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Biblical Concepts of Divine Protection: A Study of Psalms 5, 91, and 140
In Light of the Iconography of the Ancient Near East

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Biblical Concepts of Divine Protection: A Study of Psalms 5, 91, and 140
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Taking a holistic approach to individual psalms as distinct and complete poems, this study explores the topic of divine protection in the Psalter. Specifically, three psalms are analyzed: Psalms 5, 91, and 140. The study is a contribution to a growing body of research that systematically incorporates iconographic material in biblical exegesis. The contribution is unique in that (1) it compares ancient Near Eastern iconography to whole poems, in contrast to thematic treatments that have not, and (2) it considers modern linguistic approaches to biblical poetics.

The first two chapters review past research on the topic of divine protection in the Book of Psalms and introduce comparative research using the art of the ancient Near East. The following three chapters discuss the three psalms under investigation: Psalms 5, 91, and 140. In each of the chapters on an individual psalm, the research unfolds along two lines. First, there is an examination of the relevant vocabulary and structure. Each psalm is analyzed using the syntactic approach of M. O'Connor's in *Hebrew Verse Structure*. The second aspect of the study in chapters 3-5 explores the concepts of protection in the selected

psalms in light of the ideas of divine protection expressed in the iconography of the ancient Near East. The literary imagery of protection in the psalms is compared with the iconographic imagery of protection as it appears in the miniature art of the Levant as well as the monumental art of Egypt and Mesopotamia.

The study provides a new of method of approach and offers a fuller and clearer sense of the biblical notions of divine protection, not, however, in the form of a single overarching theme. Studying the topic of divine protection offers a complex and multifaceted viewpoint; the findings do not produce a single concept of divine protection. The three psalms separately conceptualized divine protection in at least three different ways; thus, there are concepts of divine protection in the psalms.

This dissertation by Adam V. Plescia fulfills the dissertation requirement for the doctoral degree in Biblical Studies approved by Robert D. Miller II, Ph.D., as Director, and by Joseph Jensen, S.T.D., and David Bosworth, Ph.D., as Readers.

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INTRODUCTION

The subject of divine protection in the Psalter has been discussed before, but past studies are now outdated. Older form-critical studies focused on the question of whether or not there was an ancient institution of (political) asylum behind some psalms.¹ I will, with the aid of the iconography of the ancient Near East, explore what the various poetic expressions of protection meant in the conceptual world of the Bible. Without ignoring form-critical questions, my intent will be to draw out the literary artistry of Psalms 5, 91, and 140 as I explore how divine protection is conceptualized within each poem. Instead of fixing upon the form-critical concern of locating each psalm's *Sitz im Leben* within the cultic institutions of Israelite religion, my focus will be upon the comparison of ideas expressed within two artistic modes: the art of the ancient Near East and the poetry of the Book of Psalms. In this manner, the dissertation aims to advance research on two fronts: (1) the literary front, using biblical poetics, and (2) the iconographic front, using archaeological studies.

While form-critical issues are still discussed concerning the Psalms, the current trend is to apply modern literary-critical methods in the analysis of the final form of the text.²

¹E.g., Lienhard Delekat, *Asylie und Schutzorakel am Zionheiligtum: Eine Untersuchung zu den privaten Feindpsalmen* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1967); see also, Hans Schmidt, *Das Gebet der Angeklagten im Alten Testament* (Giessen: A. Töpelmann, 1928); and Walter Beyerlin, *Die Rettung der Bedrängten in den Feindpsalmen der Einzelnen auf institutionelle Zusammenhänge untersucht* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1970).

²David M. Howard, Jr., "Recent Trends in Psalms Study," in *The Face of Old Testament Study: A Survey of Contemporary Approaches* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999) 329-90.

Recent scholarly activity in this regard has been in the analysis of the composition of the Book of Psalms as a whole and in the examination of the various smaller collections of poems within the Psalter.³ This recent discussion has started to yield many insights as scholars have begun to discover the meaningful ways in which the Book of Psalms was compiled. The next step in this advance of literary methods should be to examine thoroughly individual psalms as whole and complete poems. Most studies focused at the level of the poem have been too general and have neglected advances made in Hebrew poetics.

