intermediary's interpretation of events (the Tekoite's parable and specifically 2 Sam. 14:13-14); and 3.) the divine punishment (Absalom's revolt culminating in a battle described as a plague (2 Sam. 15 -18, and specifically 18:6-8)).

In fact, among the errant monarchs listed by Hanson in his study, David is already featured in two RD accounts – the Gibeonite episode in 2 Sam. 21 and the story of a census conducted by him in 2 Sam. 24:1-24. Moreover, 2 Sam. 14 is embedded into a bigger RD account created by David's misconduct with Bathsheba (2 Sam. 11) and identified as such by Nathan (2 Sam. 12).⁵¹ Incorporated into the web of punitive events predicted in 2 Sam. 12 and in itself presenting an RD case, 2 Sam. 14 therefore deals with both circumstances of David's deviance as a king. Since the other RD accounts in David's career most likely predate the Amnon-Absalom entanglement,⁵² its delegation to a sage becomes an occasion to explore the deadly pattern in royal behaviour. In fact, scholars observe that the Tekoite

⁴⁹ Although not all of the characteristic motifs are present in each narrative he discusses.

⁵⁰ In 2 Sam. 14 the catastrophe has not struck yet but it is predicted in v. 14 and is developed in the later chapters, esp. in 2 Sam. 18. Note that Hoftijzer already recognised that 2 Sam. 14 belongs to the RD materials. Hoftijzer, 'David,' 433.

⁵¹ Note that Samuel scholars observe that the so-called double or complimentary causation, i.e. divine and human agency, is detected behind judgments that befall David. Therefore even though overt supernatural cataclysms as penal tools for David's transgressions are missing from 2 Sam. 11-18, the same RD principles operate in this section, qualifying it for the RD genre.

⁵² Scholars tend to locate the 2 Sam. 21 account earlier in David's reign 'when issues with Saul were more pressing.' Firth, *1 & 2 Samuel*, 503, although for Firth the precise chronological placement of 2 Sam. 21-24 in David's reign is not important. Some locate it before Shimei's curses in 2 Sam. 16:5-8 and some see it as the first half of the story in 2 Sam. 9 (and thus prior to 2 Sam. 14). *Ibid.*, 503 and the bibliography on 402. The 2 Sam. 24 account features Joab, yet its location in relation to 2 Sam. 14 is harder to establish.

punctuates her speech with allusions to recent affairs at the court,⁵³ owing her awareness of its unfortunate chronicles to Joab (2 Sam. 14:2, 20). Either with his help or singlehandedly,⁵⁴ she therefore extrapolates the royal deviance theme dominant in David's reign and tailors her speech to address it. Although avoiding overt references to the Amnon-Absalom-David conflict in her parabolic appeal, the Tekoite, nonetheless, touches on the basic idea of their predicament, as well as the events precipitating it, and speaks to the issues crucial to the RD principle. Acting in the status of an intermediary⁵⁵ and stressing the severity of her son's/Absalom's situation, as well as its repercussions for a larger community, the woman wrests a vow from David. Given the nature of David's office as an ANE monarch – mediating between a nation and their deity – the oath obtained from him (vv. 10-11), and the ominous prognosis of its breach (vv. 13-14), becomes a crucial component in the woman's appeal.⁵⁶

V. David's Oath in 2 Sam. 14:10-11.

The importance of vows for the royal deviance materials can hardly be overestimated as they constitute a sacred element which, if violated, offsets the aforementioned balance in the world of divine - human relations. Regarding the oath taken by David in 2 Sam. 14:11 some scholars are highly sceptical about its legally binding nature on the monarch and the implication it had for his kingdom. Since it was obtained in the context of a fictitious story

⁵³ See Willey for the analysis of the ubiquitous *כִּלְבֵּר הַזֶּה* in 2 Sam. 11-14. It appears thirteen times in the span of these chapters (cf. 8 times in the rest of 1 and 2 Samuel), each time referencing David's affair with Bathsheba and the subsequent tragedies it generated. Willey, 'The Importunate Woman,' 125-127. For other allusions see Lyke, *King David*, 99-100.

⁵⁴ Note that Joab is a key player both in 2 Sam. 11, Uriah's assassination, and in 2 Sam. 24, the carrying out of a census. In 2 Sam. 24 he even tried to stop David (v. 3). However, he is not mentioned in 2 Sam. 21. But since the Gibeonite episode had to have taken place earlier in David's reign and before 2 Sam. 16, it is not unlikely that Joab would have been aware of it and in some capacity involved in it. Alternatively, given the pandemic scale of plagues in 2 Sam. 21:1-14 and 24:15 and given that Tekoa is only 10 miles away from Jerusalem, the woman might have been well aware of these events without Joab's help.

⁵⁵ Although by proxy.

⁵⁶ It should be kept in mind, however, that David's breach of an oath in 2 Sam. 14 is not the only sacred element (to use Hanson's category) that is violated in the Amnon-Absalom dilemma. For David's repeated failure to uphold justice in the judicial matters that concerned his family, see Smith, *The Fate of Justice*, 146 -204.

the king was under no obligation to honour it in connection to Absalom, and his subjects were in no way jeopardised by his disregard of it.⁵⁷ Viewed against the background of RD principles, however, the oath in the Tekoite's appeal gets substantial credence and is, in fact, one of her strongest rhetorical tools.⁵⁸

In fact, the presence of vows is not only attested in both inscriptional and biblical petitionary narratives but is also shown to play an integral role in them.⁵⁹ Based on the Meşad Ḥashavyahu ostrakon Parker and Schipper demonstrate that the woman's speech implements a number of comparable strategies: vv. 5-8 contain a narrative report and vv. 9-17 use reassurance, an oath, royal flattery, a blessing, and pleas for mercy.⁶⁰ So in accordance with petitionary conventions the Tekoite (vv. 5-8) skilfully spins a story of fratricide and reinforces it with references to customs of blood vengeance and laws of succession and inheritance. In response to this David gives a hasty yet ambiguous ruling – לְכִי לְבֵיתְךָ וְאֲנִי אֲצוּהָ – לְכִי עֲלֶיךָ (v. 8).⁶¹ Sensing David's reluctance to give a direct sanction regarding her son, or knowing that her mission has not yet been fully presented (vv. 13-14), the Tekoite proceeds to exact an oath from him – יִזְכְּרֶנָּה הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲתִיּוּהוּ אֱלֹהֶיךָ. For the discussion at hand the following three issues are of importance: 1.) coerced by the woman David gives a proper vow; 2.) the woman's rationale for it is group-oriented in its focus; and 3.) the oath and its surrounding themes are echoed in the development of Absalom's revolt.

⁵⁷ W. Schottroff, 'Gedenken' im alten Orient und im Alten Testament: die Wurzel zākar im semitischen Sprachkreis (Neukirchen, 1964), 168-169; Simon, 'The Poor Man's Ewe Lamb,' 224; D. Gunn, 'Traditional Composition in the "Succession Narrative,"' VT 26 (1976), 217-222; K. Whitelam, *The Just King: Monarchical Judicial Authority in Ancient Israel* (Sheffield, 1979), 127-35; Camp, 'The Wise Women,' 21; Bellefontaine, 'Customary Law,' 207.

⁵⁸ For those who understand the vow in v. 11 as legally binding on David, see, for example, P. de Boer, *Gedenken und Gedächtnis in der Welt des Alten Testaments* (Stuttgart, 1962), 33; Hoftijzer, 'David,' 421-24; McCarter, *II Samuel*, 348; Ackroyd, *The Second Book of Samuel*, 132; Pyper, *David as Reader*, 129; Smith, *The Fate of Justice*, 166-167.

⁵⁹ Parker, *Stories*, 13-35.

⁶⁰ Schipper, *Parables*, 63-72. On the Meşad Ḥashavyahu ostrakon that contains an oath and is thought to be a parallel to the petition in 2 Sam. 14, see Parker, *Stories*, 13-35, especially 15-17; W. Dobbs-Allsopp, 'The Genre of the Mesad Hashavyahu Ostrakon,' *BASOR* 295 (1994), 49-55.

⁶¹ Smith rightly observes that the king twice says that he will give orders regarding the woman, עֲלֶיךָ, not her son. Smith, *The Fate of Justice*, 165.

Against those who downplay the importance of vv. 10-11 it might be noted that the formulation of David's response to the woman's request – חִי־יְהוָה אִם־יִפְּלֵ מִשְׁעֶרֶת בְּנֶךְ אֶרֶצָה – shows that he understood her bid in terms of a proper oath invoking the name and life of Yahweh (v. 11). In fact, David's reply might be 'an idiomatic oath of protection' as seen from 1 Sam. 14:45 where the Israelite forces swear to ensure Jonathan's safety – חֲלִילָה חִי־יְהוָה – אִם־יִפְּלֵ מִשְׁעֶרֶת רֵאשׁוֹ אֶרֶצָה.⁶² Secondly, of special pertinence for the discussion, is the second half of the woman's request for an oath, which, along with other elements in her speech, exhibits a marked concern for a bigger group – גֹּאֵל הַדָּם לִשְׁחַת [מִהֶרְבֵּית כֹּן] (v. 10).⁶³ Hoftijzer observes that the Hiphil of רָבָה coupled with לִשְׁחַת can have at least three shades or emphases in its meaning: 1.) the multiplicity of an action; 2.) the outcome of an action; and 3.) the intensity of an action.⁶⁴ Following Driver and opting for the last meaning of this construction, i.e. the intensity of the act of killing, he explains that the Tekoite refers to the eventual extinction of both sons, not just the remaining one.⁶⁵ However, given the fact that earlier she connects her fratricide to his father's remnant and name on the face of the earth/ שֵׁם וּשְׂאֵרֵית עַל־פְּנֵי הָאֲדָמָה (v. 7) her concern in the prevention of 'big killing'/'ravaging to increase'⁶⁶ (v. 10) might, in fact, be for the generations of those who are yet to be born to her living son. Since the concept of family encompassed 'its first ancestors and all future progeny in a complex, yet real and enduring entity,'⁶⁷ the figure of her surviving offspring is simultaneously uni- and multi-referential and his demise at the hands of the avenger of blood would qualify for the 'big killing' formulation. If this reading is accepted then it is of importance that this phrase is not the only link created by the Tekoite between her fictitious

⁶² Schipper, *Parables*, 68.

⁶³ Driver explains the Qere מִהֶרְבֵּית as the construct form of הֶרְבָּה, Inf. Abs., and the Ketiv, הֶרְבִּית, as an error for הֶרְבִּוֹת (cf. 1 Sam. 1:12). Driver, *Notes*, 307.

⁶⁴ Hoftijzer, 'David,' 429, n. 2. Indeed, Driver shows that the usage in this construction is, for example, parallel to לְהִתְפַּלֵּל לְהֶרְבֵּיתָהּ in 1 Sam. 1:12, which means 'lit. *did much in respect of* praying, i.e. *prayed long or much*' (cf. Is. 55:7, again 2 Sam. 14:11, Ex. 36:5, and Ps. 78:38). Driver, *Notes*, 307, cf. 13.

⁶⁵ Hoftijzer, 'David,' 429.

⁶⁶ Smith, *The Fate of Justice*, 166.

⁶⁷ Brichto, 'Kin, Cult, Land,' 5.

son and a larger community. Having placed him⁶⁸ under the protection of an oath sealed with the name of YHWH, the Tekoite outlines the prospect of its possible violation in vv. 13-14 and stresses group repercussions for David's subjects. First of all, her statement in v. 13 connects the continued exile of Absalom to the fate of God's people – ולמה חשבתה כזאת על-עם (v. 13a, c) (cf. 2 Sam. 13:39, 14:1) and thus is again group-oriented. Secondly, just as the oath in v. 10 was meant to prevent the cessation of a group, i.e. the woman's clan, via the Hiphil of רבה the account of consequences of the failure to honour the oath is also fraught with locutions of a massacre, i.e. the plural of מות נמות, and the use of נגר⁶⁹ in the simile that follows (v. 14).⁷⁰ In addition, the interconnectedness between Absalom and the people of God can be detected in v. 14c – לבלתי ידה ממנו נדה – which describes God's intentions regarding the banished one and can be read as both 'not to banish the banished one from him,' i.e. God, and 'not to banish the banished one from us,' i.e. God's people, stressing the group focus of the woman's speech even further.

Lastly, against those who deem the vow in v. 11 of no consequence, it must be noted that both v. 11 and the woman's speech in general become, in a way, programmatic for the insurrection led by Absalom in 2 Sam. 15-18. First of all, the account of Absalom's demise (his hair getting caught in the branches of a large oak (2 Sam. 18:9)) is reminiscent of his father's own oath that the hair of the woman's son will not fall on the ground (2 Sam. 14:11).⁷¹ Secondly, the banishing root נדה, so prominent in 2 Sam. 14:13-14 when the woman advocates for Absalom's restoration – וחשב מחשבות לבלתי ידה ממנו נדה /השיב המלך את-נדהו – is echoed in David's assessment of his own banishment from Jerusalem in the outbreak of civil

⁶⁸ And Absalom as his referent.

⁶⁹ It has been noted that the root נגר, when used with liquids, usually suggests *torrential* floods, powerful issue of water, etc. For other possibilities see discussion below.

⁷⁰ Although in 2 Sam. 14:11 David refrains from including a self-curse for a breach into his oath, as he does on other occasions (cf. 2 Sam. 19:13, cf. also Ruth 1:17), the Tekoite will use language forms specifically associated with curse traditions (v. 14) explaining the outcome of his actions.

⁷¹ McCarter, *II Samuel*, 349; Brueggemann, *First and Second Samuel*, 293; W. Propp, 'Kinship in 2 Samuel 13,' *CBQ* 55 (1993), 50, n. 45; Lyke, *King David*, 172-173; Schipper, *Parables*, 68.

war – and he [Absalom] will bring ruin on us (thrust, impel (Hiphil of נדח) evil)/ והדיח עלינו את־הרעה (2 Sam. 15:14).⁷² Finally, and most importantly, the motif of mass casualties variously emphasised and cautioned against in vv. 10, 14 will find its realisation in the defeat of Absalom's troops in 2 Sam. 18:6-8.⁷³ Thus the royal oath, and its wider setting, will be developed in the Absalom cycle and is not as inconsequential as some scholars want to make it. Given that it is situated in a royal deviance episode, it is only natural that its infraction will be penalised by an eruption of supernatural or natural cataclysms (cf. 2 Sam. 21:1-14). The premise of this discussion is that the fatal outcome of the unresolved triangulation between David, Absalom, and the people of God, i.e. the breach of the oath, is addressed by the Tekoite and is compressed into a simile in v. 14, to which this discussion will now turn.

VI. The Metaphor in 2 Sam. 14:14: כִּי־מֹת נָמוֹת וְכָמִים הַנִּגְרִים אֶרְצָה אֲשֶׁר לֹא יֵאֲסֹפוּ.

According to the RD genre, the Tekoite functions as an intermediary in 2 Sam. 14 advising the erring king on the consequences of his actions. Having noted the connection between his hostile disposition towards Absalom (2 Sam. 14:13c, [cf. 2 Sam. 13:39, 14:1]) and his subjects (v. 13a) – a typical RD principle at the heart of an RD narrative – she proceeds to outline the fate of David's nation in v. 14. Vv. 13-14 are indeed challenging, yet some of their imagery, i.e. an expanded simile – כִּי־מֹת נָמוֹת וְכָמִים הַנִּגְרִים אֶרְצָה אֲשֶׁר לֹא יֵאֲסֹפוּ – can be reconstructed and will assist in understanding the woman's speech. The first clause of v. 14, ⁷⁴כִּי־מֹת נָמוֹת, has been correctly identified by Hoftijzer as signalling the punitive demise of

⁷² Kronholm says that the Hiphil of נדח in 2 Sam. 15:14 means that Absalom 'impelled, i.e. set in motion, the evil against us.' Kronholm, *TDOT*, 235. Lexica usually list two roots: נדח I – banish, drive away, etc., and נדח II – thrust, impel, wield (*HALOT*, 673, *DCH*, 624-625), but to postulate a new root to accommodate only three occurrences where נדח is used with inanimate objects (Deut. 19:5, 20:19, 2 Sam. 15:14) might not be necessary. Having the general meaning of a movement in the direction away from the one generating it, these usages can still fall under the same semantic umbrella.

⁷³ See discussion below.

⁷⁴ Note that LXX^L and Theodotion here have 'for your son is dead.' McCarter prefers this reading and thinks that it is a reference to Amnon. He says that in the MT it has become a trite generality: כִּי־מֹת נָמוֹת / 'we must all die.' McCarter, *II Samuel*, 340-341. Smith, however, believes that LXX^L is 'an attempt to make explicit what

David's subjects. He rightly establishes that the use of inf. abs. Qal of מוֹת followed by a verbal form of the same root appears in contexts of judgement and unnatural death.⁷⁵ The simile that continues this prognosis for the nation has been surprisingly understood in more neutral ways, i.e. either as referring to the general irrevocability of death or, less often and without specification, in terms of an untimely death.

Some discussions on כמים הנגרים ארצה⁷⁶ are rather abbreviated. Driver, for example, applies it to Absalom and states that 'life may end at any moment: when it is past it cannot be recalled: thou [David] mayest find this to be too true in the case of thy son, if thou leavest him in banishment.'⁷⁷ Similarly Brueggemann says that כמים הנגרים ארצה is a 'proverb that illustrates the delicacy and transiency of life. King David must accept that Amnon is gone and must be relinquished but [he] has a chance for a saving act toward Absalom.'⁷⁸ Gevarjahu, on the other hand, admits that he is not aware of any direct parallels to v. 14a in either biblical or rabbinic discussions, yet offers a very sophisticated theory on the imagery's origin in the natural phenomenon of water streams and floods rushing through valleys or crevices (cf. Mich. 1:4, Qoh. 12:6).⁷⁹ He concludes his argument by theorising that perhaps the לא יאספו element was originally utilised in funerary laments over those who died in a foreign land and thus could not have been buried in their family tomb, i.e. 'gathered to their

may be implied in the MT' making the MT preferable. Smith, *The Fate of Justice*, 171, n. 76. Given that the MT is supported by 4 QSam^c (although it is fragmentary) and that 2 Sam. 12:14 uses the same construction for the death of a person as payment for David's misconduct – מוֹת יָמוּת – גם הבן הילוד לך מוֹת יָמוּת – the MT's כִּי־מוֹת נִמוֹת should be favoured.

⁷⁵ Hoftijzer, 'David,' 432-433. For the biblical passages that contain this formulation see Hoftijzer, 'David,' 432-433, n. 2. Note, however, Fokkelman's observation that in certain passages where this construction occurs and judgment is envisaged there is still a possibility of repentance and thus a chance to escape a death sentence. Fokkelman, *Narrative Art*, 136.

⁷⁶ Conroy simply lists it as a striking simile in 2 Samuel but does not discuss its meaning or function in the events narrated in ch. 14. Conroy, *Absalom*, 125.

⁷⁷ Driver, *Notes*, 308. Cf. Whybray, *The Succession Narrative*, 81; Willey, 'The Importunate Woman,' 120.

⁷⁸ Brueggemann, *First and Second Samuel*, 294. Cf. Hertzberg, *I and II Samuel*, 332.

⁷⁹ Gevarjahu, 'The Return,' 18-19. The passages he cites, however, offer dissimilar scenarios of spilled water and therefore scholars are hesitant to accept his reading. See, for example, Conroy, *Absalom*, 125, n. 44.

fathers' or 'gathered to their people.'⁸⁰ Following Hoftijzer, Fokkelman finds this simile to be a cipher for a premature death as the consequence of David's guilt and treats the images in vv. 7 and 14 as a literary tandem, 'the metaphor of the water oozing away is the ingenious successor to the warming fire in v. 7f, which stood for life. There the clan, just as threatening as David now is, tries to douse the widow's ember, i.e. to bring about the untimely death of her son by execution. Here we have to do with the consequences of pouring out water. The water seeps away into the soil = life is prematurely lost through David's doing, by way of divine punishment.'⁸¹ Although the present discussion agrees with both Hoftijzer and Fokkelman on the function of מות נמות and the water imagery it will, however, propose a more specific reading of the simile.

Based on Scott's classification of proverbs⁸² Camp provides a somewhat extended discussion of כמים הנגרים ארצה. She believes that it 'falls into the category of "identificational proverb,"... characteristic of folk wisdom not only in the ancient Near East but also in the classical world and modern Europe.'⁸³ For her Pr. 17:14 ('the beginning of strife is like letting out water, so quit before the quarrel breaks out') offers the best parallel to 2 Sam. 14:14. She observes that the image of wasted water remains somewhat constant in biblical traditions, yet its applications may vary, and concludes her discussion by saying that 'a firm decision on the "correct" interpretation may not be possible.'⁸⁴ In fact, 'the ambiguity may have been fully intentional. It is a characteristic of poetic speech to intend more than is actually stated, to carry a surplus of meaning.'⁸⁵ In response to Camp it should be noted that

⁸⁰ Gevarjahu, 'The Return,' 20.

⁸¹ Fokkelman, *Narrative Art*, 136.

⁸² R. Scott, 'Folk Proverbs of the Ancient Near East,' in J. Crenshaw (ed.), *Studies in Ancient Israelite Wisdom* (New York, 1976), 417-28, especially 419-420.

⁸³ Camp, 'The Wise Women,' 20.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 21.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 21. Since the Tekoite pretended to be a mourner it should be noted that some keening women indeed used riddles in their solemn compositions, yet, as it will be shown below, the formulation in v. 14 is not one of them. For riddles used in funerary laments see M. Bar-Ilan, *Some Jewish Women in Antiquity* (Atlanta, 1998), 74, n. 59.

the formulations in 2 Sam. 14:14, וכמים הנגרים ארצה, and Pr. 17:14, פוטר מים, have only one lexeme in common, i.e. ‘water.’ In addition, the spilled water representing the beginning of strife in Pr. 17 is a strange figure to use as a parallel to the conflict which originated at least three years prior to the appeal in 2 Sam. 14 (2 Sam. 13:38).⁸⁶ Lastly, the trajectory of Camp’s discussion of כמים הנגרים ארצה from being intentionally ambiguous to seeing in it ‘a loaded remark, one that encapsulates the bathos of the many lives... in the dilemma that currently faces the king’⁸⁷ is inconsistent and thus puzzling.

Another discussion worth mentioning is offered by Caquot who, like Hoftijzer, understands both מות נמות and כמים הנגרים ארצה as referents to the demise of God’s people.⁸⁸ He speculates on the uncontainable and thus destructive nature of water and views the simile in question as representing death due to violent floods or cascades of water poured over the ground (Mic. 1:4, Job 20:28, Lam. 3:49). For him the Tekoite in her speech juxtaposes David’s overflowing passion, which is fatal for Absalom, and God’s nonviolence (v. 14b), which is restorative for the one who is banished from him.⁸⁹ Caquot’s argument is rightly critiqued by Smith who points out that Caquot’s emphasis on God’s nonviolence contradicts his reading of מות נמות in terms of divine punishments.⁹⁰ Smith’s discussion of 2 Sam. 14 is very detailed and generally valuable,⁹¹ yet his treatment of כמים הנגרים ארצה is unsatisfactory. Disagreeing with Hoftijzer’s theory on מות נמות he says that since ‘fatalistic sounding statements about the irreversibility of human mortality’ have already been made in 2 Sam. 11:25 and 12:22 (cf. Eccl. 9:2-6), v. 14a should be seen as ‘the fundamental reality that God

⁸⁶ Firth also cites Pr. 17:14 but does not elaborate on its connection to 2 Sam. 14:14. Firth, *1 & 2 Samuel*, 446.

⁸⁷ Camp, ‘The Wise Women,’ 21.

⁸⁸ A. Caquot, ‘Un point difficile du discours de la Tékoïte (II Sam 14, 13-15),’ in D. Garrone, F. Israel (eds), *Storia e tradizioni di Israele: Scritti in onore di J. Alberto Soggin* (Brescia, 1991), 23-25.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 22-23.

⁹⁰ Smith, *The Fate of Justice*, 171.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 167-172.

has assigned all people to die (cf. Gen. 2:17).⁹² Ironic, however, is his citation of Gen. 2:17 where מות נמות does presuppose divine punishments and as such is listed by Hoftijzer.

Seeing that the precise meaning of v. 14a has so far resisted persuasive identification and that it is crucial for the royal deviance account, this discussion will attempt to reconstruct its semantics by looking at extrabiblical and biblical formulations which, without exception, are located in what could be generally labelled as *distress literature*.⁹³ Hoftijzer is correct about the meaning of מות נמות,⁹⁴ and his discussion on the woman's prognosis of a violent death awaiting God's people as punishment for David's failure to comply with his own ruling (2 Sam. 14:11) can now be taken further. Since the projection of doom formulated by מות נמות is immediately followed by כמים הנגרים ארצה it is only natural to assume that this simile is meant to reinforce and elucidate the 'we will surely die' proclamation.⁹⁵ Thus it will be shown that the metaphor in v. 14a does, in fact, have both extra-biblical and biblical parallels,⁹⁶ unmistakably charged with punitive, fatal semantics. Moreover, it will be suggested that the imagery offered by the Tekoite is a form of collage of death-related images built on to the well-attested core – spilled water as a cipher for lost life – maximising its symbolic density.⁹⁷ Admittedly, any comparative study should be approached with caution and must be exercised in relation to כמים הנגרים ארצה to avoid unnecessary overtaxing of its

⁹² *Ibid.*, 171.

⁹³ This literature in turn is differentiated along the lines of a variety of genres; yet the common denominator to all of the attestations of the simile is its reference to some kind of human distress, more specifically and most frequently 'death.'

⁹⁴ Hoftijzer, 'David,' 432-433.

⁹⁵ On the asseverative waw before כמים see the bibliography cited by Hoftijzer. *Ibid.*, 433, n. 2.

⁹⁶ Hoftijzer, in a footnote, says that to his knowledge there are no exact parallels to the words כמים הנגרים ארצה. Although he notes Ps. 58:8 and Ps. 22:14 he does not discuss their significance. He also adds Job 11:16 but this text's imagery is different from the reading he suggests for 2 Sam. 14:14. *Ibid.*, 433-434, n. 4.

⁹⁷ Cf. Camp's hypothesis that 2 Sam. 14:14 'is a shining example of a proverb "in action," perhaps a reference to a well-known saying rather than a full citation. It is a proverb not nestled quietly in a collection but employed by a person of agile mind and persuasive tongue to influence a situation, suggesting once more that neither "wisdom speech" nor its effective utilisation was the sole domain of the royal court.' Camp, 'The Wise Women,' 20.

meaning, yet the overlap in genres and themes that put this simile to use across cultures justifies this line of investigation.

A. The Imagery of ‘Spilled Water’ in Extrabiblical Sources.

A survey of ANE and biblical sources for a cross-cultural metaphorical profile of water shows that water-based imagery was habitually applied to a wide spectrum of experiences associated with extreme psychological and physical discomfort – spanning from emotional distress and its psychosomatic manifestations to intense physical pain to the very climax in health decline, i.e. death.⁹⁸ When the latter was conceptualised as life poured out as water the conventions of ancient rhetoric usually implied that some outside inimical forces (human, demonic, divine) were involved in bringing about such demise. Since some of the extrabiblical sources of interest predate their Biblical counterparts and, more importantly,

⁹⁸ Both ANE and Biblical texts witness frequent conceptualisation of strong unpleasant emotions such as fear and its adjacent bodily dysfunctions (somatisations) via water-related symbolism: in Josh. 7:5, for example, the hearts of people melt and they turn into water – וימס לבב העם ויהי למים, and in Ez. 7:17, 21:12 people’s knees run with water – כל ברכים תלכנה מים, which some understand as the involuntary release of bowels, i.e. urination (cf. Block, who also cites an Akk. parallel. D. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel* (Grand Rapids, 1997-1998), 261, n. 98.), but see how urination is expressed in Job 18:11 - compelled to make water over the feet/ והפיצהו לרגליו. Similarly in cuneiform sources physical manifestations of fear due to black magic aimed at murdering the individual are expressed via the imagery of ‘poured out’ body parts – *his limbs are always ‘poured out.’* M. Stol, ‘Psychosomatic Suffering in Ancient Mesopotamia,’ in T. Abusch, K. van der Toorn (eds), *Mesopotamian Magic: Textual, Historical, and Interpretative Perspectives* (Groningen, 1999), 66. Cf. also ‘*I do not know them, (those) who stung me in my flesh, seized my temples, ‘poured out’ my joints’ (?) (piṭru).*’ *Ibid.*, 67. In addition to fear, depression can be described through similar imagery. In an Akkadian text, a depressed person, who like Job loses everything and suffers from severe depression, is described as having his limbs ‘poured out.’ *Ibid.*, 65. Somatic and psychosomatic symptoms associated with sexual impotence are envisaged in a similar manner – *his flesh is ‘poured down.’* *Ibid.*, 58. Apparently, sickness in general could be formulated as ‘poured out limbs’ as is seen from the following formulation: ‘if his limbs are ‘poured out’ as in a sick man...’ *Ibid.*, 59. Cf. biblical depictions of anxiety and agony, both mental and physical, in Ps. 22:14, כמים נשפכתי והתפרדו כל-עצמותי, as ‘graphic descriptions of feverish anxiety.’ C. Briggs, E. Briggs, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, (Edinburgh, 1906-1907), 196. Cf. Oesterley who says this is ‘utter helplessness’ described in ‘an extremely graphic picture as *being poured out like water*, likening his [the psalmist’s] body to water splashed on the ground and spreading aimlessly, his *bones* being *all out of joint.*’ W. Oesterley, *The Psalms* (London, 1955), 179.

contain all three elements of interest – ‘life,’ ‘pouring out,’ and ‘like water’ – the following discussion will address them first and then turn to the way they feature in the Hebrew Bible.⁹⁹

The extent of the literary proliferation of water-based imagery in Akkadian sources is not significant enough to assess the full scope of its semantics, yet it is sufficient to detect its popularity in contexts of violent and eventually lethal retributions. Thus, for example, a Sumerian prayer of a gravely ill Lugalbanda (c.1.8.2.1) describes him trapped in a mountain cave, where no one can assist him or weep for him (‘Alas, my child!,’ ‘Alas, my brother!’). He prays to his gods for rescue and uses a set of similes representing a variety of lethal scenarios – a throw-stick fallen in the unknown desert, a weakling coming to an end in the mountains. Embedded into this series of pleas is Lugalbanda’s cry, ‘*Do not make me flow away like water in a violent death!*’¹⁰⁰ Another attestation of similar imagery comes from the Babylonian Wisdom materials that cast a violent attack on the righteous sufferer as follows, ‘*I will make him lay down his life,*’¹⁰¹ literally ‘*I will make him pour out his life.*’¹⁰²

A set of analogous metaphorisations of death is featured in a series of Babylonian *Maqlû* incantations that describe rituals performed at morning and night time to counteract life-threatening spells of wizards and witches. Included in these incantations are imprecations that invoke various deities. Apparently the morning performance of rituals ‘fostered the dominance of Šamaš’ and the night time performance ‘required his replacement... by Nuska and Girra.’¹⁰³ The latter deity is repeatedly appealed to to destroy the aforementioned

⁹⁹ It should be noted that some of the biblical passages mentioned below are sometimes cited in connection with 2 Sam. 14, but without any discussion and systematisation. Their citation alongside those passages that are not relevant to the Tekoite’s language shows that their significance for the story at hand is not fully grasped. Youngblood, for example, cites Ps. 58:7, Ps. 22:14-15, which are of relevance (see discussion below), but in addition he lists Job 11:16, Pr. 17:14 which, as will be shown, are not exactly helpful. Gaebelein *et al.*, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, 979.