Of the many advances in biblical studies made in recent times, the most pertinent for the Psalms are the developments in our understanding of Hebrew poetry. Since the 1970s there has been much progress, and while a new consensus has not been reached, most scholars now agree that the old description of biblical Hebrew poetry as parallelism of the kind described by Bishop Robert Lowth is inaccurate and outdated. Current work by such scholars as Michael O'Connor, Adele Berlin, Stephen Geller, Dennis Pardee, and James Kugel has changed how we understand biblical Hebrew verse. In particular, the poetic system described by M. O'Connor in *Hebrew Verse Structure* is important because it is a coherent and functional system that describes the gross structure of a whole poem as well as the particulars of the individual verse.⁴ Yet, only a few scholars, notably William L. Holladay

³J. Clinton McCann, ed., *The Shape and Shaping of the Hebrew Psalter* (JSOTSup 159; Sheffield: JSOT, 1993); Jerome F. D. Creach, *Yahweh as Refuge and the Editing of the Hebrew Psalter* (JSOTSup 217; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996); David M. Howard Jr., *The Structure of Psalms 93-100* (ed. William Henry Propp; Biblical and Judaic Studies 5; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1997).

⁴Michael Patrick O'Connor, *Hebrew Verse Structure* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1997).

and Eric D. Reymond, are currently applying his description of Hebrew Poetry in their work.⁵

Archaeological discoveries in the ancient Near East have always been of great value in the study of the Bible. Often these findings have been used in the attempt to recreate the material culture described in the Bible, e. g., the Tabernacle and Temple.⁶ The direction now should be to study the archaeological findings, the iconography in particular, as a source by which we compare important concepts, religious or otherwise. The pioneering scholar in this type biblical-iconographical research is the Swiss scholar Othmar Keel. In a preliminary but highly enlightening fashion, Keel in his book *Symbolism of the Biblical World* began to relate biblical ideas and beliefs cast in the poetic imagery of the Psalter to the many relevant works of art of the ancient Near East.⁷ He proceeds systematically, using broad categories such as “the temple” or “God,” and the discussion is guided mostly by elucidating familiar notions in the psalms, like God as rock or warrior. For the most part, the discussion remained general, and Keel limited his comparisons of the iconographic images to one or two lines of verse at a time.

In contrast to his thematic approach which had the undesired effect of neglecting the context of the biblical texts, I will analyze the iconographic data of an idea as it relates to a

⁵William L. Holladay, “Hebrew Verse Structure Revisited (I): Which Words ‘Count’?,” *JBL* 118 (1999) 19-32; idem, “Hebrew Verse Structure Revisited (II): Conjoint Cola, and Further Suggestions,” *JBL* 118 (1999) 401-16; Eric D. Reymond, *Innovations in Hebrew Poetry: Parallelism and the Poems of Sirach* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2004).

⁶E.g., Roland de Vaux, “Religious Institutions,” in *Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions* (trans. John McHugh; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1961) esp. 271-330; for a history of the illustrative use of iconography in biblical research, especially as it relates to the history and material culture of biblical times, see Othmar Keel, “Iconography and the Bible,” *ABD*, 3. 358-374.

⁷Othmar Keel, *The Symbolism of the Biblical World: Ancient Near Eastern Iconography and the Book of Psalms* (New York: Seabury Press, 1978).

whole poem with all of its complexities and subtleties, not just in the isolation of one or two lines. In this way the rough sketches outlined in Keel's early work will begin to become more defined, at least as it regards the concepts involving divine protection. Likewise, the iconography will add depth to the literary-critical studies on the psalms I have chosen. The recent studies I have encountered often turn to the composition of the Book of Psalms as a key to interpreting individual psalms, while historical-critical questions are ignored or discussed from a form-critical standpoint, and issues of poetic structure are neglected or treated lightly. My dissertation will remedy these deficiencies of method, and offer a fuller and clearer sense of the biblical notions of divine protection. A clearer sense, however, will not be in the form of a single overarching theme, motif, or metaphor. Studying the topic of divine protection offers a complex and multifaceted viewpoint; one should not expect to find a single concept of divine protection. The three psalms separately conceptualized divine protection in at least three different ways; thus, the title reflects this point: there are concepts of divine protection in the psalms.

The study will proceed as follows: Chapter 1 will discuss the topic of divine protection in the Book of Psalms as it has been presented in past research. Chapter 2 will introduce the archaeological resource that will be used in comparative research: the art of the ancient Near East. The following three chapters will discuss the three psalms under investigation: Psalm 5 (chapter 3), Psalm 140 (chapter 4), and Psalm 91 (chapter 5). In each of the chapters on an individual psalm, the research will unfold along two lines. First, there will be an examination of the relevant vocabulary and structure of these psalms; this will be the literary and poetic aspect of the study. Applying O'Connor's method, which will be

introduced in chapter 3, I will analyze each psalm as a whole and coherent poem from a literary-critical standpoint. The second aspect of the study in chapters 3-5 will be to explore the concepts of protection in the selected psalms in light of the ideas of divine protection expressed in the iconography of the Ancient Near East. Essentially, I will compare the literary imagery of divine protection in the psalms with the iconographic imagery of protection as it appears in the miniature art of the Levant as well as the monumental art of Egypt and Mesopotamia.

CHAPTER 1

DIVINE PROTECTION IN PAST RESEARCH

Over the past century, there have been a number of critical studies that have discussed the concept of divine protection in the Psalms. Most of these studies were produced in the wake of the revolutionary work of Herman Gunkel. It follows that while some elements in these studies might reflect the older historical approaches, the driving force of research in these studies was motivated by the classic form-critical concerns of defining a particular psalm's form and identifying its original *Sitz im Leben*. The question of genre in the selected psalms under discussion (Psalms 5, 91, 140) is not a primary issue in this dissertation.¹

Psalms 5 and 140 are commonly identified as individual laments, while there have been

¹I do not wish to enter the debate regarding which labels are most apt to categorize and describe various genres of psalms; consequently, I am using the designation "laments of the individual" merely to identify a certain group of psalms that are often classed together going back to Gunkel's original divisions. He (Hermann Gunkel and Joachim Begrich, *Introduction to Psalms: the Genres of the Religious Lyric of Israel* [trans. James D. Nogalski; Macon, Ga: Mercer University Press, 1998] 121) lists the following as individual laments: Pss 3, 5, 6, 7, 13, 17, 22, 25, 26, 27:7-14, 28, 31, 35, 38, 39, 42, 43, 51, 54, 55, 56, 57, 59, 61, 63, 64, 69, 70, 71, 86, 88, 102, 109, 120, 130, 140, 141, 142, 143, and along with sections of mixed-genre psalms, he adds several in which confidence of a positive outcome is expressed (Pss 4, 11, 16, 23, 27:1-6, 62, 131). Klaus Seybold's list is nearly identical, with the exception that he does not include Psalms 31, 70, 120, 142, but adds Psalm 41 (*Introducing the Psalms* [trans. G. Dunphy; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1990] 116). Regarding the debate over categories, cf. Hans-Joachim Kraus (*Psalms 1-59: a commentary* [Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1988] 47-52) who takes issue with Gunkel's nomenclature and classifications, and instead groups "individual laments" with "community laments," and labels them "Songs of Prayer." Kraus (*Psalms 1-59*, 40) cites two key influences that led him to such a new arrangement: (1) Walter Beyerlin (*Die Rettung der Bedrängten in den Feindpsalmen der Einzelnen auf institutionelle Zusammenhänge untersucht* [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck u. Ruprecht, 1970]) and (2) Erhard Gerstenberger (*Der bittende Mensch: Bittritual und Klagelied des Einzelnen im Alten Testament* [WMANT 51; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1980]), whose sociological analysis challenges Gunkel's rigid division between the individual and the community. Cf. also Claus Westermann's two primary categories that he argues span the gamut of prayer in the psalms: "praise" and "lament" in *Praise and Lament in the Psalms* (trans. K. Crim and R. N. Soulen; Atlanta: J. Knox Press, 1981), esp. pp. 17-18.

several different suggestions for the genre of Psalm 91. The debate over genres or sub-genres which has been integral to form-critical theories will have to be considered, but overall the issue of genre will have less of an impact upon the arguments that will be presented in this study. It will be guided by a different set of principles, as are some of the more recent studies that reflect upon the concept of divine protection in the whole of the Psalter in its final form. The aim of this chapter is to consider how past studies have contributed to our understanding of divine protection in the Book of Psalms as well as where they have fallen short.