¹⁰⁰ <http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/#> Accessed August, 2013.

¹⁰¹ *CAD*, t, 8.

¹⁰² W. Lambert, *Babylonian Wisdom Literature* (Winona Lake, 1996), 32-33.

¹⁰³ T. Abusch, ‘Mesopotamian Anti-Witchcraft Literature: Texts and Studies Part I: The Nature of *Maqlû*: Its Character, Divisions, and Calendrical Setting,’ *JNES* 33(1974), 259; *CAD*, n/ I, 299.

evildoers in a variety of ways including the pouring out of their lives like water, *'Let Girru [pour] out their life like water, Let Girru dismiss [them] to the Land of No Return... Let Girru hand [them] over to Namtar, the vizier of the underworld.'*¹⁰⁴ The pairing of the plea 'to pour out their life like water' with the banishment to the Land of no return and the underworld leaves no doubt regarding the fatal semantics of this water-based imagery. Another series of spells ensues soon after, where again the priest intercedes for the complete disintegration of the wizards, this time reinforcing his curse language with more liquid-based imagery, *'Let them melt, dissolve and run down, Let their [l]ife come to an end like water from a skin. Let them die. But let me live...'*¹⁰⁵ In yet another series of *Maqlû* incantations a similar curse is invoked, *'May they come to an end, like water from a water skin, by dripping.'*¹⁰⁶

The imagery of the spilled water signifying the cessation of life is also found in treaties between ANE monarchs. Thus the curse section of the agreement between Šamši-Adad V and Marduk-zākir-šumi I holds an imprecation, *'May Marduk, the great lord whose commands take precedents, [by his unalterable word] order his decay and the dispersion of his people[...]; may he pour out his life like water!'*¹⁰⁷ Similarly, the treaty between the Assyrian king Aššur-nîrāri V and Mati'-ilu of Arpad contains the following threat, *'May Aššur, the father of the gods, who grants kingship, turn your land into a battlefield, your*

¹⁰⁴ W. Lambert, 'An Incantation of the Maqlu Type,' *AO 18* (1957-1958), 293- 294.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 293.

¹⁰⁶ G. Meier, *Die assyrische Beschwörungssammlung Maqlû* (London, 1937), 11. Cf. *'dessen Leben möge Nabu, der Bewohner des mumu, wie Wasser ausgießen,'* H. Hunger, *Babylonische und assyrische Kolophone* (Kevelaer, 1968), 79. And then again, *'dessen Seele möge Nabu wie Wasser ausgießen.'* *Ibid.*, 111. Another shorter incantation contains two intriguing water-related images and describes what the supplicant has been subjected to by wizards, *'They made over images of me to Girru, They immured them in a hole in the West, They fed them to a dog, they lay down the water of my life in a grave. They poured out my water to the stars of the heavens'* (lines 35-37). Lambert, 'An Incantation,' 298. For the comparison of one's life to a water skin see Proverbs: collection 19: c.6.1.19 (cf. 6.1.21.c1, 6.1.23.18, 6.1.24.8) 'A man's water skin is his life. A man's sandals are his eyes. A man's wife is his supervisor (?).'

¹⁰⁷ Parpola, Watanabe, *Neo-Assyrian Treaties*, 4.

*people to devastation (downpour), your cities into mounds, your house to ruins.*¹⁰⁸ Another striking attestation of the imagery of interest is preserved in the epilogue to the Law of Hammurabi. This collection of laws is concluded with an extended list of curses envisaged to befall the one who will disobey Hammurabi's vision of social order. In xlix 81-97 the law-giver entreats Enlil, through the agency of Ninlil, to send plagues to the offender's land and to ensure the loss of his subjects. The destruction of the offender's people is then followed by a curse that targets the offender's own life and formulates his demise as *'the spilling of his life force [napištišu] like water.'*¹⁰⁹ In his translation of the Code Driver understands *napištišu* as *blood-life* and explains that *'tabāk napištišu* is *'seines Lebensodem's Ausgiessung.*¹¹⁰ He further compares Hammurabi's curse in this section with 1 Sam. 1:15, *וַאֲשַׁפֵּךְ אֶת־נַפְשִׁי לִפְנֵי יְהוָה*, Job 30:16, *וַעֲתָה עָלַי תִּשְׁתַּפֵּךְ נַפְשִׁי*, and Ps. 22:15, *כַּמִּים נִשְׁפַּכְתִּי*, where he believes the sense is metaphorical. In addition, Driver speculates that this word in both xlix 81-97 and in *tubuk napšatšu* in Enûma Elish (IV:18) can mean breath or 'life' itself as in *napištašu gimil* ('preserve life,' IV:17).¹¹¹ This line in Enûma Elish is part of the address to Marduk at his enthronement and clearly means execution, *'O lord, preserve the life of him who puts his trust in thee; but as for the god who has espoused evil, pour out his life.'*¹¹²

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 12.

¹⁰⁹ M. Roth, H. Hoffner, P. Michalowski, *Law Collections from Mesopotamia and Asia Minor* (Atlanta, 1997), 137; *CAD*, n/ I, 299.

¹¹⁰ Driver, Miles, *The Babylonian Laws*, 295.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 295.

¹¹² S. Langdon, *The Babylonian Epic of Creation Restored from the Recently Recovered Tablets of Aššur* (Oxford, 1923), 129. See also Seebass, *TDOT*, 510-517. For comparable symbolisms in Hittite oaths see the Second Soldiers' Oath (1.67): §10-11 '[Aft]erwards they pour out water [and simultaneously] he sa[ys] as follows: "Just as the earth [swallows down] this water and afterward no trace of it is visible, may the earth swallow [you] down in the same way, and like the water, may no [trace] of you be visible afterward." [Aft]erwards he pours out wine and simultaneously [he says as follows]: "[This] is not w[in]e, it is your blood. [Just as] the earth swallowed (this) dow[n], may the earth swallow down your [blood] and [...] in the same way.'" Hallo, Younger, *The Context of Scripture*, 167.

B. The Imagery of ‘Spilled Water’ in Biblical Texts.

Admittedly, from the linguistic point of view the formulations in 1 Sam. 1:15, Job 30:16, and Ps. 22:15 are very close to Hammurabi’s curse in xlix 81-97, and other texts cited above; semantically, however, they belong to a different group within the metaphorical profile of ‘spilled water.’ Certainly outside of 2 Sam. 14:14 the Hebrew Bible does not preserve the combination of all three lexemes – ‘life,’ ‘poured out,’ and ‘like water’ – yet interesting counterparts to the law-giver’s vision of disintegration do exist. Perhaps, the first semantic and linguistic analogue to xlix 81-97 that should be cited is a lament by Daughter Jerusalem for her children dying of starvation (Lam. 2:12b).¹¹³ The slow death of Jerusalem’s young populace – עולל ויונק (v. 11) – is described in two clauses in v. 12: ‘they languish like the wounded in the streets’/ בהתעטפם כחלל ברחבות עיר and ‘their life is being poured on their mothers’ chest’/ בהשתפך נפשם אל־חיק אמתם. This imagery of death in the MT is more or less faithfully represented across the versions. The LXX reads, ‘while their souls were poured out into their mother’s bosom’/ ἐν τῷ ἐκχεῖσθαι ψυχὰς αὐτῶν εἰς κόλπον μητέρων αὐτῶν, and Tg. expands the text to underscore expiration from dehydration and hunger, ‘when they were parched with thirst, like one slain by the sword in the open spaces of the city, when their souls were poured out through hunger into their mothers’ bosoms.’¹¹⁴ Thus both Tg. and later rabbinic exegetical traditions (Lam. R. 2:12§ 16) clearly understood Lam. 2:12 in terms of

¹¹³ J. Renkema, *Lamentations* (Leuven, 1998), 268. Lamentations is cited first since it is a response to the Babylonian crisis and has proven to hold materials comparable to cuneiform sources.

¹¹⁴ P. Alexander, *The Targum of Lamentations* (Collegeville, 2008), 135, n. 42. Cf. the lament for Sumer and Urim: c.2.2.3: ‘Enlil threw open the door of the grand gate to the wind. In Urim no one went to fetch food, no one went to fetch water. *Its people rushed around like water being poured from a well.* Their strength ebbed away, they could not even go on their way. Enlil afflicted the city with an evil famine. He afflicted the city with that which destroys cities, that which destroys houses. He afflicted the city with that which cannot be withstood with weapons. He afflicted the city with dissatisfaction and treachery. In Urim, which was like a solitary reed, there was not even fear. Its people, like fish being grabbed in a pond, sought to escape. *Its young and old lay spread about, no one could rise.*’ <http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/#> Accessed August, 2013. Italics are mine. Of interest could be another metaphor of destruction, that is *milk poured out to dogs*, found in the lament for Sumer and Urim: c.2.2.3: ‘Ninġirsu poured Sumer away like milk to the dogs,’ and, ‘they destroyed Gaeš like milk poured out to dogs.’ <http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/#> Accessed August, 2013.

death. In fact, it might be noted that Lam. 2 exhibits a full-fledged taxonomy of the ‘liquefying’ rhetoric of distress - commencing with divine anger being poured out (v. 4), proceeding to the pouring out of starved and dehydrated children’s life (vv. 11, 12), and culminating with an urge to a community to pour out their hearts to God in intercession (vv. 18, 19).¹¹⁵ Admittedly, the בהשתפך נפשם in v. 12 is stripped of the water element proper, i.e. כמים, yet its suspension in v. 12 might be due to the consideration of rhythm or the overall excess of water-related symbolism in the chapter, i.e. כים (v. 13), כנהל (v. 18), כמים (v. 19). Thus it is not improbable that in the mind of the poet the verb שפך took on double duty, i.e. standing for the act of pouring and the simile ‘like water.’ Of significance for 2 Sam. 14, however, is that Lamentations: 1.) casts the mode of expiration expressed in בהשתפך נפשם as *divine punishment* (Lam. 2:1ff); 2.) incorporates it into a lament; and 3.) places this composition on the lips of Jerusalem personified as a bereft mother (vv. 11,12, 20-22).¹¹⁶

Another occurrence of the pertinent imagery is found in Is. 53, which is technically not a lament, yet content-wise it could, tentatively, fall under the rubric of distress-literature.¹¹⁷ The formulation of interest - *he poured out his life to death*¹¹⁸ / הערה למות נפשו (v.

¹¹⁵ Cf. Nah. 2:7-8, ונינוה כברכת־מים מימי היא והמה נסים עמדו עמדו ואין מפנה, which could be an intentional paronomasia, i.e. Nineveh is flooded as the result of the breakage of water systems (v. 6), but it is also likened to a pool or ‘a reservoir whose water is draining away,’ that is its citizens are expiring. Scholars have long recognised that in the book of Nahum the depiction of Nineveh’s downfall uses a lot of Assyrian propagandistic language in a reversed way. For the reversal of imagery in Nahum see, for example, C. Chapman, *The Gendered Language of Warfare in the Israelite-Assyrian Encounter* (Winona Lake, 2004), 73, 75. So the statement about Nineveh becoming like a ‘pool of water’ that is running away may be the case of one of such reversals. If it is then its proximity to women in mourning who are led away moaning like doves, אמהתיה מנהגות כקול יונים, and beating their chest, על־לבבהן מתפפת, is of interest since again the water based imagery is linked to laments. Cf. Eaton who in a brief comment connects Nah. 2 and 2 Sam. 14, ‘The waters came to represent the rich life of the city, now pouring out to waste (cf. 2 Sam. 14:14).’ J. Eaton (ed.), *Readings in Biblical Hebrew II* (Birmingham, 1978), 82. But see Machinist’s discussion of the flood imagery in Nahum in connection with Mesopotamian geography and the use of flooding in other conquest accounts. P. Machinist, ‘The Fall of Assyria in Comparative Ancient Perspective,’ in S. Parpola, R. Whiting (eds), *Assyria 1995. Proceedings of the 10th Anniversary Symposium of the Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, Helsinki, September 7-11, 1995* (Helsinki, 1997), 190-195.

¹¹⁶ Renkema, *Lamentations*, 267.

¹¹⁷ Blenkinsopp also hypothesises that this composition could be ‘...from the repertoire of lament psalms but reads more like panegyric pronounced over the catafalque.’ Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40-55*, 352.

¹¹⁸ Cf. Gen. 24:20 and Is. 32:15, where the root ערה is used with a jar and its contents and spirit respectively. Delitzsch explains that הערה means to make empty or to pour out to the last remnant. F. Delitzsch, *Biblischer*

12)¹¹⁹ – conveys the idea of voluntary martyrdom (cf. vv. 4, 7) and thus deviates from the water-related representations of death in ANE and biblical sources cited above, yet the martyr's passing¹²⁰ is only one element in a sophisticated complex of *judgments*¹²¹ (cf. Is. 53:4b) and therefore is of relevance. Scholars detect echoes of sacrificial language that configures the Servant's fate: 'the Isaian poet does not state the analogy in formal terms or explore it at length, but it is hinted at... in the image of a sheep being led to the slaughter (53:7b) and the pouring out of the life-blood (cf. Ps. 141:8, the same verb also with *nepes* [אל־תֵּעַר נַפְשִׁי]).'¹²² While the Isaiah text is unique in the concepts it introduces, a proxy pattern of suffering present in the *הֵעֲרָה הַעֲרָה לְמוֹת נַפְשׁוֹ* formulation does echo 2 Sam. 14. While the Isaian servant empties his life *vicariously*, for the sins of his generation, the people of God in 2 Sam. 14 are to take a gross affront for their errant king. Thus Samuel's *many suffer for one*

Commentar über den Prophet Jesaia (Leipzig, 1866), 304. Cf. Smith's rendering of this phrase as 'he poured his life unto death.' S. Smith, *Isaiah, Chapters XL - LV: Literary Criticism and History* (London, 1944), 345. Cf. M. Friedländer, *The Commentary of Ibn Ezra on Isaiah: Edited from MSS and Translated, with Notes, Introductions, and Indexes* (London, 1873-77), 246. But see Korpel and de Moor for the translation 'because he exposed his life to death.' M. Korpel, J. de Moor, *The Structure of Classical Hebrew Poetry: Isaiah 40-55* (Leiden, 1998), 549. Cf. Baltzer who renders this clause as 'he surrendered his life to death.' K. Baltzer, *Deutero-Isaiah: a Commentary on Isaiah 40-55* (Minneapolis, 2001), 393. For the use of the root עֲרָה with נַפֵּשׁ see also Ps. 141:8, אֶל־תֵּעַר נַפְשִׁי (Cf. Tg.: *Do not empty my soul*. D. Stec, *The Targum of Psalms* (Collegeville, 2004), 236).

¹¹⁹ Pesh.: 'he poured out his life'; LXX: 'because his soul was delivered to death.' J. Goldingay, D. Payne, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Isaiah 40-55* (London, 2006), 329-330. Tg.: 'because he handed over his soul to the death.' B. Chilton, *The Isaiah Targum* (Edinburgh, 1987), 105.

¹²⁰ See Blenkinsopp's discussion on the fact the martyr does die in this poem. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40-55*, 352. Cf. Goldingay who states that this 'line may imply that he poured out his lifeblood and thus refer literally to death. Once again the phraseology is allusive, though with suffering and the possibility of death in the context here, it is unlikely that the phrase could have been heard in a figurative sense with its reduced implications, to mean merely that he gave himself unreservedly to his ministry.' J. Goldingay, *The Message of Isaiah 40-55: a Literary-Theological Commentary* (London, 2005), 518.

¹²¹ Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40-55*, 351.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 346. Of interest is Delitzsch's observation that ל of לְמוֹת is like that in לְעַפְרָת־מוֹת in Ps. 22:16. Delitzsch, *Biblischer Commentar*, 304. If לְמוֹת in Is. 53 is indeed a cropped variant of לְעַפְרָת־מוֹת then it, in turn, can be analogous to אֶרֶץ־הַמָּוֶת in 2 Sam. 14:14. It is equally possible, however, that, set in their distinctive contexts, these ground/ the dust of death/death elements are given different semantic trajectories – non-burial/anticipated burial/realm of death respectively.

principle is dissimilar from Isaiah's vision of vicariism, i.e. *one suffers for many*, but it does cohere well with the royal deviance genre.¹²³

Another text, Ps. 58:8, is of special bearing as it contains a water-related idiom in a set of imprecations advocating the disempowerment of the wicked – *let them vanish like water* (cf. RSV)/יִמְאָסוּ כַּמַּוּיִם.¹²⁴ Of pertinence for the discussion at hand is that the series of curses levelled at the wicked follows their failure to execute proper justice and to help the underprivileged (vv. 1-2). Regarding the reversal of images in the psalmist's outcry Doyle observes that,

these judges, normally so necessary to the poor when they listen and judge with fairness, are deaf to the just appeals of their clients and as such they are perverting the course of justice. This corresponds with the perverse images of water and grass going to waste... The wicked are cursed to waste and wither as they have allowed justice to go to waste.¹²⁵

¹²³ Of interest here is also the presence of the root אָשַׁם in Is. 53 and 2 Sam. 14. In Is. 53:10 אָשַׁם is vocalised as a noun (guilt, guilt offering), that is the servant's life is seen as a guilt/trespass offering. In 2 Sam. 14:13 it is treated as an adjective or a stative verb and some scholars think that its antecedent is the people of God, not the king, i.e. the king devises something against the people of God as if they are guilty. Gevarjahu, 'The Return,' 26-27; McCarter, *II Samuel*, 348-349. Both, however, offer divergent interpretations of what the guilt of the people of God might be. The majority of scholars, however, agree that it is the king's guilt that is in view. For Hoftijzer's refutation of Gevarjahu's view see Hoftijzer, 'David,' 431, n. 1.

¹²⁴ Note that אָשַׁם is sometimes understood by scholars as despised. Cf. Mannati's translation, 'despised like water, they flow.' M. Mannati, 'Psaume lviii 8,' *VT* 28 (1978), 480. Yet lexicists list אָשַׁם II as flow, run as a by-form of אָשַׁם (cf. Job 7:5). *BDB*, 549; *HALOT*, 540-541; *DCH*, 122. In light of v. 8 that contains images of disintegration and death the reading 'let them vanish like water' is also legitimate (cf. NIV).

¹²⁵ B. Doyle, 'Psalm 58: Curse as Voiced Disorientation,' *Bijdr* 57 (1996), 134. Some understand that water is a frequent simile of instability and weakness. Briggs, Briggs, *The Book of Psalms*, 44. On the other hand, Hossfeld and Zenger note that 'the image of water flowing away (v. 8a) makes a statement on two levels: on the one hand there is the transitoriness that corresponds to the non-existence (or no-longer-existence) of the wicked. On the other hand there is recollection of the chaotic power of water that corresponds to the threatening power of the wicked.' F. Hossfeld, E. Zenger, *Psalms 2: a Commentary on Psalms 51-100* (Minneapolis, 2005), 81. In light of the Akkadian imprecations cited above, vanishing and poured out water as a symbol of the cessation of life is appropriate for an imprecatory lament. Besides, more images of death are strung along in the following verse – a disappearing slug, a miscarried foetus that cannot see the sun (v. 8) – and thus all support the idea of *vanishing not despised waters*. Of further interest is also the statement in v. 10 regarding the righteous person bathing his feet in the blood of the wicked. Doyle thinks that this image may be 'an extra-biblical allusion to Ugaritic Poetry where a similar image of victory/vengeance is used in the Anath cycle ('nt: II: 28ff.),' *Ibid.*, 136. Whatever the intended allusion might be it is of relevance for the present discussion that both in Akkadian and biblical sources blood is frequently metaphorised as water. *CAD*, d, 76-77; H. Tawil, *An Akkadian Lexical Companion for Biblical Hebrew: Etymological-Semantic and Idiomatic Equivalents with Supplement on Biblical Aramaic* (Jersey City, 2009), 78. See also discussion below. Such grouping of images – vanishing water as a symbol of the wicked judges' death in v. 7 and the vindicated person bathing his feet in their blood in v. 10

Coincidentally the book of Samuel too injects its water symbolism into the juxtaposition of David's intentions regarding Absalom and God's people (v. 13) and those of the Lord (v. 14b, **והשב מחשבות לבלתי ידה ממנו נדח**, **לא־ישא אלהים נפש וחשב מחשבות לבלתי ידה ממנו נדח**) and thus underscores the outcome of the king's faulty judgments.¹²⁶ Of significance is also Doyle's observation on the diagnostic function of imprecations in Ps. 58. 'Curse elements of this psalm, he notes, are a... reason for understanding the speaker collectively and the lament to be communal... Only the damage done to the group by the class of the wicked is enough to justify such a response on behalf of the righteous.'¹²⁷ The Tekoite's 'unguarded imprecatory language'¹²⁸ is also legitimate if she is understood as acting in the interests of a group, **עם אלהים** (v. 13). Morphing into the people of God – **מות נמות** (1st person plural) – and reaching into the deadliest tier of water's figurative profile – **כמים הנגרים ארצה** – she advocates the well-being of YHWH's inheritance.¹²⁹ Giving

– suggests that various water based metaphors from contexts of aggression dominated the psalmist's musings in the production of this piece. Some scholars postulate the presence of another water element in the difficult v. 9. R. Althann, 'Psalm 58, 10 in the Light of Ebla,' *Bib* 64 (1983), 122-24; Doyle, 'Psalm 58,' 126-127. This hypothesis, however, is based on Dahood's unconvincing theory that **מַו** in **כַּמּוּ** means 'water' based on the Eblaite word *ma-wu*. M. Dahood, 'A Sea of Troubles: Notes on Psalms 55:3-4 and 140:10-11,' *CBQ* 41 (1979), 604-607.

¹²⁶ **לא־ישא אלהים נפש** is extremely difficult. For the up-to-date list of readings of this clause suggested by scholars, all of which are not without difficulties and/or emendations, and their assessment see Smith, *The Fate of Justice*, 169-170. Since **נָשָׂא** with **נִפְשׁוּ** as its object in the Hebrew Bible functions idiomatically to convey the idea of 'wanting,' 'desiring,' (Deut. 24:15, Jer. 22:27, 44:14, Prov. 19:18, Ps. 24:4, Hos. 4:8, etc.) (and not, for example, 'taking away life,' 'restoring life,' etc.) the sense of *God not wanting* [something] for **לא־ישא אלהים נפש** seems most plausible. Admittedly, in all of the 9 instances where **נָשָׂא** with **נִפְשׁוּ** are paired in the Bible **נִפְשׁוּ** appears with a pronominal suffix, and so its absence in 2 Sam. 14:14 is indeed problematic. However, it could either be attributed to the woman's distress that plagues her entire speech and affects vv. 13-14 the most, or understood as being lost through haplography as the following clause starts with a **וְהָשִׁב מַחְשְׁבוֹתַי**. The tentative translation of v. 14, therefore, could be as follows, 'we will surely die, [namely we will be] like water poured out on the ground, which is not gathered. But God does not want [it], yet [if you, David, do not change your plans, 'devices' regarding Absalom] He [in turn] will devise devices [i.e. He will take punitive actions against you, or rather your people] so that the banished one will not be banished from Him [or us].' The reasons for reading **וְהָשִׁב מַחְשְׁבוֹתַי** in the sense of divine retaliation (*contra* others who read it positively) are 1.) the root **חָשַׁב** generally has a negative connotation; and 2.) the RD principle that is at work in ch. 11-18, and in ch. 14, demands that the Lord make David pay for his sins, his devices (**וְהָשִׁב מַחְשְׁבוֹתַי לְצַדִּיקִים** (2 Sam. 13: 39a), **כִּי־לֵב הַמֶּלֶךְ עַל־אֲבִישׁוֹן** (14:1), **חָשַׁב** (14:13)). Of interest for this point is that Jer. 18, via a heavier usage of **חָשַׁב** (vv. 8, 11, 12, 18), contrasts the *devices* of the erring Judeans and the *devices* of the Lord in response. Embedded into this tug-of-war of 'devices' is Jeremiah's curse-based cry – *give their children over to famine; pour them out to the power of the sword/וְהָשִׁב מַחְשְׁבוֹתַי לְצַדִּיקִים לְרַעַב וְהָגָרַם עַל־יְדֵי־חֶרֶב (Jer. 18:21 (discussed below)).*

¹²⁷ Doyle, 'Psalm 58,' 137.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 146.

¹²⁹ Cf. Doyle's definition of curse as a 'prayer at the limits of human endurance.' *Ibid.*, 146.

her plea the quality of an imprecatory petition she becomes one of the voices who implemented a curse rhetoric, either subdued (2 Sam. 21:10) or unrestrained (2 Sam. 16:5-12), to address the issue of excessive bloodshed in David's career (cf. 1 Chr. 22:8, 28:3).

C. The Phrase 'Like Water' and the Verb 'to Spill' (נגר).

No discussion on כמים הנגרים ארצה can be complete without a comment on the ubiquitous use of water symbolism in reference to blood - either the blood of sacrificial animals¹³⁰ or human blood shed in battles. A Sumerian praise poem of Šulgi, for example, describes blood as 'the water of battle' (Šulgi B: c.2.4.2.02) and in a later section contains a number of similar images,

My [...] battle-axe sheds the blood of the people like water. My double-edged axe weapon [...] in their [...] blood, which covers the [...], spilled on the hills like the contents of a broken wine jug. I [...] the people in their meadows; the blood [...] like water in their wadis; the blood [...] into the cracks of the earth. (A Praise Poem of Šulgi (Šulgi D): c.2.4.2.04)¹³¹

A hymn to Inana exalts the goddess endowed with military prowess and praises her for being able, among other things, 'to make the earth drink the blood of enemies like water and to pile up their bodies' ((Išme-Dagan K): c.2.5.4.11).¹³²

Among the idiomatic uses of water as a cipher for spilled human blood in the Hebrew Bible Ps. 79:3 stands out the most - they have poured out blood like water all around Jerusalem, and there is no one to bury the dead/ואין קובר/שפכו דמם כמים סביבות ירושלם ואין קובר.¹³³ Of pertinence again is the already established cluster of motifs grouped around the ominous

¹³⁰ Cf. Deut. 12:16, 24, 15:23. Cf. 11QT 32:14 that describes 'a structure near the temple through which water mixed with the blood of the sacrificial animals can flow and then seep into the ground.' Liwak, *TDOT*, 441.

¹³¹ <http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/#> Accessed August, 2013.

¹³² <http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/#> Accessed August, 2013.

¹³³ Cited by 1 Mac. 7:37. Sopherim 18:3 prescribes this psalm and Ps. 74 to be read on the ninth of Ab, 'the fast day which is the anniversary of the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple by the Babylonians.' A. Cohen, *The Psalms: Hebrew Text & English Translation* (London, 1945), 260.

water symbolism – divine judgements (v. 5) and curse elements (non-burial of Jerusalem's citizens and their posthumous desecration – נתנו את־נבלת עבדיך מאכל לעוף השמים בשר חסידיך (v. 2), לחיתו־ארץ (v. 3)).¹³⁴ The alignment of the ideas of judgments (v. 5), profuse bloodshed (סביבות ירושלם), and non-burial (ואין קובר) may correlate with 2 Sam. 14:14, where God's punitive actions are envisaged in מות נמות, the idea of a massacre is underscored by נגר, and the non-burial is possibly hinted at by לא יאספו.

It has been suggested that the woman's formulation in v. 14 could be viewed as an improvised assembly of lexemes overlaying the well-established core, i.e. 'poured out water.' Seeing that Biblical images of pertinence cited above use such verbs as שפך and ערה and that water often serves as a cipher for bloodshed in military contexts the root נגר featured in 2 Sam. 14:14 warrants a comment. In three of its attestations נגר appears with human beings as its objects 'poured out,' without exception, 'to the power of the sword' (Jer. 18:21, Ez. 35:5, Ps. 63:10). Commenting on Jer. 18:21, McKane explains that Tg. connects נגר with a post biblical Hebrew, Aramaic, and Arabic root 'to saw, cut' and renders Jer. 18:21a as 'cut them by means of those who slay with the sword.'¹³⁵ Stating that the Hiphil form of נגר in these passages is odd and that it is not attested in the post-biblical Hebrew, Aramaic, and Arabic, McKane concludes that 'the choice lies between interpreting 'cause them to flow into the power of the sword' as 'deliver them up to the power of the sword,' and retaining a more particular nuance of shedding blood ('Shed their blood by means of the sword').'¹³⁶ In view of the coincidence in genre that features images cited in this discussion¹³⁷ the combination of נגר and על־ידי־חרב can be seen as originating from the same general conceptualisation of lost

¹³⁴ Note Jongeling's observation that the metaphor in 2 Sam 14:14 is reminiscent of dead bodies left exposed on a battle field. Jongeling, 'Joab,' 122.

¹³⁵ McKane, *Jeremiah*, 441.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 441.

¹³⁷ Note that in Jer. 18 and Ps. 63 the combination of נגר and על־ידי־חרב is used in imprecatory petitions against those who 'devise devices' (Jer. 18:18) or 'seek life' (Ps. 63:9).

life yet modified to accommodate military contexts (cf. Jer. 18:21c).¹³⁸ The preference of נגר in 2 Sam. 14:14 can be due to the same rationale (discussed below).

D. The Verb אסף in the Hebrew Bible.

Finally, contributing to the portentous symbolism of כִּי־מוֹת נָמוּת וּכְמוֹת הַנְּגָרִים אֲרָצָה אֲשֶׁר־לֹא יֵאָסְפוּ is its last element, i.e. לֹא יֵאָסְפוּ. Within the semi-figurative semantic domain of the root אסף three trajectories of pertinence can be detected. First of all, the verb can stand for the state of being dead (Is. 57:1, cf. Hos. 4:3, Ez. 34:29, Sir. 8:7, 40:28_(B)). Secondly, the root אסף can mean ‘to take someone’s life’ (1 Sam. 15:6,¹³⁹ cf. Jdg 18:25, Ps. 29:6, 104:29). Finally, it is utilised in contexts of burial and is featured in the well-known formulation, and its adjacent variants, i.e. ‘to be gathered to one’s fathers’ (Gen. 25:8, 35:29, Deut. 32:50, Jdg 2:10, 2 Kgs 22:20). The precise meaning of אסף in this formula is variously understood¹⁴⁰ and may not function identically in the Hebrew Bible, but its negative usage in Jer. 8:2, 9: 21 [22], and the appearance in a later text, Sir. 38:16, link it to the acts of burial or suspension of burial. Therefore the ‘non-gathered’ component in 2 Sam. 14:14 could symbolise non-burial, the least desired option in the hierarchy of burial types and as such a common feature in ANE curses.

It has been suggested that while staying in the proximity of the core base of death imagery metaphorised as spilled water, the Tekoite augments it by either compressing more symbolism into it, i.e. לֹא יֵאָסְפוּ, or opting for נגר instead of the more common שָׁפַךְ. Sharpening

¹³⁸ Therefore it is possible that in v. 14 it is preferred to the more customary שָׁפַךְ (see discussion below) precisely because the woman wanted to underscore the death toll among God’s people.

¹³⁹ Cf. also how Resheph (god of pestilence) ‘gathered’ 1/5 of Keret’s family (KTU 1.14:I:18). Pardee notes that since Keret’s other wives have died various violent deaths, the 5th one who is ‘gathered’ may be also understood as having died an untimely death and thus was gathered. Hallo, Younger, *The Context of Scripture*, 333, n. 10.

¹⁴⁰ For an older overview of scholarly readings see, for example, N. Tromp, *Primitive Conceptions of Death and the Nether World in the Old Testament* (Rome, 1969), 168-169; K. Illman, *Old Testament Formulas About Death* (Åbo, 1979), 42-45. For a more recent list of opinions see, for example, P. Johnston, *Shades of Sheol: Death and Afterlife in the Old Testament* (Leicester, 2002), 33; Suriano, *The Politics*, 32-50.

some of the semantic facets in this fossilised phraseology and reinforcing its tie to ancient maledictions the woman parades before David a horrid demise of a nation due to its monarch's failure to rectify inner-dynastic feuds. The audacity of her language forms is justifiable not only in the light of the RD principle(s) operative in 2 Sam. 11-18 but also in view of the frequent use of parabolic utterances with strong elements of curses and taunts and functioning specifically as means of mockery or reproach in biblical traditions.¹⁴¹ By placing her curse-related imagery into a lament-based petition the woman not only creates a rhetorical landscape most suitable for such imprecatory utterance (cf. Ps. 58, 63) but also protests its fulfilment in the ensuing chapters in the Absalom saga.¹⁴²

VII. Consequences of David's Actions: 2 Sam. 15-18.

As has already been noted the woman's speech shows awareness of the affairs central to David's reign (2 Sam. 11-13). The premise of this discussion, however, is that her appeal was not only retrospective in its thrust, i.e. pointing to the recent past of the royal court, but also prospective, i.e. suggesting its development in the future. Scholars observe that the 'wisdom' of those designated as wise in 2 Sam. 13 and 14 is seen as 'achieving short-term results that lead to negative long-range consequences.'¹⁴³ McCarter states that 'in its disregard for larger moral questions and consequences in the interest of the attainment of an immediate goal, the woman's masquerade exhibits what has become familiar to us as the Machiavellian spirit of the sons of Zeruiah.'¹⁴⁴ Yet McCarter and others fail to recognise that

¹⁴¹ Schipper, *Parables*, 13-14. Also see discussion on Jotham's parabolic curse in Judg. 9. *Ibid.*, 23-40. But see his observation that Jotham, Nathan, the woman of Tekoa, or the prophet in 1 Kgs 20, did not have 'a political advantage with respect to his or her addressee' and used 'parables to deliver their criticism indirectly because a more explicit condemnation of their more politically powerful addressees would endanger the speakers.' Schipper, *Parables*, 108.

¹⁴² Cf. how Judg. 9:23-57 forms the realisation of the parabolic curse delivered in Judg. 9:7-16 (Judg. 9:57 – קללת יותם).

¹⁴³ J. Ackerman, 'Knowing Good and Evil: A Literary Analysis of the Court History in 2 Samuel 9-20 and 1 Kings 1-2,' *JBL* 109 (1990), 56.

¹⁴⁴ McCarter, *II Samuel*, 352. Cf. also Pigott's discussion on how the Tekoite's wisdom is closely tied to the 'wisdom' of Jonadab (2 Sam. 13) functioning as a 'catalyst for change in the kingship of Israel by inaugurating

despite the tactics used by the Tekoite David never vindicates Absalom and never restores him to the court,¹⁴⁵ thus setting in motion his conspiracy.

As noted above, according to the Royal Deviance schema the punishment incurred on the erring king's subjects takes on the form of both supernatural cataclysms and natural phenomena.¹⁴⁶ Of interest for the present discussion is the already mentioned Code of Hammurabi,¹⁴⁷ which is concluded with a list of curses comparable to the details in Absalom's revolt and its outcome. The malediction 'let his own life be poured out like water' in it is featured among curses that foresee the loss of the offender's city, the exile of his people, the overthrow of his kingdom (cf. 2 Sam. 15-18), revolts and insurrections (cf. 2 Sam. 15-18), the extinction of the offender's name and reputation from the land (cf. 2 Sam. 14:7, 18:9, 14¹⁴⁸), deprivation of wisdom and understanding (cf. how Ahitophel's counsel was destroyed in 2 Sam. 17:14, 23), removal of his kingly crown and throne (cf. 2 Sam. 15:13-19:8), facing a rival of his kingdom (cf. 2 Sam. 18:6-8).¹⁴⁹ Certainly the events of the civil war in 2 Sam. 15-18 are not modelled on the Hammurabi's Code, yet it should not be

events that lead to the ruin of yet another son.' S. Pigott, 'Wives, Witches and Wise Women: Prophetic Heralds of Kingship in 1 and 2 Samuel,' *RE* 99 (2002), 159-160. But note that in some biblical accounts of conflicts that feature parables the resolution is not even attempted. Regarding Judg. 9 Schipper notes that it 'does not intend to introduce a change of mindset among the Shechemites but a hostile action from God.' Schipper, *Parables*, 31-37, especially 32. 2 Sam. 14:20, on the other hand, explicitly states that the Tekoite/Joab's speech was meant to bring resolution to the ill dynamics within the royal family – לבעבור סבב את־פני הדבר .

¹⁴⁵ Smith calls it 'a fatal omission.' Smith, *The Fate of Justice*, 176-177.

¹⁴⁶ Note Halpern's observation that in the book of Samuel 'the author constructs double causation [...] not for the actors, but for the reader. There are human as well as divine reasons for Absalom's revolt and its outcome. Still, the message of complementary causation is delivered without overt divine action being narrated, so it is the reader who must divine the providential character of the events.' B. Halpern, *David's Secret Demons: Messiah, Murderer, Traitor, King* (Grand Rapids, 2001), 46.

¹⁴⁷ The Code of Hammurabi, of course, is of a different genre than RD narratives cited by Hanson yet its punitive section presupposes similar principles.

¹⁴⁸ Absalom was by no means David's only son (2 Sam. 3:2-5) yet at this point he was a key figure in relation to the succession. So when Amnon died Absalom became heir apparent (cf. 13:39). R. Gordon, *1 and 2 Samuel* (Sheffield, 1984), 266. Also note that the idea of the extinction of one's name from the land is visited after Absalom's burial (2 Sam. 18:18).

¹⁴⁹ Roth, Hoffner, Michalowski, *Law Collections*, 133-140. Note also that in this series of curses Ishtar is asked to bring down the offender's heroes and let the earth drink their blood (l 92- li 23) which can be a parallel to Amasa's death (2 Sam. 20:10). Although this episode is found outside of the Absalom saga it is part of the long-term ramifications of David's prior decisions that plagued his nation. Preceded by a kiss, an already established symbol of treachery (cf. 2 Sam. 14:33, 15:5), Amasa's death is described as יכהו בה אליהחמש וישפך מעיו ארצה. Cast as the pouring out of his intestines on the ground and coupled with non-burial Amasa's assassination may create another reflex of the Tekoite's speech.

surprising that David, a Near Eastern monarch, would be disciplined according to the penal fashion of the day.¹⁵⁰ Admittedly, the Code uses the water-based curse in relation to the offender of the Code himself, and the Tekoite adjusts it in the custom of royal deviancy principle and projects this fate on to David's people. If the complex of events in 2 Sam. 13-18 represents the punitive outcome of David's misconduct in 2 Sam. 11 predicted by Nathan in 2 Sam. 12, then the realisation of 2 Sam. 14:13-14 could be located in the account of the battle between David's and Absalom's forces (2 Sam. 18:6-8). Indeed, the report of this confrontation is very brief, yet it contains a few elements of interest: 1.) the description of the battle and death of Absalom via elements traditionally linked to *divine judgements* (vv. 7, 8, 9, 14); 2.) the scale of the losses incurred (v. 7);¹⁵¹ and 3.) the location of the combat in the forest of Ephraim and thus, most likely, east of Jordan (v. 6). First of all, scholars observe that the defeat of Absalom's troops where nature, i.e. the forest, devoured more people than the sword – וירב היער לאכל בעם מאשר אכלה החרב ביום ההוא (v. 8) – is depicted in terms similar to the motifs of Yahweh war in the Hebrew Bible (cf. Josh. 10:11, Judg. 5:20-21, 1 Sam. 7:10).¹⁵² In addition, Absalom's murder in vv. 9, 14, where his hair is caught in the branches of an oak and he is balancing mid-air, signals divine retribution as 'the pairing of the realms of heaven and earth occurs elsewhere and is associated with an element of divine initiative in

¹⁵⁰ Note that the curse section in the vassal treaty between Šamši-Adad V and Marduk-zākir-šumi I, that includes the 'let his own life be poured out like water' malediction, is 'largely identical with those, [curses], found in Codex Hammurapi.' Parpola, Watanabe, *Neo-Assyrian Treaties*, 4. For the Israelite curse language similar to the overall ANE conventions in maledictions, see N. Weeks, *Admonition and Curse: the Ancient Near Eastern Treaty/Covenant Form as a Problem in Inter-cultural Relationships* (London, 2004).

¹⁵¹ Firth says that 'casualties are given only for Absalom's troops.' Firth, *1 & 2 Samuel*, 476. Thus the overall death toll might have been more substantial. See, however, Mendenhall's discussion where he argued that only 100-280 men died in this battle. G. Mendenhall, 'The Census Lists of Numbers 1 and 26,' *JBL* (1958), 52-66. No matter what number is represented by עשרים אלף it is the overall emphasis on the large scale massacre that is of significance. Interestingly enough, in 2 Sam. 17 Absalom receives advice from two counsellors. Ahithophel seeks to kill only David and to spare the nation (2 Sam. 17:1-4); Hushai proposes to fall on David and his warriors 'as dew settles on the ground' – כאשר יפל הטל על־האדמה – (vv. 7-13) and to annihilate David's troops completely – ולא־נותר בו ובכל־האנשים אשר־אתו גם־אחד (v. 13). As powerful as the imagery of dew is, it may not be an echo of the Tekoite's water-based imagery in 2 Sam. 14:14, yet it does contribute to the 'big killing' motif as its realisation.

¹⁵² H. Stoebe, *Das zweite Buch Samuelis* (Gütersloher, 1994), 404; Smith, *The Fate of Justice*, 191.

Ezek 8:3, Zech 5:9, and 1 Chr. 21:16.¹⁵³ Furthermore, and in light of the present discussion, it could be argued that the Tekoite's 'liquefying' prognosis of national demise lingers in the Absalom's saga in the form of a paranomastic formulation in 2 Sam. 18:8 – the battle spread out over the whole countryside/על-פני כל-הארץ (נפצת ק) [נפצית כ]. Concerning the root פוץ it is observed that it is not unusual in contexts of military combat (Num. 10:35, 1 Sam. 11:11, 2 Sam. 20:22, 1 Kgs 22:17, 2 Kgs 25:5, Jer. 40:15, Zech. 13:7, Ps. 68:2), yet its pairing with מלחמה is, in fact, unique.¹⁵⁴ Of interest is that one of the meanings of the root פוץ is to flow, overflow (cf. Pr. 5:16, Job 40:11, Zech. 1:17),¹⁵⁵ and thus may echo the Tekoite's imprecatory language – the battle was spread over the whole land, the battle was 'spilled/poured' over the whole land – על-פני כל-הארץ (note 2 Sam. 14:14 – כמים הנגרים ארצה). Secondly, the assessment of the outcome – המגפה גדולה (v. 7) – is not only reminiscent of contexts of plagues, i.e. divine judgments, rather than of battles,¹⁵⁶ but also, arguably, develops the woman's concern with 'big killing' (2 Sam. 14:11, 14). Finally, the report of the battle as having taken place in the forest of Ephraim, east of Jordan (v. 6)¹⁵⁷ is suggestive, although this is highly speculative, of the casualties' fall beyond the Israel's border and their non-interment.¹⁵⁸ Since the repatriation of the fallen warriors of a rebel would have been an unlikely priority for the state, their abandonment in the forest could correspond to the לא יאספו

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 191-192.

¹⁵⁴ Conroy notes that it is the only instance in the MT, but 'the Vorlage of LXX at 1 Sam 14, 24 may have had this combination too.' Conroy, *Absalom*, 59, and 59, n. 52.

¹⁵⁵ *BDB*, 807; *HALOT*, 919; *DCH*, 668. In 1QAdmon 1.1₄ it is used specifically with מים.

¹⁵⁶ Note that the root נגף is used twice in the account of this battle – עבדי דוד – וינגפו שם עם ישראל לפני עבדי דוד (v. 7, cf. 2 Sam. 17:9, 1 Sam. 4:17). Conroy observes that instead of the traditional מכה 2 Sam. 18:7 uses מגפה, which more often 'refers to a plague, disease, or some divine punishment.' Conroy, *Absalom*, 59, n. 53.

¹⁵⁷ Gaebelein, Douglas, Polcyn (eds), *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 1018 and the bibliography cited there. Firth acknowledges that the location of the forest is uncertain but parts of it would have been in proximity to Mahanaim (east of Jordan) and parts of it may have been across Jordan (Josh. 17:15-17). Firth, *1 & 2 Samuel*, 476.

¹⁵⁸ Note that even Absalom was given hasty burial – thrown into a pit and covered with a heap of rocks (2 Sam. 18:17). Cf. Gevarjahu's hypothesis that the woman's metaphor in v. 14 comes from funerary laments for those who died in exile, or foreign land, i.e. for those who were not gathered to their people/fathers. Gevarjahu, 'The Return,' 18-20.

element.¹⁵⁹ Such representation of the suppression of Absalom's revolt through divine involvement coheres well with the royal deviance schema and, arguably, can reflect its prognosis in 2 Sam. 14:14.

VIII. Conclusion.

In the aforementioned analysis of the discourse of bereavement and commemoration in 'a country that has lived by its sword for more than sixty years' Guilat suggests that the works of women artists 'herald or anticipate the trauma by seeking to express something that may be called "pre- and counter-commemoration."'”¹⁶⁰ She explains that 'the counter-memory concept evolved from a confrontation with the collective memory, which essentially banishes or represses memory that is personal or that fails to conform with hegemonic group memory.'¹⁶¹ Accordingly, refusing to 'comply with models that perpetuate the status of women in Zionist nationalism: as national mothers, national wombs, and mothers who have babies, bury them, and lament them,' these women artists 'operate from a maternal position and express themselves by issuing warnings, offering resistance, anticipating catastrophe, and proposing a preventive course of action.'¹⁶² The preceding analysis of 2 Sam. 14 has demonstrated that the Tekoite's speech was orchestrated with similar objectives in mind. Linking a fabricated scenario of a personal crisis to an anticipated trauma sustained by a large community, the appeal in 2 Sam. 14 emerged as a critical voice suggesting 'alternative ways of viewing human affairs'¹⁶³ and seeking to break the deadly cycle of David's domestic politics. As various rites associated with death and burial, particularly ancient and modern funerary laments, have been shown to often provide a 'public forum for commenting on

¹⁵⁹ Although the account of the insurrection continuously juxtaposes David's servants and Absalom's troops, mostly Northern tribes alienated by Absalom, they are all technically the people of God, however fragmented.

¹⁶⁰ Guilat, 'Motherhood and Nation,' 284.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 286.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 309.

¹⁶³ Briggs, 'Since I Am a Woman,' 341.

social and political-economic processes¹⁶⁴ and at times to serve as protests against death and its consequences for the survivors,¹⁶⁵ the overall thrust of the concerns addressed in the Tekoite's anticipatory mourning coheres well with the general rules and expectations of the solemn genre (cf. Joab's commission to the sage via the imperative 'to mourn,' התאבל יינא, 2 Sam. 14:2).

Admittedly, the Tekoite's efforts have failed in bringing long-term resolutions in the Absalom conflict, yet the multiplicity of rhetorical tactics attempted in her speech and the space accorded to it are suggestive of its significance. 2 Sam. 14, indeed, credits Joab with the words placed in the woman's mouth (vv. 1-3, 19-20), yet given his general preference for hasty actions over sophisticated elocution, the actual speech delivered to the king might have been an RD-based ad-libbing of a sage skilled in portentous curse language forms.¹⁶⁶ Regarding the phenomenon of imprecatory petition in the Hebrew Bible, Doyle writes that 'having developed from the formulaic curse [it] has its remote roots in the effective power of words. It is the distant relative of the spell and the oath, which were considered to have immediate effect and were only to be countered by other spells and oaths. Such incantations were banned by biblical religion thereby giving way for their development into the type of theologically rooted curse we find in Ps. 58 and elsewhere.'¹⁶⁷ Given such origin of imprecatory locutions it is possible that the initial circulation of some of the symbolisms

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 350.

¹⁶⁵ See, for example, A. Standhartinger, "What Women Were Accustomed to Do for the Dead Beloved by Them" (Gospel of Peter 12.50): Traces of Laments and Mourning Rituals in Early Easter, Passion, and Lord's Supper Traditions,' *JBL* 129 (2010), 561-562.

¹⁶⁶ Since the Tekoite's metaphors used in 2 Sam. 14:7, 14 are also preserved in laments it might be argued that she could have been familiar with keening. Cf. Gevarjahu who believed that the wisdom of the Tekoite is confined to her being able to utter lamentations, Gevarjahu, 'The Return,' 11. Brenner notes that 'women who took up mourning as a vocation had to learn the formulae of their trade.' A. Brenner, *The Israelite Woman: Social Role and Literary Type in Biblical Narrative* (Sheffield, 1985), 37. For more on keening women see Bar-Ilan, *Some Jewish Women*, 52-77; M. Garcia Bachmann, *Women at Work in the Deuteronomistic History* (Atlanta, 2013), 215-217.

¹⁶⁷ Doyle, 'Psalm 58,' 144. Based on Brueggemann's analysis of lament psalms Doyle also states that, in fact, 'curse and imprecation is an important aspect of the lament speech form...' *Ibid.*, 144. For a further discussion on curses in the Hebrew Bible and ANE texts and helpful assessment of scholarship on the subject see P. Keim, 'The Politics of Malice: Ancient Near Eastern Malediction as Metaphor,' in H. Page (ed.), *Exploring New Paradigms in Biblical and Cognate Studies* (Lewiston, 1996), 17- 45.

utilised by the woman was more extensive. Yet as these images gravitated towards curses and maledictions they indeed may have been largely suppressed by biblical authors who adhered to a less pronounced ‘anthropology of human vengeance and hatred.’¹⁶⁸ Although the precise extent of dissemination of water symbolism in Israel around David’s time is impenetrable due to the paucity of evidence, the mastery of these language forms by a sage might have been substantial. Assuming a maternal stance in her confrontation with David and implementing a pre-emptive, anticipatory approach in dealing with a large-scale crisis, the Tekoite gained an unrestricted license for a fully-fledged, uninhibited ‘anthropology of human vengeance.’ With two factors in place, the communicative force of the sage’s appeal was, therefore, pushed to its rhetorical maximum and should have constrained, if not broken, the deadly cycle of royal misconducts. Given David’s expertise in both the lament genre (cf. 2 Sam. 1:17-27) and the proverbial language used in contexts of perceived conflict,¹⁶⁹ the address offered in 2 Sam. 14 should have procured a favourable decision from the king and should have engendered Israel’s survival. The blame for the failure to prevent the tragedy and effect Israel’s social transformation (2 Sam. 15-18) should be placed solely with David’s lack of political forethought and moral inadequacy.

Thus, the foregoing analysis of 2 Sam. 14 has demonstrated that due to the high-rate mortality among contenders for the Israelite throne (2 Sam. 12, 13, 18, cf. 1 Kgs 2:25) and the threat it posed to the kingdom, the appeal constructed by the unnamed sage from Tekoa was meant to mend David’s fragmented family and jolt his state out of political limbo. Attempting to break the royal deviance pattern in David’s career, so vividly traced in its past and looming large in its future, the woman’s speech appears to have had two main objectives.

¹⁶⁸ Doyle, ‘Psalm 58,’ 122.

¹⁶⁹ Cf. his words in 1 Sam. 24:13-14 – ‘as the ancient proverb says.’ It is also possible that the woman’s likening him to the messenger of the Lord being able to discern between good and evil (2 Sam. 14:17) and to know everything in the land (2 Sam. 20:20) may indicate not only his overall wisdom, but also the so-called ‘hermeneutical communal competence’ in deciphering the ominous symbolism passed between them.

Embracing a longer history of child loss at the court through the semiotics of grief, she mourned the fate of the royal offspring, in retrospect (2 Sam. 12:16, 13:31) and proleptically (2 Sam. 14:32, 18:14, 15 (cf. 2 Sam. 13:39), cf. 1 Kgs 2:23-25). Gaining fierce imprecatory force from the כמים הנגרים ארצה simile, her plea outlined the massacre awaiting God's people in the future and implicated David in their projected demise. Fraught with the highest concentration of broken and thus anguished syntax, the cry for the safety of God's inheritance in vv. 13-14 became a focal point in the longest conversation in the books of Samuel.

Given the space accorded to the Tekoite's speech and given its position alongside grief narratives featuring David, the text unequivocally calls into question the ethical outlook of the latter and invites assessment of gender differences in the biblical perspective(s) on grief and mourning. Placed beside the repeated instances of child loss in David's life and orchestrated from the viewpoint of mother grief, albeit fabricated, the Tekoite's debut at the court exposes the lack of ethical reflection in David's mourning, a reflection that considers the concerns and suffering of others alongside one's own. The above analyses of 2 Sam. 21 and 14 have suggested that such a perspective was indispensable not only as a foundational principle in human relations in general, and as such was preserved in ancient accounts of maternal grief, but was also an absolute prerequisite to sound politics.

CHAPTER V

RACHEL (AND VIRGIN ISRAEL)

I. Introduction.

The foregoing chapters in this thesis have looked at the stories of three bereft mothers who were placed at important points in Israel's history to renegotiate the destinies not only of their own children, dead or lost, but also those of larger communities, i.e. family lines, ethnic groups, or entire nations. Yet, the nexus of maternal grief, politics, ritual zeal, and the restoration of a group is nowhere evident as powerfully in the Hebrew Bible as in the book of Jeremiah, which deals with the cessation of Israel's monarchy. As pointed out in the introductory chapter of the thesis, Jeremiah's presentation of the Babylonian crisis is profusely encoded in maternal terms, boosting the overall pathos of Judah's downfall. From the depth of suffering sustained by the nation to the oracles against Babylon, Judah's oppressor, the entirety of the seventh-sixth century trauma is circumscribed in mother grief symbolism. Equally effective in Jeremiah's chronicling of the crisis, however, is the use of this symbolism in the immediate ritual responses to Judah's demise and in the processes of national reconstitution following the exile. The focus of this chapter, therefore, will be Jer. 31:15-22. Closing a series of poetic compositions within the Book of Consolation (Jer. 30-31), this poem contains a grouping of all components pertinent to this project: a bereaved mother engaged in a series of mourning rites; a dead child whose death represents the fall of a nation; and finally the child's restoration in response to the mother's actions.

Featuring an ancestral matriarch frenziedly interceding for her offspring, this poignant poem is set against the background of Judah's demise in the Babylonian invasion at the end of the seventh and the beginning of the sixth centuries BC. Formulated as the outworking of

divine retribution for Judah's moral failure, the prophet's overall presentation of the crisis is marked by thoroughgoing mortuary abuses (Jer. 8:1-3, 9:18-21, 10:18-19, 15:18, 16:1-13, 19:6-8, 30:12-15, etc.). The complex of punitive actions taken against the erring nation involved, among other things, the exhumation of past generations of Jerusalem's citizens from their graves (Jer. 8:1-3), the abandonment of human bodies of current Judeans with no successive interment (Jer. 14:16, 22:19, 28, 26:23, 36:30, 41:9) and their posthumous desecration by animal scavengers (Jer. 7:33, 16:4). In fact, the book of Jeremiah holds the highest number of instances of corpse abuses and images the exile of both kingdoms, Israel and Judah, by way of violent carcass disposal (Jer. 7:15, 52:3).¹ Since the Book of Consolation, too, exhibits a focused interest in the plight of a nation struck by YHWH (Jer. 30:12-13), it will be argued that the issue of deviant treatment of Judah's dead should hold the interpretive control for the prophet's articulation of national fall and restoration in Jer. 31:15-22, and endorse a ritual reading of the poem at hand.²

Given the specifics of the prophet's portrayal of Judah's downfall and the overall anxiety about the polluting presence of human remains 'felt by a legalist age,'³ it will be argued that the Jeremian responses to both Judah's collapse at the beginning of the sixth century and its liberation in the second half of it (Jer. 31:15-22) are steeped in the ritual rhetoric of dealing with the dead. The ensuing discussion, therefore, will concentrate on the figure of Rachel and her mourning rites, arguing that they address the issue of mortuary deviances implemented in the Babylonian invasion and salvage the honour of the fallen.

¹ On the verb לָשַׁח used in these texts see discussion in ch. II.

² For other attestations of mortuary abuses in Jeremiah see Jer. 14:16, 15:7-9, 16:1-10, 22:19, 25:33, 33:5, 34:19-22, 36:30, and 41:9. For understanding the Babylonian crisis and exile as the experience of death see, for example, Olyan's discussion on the interrelation of formulations such as 'being cut off,' 'forsaken,' 'forgotten' in Is. 42:16, 49:14, 54:7, 62:4, Jer. 12:7, Lam. 5:20, 22, Ez. 37:11, 2 Kgs. 21:14. S. Olyan, "'We Are Utterly Cut Off': Some Possible Nuances of $\text{לָנוּ נִגְזַרְנוּ לָנוּ}$ in Ezek. 37:11,' *CBQ* (2003), 47-51. Cf. M. Halvorson-Taylor, *Enduring Exile: the Metaphorization of Exile in the Hebrew Bible* (Leiden, 2011), 31-38. See especially her discussion of the phrase אֶרֶץ אוֹיֵב in Lev. 26 and Jer. 31:16, where she demonstrates that in relation to exile it functions as a metaphor of descent into death. *Ibid.*, 82-83.

³ G. Cooke, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Ezekiel* (Edinburgh, 1936), 420.