The general concern of defining or conceptualizing divine protection is not addressed directly in form-critical studies. Rather, discussions of divine protection are ancillary to other form-critical matters that center on finding the exact life-setting in which the particular psalms originated and how they were subsequently used. With form-critical concerns guiding much of the research published on the Book of Psalms for nearly a century, the older studies which put the subject of divine protection in sharpest focus have centered upon particular psalms in which the life-setting was argued to be connected to the Temple cult. However, the discussion will also take us to other areas of Psalms research, mainly to studies that have a cult-functional orientation and that assert a royal background for many psalms, but also to more recent research that emphasizes the study of metaphor in the interpretation of the Book of Psalms as it exists in its final form.

Divine Protection as a Temple Institution

The scholar who most directly addresses the topic of divine protection from a form-critical perspective is Lienhard Delekat in *Asylie und Schutzorakel am Zionheiligtum*.² He argues that the *Sitz im Leben* of nearly all of the individual laments is an institution of asylum in the Jerusalem Temple. In his reconstruction of the life-setting of these psalms, he posits the existence of a right of asylum to those who flee to the Temple in order to request refuge within its precincts. He maintains that these psalms were hand written by individual asylum-seekers, and were deposited and kept in the Temple. As a genre, these psalms were not sung but inscribed, a personal written record of the oppressed individual's plight and rescue. In this scenario, a person seeking asylum would arrive at the Temple and write down on the Temple wall his plea for help. When a positive response was granted in the form of a protection-oracle, then a short prayer of thanks was appended. As evidence to support his reconstruction of this *Sitz im Leben*, he cites a parallel practice in Egypt where inscriptions of prayers for help were written on the walls of minor temples dating to the 13th and 12th centuries B.C.E.³

Delekat's interpretations of the individual laments are very ambitious. He not only believes that interpreting these psalms with the assumption that the *Sitz im Leben* of Temple asylum unlocks the meaning of each lament, but that each psalm contains enough clues so that the interpreter can be very specific about many key elements. His interpretations regard

²Lienhard Delekat, *Asylie und Schutzorakel am Zionheiligtum: Eine Untersuchung zu den privaten Feindpsalmen* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1967).

³Delekat, *Asylie*, 391-401.

the language of each lament as being very concrete and referring to specific events, which he recreates in his exegesis. Critics have found admirable his consistency of interpretation, but find many of his interpretations improbable.⁴ Delekat errs by forcing radically literal interpretations. There is no room in Delekat's type of exegesis for figurative or symbolic language. As a result, divine protection is understood as particular, realistic and concrete to the extreme, and is relegated to a single cultic institution: an oppressed citizen is fleeing immanent harm in an actual situation from a real enemy amidst physical hardship. In short, divine protection is viewed concretely as recourse to a cultic institution of asylum.

Although Delekat was not the first to locate the *Sitz im Leben* of individual laments within cultic procedures in the Temple, he stands out for two reasons. First, among the other scholars who have argued for similar settings involving a cultic institution in the Temple, he makes the most aggressive case for identifying the cultic institution within the Temple as having primarily a protecting function of asylum. Second, he is the only one who has argued for a cultic *Sitz im Leben* in the Temple for all three of the psalms that I have chosen to examine.

The first consequential study connecting individual laments to a particular cultic practice was carried out by Hans Schmidt, who argued for a similar *Sitz im Leben* connected to a temple institution, but the theory he proposes differs from Delekat's regarding the nature

⁴For example, both John H. Eaton (*Kingship and the psalms* [SBT 2nd. Series 32; London: S.C.M. Press, 1976], 7) and Brevard Childs (review of *Asylie und Schutzorakel am Zionheiligtum: Eine Untersuchung zu den privaten Feindpsalmen*, by Lienhard Delekat, *JBL* 88 [1969]: 104-105) are right to dispute Delekat's contention that Psalm 22 refers to the conditions of the asylum (e.g., forced starvation, mocking, etc.). Similarly, Eaton (*Kingship*, 7) disputes interpreting Psalm 69 to mean that a prisoner is literally in a cistern and is near drowning due to the fact that it has filled up with rainwater.

of the institution. While Delakat argues that the function was protection, Schmidt contends that it was judgment. Schmidt is important in this discussion, nonetheless, because his study involves many of the individual laments that Delekat discusses, he suggests a cultic *Sitz im Leben* connected to the Temple, and he was partly the inspiration behind Delekat's work on asylum.