Furthermore, in light of ancient ideologies of restoration that demanded certain rites in a community's transition from collapse to resurgence, it will be suggested that Jeremiah prescribes similar strategies to a female – a group of repatriated Judeans personified as Virgin Israel (Jer. 31:21). Having attended to these matters through the two hypostases of a nation – an ancestral matriarch, Rachel, and Virgin Israel – Jeremiah is then able to speak of Judah's reestablishment in the homeland in the later part of the Book of Consolation (Jer. 31:23ff). Since the focus of the current thesis is on the agentic role of mothers in social reconstitution of ancient societies in crisis, the primary attention in the following analysis of Jer. 31:15-22 will be given to Rachel.

II. Rachel's Mourning in Jer. 31:15-22.

The efficacy of maternal weeping and petitionary mourning in confronting authorities, either divine or human, has already been explored in the accounts of Hagar (Gen. 21) and the Tekoite (2 Sam. 14). In the same way, the linkage between Rachel's tears over the fallen Judah, cast as her child, and the promise of its return from captivity is also unquestionable in the poem's opening strophe (Jer. 31:15-16); and as such has generated a great number of laudatory responses from its readership. Thus, for example, in rabbinic traditions (Lam. Rabba 24) Rachel is featured in the reflections on God's own grief over Jerusalem's fall and her intercessions are juxtaposed with those of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Moses. Summoned by Jeremiah from their graves, the legendary ancestors and prophets all fail in their supplications for Jerusalem. Yet, when Rachel, a sorrowful mother, approaches God, He relents and promises to restore Israel.⁴ The premise of the subsequent discussion, however, is

⁴ Note that in Jer. 15:1 Moses and Samuel's pleas are dismissed and in Jer. 31:15 Rachel's petitions are accepted. Also note that her appearance in Jeremiah, along with experiences of other prominent ancestors and prophets, inspired a Jewish tradition of arguing with God, 'boldness with regard to heaven.' B. Lane, 'Hutzpa K'lapei Shamaya: A Christian Response to the Jewish Tradition of Arguing with God,' *JES* 23 (1986), 574; S. Dresner, *Rachel* (Minneapolis, 1994), 183-184; See also Bozak who understands Rachel's weeping as a prayer.

that in Jeremiah's iconic text (Jer. 31:15-22), weeping is not the only act of ritual significance and transformative power ascribed to Rachel. Given Jeremiah's heightened interest in the mechanisms of Judah's downfall and its resurgence, and the prominence of mother grief symbolism in both processes, the poet engages the ancestral matriarch in a full load of solemn rites in the wake of the crisis. As her tears in v. 15 have received much consideration both in antiquity and modern scholarship, the following analysis will instead explore the obscure clause in v. 22b, 'the woman encompasses a man,' and suggest that it may refer to Rachel's funerary dance around the casualties of the Babylonian invasion. It is to this cryptic statement that the present discussion will now turn.

A. Jer. 31:22b: A Brief Survey of Previous Views and Their Assessment.

The rendering of Jer. 31:22b, נקבה תסובב גבר, in the ancient translations is very diverse. Septuagint (Jer. 38:22), Theodotion, and Origen have ἐν σωτηρίᾳ περιλεύσονται ἄνθρωποι, *men shall go about in safety/salvation*, showing practically no resemblance to the Hebrew text. Aquila and Symmachus reflect the MT but represent גבר with different terms. They both use θήλεια, *female*, as the subject and περικυκλώσει, *to encircle*, as the verb, while Aquila uses ἄνδρα as the object and Symmachus uses ἄρσενά. The Vulgate, too, is close to the Hebrew, *femina circumdabit virum*, but does not clarify the meaning. The uncertainty of the versions is matched by the diversity of exegetical routes taken in the course of two millennia. Interpretive approaches to Jer. 31:22b can be more or less grouped under the following three rubrics: 1.) 'conception/procreation/courtship' approach; 2.) 'militaristic' reading; and 3.) 'gender-subversion' interpretation.⁵

B. Bozak, *Life Anew: a Literary-Theological Study of Jer. 30-31* (Rome, 1991), 95. On weeping as prayer see P. Ackroyd, 'Hosea and Jacob' *VT* 13 (1963), 250-251.

⁵ For a more detailed summary of interpretative traditions of this passage see C. Feinberg, 'Jeremiah 31:22: Proverb, Promise, or Prophecy?' *BS* 123-124 (1966-1967), 315-324, 16-21; McKane, *Jeremiah*, 806-807; J. Lewis, 'The Lord Has Created a New Thing on the Earth,' *RQ* 52 (2010), 19-28;

Within the overarching theme of conception/procreation/courtship many variously nuanced interpretations have emerged. Early Christian exegesis, for example, was dominated by Jerome's understanding of v. 22b as a 'mariological prophecy' which to him heralded the advent of a messiah.⁶ Modern scholarship, too, has proponents of Jer. 31:22b read in procreative terms, yet they understand the resumption of sexual activity as part of the return from exile. For Anderson this clause, when viewed in its wider context, 'announces that the way into the future is opened by Yahweh who, in a miracle of creation, gives the people new life by restoring them to their land and giving them a posterity, a future (cf. 'the seed of man... (31:27!).'⁷ Carroll is even more explicit in his reading of נקבה תסובב גבר, 'perhaps "the vagina envelops the penis,"' and says that 'when Yahweh acts creatively women will be women and men will be men - and ever the twain shall meet and become one flesh! Hence the repopulation of the community!'⁸ Jewish exegesis (Rashi, Kimchi) understood the phrase as the reversal of the established order under which women, not men, would initiate the courting, and on a symbolic level, this courting is a sign of the people of Israel pursuing their divine husband, YHWH (cf. JB, NAB).⁹ In response to this line of thinking Lewis offers an analysis of the Old Testament conventions in expressing ideas of courtship, conception, and pregnancy and finds that the formulation of Jer. 31:22b does not correspond to any of them.¹⁰ He concludes by saying that 'neither is there vocabulary similarity here nor can their action qualify for the Lord's creating a new thing.'¹¹ Besides, the promise of repopulation of the

⁶ For a summary of this view see B. Anderson, 'The Lord Has Created Something New: a Stylistic Study of Jer 31:15-22,' *CBQ* 40 (1978), 465, n. 5 and the bibliography cited there.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 476-477.

⁸ R. Carroll, *Jeremiah: a Commentary* (London, 1986), 602-603.

⁹ Cf. R. Samuel bar Nahmani who also used Jer. 31:22 to speak of Israel's renewed devotion to YHWH, 'As in this world the man courts the woman, and as in the time-to-come the women will court the man... The children of Israel will court the Holy One, blessed be He.' W. Braude, *The Midrash on Psalms* (New Haven, 1959), 24. Cf. also Tg.: 'The Lord is creating a new thing upon the earth: the people, the house of Israel, shall pursue the Law.' Hayward, *The Targum of Jeremiah*, 137. See also the bibliography cited in Anderson, 'The Lord,' 467, n. 10.

¹⁰ Lewis, 'The Lord Has Created,' 22-24.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 23.

land of Judah is treated more extensively in vv. 23-27 of the concluding section of Jeremiah 31 written in prose.

The second exegetical approach can be represented by Holladay's view¹² which understands traditional battle-taunts to be in the background of v. 22b.¹³ Previously referred to as 'women,' an ANE shorthand for 'cowards' (Jer. 30:6), Israel is now summoned as a warrior, 'Never fear: stop acting like a silly female, out there in the wilderness: God has withdrawn the curse, he is about to revise creation, he will reverse the sex-roles so that the female has priority, initiative, dominance over the male. Your warriors have become female? Look: the female will surmount the warrior! Take heart; come home.'¹⁴ A few objections, however, are in order. Anderson rightly observes that Jer. 30:5-7 was not necessarily meant to be read as a mockery of Israelite warriors. The metaphor of child-birth is habitually used by Jeremiah to represent the 'anguish of times' in anticipation of the Day of the Lord (4:31, 6:24, 22:23, 49:24, 50:43).¹⁵ Furthermore, passages that do echo conventional battle-taunts (Jer. 40:37, 41:30, 49:22, and Nah. 3:13) utilize a somewhat different vocabulary – גבור, not גבר, אשה, not נקבה, ל, היה כ/היה ל, סבב. In addition, to make his case Holladay connects Jer. 31:15-22 with the opening poem of the Book of Consolation, Jer. 30:5-11. But given a high concentration of images of death and mourning in 31:15-22, another sequence within this series of poems may be more probable. Jer. 30:12-17 describes an incurable wound inflicted on the nation – אנוש לשברך נחלה מכתך (v. 12) – and Jer. 31:15 conjures up a vision of a post death and interment scene thus lending itself as a better sequel to the poem in 30:12-13.¹⁶

¹² W. Holladay, 'Jer 31:22b Reconsidered: the Woman Encompasses the Man,' *VT* 16 (1966), 239. He is by no means alone in this line of thinking. For a list of similar approaches and their discussion see, for example, B. Becking, *Between Fear and Freedom: Essays on the Interpretation of Jeremiah 30-31* (Leiden, 2004), 223-225.

¹³ D. Hillers, *Treaty-Curses and the Old Testament Prophets* (Rome, 1964), 66-68; H. Hoffner, 'Symbols for Masculinity and Femininity, Their Use in Ancient Near Eastern Sympathetic Magic Rituals,' *JBL* 85 (1966), 326-334.

¹⁴ Holladay, 'Jer 31:22b,' 239.

¹⁵ Anderson, 'The Lord,' 468; C. Bergmann, *Childbirth as a Metaphor for Crisis: Evidence from the Ancient Near East, the Hebrew Bible, and 1QH XI, 1-18* (Berlin, 2008).

¹⁶ Cf. Jer. 10:18-19, 15:18, 19:6-8, 30:12-15, etc. where YHWH inflicts wounds on his children.

Furthermore, the chiasmic structure of 31:15-22 calls for a rhetorical correlation between the opening and concluding elements of the unit and thus, most likely, locates the meaning of נקבה תסובב גבר among mourning rites.¹⁷

The third exegetical tradition represents a range of interpretations that take Jer. 31:22b as a ‘gender-challenging stanza’¹⁸ signalling a reversal of male and female roles as the culmination of the Day of the Lord.¹⁹ Following the prompting of NEB and the ‘postmodern context that does not bind the reader to a dualistic value system’ Sawyer, for example, sees in Jer. 31:22b an occasion to ‘read biblical images of anarchy as alternative modes of reality set alongside those which predominate.’²⁰ She understands Jer. 31:22b as ‘a biblical strand which radically undermines traditional gender polarities’²¹and, taking Genesis as a recourse for Jeremiah, detects in the latter the reversal of biological functions and the undoing of the curses in Gen. 3. The Day of the Lord in 30:4 - 31:22, she states, is ‘the transformation, even the transmogrification, of the normal patterns of life which characterizes this particular day.’²² Kruger also focuses on the discontinuity of traditional gender roles, yet supports his reading by showing that this theme is common in many ANE cultural contexts. Like Sawyer,

¹⁷ Discussed below. Among these militaristic readings there is also a popular view that in the return from exile Israel’s soldiers will be so exhausted that women (the only ones left with strength) will have to protect them. Cf. J. Lundbom, *Jeremiah 21-36* (New York, 2004), 451-452. Yet, as rightly pointed out by many, if the return and subsequent life in the land are supposed to be peaceful, why do(es) women or Virgin Israel need to protect men? Anderson, ‘The Lord,’ 466. For further refutation of this and similar views see Becking, *Between Fear and Freedom*, 24-25.

¹⁸ D. Sawyer, ‘Gender-Play and Sacred Text: A Scene from Jeremiah,’ *JSOT* 83 (1999), 106. Cf. H. Huffmon, ‘Gender Subversion in the Book of Jeremiah,’ in S. Parpola and R. M. Whiting (eds), *Sex and Gender in the Ancient Near East: Proceedings of the 47th Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale, Helsinki, July 2-6, 2001* (Helsinki, 2002), 245-254. See also McKane who simply lists a number of possibilities including YHWH’s new regime that ‘would introduce unheard and undreamed of conditions of life.’ McKane, *Jeremiah*, 807.

¹⁹ Cf. NEB: ‘a woman will be turned into a man’; REB: ‘a woman will play a man’s part.’

²⁰ Sawyer, ‘Gender-Play,’ 105.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 105.

²² Cf. Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 574.

he too understands this new reality to be the redemptive conclusion to the day of the Lord, yet admits that the exact nature of it is not explicitly evident.²³

Postmodern gender theories aside, Sawyer's discussion of biblical texts seems rather convoluted. If Jeremiah indeed uses Genesis as a recourse,²⁴ it is unclear why the poet uses the terminology of Gen. 1 to reverse the many-fold punishment of Eve pronounced in Gen. 3.²⁵ Furthermore, in discussing תסרב Sawyer cites Deut. 32:10 and Ps. 32:10 and defines the verb as a 'female role in terms of active protection and care, offered elsewhere in biblical contexts by God.'²⁶ Ascribing *protection* and *care* to the meaning of תסרב in Jer. 31:22b and understanding משל in Gen. 3:16 as *dominance* she, surprisingly, treats the former as the reversal of the latter. If the semantics of these two verbs do not represent comparable attitudes or behaviours, it is fallacious to think that one author (Jer. 31) meant to create a reality antithetical to the one envisaged by the other (Gen. 3), i.e. to undo the curses and to restore creation to its pristine condition (Gen. 1, 2). For those in this group who subscribe to the view that in the eschatological age the woman will turn into the man it should be noted that such metamorphosis can hardly be redemptive for anyone.²⁷

²³ He states that in the new world order to come 'the woman will assume a social role which stands in direct antithesis to the traditional expectations regarding femininity and that is: "the woman will... (Poel Impf.) the man." Whether it refers to "encompass," "to go around," "to court," or "to protect" is difficult to determine.' P. Kruger, 'A Woman will "Encompass" a Man: on Gender Reversal in Jer 31, 22b,' *Bib* 89 (2008), 388. He does, however, cite Deut. 32:10 as the most comparable passage in terms of the use of סרב and is inclined to take סרב to mean 'to protect.' Again it is unclear how the meaning of the verb in Deut. 32:10, being that of protection and nourishment, is supposed to be 'new,' something that women are not already responsible for.

²⁴ For commentators who link Jer. 31:22b to Jer. 30:6 and the creation account see Holladay, *Jeremiah* 2, 195.

²⁵ The connection can only be demonstrated between v. 22b and Gen. 1 due to the two words, ונקבה and ברא. The use of ברא, however, is not limited to the original creation in Genesis 1. Lewis, 'The Lord Has Created,' 22.

²⁶ Sawyer, 'Gender-Play,' 110.

²⁷ On the redemptive aspect of the use of feminine imagery in Jer. 30-31 see ch. 5 in Bozak where she hypothesizes that in exile people were 'continually faced with a society which gave women greater freedom and legal autonomy than they had been accustomed to.' Bozak, *Life Anew*, 168-170.

B. Alternative Reading: Rachel's Funerary Dance.

Seeing that the MT has so far resisted persuasive interpretations and that among 'the numerous emendations that have been offered, none commands confidence,'²⁸ this chapter will attempt to propose yet another reading of the statement in v. 22b. Against the theories cited above and many others subsumed under the broader rubrics they represent, it will be argued that the obscure clause in Jer. 31:22b may refer to a funerary rite of circumambulation performed by Rachel. In reconstructing the meaning of v. 22b this discussion will adopt the suggestions of those who identify the noun נקבה with Rachel from v. 15 and גבר with her expatriated child(ren).²⁹ Since the primary semantic force of the Hebrew verb סבב is 'to surround,' 'to encompass'³⁰ it will be suggested that v. 22 contains a description of Rachel's funerary dance around her posterity poetically cast as a dead child. This reading will become possible when the following issues have been given consideration: 1.) the compositional structure of Jer. 31:15-22 that calls for a correlation of vv. 15 and 22b; 2.) the meaning of 'a new thing' identified with provisions for the journey home, i.e. מסלה and דרך, not the statement in v. 22b; 3.) Jeremiah's use of metaleptic traditions that exacerbate the poignancy of the Babylonian crisis and demand strong mortuary responses to it; 4.) the use of סבב in Qoh. 12:5; 5.) the kinaesthetic nature of grief and ANE evidence for funerary dances; and 6.) archaeological evidence for women involved in music production. Thus it will be argued that Jeremiah's 'mortuary' agenda, firmly embedded into the rhetorical organization of Jer. 31:15-

²⁸ J. Bright, *Jeremiah: a New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (Garden City, 1965), 282. One such suggestion, for example, is to emend *t'sôbēb* to *tissôb* proposed by Duhm. He understood 'the woman is turned into a man' as a gloss which informed the reader that Israel, who had been referred to shortly before as a man, is here regarded as a woman. B. Duhm, *Das Buch Jeremia* (Tübingen, 1901), 251. The sequence of female and male imagery in the poem, however, makes this suggestion unlikely – for Ephraim (man) comes before Virgin Israel (woman) and thus calls for 'the man is turned into a woman.'

²⁹ Cf. C. Ritter, *Rachels Klage im antiken Judentum und frühen Christentum: Eine auslegungsgeschichtliche Studie* (Leiden, 2003), 38-52; Becking, *Between Fear and Freedom*, 225.

³⁰ Cf. Lewis's discussion of סבב in Jer. 31:22b as a regular grammatical, imperfect Polel form of סבב, which occurs 150 times in the OT with the meaning 'to surround' or 'go around.' Lewis, 'The Lord Has Created,' 23. See also R. Patterson, סבב, *TDOT*, 615-616; L. Allen, סבב, *DOTTE*, 220; F. Garcia-López, סבב, *TDOT*, 136.

22 and its wider context, overrides a rampant desecration of the Judeans and through Rachel posthumously seeks to restore their honour.

1. The Compositional Structure of Jer. 31:15-22.

Although some scholars are hesitant to treat Jer. 31:15-22 as a unified poem,³¹ quite a few consider it as a coherent composition comprised of three subunits, which are thematically interlinked.³² Since the first two strophes depict individuals undeniably engaged in mourning rites, it would not be too implausible to construe the actions featured in the third part of the poem (vv. 21-22) in the same light. In fact, it could be argued that a carefully-balanced distribution of these rites across the poem's strophes corresponds to the unique societal concerns located on the trajectory of Israel's history hinged on the experience of its exile.

Cast as a post-death scene featuring a bereft mother, Rachel, stationed in Ramah, the first subunit deals with the onslaught on Judeans in the Babylonian crisis and ritually marks the pre-exilic juncture. Her wailing (v. 15) gets the attention of YHWH and he promises to reverse her children's misfortunes. To counteract the nonbeing of Rachel's offspring, כי איננו, the divine oracle contains a double promise of return – כי יש שכר (v. 16b) and יש-תקוה לאחרי־ך (v. 17a). As it will be argued below, Rachel's wails (v. 15) and funerary choreography (v. 22b), address the issue of widespread desecration of the Judeans in the Babylonian invasion.

Conjuring a vision of Israel under a different guise, i.e. Ephraim, the second subunit (vv. 18-20) advances in the course of Israel's history and probes into the experience of exile. Resurrected for a moment of violent confession, Ephraim, the exiled, is similarly cast by

³¹ See, for example, Childs who calls vv. 15-20 'a series of separate units loosely joined together.' B. Childs, *Memory and Tradition in Israel* (London, 1962), 40; Becking, *Between Fear and Freedom*, 189, n. 3 and the bibliography cited there.

³² For those who understand vv. 15-22 as a poetic unit see, P. Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (Philadelphia, 1978), 40; B. Lindars, "'Rachel Weeping for Her Children"- Jeremiah 31:15-22,' *JSOT* 12 (1979), 55; Bright, *Jeremiah*, 275-276, 284-286; J. Muilenburg, 'Jeremiah, the Prophet,' *IDB*, 834; Anderson, 'The Lord,' 469-470; Becking, *Between Fear and Freedom*, 188, n. 1 and the bibliography cited there.

means of rites and behaviours traditionally associated with grief – lamenting, מתנווד³³ (v. 18) and striking his thigh, ספקתי על-יירך (v. 19).³⁴ Since the relocation and social disintegration of the Judean elite is frequently metaphorised in prophetic thought as the experience of death, and since ancient socio-religious conventions prescribed mourning rites and behaviours to penitents,³⁵ the convergence of these themes in vv. 18-20 is appropriate. Under the guise of Ephraim, the exiled, and thus effectively dead, nation resorts to socially determined means of penance and solicits divine absolution.³⁶

Finally, spotlighting the post-exilic phase, the third subunit provides a detailed manifesto of Israel's return to the homeland. Following the first two strophes heavily loaded with mortuary rites, a series of imperatives in v. 21 also emerges as a semantically layered directive. The linear geography of repatriation from vv. 16b, 17b is now diversified – למסלה, דרך הלכת, and עריך – and is further augmented by the directives to signpost the journey with תמרורים and צינים, and mark it by אלה. Given the interrelatedness of the subunits, these elements in the expanded itinerary will prove to be of ritual significance as well. Reintegrating the fallen and desecrated Judeans into a new society via the construction of burial markers, צינים, and supplementing the return with ritual wailing, אלה,³⁷ these elements

³³ Note McKane's translation of מתנווד – 'shaking as he sobbed.' McKane, *Jeremiah*, 796. But note that מתנווד is the Hithpolel of נוד, which in Qal can mean to grieve but also to 'wander.' Halvorson-Taylor observes that 'there may be a double meaning here; primarily, the verse means 'to move back and forth in grief,' but in context it may also mean 'to wander to and fro.' Halvorson-Taylor, *Enduring Exile*, 75, n. 66. On נוד with the meaning 'to lament,' 'to grieve' see also Becking, *Between Fear and Freedom*, 209. Thus Ephraim's wandering about as part of his penitentiary mourning in v. 18 anticipates the highly kinaesthetic expression of Rachel's grief in v. 22b and further connects the subunits within Jer. 31:15-22. Of interest is also the description of Virgin Israel as 'a turning one' in v. 22, שובבה.

³⁴ In another biblical attestation this gesture is paired up with wailing and weeping, and clearly carries funerary overtones (Ez. 21:17). Note that the LXX and Pesh. tried to find an adequate way to render this Hebrew idiom and have 'I groaned in the days of shame' and 'I was quietened' respectively. McKane, *Jeremiah*, 800. On this gesture see also X. Pham, *Mourning in the Ancient Near East and the Hebrew Bible* (London, 2000), 27; Gruber, *Aspects of Nonverbal Communication*, 380-382.

³⁵ Olyan, *Biblical Mourning*, 62-89.

³⁶ See Tribble who understands that in Jer. 31:15-22 YHWH's emotions are described in a distinctly maternal language. Tribble, *God and the Rhetoric*, 45-50. See also Becking who argues that the imagery here is both paternal and maternal. Becking, *Between Fear and Freedom*, 214, n. 116, 117.

³⁷ See discussion below.

will ensure a more comprehensive reconstitution of Israel and render the land of Judah cultically clean and suitable for repopulation. Graphically the compositional structure of 31:15-22 could be represented as follows:

Unit I

v. 15: Rachel bewailing her children/funerary rites

v. 16a: YHWH's address to Rachel to discontinue her weeping

vv. 16b, 17: 1st promise of return in response to Rachel's vigilance – כי יש שכר לפעלתך

Unit II

v. 18a: YHWH hears Ephraim's cry

v. 18b: Ephraim's 1st speech/admission of his repentance

v. 19: Ephraim's 2nd speech/admission of remorse over his actions

v. 20: YHWH's compassionate response

Unit III

v. 21: 2nd promise of return

v. 22a: the prophet's address/question to Israel to further emphasise the possibility of return

v. 22b: 2nd assurance of return via a statement that everything has been provided for it, כי נקבה תסובב גבר, [in response to] ברא יהוה חדשה בארץ

As is evident from the graph, this poem, as well as its individual elements, has a ring composition to it,³⁸ and thus calls for the correlation between the opening and the closing strophes. Since both strophes deal with Judah's return from exile, and Rachel's watch features prominently as its agent in vv. 15-17, the identity of נקבה, which happens to be in the כי sentence as well, should be sought in the person of the matriarch. As Rachel's labour is cast in undeniably funereal terms in v. 15, the nature of תסובב גבר, too, should be located in the registry of funerary practices. As it will be argued below, the most likely meaning of the action articulated in v. 22b with the root סבב is that of a funerary dance, which incidentally is a part of many cultures' mortuary customs. Thus spread across its three strophes and the historical junctures they represent, the poem's funerary solidarity offers a qualitatively different programme of Israel's resurgence and proves requisite for its resettlement in the

³⁸ On the chiasmic structure of the poem see Tribble, *God and the Rhetoric*, 40-41. Cf. Lindars who says that 'two oracles of return from captivity enclose that splendid poem based on Hosea, which expresses Yahweh's acceptance of the people's repentance.' Lindars, 'Rachel,' 55. Cf. Anderson, 'The Lord,' 475. Anderson, however, thinks that the last statement in the poem should be understood as a contrast to v. 15.

land (vv. 23ff). Stationed at either end of the exile, the two females encompass Ephraim with their lamentations according to the conventions of the funerary wailing genre – generating a powerful antiphon – and advance a claim that hope in the Book of Consolation is a ritually inflected ideal.³⁹

2. Jer. 31:22a: כִּי־בְרָא יְהוָה חֲדָשָׁה בְּאֶרֶץ.

Before moving to the discussion of Rachel's mourning in the final clause of v. 22, it is important to consider the possibility that the poet's statement concerning the new creation in v. 22 looks *back* to his previous promises (vv. 21, 22a) and not *forward* to the actions of a woman (v. 22b). The statement כִּי־בְרָא יְהוָה חֲדָשָׁה בְּאֶרֶץ is found in the wake of a rhetorical question that underscores the longevity of Israel's exile and its hesitance to return home, 'How long will you go here and there, Oh, turning Daughter?' (v. 22a). This question in turn flows from a series of urgent imperatives summoning people to a journey home (v. 21). Surprised at Israel's indecisiveness the prophet seems to reassure her that adequate provisions have been made for her journey and states כִּי־בְרָא יְהוָה חֲדָשָׁה בְּאֶרֶץ.

Since the concept of a 'new thing' is introduced immediately following the section on YHWH's repatriation programme built around the motif of the road (מַסְלָה) or the path (דֶּרֶךְ) (v. 21), it too should be understood in similar terms. In fact, the book of Isaiah, which capitalises on the subject of roads and highways in analogous contexts (Is. 40:1-11, 43), uses the term חֲדָשָׁה for the new thing the Lord is about to do (Isa 43:[18]19) and which consists in his making a road (דֶּרֶךְ) and rivers (נְהַרֹת) in the wilderness.⁴⁰ Likewise, in Jer. 31:9 YHWH

³⁹ For the theological motif of weeping as the route to restoration see P. Scalise, 'The Way of Weeping: Reading the Path of Grief in Jeremiah,' *WW* 22 (2002), 415-422, especially 422; W. Brueggemann, 'The "Uncared for" now Cared For (Jer. 30:12-17): a Methodological Consideration,' *JBL* 104 (1985), 419-428.

⁴⁰ Bozak notes that חֲדָשָׁה is either the modifier of the object or the object of a verb whose subject is YHWH as he appears in Is. 43:19, 65:17, 66:22, Ez. 11:19, 36:26, and Jer 31:22, all in eschatological contexts. Bozak, *Life Anew*, 103, n. 408. She also discusses the meaning of חֲדָשָׁה as the possibility to return, yet surprisingly later states that in Jer. 31:22 the newness consists in נִקְבָּה תְּסוּבָּב גְּבֵר which can be a blessing antithetical to Gen.

promises to lead people back to the homeland by streams of water (נהלי מים) and on a straight path (בדרך ישר). Writing on the semantic field of מסלה Tidwell states that ‘its original and earliest referential identity is nothing other than the approach roads that branched off from the regional foot-worn cross-country roads to ascend by an easy, artificially constructed gradient to the gates of the Israelite cities standing on top of their mounds.’⁴¹ In addition, he points out that its use in Is. 62:10 more closely identifies it with ‘the passage through the city gates and pictures it unmistakably as the road leading to or from the city gate.’⁴² In v. 21, when urging Israel to go back, Jeremiah combines the phrases ‘set your heart on the highway’ and ‘return to your cities’ and thus brings into focus the last stretch of a journey home.⁴³

Understanding חדשה, the new thing, as a return from exile realised through a matrix of pathways and highways in the land⁴⁴ not only coheres well with other prophetic materials concerning Judah’s repatriation, but also connects the two elements in v. 22b in a more meaningful way. In vv. 16-17 the return of Rachel’s children was predicated on her work as a sorrowing mother. Similarly in v. 22 the prophet provides a rationale for the assurance of Judah’s restoration – the Lord created a new thing, i.e. roads, pathways, *in response to* תשובב נקבה, in response to Rachel’s solemn labour.

3. The Use of Rachel and the Location of Her Grief (in) ברמה.

In support of the premise of this discussion, i.e. the meaning of תשובב נקבה should be sought in Rachel’s responses to the loss of her children, is also Jeremiah’s use of

3:16. She also mentions that v. 22b may be a ‘proverb whose original meaning eludes present generations.’ *Ibid.*, 104.

⁴¹ N. Tidwell, ‘No Highway! The Outline of Semantic Description of *mesillä*,’ *VT* 45 (1995), 254.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 259. See also Bozak who shows that גבול (v. 17) means a territory, ‘which is defined, bounded or enclosed (as a city).’ Bozak, *Life Anew*, 96.

⁴³ Tidwell also observes that central to the meaning of מסלה is its frequent use in contexts of cult-processions (Jdg 5:20, 21:19, 1 Sam. 6:12; Ps. 68:5 (verb), 84:6; Isa. 35:8, 40:3, 49:11, 62:10) and theophanies (Jdg 5, Ps. 68, Is. 40:1-11) pointing to its character and function as a *via sacra*. *Ibid.*, 258.

⁴⁴ See Anderson who argues persuasively that בארץ should be understood as ‘in the land,’ not ‘in/on the earth’ (cf. Jer. 30:3). Anderson, ‘The Lord,’ 474-475.

metaleptic traditions⁴⁵ in its presentation of the Judean crisis. Throughout his composition the poet continually utilizes elements of grammar, morphology, and syntax that intensify the depiction of Judah's collapse.⁴⁶ Yet one of his most effective strategies in creating a moving depiction of the national disaster is his use of the figure of Rachel and his situating her in Ramah. As both represent traditions that hold extreme patterns of sorrow and violence, and thus mobilise Israel's wider sensitive histories, they call for unrestrained ritual reactions, for a surplus of funerary rites.

In vv. 15-17 Rachel's lament is located (in) ברמה which is understood by the versions in a variety of ways: 1.) a place-name (LXX, possibly Pesh. [*brmt*' could be either a place name or 'a height'⁴⁷]); 2.) 'a height' (Vulg. (*in excelso*)); 3.) 'on top of the world' (Targum Jonathan).⁴⁸ In modern scholarship the reading of ברמה as 'a height' has also enjoyed its share of proponents.⁴⁹ Tsevat, for example, advanced a few objections to treating ברמה as a proper name, one of which is the formulation in Jer. 3:21 understood by him as an 'almost perfect duplicate' to Jer. 31:15, קול על-שפיים נשמע. He states that, 'sound philology requires that, unless there is an overriding argument, two passages by the same author as similar as these be interpreted alike. ברמה of the disputed passage corresponds to על-שפיים of the control passage (see also [7:29]).'⁵⁰ It should be noted, however, that an expression similar to those discussed by Tsevat is found in Jer. 9:16, קול נהי נשמע מציון, which obviously utilises

⁴⁵ Borrowing Hays' terminology from his analysis of the use of Rachel in Matthew. R. Hays, 'The Gospel of Matthew: Reconfigured Torah,' *HTS* 61 (2005), 177.

⁴⁶ Intensive verbal themes: מבכה (v. 15), מתנוודד (lamenting/ bemoaning/ ever-increasing distress (cf. Bright, *Jeremiah*, 275, Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 95), תתחמקין, תסובב, תתחמקין; intensifying grammatical constructions: שמוע שמעתי, שמוע ארמנו, זכר אזכרנו, רחם ארחמנו; repetitions and chiasmic arrangements.

⁴⁷ McKane, *Jeremiah*, 797.

⁴⁸ Targum Jonathan is too paraphrastic and reads v. 15 as, 'A cry is heard "in the heights of the world, the house of Israel is lamenting and moaning..." Jerusalem is weeping for her children. She refuses to be comforted, for they are not.' Dresner, *Rachel*, 180. These divergent readings, and more specifically the preference for 'a height,' must have been due to the fact that Ramah was a common place-name. McKane, *Jeremiah*, 797.

⁴⁹ M. Tsevat, 'Studies in the Book of Samuel,' *HUCA* 33 (1962), 107-109.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 108-109.

a proper name, i.e. Zion.⁵¹ Admittedly, Zion, too, is an elevated locus, it nevertheless is a proper name, and there is no need to discriminate against Jeremiah's use of toponyms in connection with laments (cf. Jer. 22:20, 48:3, 51:54).⁵²

Furthermore, Tsevat points out that 'locating Rachel's tomb at Haramah is to deny the explicit information of both Genesis and Samuel; a location at Haramah cannot be reconciled with one at Zelzah... or at Ephrath(ah)-Bethlehem.'⁵³ This contradiction of biblical traditions, however, can be explained by the Judean-Benjaminite antagonism which dominated Palestinian politics during the Neo-Babylonian and Persian periods.⁵⁴ In fact, Blenkinsopp detects a habitual appropriation of Benjaminite sites by the Judeans as a 'means of enhancing Judah's prestige and furthering its political ascendancy',⁵⁵

In view of the persistence or revival of a distinctly Benjaminite identity in the Neo-Babylonian period, together with the indications of Judean-Benjaminite hostility we should allow for the possibility that the takeover of the grave tradition of the great matriarch was one aspect of the process by which Judean-Jerusalemite hegemony was revalidated during the first century of the Persian rule.⁵⁶

Regarding the original location of Rachel's tomb in Benjaminite not Judean territory, Blenkinsopp states that it is only expected given 'the eponymous character of the tradition about Benjamin's birth' and its mention in 1 Sam. 10:2 and Jer. 31:15 as being in the

⁵¹ Tsevat also points out the lack of an article in ברמה, but see JM, §137b for a list of locations that appear both with an article and without it. See also S. Lee, 'The Use of the Definite Article in the Development of Some Biblical Toponyms,' *VT* 52 (2002), 334-349.

⁵² Cf. Jer. 4:15: כִּי קוֹל מִגִּיד מִדָּן וּמִשְׁמִיעַ אֹן מִהַר אֶפְרַיִם. Jer. 4:15 is not a lament but here the word קוֹל (cf. Jer. 3:21, Jer.9:16, Jer. 22:20, 48:3, 51:54) again appears in connection with two toponyms, Dan and Mount Ephraim.

⁵³ Tsevat, 'Studies,' 109.

⁵⁴ J. Blenkinsopp, 'Benjamin Traditions Read in the Early Persian Period,' in O. Lipschits, M. Oeming (eds), *Judah and the Judeans in the Persian Period* (Winona Lake, 2006), 631-633.

⁵⁵ Along with the tradition regarding Rachel's grave a number of other sites came to be identified as being located in Judah. By the time of the Chronicler the site of Solomon's temple had been recognised as the אֶרֶץ הַמְּרִיָּה, the place of Isaac's near sacrifice (2 Chr. 3:1, Gen. 22:2). Kiriath-jearim, originally a Benjaminite settlement (Josh. 9:17, 18:28), was also absorbed into Judah. *Ibid.*, 632.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 633.

Benjaminite territory. The transference of Rachel's tomb to Judah must have been due to the existence of a similar toponym in or near Bethlehem.⁵⁷

Tsevat's further objection to locating Rachel's tomb in Ramah in Jer. 31, and thus to reading ברמה as a proper name, is that Jer. 31:15-22 'does not speak of graves, burials, and the like; Rachel's Tomb in the passage is a case of eisegesis.'⁵⁸ But even if Rachel's tomb is located someplace else, it is unclear why Tzevat feels the need to immobilise Rachel's ghost and dissociate her from Ramah in Jer. 31. According to 1 Sam. 28, the spirit of Samuel is conjured up in Endor, the place of residence of a medium, not in Ramah, the place of Samuel's burial (1 Sam. 25:1, 28:3). Ramah in Jer. 31 could have been chosen not in connection with the place of Rachel's own demise, but in connection with those whom she mourns. Therefore, Tsevat's reading of ברמה as 'a height,' should be dismissed.⁵⁹

If however, ברמה's referent is Ramah (Haramah), then in Jeremiah's poem it takes on a metaleptic dimension, recalling a longer history of its calamities. Since Ramah is in the Benjaminite territory and close to the border of Ephraim, Rachel must have bewailed the loss of the people in the wake of the fall of Samaria in 722 BC.⁶⁰ However, the eighth century strand of Ramah's metaleptic rhetoric would not be complete without its connection to the events in Hos. 5:8 and Is. 10:29. The precise significance of these oracles is not clear, yet they do signal the threat of annihilation to Benjamin and Judah in the tumultuous century.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 631-632. In keeping with the Judean scribal tradition, the site of Rachel's tomb on the road from Jerusalem to Bethlehem has been a popular destination for Jewish and Christian pilgrims since at least the fourth century CE. S. Sered, 'Rachel's Tomb and the Milk Grotto of the Virgin Mary: Two Women's Shrines in Bethlehem,' *JFSR* 2 (1986), 7-22; S. Sered, 'Rachel's Tomb: Societal Liminality and the Revitalization of a Shrine,' *Rel* 19 (1989), 27-40. For a different reason why Rachel was buried in the Benjaminite territory as opposed to in Bethlehem see B. Cox, S. Ackerman, 'Rachel's Tomb,' *JBL* 128 (2009), 135-148; Z. Kallai, 'Rachel's Tomb: A Historiographical Review,' in J. Loader, H. Kieweler (eds), *Vielseitigkeit des Alten Testaments: Festschrift für Georg Sauer zum 70. Geburtstag* (Frankfurt, 1999), 215-223.

⁵⁸ Tsevat, 'Studies,' 109.

⁵⁹ For scholars who read ברמה as a proper name see McKane, *Jeremiah*, 797.

⁶⁰ Lindars, 'Rachel,' 53-54. Cf. Allen who states that 'the vision reflects the real-life mourning of those left in the area, still bemoaning the absence of their fellow citizens exiled in 721 B.C.E.' L. Allen, *Jeremiah: a Commentary* (Louisville, 2008), 348.

Hos. 5:8 speaks of warning trumpets blasting in Gibeah, Ramah, and Beth-Aven, which controlled the northern approach to Jerusalem in the Syro-Ephraimite conflict.⁶¹ Since vv. 9-12 chastise both Judah and Ephraim for their rivalry over the disputed region the oracle in v. 5 might have intended to warn the Benjaminites about the danger coming from either the North or South.⁶² Regarding Is. 10:29, however, it is noted that ‘the defeat of the northern rebels in 720 led by Hamath and including Samaria, followed by a rapid march south to subdue Hannun of Gaza, seems to provide a more fitting context for a show of strength against Jerusalem with the purpose of discouraging Judean participation in the revolt.’⁶³ In the sixth century, due to its location on a major trade route, Ramah became a transit camp for the caravans of captive Judeans and Babylonian troops en route to Mesopotamia after the fall of Jerusalem (Jer. 40:1). Stith points out that Ramah at this time was the ‘point of no return’ and its cryptic mention in Jer. 31:15 may well reflect the actual laments of the departing exiles that Jeremiah heard there.⁶⁴

It is these layered associations of violence with Ramah in the memory of Jeremiah’s contemporaries that might have given rise to a poignant overlap of traditions – national threat and a matriarch who expired in childbirth.⁶⁵ Since Ramah absorbed so much of Israel’s calamitous history,⁶⁶ identifying its individual strands is definitely important. Separating them, however, might not be. In fact, against those who see this section as a northern

⁶¹ D. Stith, ‘Ramah,’ *NIDB*, 731; A. Macintosh, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Hosea* (Edinburgh, 1997), 195.

⁶² Regarding Hos. 5:8 Macintosh shows ‘that the events of Syro-Ephraimite War are but the latest examples of a long history of dispute and tension between Ephraim and Judah in respect of the territory of Benjamin; that both states are and have been at fault and that their hostility and greed represent a fundamental disloyalty to Yahweh, for which both are punishable. His manifestly even-handed condemnations (cf. vv. 9-12) suggest that he grieves for ‘Israel,’ i.e. the whole people of Yahweh, now, and long, debilitated and ruined by such internecine strife.’ *Ibid.*, 198.

⁶³ Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah*, 261.

⁶⁴ Stith, ‘Ramah,’ 731. Lindars thinks that the prophet is quoting a traditional lament associated with Rachel’s tomb. Lindars, ‘Rachel,’ 53.

⁶⁵ As a Benjaminite, Jeremiah would have been well acquainted with these traditions. For a discussion on the widely and cross-culturally attested belief that women who die in child-birth linger in the world to protect their children see Cox, Ackerman, ‘Rachel’s Tomb’; cf. Gaster, *Myth*, 605, 707 and the bibliography cited there.

⁶⁶ Davies and Allison refer to Ramah as ‘a city of sadness *par excellence*.’ W. Davies, D. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew* (Edinburgh, 1988), 269.

recension produced during Jeremiah's earlier ministry under Josiah, it should be noted that the Book of Consolation is rather ecumenical in its outlook and appears to be mindful of both kingdoms (30:3, 4, 7, 31:2-6, 9, 31ff).⁶⁷ The poem itself continually alternates between plural and singular references to Rachel's children and thus cautions against such differentiation.⁶⁸ In addition, like the entire cycle, Jer. 31:15-22 identifies past experiences with present ones through the ambiguity of verbal tenses⁶⁹ and thus itself is a metalepsis for recurring patterns of violence in Israel's history.⁷⁰

Since Ramah was also of significance at the nascent stages of Israel's move towards monarchy – it was at Ramah that the elders of Israel demanded a king (1 Sam. 8:4)⁷¹ – its mention in Jer. 31:15 stands at the end of the entire epoch of monarchy. Given the calibre of the task at hand – to bury a nation cast effectively as dead and to 'inhume' an entire age – Jeremiah releases a full arsenal of loaded traditions. It resuscitates Rachel, an ancestral figure of sorrows⁷² and a composite palimpsest on the maternal grief in Judah (Jer. 4:31, 15:7-9, 16:3, 18:21, etc.), and engages her in vigorous mortuary practices, i.e. inconsolable wails (v.

⁶⁷ Note Anderson's discussion that in the Book of Consolation Israel is addressed as a whole. Anderson, 'The Lord,' 475. Lindars also notes that Jer. 31:15 and 40:1 should be connected since the poem promises a reversal of current despair (Jer. 31:16, 17ff) and thus refers to something that has actually happened, i.e. either the deportation of 722, or that of 587-586. Lindars, 'Rachel,' 53. See Allen who states that northern exiles will share in the restoration of Judah. Allen, *Jeremiah*, 348.

⁶⁸ V. 15 uses both בְּנֵיהָ (plural) and אִינָנוּ (singular). Vv. 16 and 17 use both שָׁבוּ (plural) and אֶחָדֶיךָ (singular). Vv. 18-20 personify Rachel's posterity as Ephraim (singular), then vv. 21, 22a – as Virgin Israel, and v. 22b – גִּבֹר (both singular). Note that *BHS*, following some of the versions, suggests emending אִינָנוּ to אִינָם to harmonize it with עַל־בְּנֵיהָ. For the significance of retaining the MT see further discussion below.

⁶⁹ Bozak, *Life Anew*, 97, n. 373.

⁷⁰ Some people argue that Jeremiah here is dependent on Hosea's rhetoric. Lindars, 'Rachel,' 57.

⁷¹ Note also the account of David's anointing for kingship in 1 Sam. 16:11 which may have entailed a procession around the altar expressed by סָבַב – עַד־בָּאוּ פֶה – כִּי לֹא־נָסַב וּקְחָנוּ כִּי לֹא־נָסַב עַד־בָּאוּ פֶה. If the premise of this discussion is correct then both the beginning and the end of monarchy appear to be marked by a rite of circumambulation. Not only Ramah happens to stand at the respective ends of Israel's kingship (1 Sam. 8:4, Jer. 31:15) but also a ritual expressed via סָבַב – performed by Samuel and Jesse's family on one hand (1 Sam. 16:11) and Rachel on the other (Jer. 31:22b). Note, however, that the LXX has 'we will not sit down' for לֹא־נָסַב in 1 Sam. 16:11, probably reading נָשַׁב. But see Smith who is not certain that LXX had a different reading, based on Cant. 1:12. He adds that, 'as סָבַב is used of going about the altar as a part of the sacrificial worship, Samuel may mean *we will not begin sacrifice* until he come.' Smith, *Samuel*, 146-147. On the possibility of a ritual procession in 1 Sam. 16:11, see also E. De Ward, 'Mourning Customs in 1, 2 Samuel,' *JJS* 23 (1972), 23 and 23, n. 134 and the bibliography cited there.

⁷² Cf. Gen. 35:16-20 where Benjamin is first named בֶּן־אֵוֶן , son of my sorrow.

15) and circumambulating choreography (v. 22b).⁷³ By locating her and her dances in Ramah, Jeremiah activates a massive repository of violence against God's people and allows Israel's monarchy to turn a full circle and collapse in on itself.

4. The Verb סבב in the Hebrew Bible.

The idea of נקבה תסובב גבר representing Rachel's performance of a funerary dance can also emerge from the use of סבב in contexts of ritual circumambulations attested in the form of either dancing or ceremonial processions. Given that other interpretive suggestions for the meaning of סבב have been ruled out on various grounds,⁷⁴ the idea of a ritual dance as a semantic option for the root in question should be considered.

Discussing the possibility of dancing as a funerary rite in ancient Palestine, De Ward mentions Is. 23:16, Ps. 26:6, 48:13, and 1 Sam. 16:11, where the root סבב may mean 'to dance.'⁷⁵ In Isaiah's lament for Tyre (Is. 23:16) the city is personified as a harlot and is instructed to walk about the city in circular motions with her harp, קחי כנור סבי עיר.⁷⁶ Whitehouse observes that סבב in this address has 'unmistakably a dance rhythm.'⁷⁷ In Ps.

⁷³ Interestingly enough, in subsequent ages Rachel's tomb served as a venerable site that attracted barren women. Sered informs that 'the most famous woman's ritual at Rachel's Tomb involves tying a red string seven times around the tomb and then wearing the string as a charm for fertility...Although some women use the string for other kinds of ills, it is best known for its power to help women marry, conceive, and bear children.' Sered, 'Rachel's Tomb,' 11.

⁷⁴ Becking, *Between Freedom and Fear*, 223-225; Lewis, 'The Lord,' 19-28. Naturally, the idea of a neologism in Jer. 31:22b should not be ruled out, but it is unclear why Jeremiah would obscure the meaning of a text that intended to instil hope and assure its people of the promise to return home.

⁷⁵ De Ward, 'Mourning,' 23.

⁷⁶ Admittedly, the root סבב here, and in other texts cited later, is featured in Qal, whereas in Jer. 31:22b it is found in Polel. It should be noted, however, that the entirety of Jer. 31:15-22 is marked by intensive verbal themes: מַבְכָּה (v. 15), מַתְנוּדָד (lamenting/ bemoaning/ ever-increasing distress (cf. Bright, *Jeremiah*, 275, Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 95), תַּתְהַמְקִין; intensifying grammatical constructions: זָכַר אֶזְכְּרֶנּוּ, שָׁמוּעַ שְׁמַעְתִּי; repetitions and chiasmic arrangements. Therefore it is not implausible that the Polel of סבב was used for similar reasons, to increase the poignancy of the unit. Also note Oesterley's observation that most of the dancing roots, 'when used in reference to dancing, occur only in intensive forms; this is significant as pointing to the nature and character of the sacred dance.' W. Oesterley, *Sacred Dance in the Ancient World* (Mineola, 2002), 44.

⁷⁷ O. Whitehouse (ed.), *Isaiah: Introduction, Revised Version with Notes* (Edinburgh, 1905), 266.

26:6 the use of סבב may describe a ritual dance round the altar (cf. Ps. 48:13).⁷⁸ To this list Gruber also adds Ps. 114:3-4, הים ראה וינס הירדן יסב לאחור, where dancing is performed as an act of worship by nonhuman creation: 1.) the mountains perform a skipping dance (רקד); 2.) the Sea and Jordan are dancing a circle dance (סבב); and 3.) the land is instructed to do a *māḥôl* dance (חול, v. 7).⁷⁹

However, given the high concentration of terms associated with mourning in Jer. 31:15-22 and that סבב's semantic field includes dancing, it is possible that the use of סבב in Qoh. 12:5 is the most comparable context to v. 22b in Jeremiah:

כִּי־הִלַּךְ הָאָדָם אֶל־בֵּית עוֹלָמוֹ וּסְבָבוּ בְשׁוֹק הַסְּפָדִים

The history of interpretation of Qohelet's imageries in 12:1-7 comes very close to matching that of Jer. 31:22b in its diversity of approaches.⁸⁰ The most plausible line of interpretation seems to be represented by literal exegetical preferences, which understand this unit as portraying not only the process of dying, but also death itself and a mournful response of a community to it.⁸¹ Those who understand Qoh. 12:1-7 to represent the end of life and a

⁷⁸ See also M. Gruber, 'Ten Dance-Derived Expressions in the Hebrew Bible,' *Bib* 62 (1981), 333-334.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 333. Gruber also mentions Jer. 31:22b as a use of סבב with the meaning 'to dance,' but for him 31:22b refers to the 'universal phenomenon of circumambulation of the bridegroom, bride, or a bridal couple.' He understands that the new thing in the land is the resumption of weddings. *Ibid.*, 333-334. It should be noted that the Book of Consolation does include statements that after the return from Babylon the land of Judah will be repopulated (Jer. 30:18, 20, 31:8, 24, 27) and young girls will again sing and dance on its hills (Jer. 31:4, 13). Yet the dancing female populace is described as distinctly young girls of marriageable age - בתולה במחול. Lewis explains that 'though either an עלמה or a בתולה would be a נקבה, there is no OT passage that identifies or limits a נקבה to either of these terms. Thus an אשה with a husband or a זונה without one is still a נקבה.' Lewis, 'The Lord,' 22. In addition, when Jeremiah speaks of weddings it seems to use a very specific formulation - קול חתן וקול כלה (Jer. 7:34, 16:9, 25:10, 33:11). On the use of *sbb* in contexts of grief in Ugaritic sources see below.

⁸⁰ For a sample of interpretive approaches of this text see G. Ogden, 'Qoheleth 11:7-12:8: Qoheleth's Summons to Enjoyment and Reflection,' *VT* 34 (1984), 27-38; M. Fox, *Qohelet and His Contradictions* (Sheffield, 1989); B. Davis, 'Ecclesiastes 12:1-8: Death, an Impetus for Life,' *BS* 148 (1991), 298-317; C. Seow, 'Qohelet's Eschatological Poem,' *JBL* 118 (1999), 209-234. For a summary of these approaches and their analyses see, for example, M. Fox, 'Aging and Death in Qohelet 12,' *JSOT* 42 (1988), 56-59; T. Longman, *The Book of Ecclesiastes* (Grand Rapids, 1998), 262-263.

⁸¹ Those who opt for metaphorical interpretations of the text, e.g. a depiction of an eschatological reality, also believe that its symbolism is rooted in literal funerary rites. But see Saywer, who understands that Qoh. 12 is a

subsequent funeral also postulate that the poem is a dirge or at least a description of a funerary scene modelled on a form and content of a dirge.⁸² Anath makes even bolder claims, saying that Qoh. 12:1-5 is based on an actual dirge⁸³ and contains elements closely associated with mourning. Fox, however, strongly questions the ‘dirge theory,’ since for him ‘the purpose of a dirge is to bewail the loss of the deceased and to praise their virtues, and these themes are lacking in Qoh. 12.’⁸⁴ But regardless of whether this poem is an actual dirge or it simply draws on funerary repertoire, of interest to the discussion at hand is Fox’s observation that,

The syntax of the passage supports the idea that 12.2-5 describes the time of death and mourning rather than the process of aging. Qoh. 12.3-5 is an extended temporal clause depicting the events that occur at the same time as ‘a man is going to his eternal home, and mourners are walking about in the street’ (v. 5b). A man’s going to his ‘eternal home’ (v. 5ba) might be thought to mean that he is aging and heading to death, but the mourners’ procession (v. 5bβ) can only signify the funeral, and thus v. 5b as well speaks of the procession to the grave.⁸⁵

Some of the elements in the text associated with mourning practices are the presence of wailing women, בנות השיר,⁸⁶ who are bowed down in a conventionalised posture of grief.⁸⁷ Anath also shows that during a funeral doors are closed and the operation of mills ceases and they grow silent (cf. Qoh. 12:4).⁸⁸ Fox provides further evidence that a passing funerary

metaphor of ‘a ruined house.’ J. Sawyer, ‘Ruined House in Ecclesiastes 12: a Reconstruction of the Original Parable,’ *JBL* 94 (1975), 519-531. For the refutation of Sawyer’s view, see Fox, ‘Aging,’ 58-59.

⁸² C. Taylor, *The Dirge of Coheleth in Ecclesiastes XII* (London, 1874), iii-iv. See also Towner who states that Qoh. 12:1-5 is the description of a funeral. S. Towner, *The Book of Ecclesiastes. The New Interpreter’s Bible* (Nashville, 1997), 355.

⁸³ M. Anat, ‘The Lament on the Death of Man in the Scroll of Qohelet,’ *BM* 15 (1970), 375-380.

⁸⁴ Fox, ‘Aging,’ 60.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 61. On the translation of בית עולמו as ‘dark house’ as opposed to ‘eternal home’ see R. Youngblood, ‘Qoheleth’s “dark house” (Eccl 12:5),’ *JETS* 29 (1986), 397-410. This rendering of the phrase, however, does not change its meaning and is unlikely. Longmann, *Ecclesiastes*, 266. See, however, Crenshaw who observes that ‘the expression “eternal home” refers to the grave in a Palmyrene inscription from the end of the second century B.C.E, a Punic inscription, Egyptian usage; the Targum on Is. 14:18; and Sanhedrin 19a; cf. Tobit 3:6.’ J. Crenshaw, ‘Youth and Old Age in Qohelet,’ *HAR* 10 (1986), 9, n. 33.

⁸⁶ For a discussion of this term see Fox, ‘Aging,’ 74, n. 24. But see Murphy who lists other possibilities. R. Murphy, *Ecclesiastes* (Dallas, 1992), 113.

⁸⁷ Bowing low, sitting on the ground, and falling to the ground are traditional expressions of mourning. Gruber, *Non-verbal Aspects*, 460-479.

⁸⁸ Anat, ‘The Lament,’ 379.

procession may bring activities in a community to a halt.⁸⁹ Furthermore, he argues that the word בור, well, in v. 6 is used due to its metaphoric association with the tomb (cf. Pr. 28:47, Is. 14:15, 38:18),⁹⁰ and, dealing with the end of life, v. 7 functions as a reversal of Gen 2:7 – humans return to the dust from which they came.⁹¹

Regarding the phrase וסבבו בשוק הספדים, which is most pertinent to the discussion on Jer. 31:22b, some scholars admit that ‘the image of the mourners going about the streets is explicitly funerary.’⁹² Ginsberg observes that סבב refers to a funerary rite and explains that the verb means that the mourners ‘surrounded (i.e. the bier).’⁹³ In connection with Qoh.12:5, Gruber states that it is probably the only passage that preserves evidence for a dance as a funerary custom. He further states that ‘perhaps the Mishnaic and Modern Hebrew term for a funeral *l'wāyāh* derives from the common Semitic root *l-w-y* and refers to the circumambulation of the bier.’⁹⁴ Therefore it is probable that סבב, participate in a circle dance or procession, ‘refers to the circumambulation of the bier in Qoh. 12:5 – “when a person goes to his eternal home, the mourners in the street participate in the circumambulations.”’⁹⁵

Fox, however, observes that this poem in Qohelet is replete with features that ‘disturb the mental construction of the funeral scene’ and prompt a reading on a symbolic level.⁹⁶ Justifying this second semantic layer, he shows that ‘the formalized expressions of mourning’ are augmented by behaviours and phenomena traditionally associated with eschatological scenes, i.e. terror, grief, quaking, and writhing (cf. Is. 13:7f, Is. 23:3, Jer. 30:6).⁹⁷ In its representation of the demise of the individual Qohelet ‘is shaping symbolism in a way

⁸⁹ ‘All who pass by when a corpse is being buried must accompany the funeral and join in the lamentation’ (*Contra Apionem*, 2.205). Cf. B. Sir. 7:34, 38:16-17. Cited by Fox, ‘Aging,’ 61.

⁹⁰ Fox, *Qohelet*, 307.

⁹¹ Longman, *Ecclesiastes*, 273.

⁹² Fox, ‘Aging,’ 62.

⁹³ H. Ginsberg, *Koheleth* (Tel Aviv, 1961), 132; Gruber, ‘10 Dance-Derived Words,’ 336, n. 33a.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 335, n. 29; U. Cassuto, ‘Leviathan,’ *Encyclopedia Miqra'it*, 486.

⁹⁵ Gruber, ‘10 Dance-Derived Words,’ 336.

⁹⁶ Fox, ‘Aging,’ 63.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 66.

contrary to its usual direction of signification.⁹⁸ Symbolism usually views the general through the particular and Qohelet views the particular through the general, ‘the small writ large.’⁹⁹

Even though Jer. 31 and Qoh. 12 are situated on the opposite ends of representational tactics,¹⁰⁰ they both express the response to the presence of a ‘deceased’ in their midst, i.e. a nation or an individual, through the root סבב. If the premise of this discussion is correct, then the female in Jer. 31:22b, i.e. Rachel, is cast as being engaged in one of the funerary rites over the ‘dead body’ of Israel, her children. The enigmatic statement in v. 22b imaginatively conceives of a nation as a male carcass,¹⁰¹ being encircled by a solemn dance of the matriarch *par excellence* – נקבה תסובב גבר. When in Qohelet’s representation the individual’s death disrupted the universal order and the life of the deceased’s community was jerked into a halt of cosmic magnitude, the village responded with a series of rituals, one of which involved mourners proceeding through the streets in circular motions.¹⁰²

Dealing with grief of a greater calibre – annihilation of one nation and imminent deportation of another – Jeremiah too saturates its text with elements associated with mortuary rites. Bozak explains that נהי in Jeremiah describes the duties of those trained in dirges who were summoned to weep over the destruction of the people and the land (Jer. 9:9,

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 66.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 66.

¹⁰⁰ One uses the particular to represent a large universal cataclysm (Jer. 31:15-22), and the other casts the particular by drawing on the cosmic reactions to a crisis (Qoh. 12).

¹⁰¹ Cf. Allen who observes that ‘in an enhancement of the funereal tone of the lament, dead victims feature in the fulfilment, rather than exiled ones.’ Allen, *Jeremiah*, 348.

¹⁰² Admittedly, it could be argued that the actions of mourners in Qoh. 12:5 are not ritual – they might be simply *walking about* the streets (cf. Songs 5:7). Yet if everybody else’s life in this poem seems to be interrupted by the death of a neighbour and their activities come to a halt, it is only logical to assume that the mourners’ duties, on the contrary, may be just beginning and their actions described as סבב represent some sort of services they would be expected to provide. After all, סבב in S.S. 5:7 also describes professional duties of city watchers, i.e. they *patrol* the city, not aimlessly *walk about* the streets. See also below on this root in Ugaritic sources.

17, 18, and 19)¹⁰³ and thus carries ‘strong funerary overtones.’¹⁰⁴ Based on Morgenstern,¹⁰⁵ she also observes that בכי can refer to the three days of violent weeping following death and interment.¹⁰⁶ The weeping is further qualified by the form תמרורים, bitterness, which is only found in the plural intensive and in contexts of grief (cf. Jer. 6:26). As mentioned earlier, the poem continually alternates between plural and singular forms for Rachel’s children, and through this maximises Rachel’s grief in v. 15. Maintaining the tightness of a composition by a prevailing 3/2 *qina* meter,¹⁰⁷ the poet, however, casts Rachel’s wailing with a series of images of an increasingly heightened force: 1.) she *weeps* (Piel) for her children (plural); 2.) she *refuses to be consoled*¹⁰⁸ for them (plural); and 3.) כי איננו, because *it (he) is not* (singular)! By utilizing תמרורים earlier in the strophe and finishing it with the singular איננו the poet disrupts an ordered expression of grief and links it to a prior incident, where a national posture of sorrow, מספד תמרורים, is parallel to the mourning for an only son, אבל יחיד (Jer. 6:26). The poet’s *singularisation* of the crisis via איננו homogenises Rachel’s posterity into *one* dead offspring and thus turns her grief into אבל יחיד, customarily conceptualised in prophetic thought as the quintessence of human sorrow.¹⁰⁹ Representing a large scale cataclysm via a gruesome phantasmagoria of mortuary abuses¹¹⁰ – mass exhumations of Judah’s past generations and desecration of its recent casualties in the Babylonian invasion –

¹⁰³ Bozak, *Life Anew*, 93, n. 348. For further description of נהי as a funerary term see H. Krause, ‘*hōj* als profetische Leichenklage über das eigene Volk im 8. Jahrhundert,’ ZAW 85 (1973), 22.

¹⁰⁴ Bozak, *Life Anew*, 93. Cf. Allen, *Jeremiah*, 348.

¹⁰⁵ J. Morgenstern, *The Rites of Birth, Marriage, Death, and Kindred Occasions Among the Semites* (Cincinnati, 1966), 164, n. 235.

¹⁰⁶ Bozak, *Life Anew*, 93.

¹⁰⁷ Anderson, ‘The Lord,’ 471.

¹⁰⁸ To have a comforter was the universal right of mourners in antiquity. For a discussion on their role see Pham, *Mourning*, 33.

¹⁰⁹ Note that in Zech. 12:10 על־יחיד מספד is also paired up with the root מרר, ‘to be bitter,’ and is further linked with the bitter weeping over a first born. Likewise, in Am. 8:10 אבל יחיד is linked to יום מר. Note that in Jer. 31:9 Ephraim is YHWH’s first born.

¹¹⁰ Regarding the parallels to ANE treaty-curses that promise privation of burial, the deceased becoming food for vultures and animals and/or refuse on the face of the earth Hillers observes that the number of these in Jeremiah is ‘remarkable, especially as contrasted with the few (and not especially close) parallels in the rest of prophetic literature.’ Hillers, *Treaty-Curses*, 68.

Jeremiah mobilises a resistance front through a surplus of ritual responses¹¹¹ and firmly integrates his ‘mortuary’ agenda into the Book of Consolation (Jer. 30:12-15, 31:9, 13, 15-22, 25, 27, 40) as part of the restoration programme. Collapsing Rachel’s progeny into one offspring, a יחיד,¹¹² who *is not*, Jeremiah unleashes her mortuary frenzy, by making her not only weep as for an only child (v. 15c), but also גבר/dance as for an only child as well – גבר (singular) (v. 22b).¹¹³

5. The Kinaesthetic Nature of Mourning and Funerary Dances.

Rachel’s actions in v. 22b, as argued here, should now be considered against the background of socially determined behaviours associated with grief and their ritual expression in the ancient Orient. As noted in the introductory chapter, recent studies in behavioural expressions of mourning and depression in biblical and ANE materials have demonstrated that they are characterised by what contemporary psychology defines as ‘psychomotor retardation’ and ‘psychomotor agitation.’¹¹⁴ One of the most prominent expressions of the latter is *wandering about*. By way of an illustration of such behaviour, it

¹¹¹ Jer. 4:28-31, 6:26-30, 7:29, 9:10, 9:17-21, 22:10, 23:10, 25:34, 36, 41:4-5, etc.

¹¹² Regarding the Hebrew כִּי אֶינְנִי, Allen observes that ‘the singular has an individualizing force, referring to none of the exiles; cf. GKC § 145m.’ Allen, *Jeremiah*, 344. Cf. Dresner, *Rachel*, 241, n. 2. Driver also lists Jer. 31:15 among the instances, in which a class of persons is spoken of and there is a transition from the plural to the singular and vice versa. S. Driver, *The Book of the Prophet Jeremiah* (London, 1906), 362. But see Jer. 10:20 where the plural of the noun and the verb is matched by the plural of אֶינָם: בְּנֵי יִצְחָק וְאֶינָם, ‘my sons have gone out from me and are no more’ (plural). Again, emending the last element of v. 15 for the sake of harmonising it with previous elements would violate the poignancy of the poem.

¹¹³ For the use of גבר as a ‘child’ see Job 3:3 where Job laments his own conception and birth. Of significance here is Crenshaw’s observation that in Job 3:3 ‘the reference to an infant as a *geber* (elsewhere used of much older boys, even a soldier) contains a pun on the word for grave, *qeber*.’ J. Crenshaw, ‘Job,’ in J. Barton, J. Muddiman (eds), *The Oxford Bible Commentary* (Oxford, 2007). If the reading of Jer. 31:22b as proposed here is correct it is not improbable that the same pun might have been intended here. See also Oesterley who discusses funerary rites of the Sephardic Jews and cites Krauss describing an instance of a Jewish mother dancing before the picture of her dead son. Oesterley, *Sacred Dance*, 199. Interestingly enough, among ancient Slavs the custom of a ‘pre-emptive burial’ was prevalent - a mother of a gravely ill infant would cover it with swaddling clothes simulating death and interment and dance by its side to ensure its healing. В. Еремина, *Ритуал и Фольклор* (Москва, 1994), 138.

¹¹⁴ Psychomotor changes include agitation (e.g. inability to sit still, pacing, etc.) or retardation (e.g. slowed speed, thinking, and body movements). For a bibliography on this see Barré, “Wandering about,” 177, n. 3. In addition to Barré’s study see also M. Stol, “Psychosomatic Suffering in Ancient Mesopotamia,” in T. Abusch and K. van der Toorn, eds., *Mesopotamian Magic* (Groningen, 1999), 57-68; J. Kselman, “Wandering About” and Depression: More Examples,’ *JNES* 61 (2002), 275-277; P. Kruger, ‘Depression in the Hebrew Bible: An Update,’ *JNES* 64 (2005), 187-192.

might be pertinent to revisit Ps. 35, where the Psalmist describes his distress and states, *קרע־כאח לי התהלכתי כאבל־אם קדר שחותי* (v. 14). As previously noted, Janzen shows that against the conventional renderings of *כאבל־אם* as ‘the one mourns for his mother,’ this statement should be understood as ‘the mourning of a mother.’¹¹⁵ In addition, Oesterley speculates that in v. 15 the root *צלע* can designate ‘a limping dance.’¹¹⁶ If Oesterley is correct, then the alignment of the psalmist’s formulations of mourning shows that to give adequate voice to his feelings, the psalmist not only chooses maternal language of grief, but he also understands the mode of its expression as highly visceral (*שכול לנפשי*, v. 12b), highly kinaesthetic (*התהלכתי*, *קרע־כאח*, v. 14b), and involving ritual choreography (*בצלעי*, v.15a).¹¹⁷

Whether this phenomenon of psychomotor agitation as a natural element of grief is connected to the emergence of dancing as a funerary rite cannot be established. With greater certainty, however, the rise of this practice can be attributed to the practice of sympathetic magic due to the ancients’ heightened awareness of the reality of the spiritual realm and the threat it posed to the living.¹¹⁸ The highly antiquarian nature of this rite does not allow us to determine the precise order and specifics of its development. But dancing, or ritual circumambulations, as part of the funerary protocol, performed for varied reasons, in many ancient and contemporary cultures is a well-attested phenomenon.

Writing on the custom of a mortuary dance in Ancient Israel, Oesterley observes that not all funerary rites are preserved in the Old Testament, and thus their absence does not indicate that they were not practised. He further argues that since dancing was an essential

¹¹⁵ Janzen, ‘The Root *škl*,’ 56.

¹¹⁶ Oesterley, *Sacred Dance*, 51.

¹¹⁷ Out of 8 occurrences where the root *קדר* is utilized in the context of mourning it is paired up with the root *הלך*, mostly in Piel or Hithpael (Job 30:28, Ps. 38:6, Ps. 42:9, Ps. 43:2, etc). For the discussion of other verbs of motion, and *הלך* in particular, in contexts of depression see Barré, “Wandering about,” 181-187. Even though he focuses on depression some of the texts he treats deal with mourning as well. See also De Ward who argues that in Ps. 35:16 there is another indication of a similar step – *בהנפִי* (Hebrew text, but not MT pointing). De Ward, ‘Mourning,’ 21.

¹¹⁸ W. Oesterley, *Immortality and the Unseen World: a Study in Old Testament Religion* (London, 1921), 172.

part of Israelite culture, it could have been part of the funerary etiquette as well.¹¹⁹ Another reason to support this theory is flute-playing, which was a traditional mourning rite.¹²⁰ As music and dancing go together, the latter also could have been practised in contexts of burial and mourning. Finally, the presence of this rite among other nations in the ancient Orient, as well as its attestation among Jewish communities at least since the Talmudic period, make it plausible that it, too, was practised among ancient Israelites.¹²¹

Regarding the Talmudic period, Oesterley observes that it was customary to accompany elegies in honour of the deceased with a form of a dance – stamping of the feet performed by mourners collectively.¹²² Regarding the Sephardic Jews, Spanish and Portuguese, he states that, unlike Ashkenazim, they have retained some ancient elements of worship and ritual, a notable instance of which is the procession round the corpse at burials.¹²³ Elsewhere he reports that ‘seven circuits are made round the bier, during which prayers for the departed are chanted to a plaintive melody. In substance some of these are believed to date back to the time of Hillel, circa 30 B.C.-10 A.D.’¹²⁴ Bernard, too, describes funerary customs among European Jews in the eighteenth century as follows, ‘A small Bag of Earth is deposited under his Head, the Coffin is nailed up and convey’d to a Grave dug on Purpose, as near the Place as conveniently may be, where the Family of the Deceased are

¹¹⁹ This is evident from the number of Hebrew roots for dancing, either in its restricted or extended sense. Oesterley discusses eleven roots. Oesterley, *Sacred Dance*, 45. For additional roots see also Gruber, ‘10 Dance-Derived Words.’

¹²⁰ See Braun who discusses the use of wind instruments in Jewish funerals and cites the Talmud, which states that ‘even the poorest in Israel should hire not less than two *h^alilim* and one wailing woman’ (m. Ketub. 4:4). J. Braun, *Music in Ancient Israel/Palestine: Archaeological, Written, and Comparative Sources* (Grand Rapids, 2002), 209-210. On Anat breaking her flute in mourning see M. Korpel, *A Rift in the Clouds: Ugaritic and Hebrew Descriptions of the Divine* (Münster, 1990), 485. Cf. Is. 16:11, Is. 23:16, Jer. 48:31ff, Job 30:31.

¹²¹ A few have observed that customs pertaining to burial and mourning are rarely innovations. Anderson, *A Time to Mourn*, 60.

¹²² Oesterley, *Sacred Dance*, 198 and the bibliography in n. 1, 199; Bar-Ilan, *Some Jewish Women* 72, n. 51. Cf. Ez. 6:11. For dances in honour of the deceased see W. Ridgeway, *The Dramas and Dramatic Dances of non-European Races in Special Reference to the Origin of Greek Tragedy* (Cambridge, 1915).

¹²³ Oesterley, *Sacred Dance*, 199.

¹²⁴ Oesterley, *Immortality*, 172; D. De Sola, M. Gaster (eds), *The Book of Prayer and Order of Service According to the Custom of the Spanish and Portuguese Jews* (London, 1901-06), 197-198. For circumambulations by the Arabs around the Ka’aba see J. Wellhausen, *Reste arabischen Heidentums* (Berlin, 1897), 10ff.

interred. In some Countries when a Coffin is brought within a short Space of the Grave, ten Men go in a solemn Manner seven Times round it, repeating a Prayer for his soul; but in other Parts this Ceremony is not observed.’¹²⁵

The cumulative effect of these arguments, as well as the practice of this rite in many ancient and contemporary cultures,¹²⁶ leads Oesterley to conclude that in ancient Israel, too, this practice was in vogue. Gaster and De Ward took his research further and postulated the idea of dancing for certain biblical mourning narratives.¹²⁷ Based on her analysis, De Ward states that ‘while none of the suggestions made above can prove that a dance formed a part of Hebrew mourning in the Old Testament period, they may at least strengthen the possibility that the later Jewish funeral dance was not an innovation.’¹²⁸

a.) Funerary Dances in Ugaritic Sources.

For the present discussion on dancing as a funerary rite a few attestations from antiquity are in order. Of special interest is the Aqhat legend, in which a young prince Aqhat falls prey to Anat’s machinations on account of his bow. Following Aqhat’s assassination Dan’el, his father, proceeds to go round (*y-s-b*) the desolate fields, hugging and kissing plants, pronouncing wishes and prayers over the withered flowers (KTU 19 ii 68). Scholars admit that Dan’el’s latter actions – hugs and spells – may very well be of some ceremonial

¹²⁵ Bernard, Picart, *Religious Ceremonies and Customs of All the Peoples of the World* (1723-1743). 100. <http://digital2.library.ucla.edu/picart/tableContents.html>. Accessed on March 30, 2012. For a pictorial illustration of the circumambulation of the coffin among the Sephardic Jews of eighteenth century Amsterdam see the engraving ‘The Acafoth, or the Seven turns round the Coffin’ by B. Picart.

¹²⁶ For the custom of circumambulations or dances in India, among the Central Eskimo, the Russian Tapps, the Buriats, the Shans, in China see J. Hastings, J. Selbie (eds), *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics* (Edinburgh, 1908-1926), v. iv, 426. For a discussion of funerary dances in Armenia, see С. Лисициан, *Армянские Старинные Пляски* (Ереван, 1983), 70-72. For this rite among Bartangi, Pamirien Tadjiks, see А. Лашкариев, *Похоронно-поминальная Обрядность Бартангцев: Конец XIX-XX вв.* (Москва, 2007). For funerary dances among ancient Slavs see Н. Велецкая, *Языческая Символика Славянских Архаических Ритуалов*, (Москва, 1978).

¹²⁷ Gaster, *Myth*, 455, 456, 543; De Ward, ‘Mourning,’ 20-27.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 27.

significance,¹²⁹ whereas his *circling round* the fields is not. Dan’el, they argue, may not have been yet aware of his son’s death. Admittedly, the message regarding Aqhat’s demise comes to Dan’el later (ii 75-93), yet he does receive a few rather telling clues before that. First, while approaching Dan’el, Pughat, his daughter, tears a piece of his garment in a symbolic mourning gesture suggestive of a tragedy.¹³⁰ Furthermore, while saddling a donkey for him, Pughat weeps bitterly, and lastly, Dan’el observes the transformation in the natural order – parchedness of the land and death of crops.¹³¹ Against the general reluctance to admit Dan’el’s awareness of his son’s demise and thus the ritual significance of Dan’el’s circling the fields expressed by *sbb*, it should be noted that the root is again used to describe similar actions in the story of Baal’s death – ‘we have done the rounds [sbb] of [some part of the

¹²⁹ D. Wright. *Ritual in Narrative: the Dynamics of Feasting, Mourning, and Retaliation Rites in the Ugaritic Tale of Aqhat* (Winona Lake, 2001), 169. Cf. also Pardee in Hallo, Younger, *The Context of Scripture*, 352.

¹³⁰ Wyatt notes that Pughat, having spiritual gifts ‘immediately discerns that some dreadful event has occurred, and anticipates the mourning she will have to observe by this ritual and symbolic gesture. Reading the text as we have, there is no evidence that either she or Dan’el knows that Aqhat is dead. Just the sight of the birds is enough to awaken her worst fears. It is possible, however, that Anat’s words in the beginning of the column are not merely a soliloquy, but a confession, perhaps addressed to Pughat, who would then indicate to Dan’el through a wordless gesture that she had bad news for him.’ N. Wyatt, *Religious Texts from Ugarit* (London, 2002), 295, n. 200.

¹³¹ Capitalizing on the motif of a dying and rising fertility god the Aqhat story could have only one meaning for the death of crops, i.e. the demise of a hero. Interesting in the legend is also the use of a location where Anat assassinates Aqhat (KTU 1.18 i 30-31.) and which Dan’el later curses (KTU 1.19 iv 4-5) - *Abilim*. Wyatt agrees with Gaster on ‘the word-play between the geographical term (cf. Heb. *’ābēl*, *√’bl* II, ‘meadow’) which underlines this TN and *√’bl* I, ‘mourn.’ Wyatt, *Religious Texts*, 308-309, n. 252. Of significance to the current discussion is also the combination of *אבל* and *מחולה* in the toponym Abel-Meholah (Judg. 7:22, 1 Kgs 4:12, 19:16). Dictionaries traditionally understand the first word as ‘meadow’ (*√’bl* II, *BDB*, 6, cf. Abel-Beth-Maacah, Abel-Maim, Abel-Keramim, Abel-Shittim) and thus the entire name as ‘meadow of dancing.’ Yet another toponym with the exact first element in Gen. 50:11, Abel-Mizraim, is explicitly linked to a grievous mourning on account of Jacob’s death. Since dancing was an integral part of ancient cultures the rite of a funerary dance might have been preserved in a toponym, Abel-Meholah. In fact, this toponym could have been a paronomastic invention pointing both to the location of this rite performance – a meadow (*אבל*) of dancing (*מחולה*), and to the occasion of this rite – mourning (*אבל*), which is expressed via a dance (*מחולה*). But see Edelman who suggests that the nonvocalized consonantal text, *mhlh*, could have implied that Abel-Meholah was a town founded on the meadow that belonged to the Mahlan clan (Num. 26:33, 27:1, 36:11, Josh., 17:3, 1 Chr. 7:18). D. Edelman, ‘Abel-Meholah,’ *IBD*, 11. See Oesterley who, in connection with *צלע*, which he defines as ‘to perform a limping dance,’ speculates that Saul’s town Zela in 2 Sam. 21:14 was a centre for cultic dancing. Oesterley, *Sacred Dance*, 51. De Ward, ‘Mourning,’ 21. Cf. also Jdg 2:4, 5 for the toponym *בכים* and 2 Sam. 20:14 for *אבלה בית המעכה*. On the reading of the latter toponym as ‘the mourning of the house of Maacah’ or ‘mourning is the house of Maacah’ see Lyke, *King David*, 162, n. 72.

earth],’ and in the Keret legend where the king is gravely ill – ‘did the rounds to the extremities of the earth.’¹³²

b.) Funerary Dances in Cuneiform Sources.

As a funerary rite circumambulation is also attested in the Akkadian text, KAR 143, 66-67, where it describes an activity of the professional mourner, ‘As for the chariot which goes again and again to the festival temple, its lord [Marduk] is not (in it); without its lord it totters. Now DN who goes in a circle around the city, she its professional mourner, goes in a circle around the city.’ Another attestation of circumambulation as a funerary rite is found in lines 4-6, ‘the daughter-in-law [of the king] will wash the feet [of the dead crown prince, her husband]. Three times she shall walk in a circle around the bier; she shall kiss [his] feet; she shall go; she shall sit.’¹³³ Lines 20-21 of the same text read, ‘three times she shall walk around the bier; she shall kiss the feet [of the deceased], and she shall burn cedar.’¹³⁴

¹³² KTU 5 vi 3-4, KTU 16 iii 3. Hallo, Younger, *Context of Scripture*, 267, 341. Admittedly these texts are damaged and lines are missing, yet descriptions of actions similar to these stories are found in many ANE sources linked to depression and grief. In addition, Gaster postulated that the story of Aqhat supplies more evidence for a ritual dance when Dan’el summons professional mourners and they bewail his son for 7 years. Commenting on the rites performed by these individuals, Gaster states, ‘... another feature of the mourning ceremonies... is the performance of dances [mrqdm], but once again the true meaning of the text has hitherto escaped recognition. The term used in the original, viz. mrqdm is of especial interest. In Biblical Hebrew, the verb r-q-d means ‘to skip, leap’ (e.g. Psalm 29:6), and this is also the normal meaning of Accadian raqadu’ and of Arabic r-q-ṣ and r-q-z. But an Accadian syllabary (...) lists ru-qu-ud-du as a term meaning “professional mourner” (equivalent of Sumerian LU.TU.IGI.GUGU(?), ‘one who weeps with troubled eye’) while in Arabic and Syriac, the corresponding nouns raqtsath and marqodeta denote a special kind of hopping or limping dance performed at funerals (...). T. Gaster, *Thespis: Ritual, Myth and Drama in the Ancient Near East* (New York, 1950), 370; Gaster, *Myth*, 455-456, 543 and the bibliography cited there. His interpretation of the Akkadian, however, is no longer accepted. Of pertinence however, is that the Peshitta uses the root *rqd* to denote the idea of lamenting. See, for example, Gen. 23:2 where Abraham mourns the death of Sarah. Cf. also Gen. 50:10. On the Syriac *rqd* see also Gruber, ‘10 Dance-Derived Expressions,’ 337; J. Payne Smith, *A Compendious Syriac Dictionary: Founded Upon the Thesaurus Syriacus of Robert Payne Smith* (Oxford, 1903), 549. See also Bar-Ilan, *Some Jewish Women*, 57, n. 16, 70, n. 49. On the connection between mourning and dancing as seen in other Semitic roots see also J. Morgenstern, ‘The Etymological History of the Three Hebrew Synonyms for ‘To Dance,’ HGG, HLL and KRR, and Their Cultural Significance,’ *JAOS* 36 (1916), 321-332.

¹³³ W. von Soden, ‘Aus einem Ersatzopferitual für den assyrischen Hof,’ *ZA* 45 (1939), 42. Cited by Gruber, ‘10 Dance-Derived Expressions,’ 336, n. 32a. Gruber also mentions that circumambulations of the bier before interment are attested in Iliad 23 where Achilles is described as having war chariots circle the body of Patroclus three times. *Ibid.*, 336. For the illustrations of funerary dancing found in the painted tombs of the Campagna and Southern Italy (300 BC) see ch. III in N. Westlake, *The Dance: Historic Illustrations of Dancing from 3300 B.C. to 1911 A.D., by an Antiquary* (London, 1911).

¹³⁴ Von Soden, ‘Aus einem Ersatzopferitual,’ 44. For *eršu* ‘bier’ see *CAD*, e, 315.

Dealing with the subject of music and dance in Mesopotamia rather broadly, Kilmer notes that ‘the priestly arts of magic and healing in and around homes and palaces could also be accompanied by dancers ... who participated in chasing away the disease or in protecting the living from any demonic influence at times of death and mourning.’¹³⁵

c.) Funerary Dances in Ancient Egypt.

Egyptian evidence for ritual dances both from today and the ancient world is particularly rich. In the Old and Middle Kingdoms professional musicians and dancers were identified as *hnr*.¹³⁶ They had a highly organised hierarchy of performers and were permanently ‘attached to temples, funerary estates and important tombs or cemeteries.’¹³⁷ It is argued that perhaps the most important of funerary dances was the dance performed by the Muu dancers attested from the Old Kingdom to the end of the New Kingdom.¹³⁸ This dance is featured in royal funerals, as well as funerary rituals of Apis and Mnevis, Egypt’s most sacred bulls.¹³⁹ In the Ptolemaic period ritual performers are listed among those who are summoned to a royal funeral and they are designated as ‘dancers, who frequent the embalming rooms.’¹⁴⁰ It is believed that the presence of dancers at funerals – high profile or common – assisted mourners in celebrating the deceased’s passage into the afterlife.

¹³⁵ A. Kilmer, ‘Music and Dance in Ancient Western Asia,’ in J. Sasson (ed.), *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East* (New York, 1995), 2610. Stone reliefs in the throne-room of the palace of Assurnasirpal II in Nimrud depict scenes of macabre dances, in which Assyrian warriors dance while juggling heads of their defeated enemies. D. Collon, ‘Dance in Ancient Mesopotamia,’ *NEA* 66 (2003), 96, 101.

¹³⁶ Initially they were women, yet towards the end of the Old Kingdom this trade was occupied by men as well. P. Spencer, ‘Dance in Ancient Egypt,’ *NEA* 66 (2003), 111-121.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 115.

¹³⁸ The account of the twelfth dynasty official provides a description of a funeral featuring the Muu dancers: ‘The sky is above you, while you lie on the bier. The dance of the weary ones is danced at the entrance to your tomb. The offering list is recited for you. Sacrifice is made at the door of your offering stone. Your pillars are built of white limestone in the vicinity of the (tombs of the) royal children.’ JAssmann, *Death and Salvation*, 444-445, n. 33.

¹³⁹ The dwarf Djeho, who lived during the thirteenth Dynasty, describes himself on his sarcophagus as follows; ‘I am the dwarf who danced in Kem on the day of the burial of Apis-Osiris... and who danced in Shenqebeh on the day of the eternal festival of the Osiris-Mnevis...’ V. Dasen, *Dwarfs in Ancient Egypt and Greece* (Oxford, 1993), 150-155.

¹⁴⁰ I. Lexova, *Ancient Egyptian Dances* (Praha, 1935), 67-68.

Writing on the semiotics of gestures in funerary contexts as preserved on ancient tomb walls and as observed in contemporary Upper Egypt, Wickett notes a high degree of continuity. She shows that the prescribed postures and choreography of lamenters – ‘the slow and hypnotic manoeuvring of the body round and round to the pulse of laments’¹⁴¹ – were as integral to the dirge recital as text to melody. Some ancient women danced around the sacred barge at funerals, naked or dressed in cloaks open at the front, to the accompaniment of music ‘to chase away the demons by their complete or partial nudity.’¹⁴² Ritual dances often entailed the unplaiting of hair so that the mourners could ‘disassociate themselves from the sentient world to communicate with the spirits in the afterlife,’¹⁴³ and to act as ‘guards’ for the departing soul. Wickett notes that in modern day Upper Egypt lamenters unplait their hair as a ‘gesture of surrender to forces beyond their control.’¹⁴⁴

d.) The Archaeology of Solemn Choreography.

Regarding the issue of funerary dances in Ancient Israel archaeological evidence is not definitive. In connection with this rite, however, it might be useful to consider terracotta figurines, a rich corpus of ceramic female statuettes with disc-shaped objects discovered from many sites of Iron Age settlements.¹⁴⁵ Due to the lack of written records the identity and function of these figurines have been widely debated. Against those who understand these

¹⁴¹ In some tombs funerary dances are depicted as performed by naked women with tambours and bent knees while in others dancers are pictured ‘leaping or gyrating in snakelike movements at the joyous, funerary banquet as in the Mastaba of Kagemni, VIth Dynasty, Saqqara.’ Wickett, *For the Living*, 155. See also Lane for the description of dances shortly after the burial performed by female peasants of Upper Egypt a century ago. ‘They daub their faces and bosoms, and a part of their dress, with mud; and tie a rope-girdle, generally made of a coarse grass called ‘halfa,’ round the waist. Each flourishes in her hand a palm stick, or a neboot (a long staff), or a spear, or a drawn sword; and dances with a slow movement, and in an irregular manner; generally pacing about and raising and depressing the body. This dance is continued for an hour or more; and is performed twice or three times of the day.’ E. Lane, *The Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* (London, 1908), 488.

¹⁴² Wickett, *For the Living*, 156.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 159.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 159. Note an obscure mourning rite entailing hair manipulation in Jer. 7:29.

¹⁴⁵ C. Meyers, ‘Of Drums and Damsels: Women’s Performance in Ancient Israel,’ *BA* 54 (1991), 17. Note, however, that the distribution of these figurines is uneven with the Northern Kingdom and the kingdoms of Transjordan yielding more statuettes. S. Paz, *Drums, Women, and Goddesses: Drumming and Gender in Iron Age II Israel* (Fribourg, 2007), 103.

figurines as goddesses, priestesses or female votaries in fertility cults,¹⁴⁶ some scholars identify at least some types of these statuettes with ordinary women due to the simplicity of their garments and lack of jewellery.¹⁴⁷

In connection with the discussion at hand, it might be suggested that if certain types of these statuettes indeed represent human female musicians, then there are reasons to identify at least a fraction of them with mourning women, professionals or genuinely bereft. One of the primary factors in ascribing mourning functions to these figurines is the widely recognised fact that religious and social concerns of women focused on the domestic arena, i.e. their sexually-defined roles, especially rites related to birth and death.¹⁴⁸ Evidence in favour of women dominating mortuary business, as well as music as its integral part, is readily available across the ancient Orient.¹⁴⁹ Another factor in connecting these figurines with contexts of mourning is their nudity, which in many ancient cultures, including Israel, was a legitimate and conventional expression of grief.¹⁵⁰ Finally, in addition to other archaeological contexts some plaque figurines were found in tombs. Regarding these finds some postulate that they were deposited there for protection of the deceased from the evil eye. Others think that their presence assured the deceased of their continuing fertility in the afterlife. Paz speculates that they were deposited alongside women who used them in their domestic

¹⁴⁶ For examples of these interpretations see J. Pritchard, *Palestinian Figurines in Relation to Certain Goddesses Known Through Literature* (New Haven, 1943).

¹⁴⁷ Meyers, 'Of Drums,' 19.

¹⁴⁸ P. Bird, 'The Place of Women in the Israelite Cultus,' in P. Miller, P. Hanson, S. McBride (eds), *Ancient Israelite Religion: Essays in Honor of Frank Moore Cross* (Philadelphia, 1987), 400, 410.

¹⁴⁹ H. Ginsberg, 'Women Singers and Wailers among the Northern Canaanites,' *BASOR* 72 (1938), 13-15; C. Meyers, 'Drum-Dance-Song Ensemble: Women's Performance in Biblical Israel,' in K. Marshall (ed.), *Rediscovering the Muses: Women's Musical Traditions* (Boston, 1993), 238, n. 48.

¹⁵⁰ For a discussion of nudity as a mourning rite in Israel and ANE see, for example, A. Rofé, 'Zechariah 12:12-14 and Hosea 10:5 in the Light of an Ancient Mourning Practice,' in C. Cohen (ed.), *Birkat Shalom Studies in the Bible, Ancient Near Eastern Literature, and Postbiblical Judaism: Presented to Shalom M. Paul on the Occasion of his Seventieth Birthday* (Eisenbrauns, 2008), 299-304.

cults.¹⁵¹ If, however, they represent wailing women, then it is equally plausible that they were meant to provide continuous mourning rituals in the afterlife.¹⁵²

Realising the interlocking nature of music and dancing and given that the field of mortuary rites was dominated by women, it is safe to assume that some of these figurines do provide further evidence for a mortuary dance. Paz observes that these figurines reflect ‘the tension between the worldviews of the ruling and subject classes in matters of society, belief, and cult’¹⁵³ and underscore the gender aspect of this confrontation. These figurines, she continues, bear witness ‘to the ideological resistance of the masses to the exclusion of women and goddesses from religious life and the gradual attrition in the standing of women as a result of the period’s socio-economic changes.’¹⁵⁴ Given indisputable prominence of women in the matters related to death, inclusion of wailers in these ceramic representations would have augmented female contribution to the society and enhanced the resistance against dominant gender ideology.

III. Virgin Israel and Her Mourning in Jer. 31:21.

The evidence presented above suggests that in Jeremiah’s portrayal of the Babylonian crisis Rachel is engaged in inconsolable wails (v. 15) and circumambulating choreography (v. 22b). The proposed reading of v. 22b can become more evident, if the beginning of the strophe (v. 21) can prove to be of a ritual nature as well. In fact, a close consideration of the directives in v. 21 can help to elucidate the socio-religious significance of Rachel’s actions in v. 22b as suggested here. To that end this discussion will now turn to the figure of Virgin

¹⁵¹ Paz, *Drums*, 121-122.

¹⁵² Cf. Egypt. Discussing illustrations of musicians from tombs in the Mareshah necropolis Braun points out the ANE belief that the deceased were to be accompanied in the afterlife and entertained by music, feasting, etc. Cf. Is. 14: 10-11. Braun, *Music*, 209. He also observes that terra-cotta reliefs from Beth Nattif from the Roman period, which bear striking resemblance to the Iron Age female drummers, may represent priestesses, or temple servants, or *lamenting women, dancers, or funeral brides*. *Ibid.*, 238.

¹⁵³ Paz, *Drums*, 124.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 124.

Israel (v. 21). Since the first two units in Jeremiah's poem (vv. 15-17, vv. 18-20) depict individuals undeniably engaged in mourning rites (Rachel, Ephraim), it would not be too implausible to construe the series of directives in the third subunit (vv. 21-22), which deals with Judah's manumission, in the same light. Thus, the following analysis will show that corresponding to the post-exilic phase this subunit contains a set of mortuary duties levelled at the liberated group under the guise of Virgin Israel and entails the erection of grave markers and ritual wailing.

A. Grave-Marking: הציבי לך צינים.

The high concentration of repatriation promises in the pericope formulated by a variety of forms of שׁוּב (vv. 16, 17, 18, 19, 21, 22) leads scholars to focus on the means by which the return is implemented – roads, highways, etc. – and to opt for a neuter reading of צינים, i.e. 'signposts' in v. 21.¹⁵⁵ If, however, the three attestations of ציין in the Hebrew Bible (2 Kgs 23:17, Ez. 39:15, Jer, 31:21) are given proper consideration, then interesting thematic similarities between them will emerge. Though the scarcity of these attestations precludes a more definite identification of ציין's function, a closer look at the overlap of commonalities might reveal an important socio-religious dimension in its use,¹⁵⁶ and help to identify it as a

¹⁵⁵ The LXX reads צינים as *Siōn*, Zion, Aq. and Sym. understand it as *skopian*, watchtower, Vulg. – *speculam*, watchtower. The partial 4QJer^c supports MT. For a summary of versional readings and their analysis see, for example, McKane, *Jeremiah*, 803.

¹⁵⁶ Due to its infrequent appearance in the Hebrew Bible ציין receives only very abbreviated discussions on its usage. See, for example, Gamberoni who discusses מצבה and lists ציין among its related terms or substitutes. Regarding ציין he notes that it is a grave stone (2 Kgs 23:17), a kind of signpost (Jer. 31:21), or funerary sign (Ez. 39:15) 'that cannot be determined more specifically.' Gamberoni, *TDOT*, 487. Cf. *DCH*, 118. The fact that the other two and only attestations of the word ציין in the Old Testament, 2 Kgs 23:17 and Ez. 39:15, are explicitly connected to burial sites is usually mentioned in passing, without any expanded discussion. Bozak notes that ציין can function as a grave mark, and that it has a metaphorical use in the Targums, but does not elaborate on her observation. Bozak, *Life Anew*, 101. Keown, *et al.* mention that צינים can indicate the position of graves as well as highways (e.g. 2 Kgs 23:17) and leave their discussion at that. G. Keown, P. Scalise, T. Smothers, *Jeremiah 26-52* (Waco, 1995), 121. Becking only mentions Ez. 39. Becking, *Between Fear and Freedom*, 217. Holladay observes that the Semitic cognates of ציין indicate that it means 'stone cairn' and understands the word to mean road-markers. He mentions both 2 Kgs and Ez. 39 but states that the resonances this word could have triggered off in the hearer could only be partially traced. He does not dwell on the Ez. 39 passage, since Jer. 31 ante-dates it. 2 Kgs 23, however, deals with Josiah's reforms and Holladay suggests that

mortuary vehicle memorialising the *remedial entombment of human remains in the wake of their punitive exposure*.¹⁵⁷ The first occurrence of the word is featured in Josiah's discovery of a צִיּוֹן-marked solitary grave, which housed the remains of an unknown Judean prophet (2 Kgs 23:17). According to another tradition, 1 Kgs 13, the prophet disobeyed divine orders (vv. 17-22) and was subjected to violent death (v. 24a). The punitive element of his demise is further exacerbated by the promise of burial outside the prophet's ancestral tomb, לֹא-תבוא (v. 21), and by the emphatic repetition of the root שלך, cast, in relating the disposal of his body in the interim, ותהי נבלתו משלכת בדרך (vv. 24b, 25). The circumstance of this two-fold mortuary disregard turns the subsequent collection of his remains and their deposition in another prophet's family grave (vv. 26-30) into *corrective* measures mitigating God's judgment on him. According to 2 Kgs 23:17, this remedial entombment was further signposted by a צִיּוֹן, a burial marker.

Likewise, the second occurrence of צִיּוֹן is located in the context of the ingathering of discarded osteological remains, and thus may go even further in detecting the counteractive, remedial policy towards the violated dead in its use. In Ez. 39:15 the word is used in a full-blown cleaning operation of the bones of Gog's army after a prolonged period of their

by using צִיּוֹן Jeremiah showed concern for Josiah's programme of political reunion in Jerusalem and cultic reunion on 'Zion.' Holladay, *Jeremiah*, 194. It should be noted, however, that even though Holladay argues for Jeremiah's allusion to Josiah's reforms the function he envisions for צִיּוֹן in Jeremiah is radically different from its use in 2 Kgs 23. See, however, Stavrakopoulou's discussion on the territorial significance of graves in Jer. 31:15-22 and 2 Kgs 23:17 and by extension of צִיּוֹן. 'The territoriality of Rachel's tomb seems to be paralleled a few verses later in the same collection of oracles, as Yhwh commands his returning people (imaged this time as Betulah Israel) to set up 'monuments' (צִיּוֹן) to mark their way to their homes (Jer. 31:21). The unusual term צִיּוֹן is significant here, for it is only used elsewhere in the MT (and only in the singular) to refer to the territorially charged memorial monuments marking the remains of the dead in 2 Kgs 23:17 and Ex. 39:15. In Jer. 31:15-17, then, Rachel's tomb is rendered a territorial marker of "national" regeneration.' Stavrakopoulou, *Land of Our Fathers*, 90-91, 95-96.

¹⁵⁷ On the material memorialisation of burial sites, see L. Rahmani, 'Ancient Jerusalem's Funerary Customs and Tombs,' *BA* 44 (1981), 171-177, and parts 2, 3, and 4 that appeared in 1981-1982. See also Bloch-Smith, *Judahite Burial Practices*, 103. On burial markers in the Old Testament see *ibid.*, 113-114; Stavrakopoulou, *Land of Our Fathers*, 13-16, see especially bibliography in 15 n. 56. On Jewish monumental markings and stelae in later periods see D. Ussishkin, *The Village of Silwan: the Necropolis from the Period of the Judean Kingdom* (Jerusalem, 1993). On the standing stone grave marker *nefesh* and its function see R. Hachlili, *Jewish Funerary Customs, Practices and Rites in the Second Temple Period* (Leiden, 2005), 339-349. On the variety of stelae marking human remains in sacrificial precincts of the ancient Mediterranean world see F. Stavrakopoulou, *King Manasseh and Child Sacrifice: Biblical Distortions of Historical Realities* (Berlin, 2004), 222-239.

exposure to the elements on the battlefield. Of special relevance to the present discussion are the following three points. First, the account of Gog's defeat is cast as an overtly divine judgment on the eschatological arch-enemy (Ez. 38, 39:1, 5, 7), which is carried out not only by means of the decisive destruction of his hordes, but also through their abandonment on Israel's fields to be consumed by vultures and scavengers (Ez. 39: 4, 17-20, cf. 1 Kgs 13:24a).¹⁵⁸ Secondly, against the background of habitual deviancy in treating the dead in Ezekiel, ch. 39 presents the clean-up operation of human debris (vv. 11-16) as a countermeasure to their contaminating effect on the land.¹⁵⁹ Thirdly, of special significance here is Zimmerli's observation that the meticulousness of the search/collection/and burial campaign in vss. 14-16 may argue in favour of ch. 39 reflecting *an actual practice* of a ritual response to the defiled and defiling human bones.¹⁶⁰

These two biblical occurrences of ציין in the context of unrestrained divine judgments through the media of non-burial and desecration of the dead by animals are matched by its

¹⁵⁸ Interestingly enough, the Targum of Ez. 39 twice expands the account of Gog's defeat by adding that his own cadaver and those of his warriors 'will be flung' on the mountains of the land (v. 4) and on the open field (v. 5). S. Levey, *The Targum of Ezekiel* (Willimington, 1987), 108. In connection with these expansions aggravating the punitive treatment of Gog's army observe that the corpse of the Judahite prophet, too, was repeatedly imaged as 'thrown,' 'flung,' נבלתו משלכת (1 Kgs 13:24, 26). The Targum also expands v. 16 by adding 'there, too, shall be flung the slain of Rome.' Levey explains that Targum's interpretive expansion has 'significant eschatological overtones, implying that the final eschatological war of Gog and Magog will actually be with Rome.' *Ibid.*, 109, n. 10.

¹⁵⁹ Ezekiel's usage of ציין eventually gave rise to a Jewish biannual practice of marking old, sunken graves, and by extension, human remains that became incidentally exposed in land cultivation. Y. Shek. I, 46a, M.Kat. 5a contain thorough discussions on the importance for pilgrims and local Jewry to avoid pollution by unwittingly coming in contact with old and thus lost graves. The rabbis speak of a variety of public services permitted before Pesah and Sukkot and elaborate on the obligations of 'officers' who inspect major roads and other spaces to enable pilgrims, as well as local Jewish populace, to reach their destination to holy places undefiled. These discussions presuppose that the practice of monitoring and signposting burial sites, which fell in disuse and posed a threat of defilement, antedates Ez. 39. Y. Shek. I, 46a, M.Kat. 5a feature both the noun ציין and the verb צייץ, and the latter implies that the marking of graves is done with piles of stones and lime. Thus, on the Aramaic ציין Jastrow comments that it is a 'heap of stones, mark, especially the mark put up to indicate the neighbourhood of an unclean place, or sunken graves.' M. Jastrow, *A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature: with an Index of Scriptural Quotations* (New York, 1926), 1275, 1277. Cf. Cooke, *Ezekiel*, 420. Although these rabbinic discussions focus on the issues of cultic purity the practice of marking old graves in them, as in Ez. 39, functions as a secondary, and thus corrective, response to one's interment altered due to shifts in the terrain, accumulation of debris mulch, crushing of caskets/skeletal remains under the earth load, or disturbance in land cultivation.

¹⁶⁰ Zimmerli, *Ezekiel*, 318-319.

usage in Jeremiah's Book of Consolation considered against its wider setting. The charge to erect צינים in Jer. 31:21 is given in the wake of the prophet's systematic pogrom formulated as the outworking of divine retribution for Judah's moral failure that feature both deviant corpse treatment articulated by the verb שלך, cast, and their posthumous consumption by animal scavengers (Jer. 7:33, 16:4). Therefore within the broader milieu of Jeremiah's socio-religious and political concerns in the restoration of Judah, the injection of the ציון erecting motif into Jer. 31:15-22 suggests the remedial ingathering and interment of Judah's dead previously exhumed, unburied, and otherwise dislocated. Even though Ez. 39:15 is usually dismissed as irrelevant to the meaning of ציון in Jer. 31, it is not insignificant that the issue of ingathering the dead in both Jeremiah and Ezekiel arises in connection with their vision of reconstituted Israel after its dispersion among the hostile nations (Jer. 31:16 (מארץ אויב), Ez. 39:27 (מארצות איביהם)). More importantly, the compounded social, religious and political dimensions of Israel's post-collapse resurgence are envisaged in these prophets in strikingly similar terms. Both Jeremiah and Ezekiel speak of the restoration of the Davidic monarchy (Jer. 30:9), re-adoption of the people by YHWH (30:22, 31:1, 33), establishment of a new covenant (Jer. 31:31-33), and rebuilding of the temple and Jerusalem (Jer. 31:23, 38-40). Although in Ezekiel these dimensions are circumscribed on a more panoramic horizon of Israel's future and are clearly eschatological in their reach, their assemblage at an earlier stratum of national restoration in Jeremiah suggests the same utilitarian thrust of ציון in 31:21a. The corrective mortuary duty of the returnees administered to the casualties in the Babylonian invasion presupposed by צינים is further underscored by its pairing with תמרורים, (v. 21a), a hapax representing another type of a marker and thus simply a homophone to תמרורים, bitterness, in v. 15, or the same word.¹⁶¹ Even though the infrequency of ציון in the

¹⁶¹ Note that the Targum to Jer. 31:21 understands it as bitterness, 'O congregation of Israel, remember the right works of thy fathers; pour out supplications; in bitterness set thy heart.' Hayward, *The Targum of Jeremiah*, 132. Cf. the Vulg., which has 'put on bitterness.' The majority of scholarship understands the word as a hapax

Hebrew Bible precludes more precise conclusions regarding its place in the registry of ritual practices, the texts discussed above do hint that it is part of a *corrective* mortuary policy, which in Jer. 31 brings ‘the exile of the dead’ to an end and makes the land suitable for repopulation. Thus Jeremiah and Ezekiel’s remedial צינים become potent symbols of hope and cultic purity in Israel’s post-exile immediate and distant futures.

B. Ritual Wailing: שבי אל-עריך אלה.

Concerning the image resulting from the series of imperatives addressed to the exiled under the guise of Virgin Israel (v. 21), and more specifically the charge to build צינים, Holladay states that it is rather ‘grotesque’ and uncharacteristic for women’s normative work – Virgin Israel making pile after pile of stones.¹⁶² Additionally, like many other scholars before and after him, he observes that Israel’s repatriation in Jer. 31:15-22 is constructed around a set of contrasts or reversals. To strengthen this view, and to introduce yet another contrast, he proposes to emend the last imperative in v. 21 שבי אל-עריך to שבי אל-עריך אלה, ‘Return (Virgin Israel) to your cities with mastery,’ and explains that Israel, ‘the giddy girl in the wilderness,’ is invited to undertake the male role in setting up signposts, and to return to Judah triumphantly.¹⁶³ Having dismissed the versional witness, as well as other emendations proposed before him, as unsatisfactory on contextual grounds, he argues that בעלה, with mastery, fits the trajectory of the whole passage better.¹⁶⁴ Being convinced that all of the directives in v. 21 are gender specific, i.e. associated with men’s work – erecting signposts and inspecting highways – but addressed to Israel personified as a female, he understands the underlying message of v. 21c as ‘[Virgin Israel,] do not be a passive victim –

representing some kind of a road marker. For the proposed etymology of תמרורים see, for example, McKane, *Jeremiah*, 803.

¹⁶² Holladay, *Jeremiah*, 192.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 193.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 193-194.

take charge, take responsibility for yourself.’¹⁶⁵ His observation on Jer. 31:15-22 being saturated with reversals is certainly legitimate, but his idea of unexpected labour assignment in v. 21 may not be and his emendation to make the MT legible is not necessary. Once the consonants of the MT (אלה) in their present form are considered, the issue of gendering Israel’s experience of manumission feminine will cohere better not only with the ancients’ conceptualisation of gender roles but with their crisis/restoration pattern as well.

To support his emendation of the last element in the phrase שבי אל־עריך אלה (v. 21c) Holladay observes that to read the word אלה as a demonstrative pronoun, i.e. ‘these,’ and thus ‘return to these your cities,’ ‘adds nothing to the colon.’ He explains that ‘there is no other demonstrative in the vicinity for a parallel (one notes the diction in the refrain of 5:9, 29; 9:8, where two demonstratives are in parallelism).’¹⁶⁶ Interestingly enough, the LXX of Jer. 38:21 reads, παρθένος ισραηλ ἀποστράφητι εἰς τὰς πόλεις σου πενθοῦσα, ‘Daughter Israel, return to your cities bewailing,’ and thus understands אלה to mean ‘bewailing,’ a feminine participle. Based on the LXX, Rudolph suggested that the LXX’s πενθοῦσα may reflect the participle אבלה, but, again, this is dismissed by Holladay, and others, on contextual grounds.¹⁶⁷ However, Holladay observes that instead of אבלה the LXX may reflect a different root, אלה, which contains the same set of consonants and is found in Joel 1:8, אלי כבתולה חגרת־שק על־בעל, ‘Lament like a virgin girded with sackcloth for the husband of her youth.’¹⁶⁸ Despite the obvious infrequency of the root אלה in the Hebrew Bible its identification in Joel 1:8 does not pose any difficulty (cf. vv. 9-14). Of pertinence here is that this Aramaic root אלה in the

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 194.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 193. Some scholars note that the difficulty with v. 21c – שבי אל־עריך אלה – lies in the indefiniteness of the word אלה. That is, to be a demonstrative pronoun, i.e. ‘these,’ this word requires a definite article. Those who opt for its reading as ‘these’ turn to the occurrences of demonstratives which require the article but are found without it (GKC 126y, JM138fg). In support of his emendation of שבי אל־עריך אלה to שבי אל־עריך בעלה Holladay states that the parallels listed in grammars for this phenomenon represent problematic texts and notes that in the second colon of v. 22 two articles are present. Hence the absence of the article in v. 21 may not be a stylistic feature of the poet’s rhetoric. Holladay, *Jeremiah*, 192-193.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 193.

¹⁶⁸ Holladay, *Jeremiah*, 193.

Targums is used specifically in connection with the office of a wailing woman, אֵלִיתָא, and represents, for example, MT's מְקוֹנְנוֹת, professional mourners in the Targ. to Jer. 9:16 [17].¹⁶⁹ If the LXX witness is accepted, then the proximity of the words אלה and בתולה in the MT of Jer. 31:21 will match the pairing of these roots in Joel 1:8 loaded with excessive grief semantics. With this observation in mind, and in light of the reading proposed for the opening directive of v. 21, the imperative to Virgin Israel in v. 21c generates a context antithetical to the one envisaged by Holladay and yields a picture of Israel's manumission as an amalgamation of ritualized purgation of the defiled Judah via erection of grave markers and wailing.

Even though Israelite and Judean prophets habitually placed laments, fasts, and adjacent mourning rites before and after the destruction phase in military conquests, as well as ascribed them to people in captivity (Jer. 41:5, Lam., Zech. 7:3-5, 8:19), their prescription to Israel in its repatriation, as argued here, should not be taken as chronologically delayed or misplaced. In fact, ancient policies regarding certain junctures in the complex of regenerative procedures of a post-collapse community, i.e. city and temple restoration, did permit and, moreover, demanded specific rites of wailing to ritually mark the transition from a community's tumultuous past to its soon rebuilt future. Thus in the second and first millennia BC Sumerian and Mesopotamian lament-based compositions, *balags* and *eršemmas*, were recited in ritual contexts to commemorate major public catastrophes in the attempt to appease the gods and restore cities after they had been in ruins for decades.¹⁷⁰ Among these sacral occasions the construction of a new temple was traditionally joined by a series of rites, one of which, a *kalû* ritual, entailed lamentations sung by priests for the entire duration of the

¹⁶⁹ Jastrow, *A Dictionary of the Targumim*, 70.

¹⁷⁰ W. Hallo, 'The Cultic Setting of Sumerian Poetry,' in A. Finet (ed.), *Actes de la XVII^e Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale* (Ham-sur-Heure, 1970), 116-134.

demolishing of old temple structures and rebuilding of a new one.¹⁷¹ Writing on the ideologies of conquest and rebuilding in the ancient Orient, and more specifically on the Mesopotamian *kalû* ritual, Fried argues that the weeping performed by older priests, Levites, and family heads in Ezra 3 may also reflect a religious obligation and not a sentimental impulse.¹⁷² Admittedly, the priestly *kalû* - ritual performed for ruined temples reflects practices of later stages in restoration schemas, and Jer. 31:15-22 has nothing to do with the rebuilding of Jerusalem or its temple. However, the prosaic section immediately following the poem (vv. 23-26) explicitly speaks of Israel's resettlement in the homeland and alludes to both the return of YHWH to his temple (v. 23), and the collective repopulation of Judean cities (v. 24). Later, vv. 38-40 will give a more explicit promise to rebuild Jerusalem. Of further pertinence here is the closing statement in v. 26 that mentions the awakening of an anonymous dreamer, possibly a prophet (v. 26). Incidentally, the presence of this enigmatic insertion¹⁷³ after a ritually charged pericope is reminiscent of the already mentioned ANE restoration accounts, an essential element of which were divine commands for rebuilding cities or temples channelled through nocturnal visions and dreams.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷¹ F. Thureau-Dangin, *Rituels accadiens* (Paris, 1921), 34-59. Cf. Ellis who writes, 'if a new temple is built on the site of an old one, lamentations are sung by lamentations priests to placate the gods and bridge the gap between the old temple and the new one. A stone is taken from the old temple and is placed in the new one during construction. Lamentations are made for the old temple until the new temple is completed.' R. Ellis, *Foundation Deposits in Ancient Mesopotamia* (New Haven, 1968), 13. Fried mentions that even though the text which witnesses the *kalû* ritual is dated to the Seleucid period, 'it likely goes back to an older practice, certainly to the Persian period, if not before.' L. Fried, 'The Land Lay Desolate: Conquest and Restoration in the Ancient Near East,' in O. Lipschits, J. Blenkinsopp (eds), *Judah and the Judeans in the Neo-Babylonian Period* (Winona Lake, 2003), 44. Cohen observes that balag-lamentations were chanted not only 'to placate the wrath of gods during the razing of sacred structures' but were also part of a 'fixed liturgy for certain days of the month, presumably to pacify the gods over unknowingly committed offenses' and ensure continuous peace in the land. This usage was maintained throughout the first millennium BC. M. Cohen, *Balag-compositions: Sumerian Lamentation Liturgies of the Second and First Millennium B.C.* (Malibu, 1974, 1975), 14, 15.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 42-45.

¹⁷³ The identity of the dreamer as well as the function of the dream has always puzzled scholars.

¹⁷⁴ Hurowitz, *I Have Built*, 32-128; A. Oppenheim, *The Interpretation of Dreams in the Ancient Near East, with a Translation of an Assyrian Dream-Book* (Philadelphia, 1956), 193. Cf. Ezra 1:1, 2 and Fried's discussion of it. Fried, 'The Land Lay Desolate,' 35-38. Admittedly, the poet/prophet in Jer. 31:26 is not a monarch, who is usually featured as the recipient of dreams/visions to initiate a rebuilding project. Yet, assuming that Jer. 31:15-22 is a poem that deals with procedures integral to the rebirth of a nation, Jeremiah's dream could be viewed as a variation on ANE nocturnal visions as part of the restoration ideology genre.

Thus against the background of reconstitution policies in the ANE and their reflexes in biblical sources, the succession and interrelation of themes in the present collection of oracles – mournful petitions and attendant rites as part of Israel’s repatriation, and divine response to them communicated through visions and dreams – may exhibit an adaptation of the well-established schema or suggest an expansion of it. Conceptualising reconstitution of a nation via a series of corrective mourning rites, Jeremiah resorts to gendering the repatriated group feminine, i.e. Virgin Israel, which is befitting the solemn task at hand. This reading may be validated not only by female mourners incorporated into the ancient deportation/manumission iconography,¹⁷⁵ but also by the ANE motif of a weeping goddess in the Sumerian and Mesopotamian second and first millennium laments. In these compositions goddesses, protectors and defenders of their cities functioned as petitioners before higher deities in the position to grant restoration to communities under their patronage. In the Israelite lament literature the manifestation of a weeping patroness has been established under the guise of personified cities, psalmists, and prophets (Ezekiel).¹⁷⁶ Even though the feminisation of the repatriated group in Jer. 31:21 may not be a conscious reuse of the lament traditions and the weeping goddess motif, it is of significance that the Book of Consolation

¹⁷⁵ While in the broader context of ancient war imagery Egyptian and Assyrian reliefs locate wailing at a variety of stages of military campaigns (siege, conquest, plunder, deportation), the latter specifically injects the semiotics of mourning into depictions of deportations, and oddly enough and more pertinently for the discussion at hand, into manumissions. S. Schroer, ‘Gender and Iconography from the Viewpoint of a Feminist Biblical Scholar,’ *LD 2* (2008), 10-14.

¹⁷⁶ For the weeping goddess motif and personification of Israel and Judah as a woman in Jeremiah and Lamentations see, for example, F. Dobbs-Allsopp, *Weep, O Daughter of Zion: a Study of the City-Lament Genre in the Hebrew Bible* (Rome, 1993), 70-91; W. Gwaltney, ‘The Biblical Book of Lamentations in the Context of Near Eastern Lament Literature,’ in W. Hallo, J. Moyer, L. Perdue (eds), *More Essays on the Comparative Method: Scripture in Context II* (Winona Lake, 1983), 214; A. Fitzgerald, ‘BTWLT and BT as Titles for Capital Cities,’ *CBQ* (1975), 167-183. See also, B. Kaiser, ‘Poet as “Female Impersonator”’: the Image of Daughter Zion as Speaker in Biblical Poems of Suffering,’ *JR* 67(1987), 164-182; P. Day, ‘The Personification of Cities in the Hebrew Bible: The Thesis of Aloysius Fitzgerald, F.S.C.,’ in F. Segovia, M. Tolbert (eds), *Reading From This Place: Social Location and Biblical Interpretation* (Minneapolis, 1995), 283-302. For this motif in Ezekiel and more specifically for the prophet’s imaging as the weeping city goddess, see D. Petter, *The Book of Ezekiel and Mesopotamian City Laments* (Fribourg, 2011), 27-29, 66-75. For the discussion on Judah being well-acquainted with the first millennium *balags* and *eršemmas*, and on the imaging of psalmists as weeping city goddesses, see W. Bouzard, Jr *We Have Heard with Our Ears, O God: Sources of the Communal Laments in the Psalms* (Atlanta, 1997), 91, 166.

contains a number of distinctive themes of *balags* and *eršemmas*.¹⁷⁷ Since the precedent of placing laments in accounts of restoration is well attested in the ancient Orient and since the poetic feminisation of intercessions for collapse societies is a prominent feature in the literatures of both Israel and its related cultures, these details in v. 21 connect Jer. 31:15-22 to the conceptual mainstream of reconstruction policies.

IV. Conclusion.

Admittedly, the third strophe in Jer. 31:15-22 is somewhat ambiguous in its formulation, and a cursory reading of it does not immediately yield the semantic thrust proposed here; yet, the cumulative evidence offered above may endorse a ritual approach to it and suggest a new set of ideological contours complementing and expanding the foci of the opening subunits of Jer. 31:15-22. Addressing the Babylonian exile and encompassing adjacent junctions of Israel's history, i.e. the nation's downfall at the beginning of the sixth century and its manumission in the second half of it, a set of oracles in Jer. 31:15-22 explores the socio-religious mechanisms by which Judah's reconstitution is to be accomplished. This ritual reading not only coheres well with restoration policies of Israel's neighbours, as well as Israel itself, but also connects the strophes in Jer. 31:15-22 in a more meaningful way. In vv. 16-17 the promise of return of Rachel's children was predicated on her work as a mourning mother. In vv. 18-20 the remembrance of Ephraim in exile is solicited by his penitence expressed through ritual behaviours. And finally, in vv. 21-22, when the nation under the guise of Virgin Israel is commissioned with a set of corrective mourning rites, it is confronted with a question signalling the end of its exile, 'How long will you go here and there, O,

¹⁷⁷ Some of these are: 1.) the fall and destruction of a city/human community; 2.) divine agent(s) of destruction; 3.) description of destruction; 4.) the weeping goddess; 5.) lamentation; 6.) restoration in general and restoration of the city; and 7.) return of the deity. For a detailed discussion of standard features in the city lament genre see, for example, Petter, *Ezekiel*, 13-33.

turning Daughter?’ (v. 22a); or, in other words, ‘how long will your captivity continue?’¹⁷⁸ In response to this ritual solidarity spread across the decades of Israel’s history, the Lord is now able to create a new thing, i.e. repatriation and resettlement of His people in the land with all of their compounded social, religious and political dimensions as set out in the Book of Consolation: reestablishment of the Davidic monarchy (Jer. 30:9); re-adoption of the people by YHWH (30:22, 31:1, 33); establishment of a new covenant (Jer. 31:31-33); and rebuilding of the temple and Jerusalem (Jer. 31:23, 38-40).

The cryptic nature of the statement in v. 22b, as well as varied functions of funerary dances, may not allow us to reconstruct its precise role in Jer. 31:15-22, and thus the precise significance of Rachel’s action. Depending on their cultural setting, funerary circumambulations have been shown to protect the living from demonic forces active at times of death and burial, as well as from malevolent actions by the deceased’s ghost. They are also understood as a protective escort and guidance to the soul en route to the afterlife. In some cultures they are meant to ascribe honour to the deceased and in others they channel the mourner’s grief through repetitive motions. Since Jeremiah’s presentation of Judah’s collapse is marked by a rampant violation of the dead, and since in its repatriation the nation was commissioned with the corrective mortuary duty, i.e. the erection of burial markers, it could be assumed that Rachel’s circumambulations had at least two objectives. On the one hand, they were meant to salvage and posthumously confer honour on her offspring. On the other hand, as an act of sympathetic magic, they were meant to keep the spirits of the violated and thus disquieted dead at bay, in anticipation of Virgin Israel’s work.¹⁷⁹ Incidentally, various manipulations of the dead in the ancient Orient were viewed as either acts of violence or acts

¹⁷⁸ Cf. Lundbom, *Jeremiah*, 450.

¹⁷⁹ Although the Hebrew Bible contains explicit prohibitions of various magical practices, it does not mean that magic was not exercised in ancient Israel. For the evidence of magical practices in the biblical literature, see P. Schäfer, ‘Magic in Ancient Judaism,’ in P. Schäfer, H. Kippenberg (eds), *Envisioning Magic: A Princeton Seminar and Symposium* (Leiden, 1997), 27; A. Jeffers, *Magic and Divination in Ancient Palestine and Syria* (Leiden, 1996).

of benevolence.¹⁸⁰ If in prophetic thought Judah's exile is envisioned as a violent act of displacing its dead (Jer. 8:1-3) and its return is cast as a benevolent act of their revivification (cf. Ez. 37:12-14), then Rachel's actions, too, can be viewed as part of YHWH's benevolent scheme of restoration. Moreover, in Jeremiah's series of benevolent acts, which enable Judah's preservation and return – scattered summons to weep and mourn (6:26, 7:27, 14:17, etc.), as well as a full-blown training operation of lament composition and recitation (9:20ff) – the figure of the ancestral matriarch is cast as the culmination of Judah's mortuary responses to the crisis (31:15, 22b) and a stimulus that incites YHWH to action (vv. 18-20). In fact, in the intricate fabric of Jeremiah's poem, Rachel, a *יחיד* forsaken¹⁸¹ mother, is succeeded by YHWH, a *בן יקר/יחיד* forsaken parent. Hence, through a layered collision of destinies and their powerful inversions,¹⁸² Jer. 31:15-22 accomplishes a great merger of human and divine compassion, which in turn enables Judah's repatriation from exile and repopulation of the land (31:23ff).

Thus against the diverse readings of the strophe in Jer. 31:21-22, the evidence presented here suggests that vv. 21-22 is a stanza that belongs to the funerary stratum of the restoration programme in Jeremiah's wider context, and in the Book of Consolation in particular. Not only does the foregoing discussion endorse the MT of the strophe, but it also suggests that ancient socio-religious tools of national, post-collapse resurgence imprint

¹⁸⁰ On non-burial as punitive measures in treaties and oaths see D. Wiseman, *The Vassal Treaties of Esarhaddon* (London, 1958), 60-80; Hillers, *Treaty-Curses*, 68-69; K. Cathcart, 'Treaty-curses and the Book of Nahum,' *CBQ* 35 (1973), 180-182; W. Barrick, *The King and the Cemeteries: Toward a New Understanding of Josiah's Reform* (Leiden, 2002), 178-181; S. Olyan, 'Unnoticed Resonances of Tomb Opening and Transportation of the Remains of the Dead in Ezekiel 37:12-14,' *JBL* 128 (2009), 492; M. Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School* (Winona Lake, 1992), 140-141. For Mesopotamian practices of disturbing the dead see W. Hallo, 'Disturbing the Dead,' in M. Brettler, M. Fishbane (eds), *Minhah le-Nahum: Biblical and Other Studies Presented to Nahum M. Sarna in Honour of his 70th Birthday* (Sheffield, 1993), 183-192 and the bibliography cited there.

¹⁸¹ Paraphrasing Brueggemann who in turn paraphrases Jürgen Moltmann. Discussing crucifixion, Moltmann refers to the Son as 'father forsaken' and to the Father as 'son forsaken.' J. Moltmann, *The Crucified God: The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology* (London, 1974) cited in W. Brueggemann, 'Texts That Linger, Words That Explode,' *TT* 54 (1997), 185, n. 6.

¹⁸² Rachel who once died in childbirth (Gen. 35:16-20) now faces the demise of her posterity. YHWH who previously inflicted deadly wounds on his children (Jer. 10:18-19, 15:18, 19:6-8, 30:12-15, etc.) is now a parent who seeks to restore them to life.

themselves into Jeremiah's poetry by means of an interrelated complex of ritual responses and ensure Judah's rebirth post exile. According Rachel a place of prominence in these processes, Jeremiah once again attests to the ritual and social potency of maternal agency.

CONCLUSION

This thesis has looked at biblical traditions in which mourning rites contributed, or sought to contribute, to various forms of social restoration in ancient Israel. More specifically, it has explored the stories of four biblical grieving mothers who were placed at key phases in Israel's history to renegotiate the destinies not only of their own children, dead or lost, but also those of larger communities, i.e. family lines, ethnic groups, or entire nations. Since 'the social and ritual dimensions of mourning are intertwined and inseparable...[and] rites in general are a context for the creation and transformation of social order,'¹ these women used the circumstance of their 'interrupted' motherhood as a platform for a kind of grief-driven socio-political activism. Since maternal bereavement was generally understood as the most intense of all types of loss and was seen as archetypal of all mourning in ancient Near Eastern cultures, the preceding discussions showed that Israelite communities in crisis deemed sorrowing motherhood to be a potent agent in bringing about their own survival and resurgence back to normalcy.

I. The Modern Debate over 'Motherist Politics.'

In the last two centuries a so-called 'motherist politics' has been applied by women to a variety of movements and for a variety of social causes, such as suffrage, peace, welfare reforms, worker's rights, and environmental issues. It has also been implemented to fight such ideologies and world-systems as capitalism, colonialism, and imperialism.² The usefulness of the circumstance of motherhood as an impetus for social and political engagement has, however, been subjected to varied critical assessments in which scholars have 'vigorously debated maternal appeals' strategic efficacy as well as their implications for

¹ Olyan, *Biblical Mourning*, 3-4.

² S. Hayden, 'Family Metaphors and the Nation: Promoting a Politics of Care through the Million Mom March,' *QJS* 89 (2003), 196, 209.

gender norms.’³ The negative evaluation of such rhetoric or stances usually comes from those who think that as a justificatory cause for socio-political action, maternity can be seen as ‘irrational and without political import and thus easily dismissed’⁴ or understood as regressive for ‘gender politics.’ The latter critique normally comes from the feminist camp that views the appeals to motherhood as a regressive strategy in politics, a strategy that brings women to ‘the oppressive essentialism,’ i.e. women’s reproductive capacities, ‘hampering efforts to achieve advances for women as individuals.’⁵ Nevertheless, even those who are doubtful about the usefulness of this rhetorical stance admit that ‘the values of caring, and nurturance, of stressing the importance of human relationships as key elements of the good life remain enticing possibilities in a culture that stresses, as its bottom line, an unlimited concern with productivity and progress.’⁶ Since the thesis at hand was aimed at considering the politics and efficacy of maternal grief in the context of crises in ancient communities, it should be noted that the concerns voiced by modern feminist thinkers might not have been shared by ancient writers, who for the most part were male.⁷ It should further be pointed out that positive appraisals of such approaches also abound and will be discussed throughout this conclusion.

II. ‘Motherist Politics’ in Ancient Israel.

Since in the ANE the circumstance of maternal bereavement engendered female leadership in ritual, social and political spheres during tumultuous times, the ‘motherist’ strategies were of great value, as has been demonstrated in the foregoing chapters. At the

³ *Ibid.*, 196.

⁴ Foss, Domenici, ‘Haunting Argentina,’ 240.

⁵ Hayden, ‘Family Metaphors,’ 197. For a helpful bibliography of both positive and negative assessment of ‘motherist politics,’ see *ibid.*, 197, and notes 4 and 9.

⁶ J. Tronto, *Moral Boundaries: a Political Argument for an Ethic of Care* (New York; London: Routledge, 1993), 2.

⁷ On female literacy (or rather its lack) in the ancient world, see Bar-Ilan, *Some Jewish Women*, 30-51. Also, the very fact that the literature scanned and analysed in this thesis was produced by male authors who richly used maternal rhetoric speaks of its efficacy.

outset of this thesis it was observed that ‘mourning the dead and its attendant rites are somehow paradigmatic in the thought world of the biblical texts’⁸ and that they were used as behavioural templates for petitionary mourning and other non-death-related mourning.⁹ It was also explained that ‘the adaptable character of mourning rites and their power to debase that best explains their application to new ritual settings with no direct relationship to mourning the dead.’¹⁰ Thus, for example, in the non-death-related contexts, mourning rites are ‘intended to attract the attention and secure the intervention of the deity or another authority.’¹¹ The previous analyses of both extra-biblical and biblical materials have demonstrated that within death and non-death related mourning rites and contexts, maternal grief and the concomitant behaviours were seen as archetypal and thus were effective in times of large scale crises. Thus, at the end of this thesis, it is worth reviewing some of the reasons for their popularity in the ancient world.

A. Mother Grief and Its Capacity for Intercession.

As suggested in the introductory chapter, the potency of maternal grief is grounded in the general features of parental grief, such as intensity of pain, a sense of loss of self, and a long-enduring and growing bond with the lost child. The intersection of psycho-biological factors (conception, pregnancy, birth and the post-natal continued bond between mother and child) with the socialisation of mothers into becoming primary care-providers normally produces an experience of grief that is acute and lasting. Such an existential limbo of the bereft mother is, in turn, thought to unlock an unprecedented capacity for heartfelt, incessant supplications and intercessions. Thus, for example, dealing with maternal grief from a different perspective, Cox and Ackerman show that in a variety of cross-cultural beliefs,

⁸ Olyan, *Biblical Mourning*, 24.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 24.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 142.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 142.

women who died in childbirth were thought to become disquieted ghosts who, in their perpetual grief and concern, lingered in the world of the living to ensure the favourable fate of their children.¹² Similarly, Kalmanofsky notes that, faced with the death or imminent death of their children, the mothers in 1 Kgs 17 and 2 Kgs 4 boldly advocate for the restoration of their sons and act ‘as if the boundaries between life and death are permeable.’¹³

Viewed as the microcosm of human care and nurturing on the one hand, and the microcosm of suffering on the other, the institution of motherhood in the ancient world was firmly anchored in the human psyche as one of the constants of the cycle of human life. Although the circumstance of child loss for a woman was a destabilising event *par excellence*,¹⁴ the paradox of this destabilisation was that it generated unrivalled energy for intercessions and impetus for social engagement. Therefore, when ancient communities were at their most vulnerable and searched for strategies of survival, the anthropological constant of maternal grief and the perpetual destabilisation of a bereft mother were the go-to social tools. One of the possible directions for further research are the father grief narratives in the Hebrew Bible, which for the most part exhibit a striking lack of the petitionary dimension present in mother grief accounts.

B. Mother Grief and the Attainment of Wisdom.

Closely related to the previous point of the usefulness of motherist politics in the ancient world is the fact that, in some traditional cultures, the birth, rearing, and loss of

¹² Cox, Ackerman, ‘Rachel’s Tomb,’ 135-148. Thus, they observe, ‘although we have precious little evidence that beliefs in lingering ghosts existed anywhere in the ancient Near East, we nevertheless wonder if Jer 31:15 may in fact suggest that the Israelites believed that the fate of women who die giving birth is to become restless spirits like the Thai *phii praj* or Russian *rusalki*. Recall that in this verse, Rachel sings a dirge from her tomb lamenting the fate of the Israelites being taken away into exile.’ *Ibid.*, 147. They further mention the first person elegy that an Assyrian woman delivers after her death in labour, cited in the introductory chapter of this thesis. They also note a postbiblical Jewish legend of how ‘a distraught Rachel speaks from her grave to comfort her son Joseph’ after he had been sold into slavery. *Ibid.*, 147-148.

¹³ Kalmanofsky, ‘Women of God,’ 70.

¹⁴ Among other things, it would have been destabilising psychologically, emotionally, and socially.

children are linked to the acquisition of wisdom. Thus, for example, among professional wailers in modern Egypt the capacity for bona fide, effective wailing, and thus instruction and comfort of people through it, is deemed to be forged in the first-hand experience of both child-rearing and child-death.¹⁵ Accordingly, older lamenters tend to disqualify or feel suspicious about their younger colleagues if the latter have not yet experienced child birth and have not yet endured the loss of their offspring. Such a nexus between bereavement and wisdom acquisition is generally recognised even by those who stand outside the solemn trade of lamenting at funerals. Thus, as mentioned previously, the circumstance of child loss gives credence and authority to women's social activism in Mumbai as 'the public knowledge of [such] loss becomes critical for the public acceptance of the woman's wisdom and potential to become caretaker to society at large.'¹⁶ Therefore it is not unlikely that in ancient Israel, too, the experience of bereavement and subsequent grief were connected to the gaining of special insight into the matters of life, to the attainment of wisdom. In fact, one of the longest biblical tractates, traditionally identified as wisdom literature, is the book of Job. Couched in the context of multiple incidents of child loss, the book's extensive monologues provide an occasion for reflection on the nature of God and the human lot under his sovereign oversight.

As shown in the introductory chapter and above, in the broader cultural milieu(s) of the ANE interrupted motherhood was thought to be imbued with a unique capacity for intercession. Coupled with the fact that child loss, and grief in general, could engender the maturation of thought and feeling, and of ethical insight and self-awareness, the ability to intercede made maternal grief an appropriate strategy to deal with communal crises.¹⁷ One of

¹⁵ Wickett, *For the Living*, 35-40.

¹⁶ Bedi, 'Motherhood, and Its "Lack,"' 484.

¹⁷ See also De Long, who shows that in Ezra 4 when the visionary joins the mourning of a woman for her son he 'shares the divine perspective of love, proving himself worthy of receiving esoteric wisdom.' K. De Long, "'Ask a Woman": Childbearing and Ezra's Transformation in 4 Ezra,' *JSP* 22 (2012), 114-145.

the possible directions for further scholarly enquiries could be the link between grief and wisdom, between biblical grief accounts or laments and wisdom traditions.

C. Mother Grief and the Hierarchy of Mourning.

Regarding ‘motherist’ politics in the ancient contexts of loss, it should be noted that its efficacy also stems from the ability of grief to disrupt the traditional hierarchy in mourning and inject its uncensored perspectives on personal and collective suffering, as well as on the persons and factors responsible for it. As pointed out previously, it is precisely because mourning is an emotionally charged occasion that it can ‘provide “cover” for individuals to transgress or violate normal social expectations and prohibitions without fear of serious reprisals.’¹⁸ Although, the books of Job and Psalms portray male mourners arguing with the deity and thus exhibiting a certain degree of insubordination, the general diminished position of women in Israel makes their transgression of social boundaries in death- and grief-related contexts more noteworthy. In fact, since some of the preceding discussions in the thesis dealt with interactions of bereft mothers with a king, Olyan’s observation on the Israelite protocol in mourning is of interest. He writes,

Several [biblical] texts suggest a hierarchical dimension to public mourning and other ritual contexts that involve the participation of the ruler. Whether the context is mourning the dead, rites in the aftermath of military victory, or response to a prophetic announcement of doom, the king’s ritual behaviour determines that of his followers. Those who choose to remain loyal to the king and communicate their affiliation follow his lead ritually, no matter what their private feelings might be, and no matter what they might otherwise wish to do. This is so even in contexts where the king’s ritual behaviour might be inappropriate to the occasion.¹⁹

The already mentioned study of the unnamed widow and the Shunammite in 1 Kgs 17 and 2 Kgs 4 by Kalmanofsky, as well as the evidence analysed in chapters III and IV, suggest

¹⁸ Ebersole, ‘The Function of Ritual Weeping,’ 243.

¹⁹ Olyan, *Biblical Mourning*, 151.

that maternal grief was uniquely equipped to erase class differences and to defy socio-religious boundaries.²⁰ Again, as women were generally disadvantaged in social position and their participation in cultic life was also limited,²¹ their ability to transgress these constraints and challenge the political and religious establishments is indeed striking. As such, this ability further supports the efficacy of bereft motherhood as a potent force at times of social unrest.

D. Mother Grief and the Politics of Care.

In her assessment of the Million Mom March, a rally held in 2000 in Washington, DC, to ‘promote common sense gun control legislation,’²² Hayden argues that as long as the country, i.e. the US, continues to use ‘the nation-as-family metaphor,’²³ ‘the potential effectiveness of maternal appeals’²⁴ in politics remains. According to her, the application of the circumstance of motherhood, and specifically bereft motherhood, in the Million Mom March and similar campaigns, promotes the so-called ‘nurturant parent morality,’²⁵ a model of social order in which ‘people are understood first and foremost in relation to each other’ and ‘moral behaviours arise out of attending to one another’s specific circumstances and needs.’²⁶ Since scholars generally admit ‘that social roles and social structures cause women to be particularly adept at developing empathic relationships,’²⁷ and that ‘maternal practices

²⁰ Although 2 Samuel does record Joab’s confrontation with David in the context of mourning (2 Sam. 18-19) and he is behind the ruse in 2 Sam. 14, the mother grief accounts in this book are more extended. Besides, the social locations of the mothers in 2 Samuel are more disadvantaged than those of David, their interlocutor, and of Joab. Again, the fact that Joab commissions a ‘mother’ in 2 Sam. 14 shows that maternity was thought to have a special efficacy in ritual contexts.

²¹ Bird, ‘The Place of Women,’ 397-419.

²² Hayden, ‘Family Metaphors,’ 197.

²³ I.e. ‘founding fathers,’ ‘Uncle Sam,’ soldiers as ‘sons’ and ‘daughters.’ In her essay she uses G. Lakoff’s theory of ‘nation’ as a family and its social and political implication. G. Lakoff, *Moral Politics: What Conservatives Know that Liberals Don’t* (Chicago, 1996).

²⁴ Hayden, ‘Family Metaphors,’ 198.

²⁵ As opposed to ‘Strict Father Pattern.’ Both categories are discussed in Lakoff, *Moral Politics*.

²⁶ Hayden, ‘Family Metaphors,’ 200.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 202 and the bibliography cited there.

[further] sustain and perpetuate this embedded sense of self,²⁸ by grounding their rhetoric in maternal terms, the Million Mom March activists, both men and women, ‘promote[d] similar attitudes and relationships among members of the larger community.’²⁹ Another aspect of maternity that the participants of the rally heavily capitalised on, and that Hayden underscores as highly effective, is the preservative function of parenthood, i.e. the drive to protect one’s children. This fundamental dimension of parental duties and responsibilities in turn was able to spawn a ‘collective anger among audience members, thus bringing militant motherhood to the forefront.’³⁰

Such a model of protective maternity has also been crucial to the actions taken by the Algerian mothers of the disappeared against the state. Regarding their militant motherhood, it has been observed that although the ‘unleashing of rage is considered an ungainly “non-motherly” attribute according to patriarchal codes of female decorum,’³¹ it is precisely the mothers’ fury that ‘proved a significant source of political power.’³² Their anger, it is argued,

provides the very impetus for the mother’s spiritual energy and her revolutionary spirit; both elements are combined in a radicalized synergy of maternal activism. Through their rage, the mothers propose a revolutionary language that redefines power from a subaltern positionality, namely the power to unmask the truth through a non-institutionalized narrative.³³

Thus against the scepticism of some critics regarding the appropriation of the maternal stance in politics, Hayden and others show that by ‘privileging a moral model based in maternal values,’³⁴ motherhood can be turned into a ‘site of power and strength’ and transformed

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 202.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 2002.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 206.

³¹ B. Mehta, ‘Commemorating the “Disappeared”’: Maternal Activism and the Algerian Civil War in Fatima Bourega-Gallaire’s *La Beauté de l’icône*,’ *RAL* 45 (2014), 40.

³² *Ibid.*, 40.

³³ *Ibid.*, 40.

³⁴ Hayden, ‘Family Metaphors,’ 208.

‘from an individual experience and private relationship into a public performance based in a set of shared values and enlarged responsibilities.’³⁵

The pertinence of Hayden’s analyses for the present project becomes clear when one considers ancient Israel and a similar family-based conceptualisation of its various social structures. In fact, the language of kinship ties in relation to Israel and various entities within its social and political order permeates the Hebrew Bible - ancestors are ‘fathers,’ Israel is ‘sons of Israel,’ cities are ‘mothers’ in Israel, relatives are ‘brothers,’ God is both a ‘father’ and a ‘husband,’ prophetic guilds are ‘sons’ of prophets, etc. Given such habitual implementation of family-based nomenclature in the Hebrew Bible, it is only natural to see the so-called ‘motherist’ politics with its emphasis on both care and protection in Israel’s accounts of social and political upheavals. Thus, for example, the militant model of maternity is preserved in Hos. 13:8, where God’s wrath is portrayed as the fury of a bear robbed of her cubs. The rhetoric of nurturing motherhood is richly represented in what scholars loosely identify as Israel’s trauma and survival literature. The application of maternal imagery in the book of Jeremiah, often labelled as a trauma document, was explored in chapters I and V of this thesis. And Claassens and others have analysed the female and mother imagery in Deutero-Isaiah, which they define as ‘survival literature that had originated from a situation where people were experiencing a profound sense of powerlessness.’³⁶ Coupled with the language of God’s deliverance in Deutero-Isaiah, this imagery ‘contributes to the creation of a counter reality that offers a means of resisting the empire.’ Thus it is argued that ‘the metaphors of God as Mother in Labour and as Mother who Nurtures her newborn subvert the violence presumed and affected by the empire.’³⁷ Additionally, at the time of tumultuous changes in Israel’s social order during and after the Babylonian invasion, the prophetic

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 2004.

³⁶ Claassens, *Mourner, Mother, Midwife*, 62.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 62.

imagination searched for rhetoric that could provide stability and certainty to its audience. Consequently, it has been argued, since all of the other institutions had fallen apart in the crises of the seventh and sixth centuries, motherhood was thought to be the only social arrangement that could withstand the calamity, and thus it was ‘the only form of security for an exilic people.’³⁸ Similarly, the matrix of processes of national survival and reconstitution in Trito-Isaiah was based on the invariant mother-specific capacities, i.e. conception/expedited gestation/miraculous birth (Is. 66).³⁹ Therefore, it is the constancy of the institution of motherhood that has been suggested as the reason for the density of maternal imagery in Deutero- and Trito-Isaiah.⁴⁰ Given this, and in light of the discussions in the main body of the thesis, it can be concluded that ‘motherist’ politics, with all its diverse dimensions and possibilities, was thought to provide appropriate strategies to address communal needs and concerns in ancient Israel.⁴¹ One of the areas worth further enquiry would be a focused investigation of the institution of parenthood in the ancient world.⁴²

³⁸ L. Bronner, ‘Gynomorphic Imagery in Exilic Isaiah (40-66),’ *DD* 12 (1983-1984), 82.

³⁹ Cf. also the conceptualisation of times of unrest and restoration via other family-related events and processes, e.g. crisis and warfare as childbirth and times of national resurgence as weddings, etc. Other aspects of family life, and more specifically of motherhood, were seen as strategies of survival. Thus, it has been theorised that the so-called sexual politics were behind the mass production and distribution of ‘pillar’ figurines of eighth and seventh-century Judah. It has been postulated that their ‘symbolic fecundity [is] best understood against the ideological emphasis on social reproduction in Judah following the Assyrian destruction of Samaria and the mass deportations of Sennacherib.’ R. Byrne, ‘Lie Back and Think of Judah: The Reproductive Politics of Pillar Figurines,’ *NEA* 67 (2004), 137.

⁴⁰ Arguably, the general constancy of motherhood as a social institution can be attributed to the general patriarchal organisation of Israel and Judah, and the patriarchal ideals attached to motherhood. The rigidity with which the traditional gender norms were upheld could have contributed to the lasting usefulness of mother grief symbolism. It should also be noted that the other possible, and obvious, reason for the appeal to the politics of maternity in the Hebrew Bible and the ANE in times of unrest is that at such times men would traditionally be involved in military combat and most likely be killed in it. As one of the surviving sectors of the population, i.e. children, women, and the elderly, women/mothers would be the ones to lament the fallen and to deal with the consequences of the catastrophe in general.

⁴¹ Note the recent disavowing of the language of conquering, warring, etc. in theology and ethics and the move towards the theology of vulnerability, brokenness, etc. The latter, among other things, is based on motherhood and mother-related tasks. See, for example, the recent monograph by Claassens, *Mourner, Mother, Midwife*.

⁴² A few recent monographs and collections of essays have addressed the issues of children and childhood in ancient Israel and ancient Near East. To mention a few: A. Michel, *Gott und Gewalt gegen Kinder im Alten Testament* (Tübingen, 2003); M. Ebner et al., (eds), *Gottes Kinder* (Neukirchen, 2002); A. Kunz-Lübcke, R. Lux, (eds) “*Schaffe mir Kinder...*”: *Beiträge zur Kindheit im alten Israel und in seinen Nachbarkulturen* (Leipzig, 2006); Parker, *Valuable and Vulnerable* (Providence, 2013); Steinberg, *The World of the Child* (Sheffield: 2013).

III. Conclusion.

In her analysis of childbirth as a metaphor for crisis in the Hebrew Bible, ANE sources, and in a text from Qumran, Bergmann mentions an ancient text that speaks of a woman in labour having the special attention of the gods.⁴³ The foregoing discussions of both extrabiblical and biblical grief narratives have argued that a bereaved mother in the ancient world was believed to hold not only the special attention of the gods, but also that of human social groups and their authorities. In the aforementioned article on anticipatory mourning among Israeli mother artists, Guilat observes that these women mourn, among a myriad of other things, ‘a motherhood that has been appropriated and nationalized by the state and the army - a motherhood that is being emptied of its content and is therefore transformed from fullness to an ominous emptiness.’⁴⁴ The current thesis has shown that, owing their magnitude to the protection of children as the ‘central constitutive, invariant aim of maternal practice’⁴⁵ on the one hand and the ‘ominous’ ontological emptiness produced by child loss on the other, petitions, intercessions, and other forms of ritual and political zeal of bereft mothers held the unmatched potential for drawing attention to ‘the vulnerable, precarious lives of human beings’⁴⁶ and for engendering social change and preservation.⁴⁷

⁴³ Bergmann, *Childbirth*, 220.

⁴⁴ Guilat, ‘Motherhood and Nation,’ 308.

⁴⁵ S. Ruddick, *Maternal Thinking: Towards a Politics of Peace* (London, 1990), 19.

⁴⁶ C. Franklin, L. Lyons, ‘From Grief to Grievance: Ethics and Politics in the Testimony of Anti-War Mothers,’ *LW* 5 (2008), 248.

⁴⁷ Although it was not the goal of the thesis to situate the discussion on the place of women/mothers in the biblical discourse(s) of bereavement within feminist theologies and readings of ancient texts, it can, nevertheless, contribute to the overall cause of the latter.

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