Schmidt makes the case for establishing a number of individual laments in a *Sitz im Leben* connected to the Temple cult in his 1928 monograph *Das Gebet der Angeklagten im Alten Testament*.⁵ Labeling these individual lament psalms "the prayers of the accused," he argues that their life-setting was a juridical process of divine judgment in which Yhwh's decision is discerned and carried out by the priests at the sanctuary (e.g., Psalms 3, 4, 5, 7, 11, 17, 26, 27, 31, 54, 55, 56, 59, 69, 109, 140). He contends that the various individuals speaking in these psalms have each been accused of a crime that could not be resolved by the ordinary means. As a court of last resort, the unresolved case is then referred to the Temple for divine judgement. The accused is imprisoned and detained at the Temple until a verdict is reached. In the meantime, the psalm is sung to God during this time of detention. The expressions of thanksgiving at the end of these psalms were voiced in gratitude after the accused was vindicated. The primary evidence Schmidt uses to support his theory is several Old Testament passages in which difficult or unresolvable cases were referred to the Temple

⁵Hans Schmidt, *Das Gebet der Angeklagten im Alten Testament* (Giessen: A. Töpelmann, 1928).

for God's decision on the matter (1 Kgs 8:31-32, Deut 17:8-13, 21:1-8, Exod 22:6-13, and Num 5:11-31).⁶

Walter Beyerlin, whose contribution to the subject follows both Schmidt's and Delekat's, presents a thesis closer to Schmidt's in *Die Rettung der Bedrängten in den Feindpsalmen der Einzelnen auf institutionelle Zusammenhänge untersucht*.⁷ Beyerlin examines a corpus of 25 psalms (Psalms 3-5, 7, 9-10, 11, 12, 17, 23, 25-27, 54-57, 59, 62-64, 86, 94, 140, 142, 143), analyzing each for evidence indicative of a cultic setting. He divides the corpus into two groups: (1) those with clear connections to an institution (Psalm 3, 4, 5, 7, 11, 17, 23, 26, 27, 57, 63), and (2) those which either probably or most likely do not have an institutional setting (Psalms 9-10, 12, 25, 54, 55, 56, 59, 62, 64, 86, 94, 140, 142, and 143).

While examining essentially the same corpus of psalms as his predecessors, Beyerlin's analysis leads him to some slightly different conclusions. Most importantly, as it regards the subject of divine protection, Beyerlin argues that the function of protection (i.e., Temple asylum) is not the primary focus, even in the laments that have elements tying them directly to the Temple. For Beyerlin, the motif of judgement within the psalms was paramount, but not set in the form of a legal trial of the petitioner imprisoned in the Temple,

⁶Related to Schmidt's theory is a body of research in which scholars have looked into this question of how difficult cases were resolved by turning to extraordinary means: the ordeal. With various types of ordeals (e. g. river, drinking, or temple ordeals) the determination of guilt or innocence was placed into divine hands, and often the verdict resulted in life or death. Schmidt's thesis defends the existence of a temple ordeal. There are other theories. For example, it has been argued that Psalm 5 has elements of a drinking ordeal as well. See Philip S. Johnston, "Ordeals in the Psalms?," in *Temple and Worship in Biblical Israel* (ed. John Day; London: T & T Clark, 2005) and Van der Toorn "Ordeal" in *ABD* 5:40-42.

⁷Walter Beyerlin, *Die Rettung der Bedrängten in den Feindpsalmen der Einzelnen auf institutionelle Zusammenhänge untersucht* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1970).

as Schmidt understood it. Indeed, the primary impetus for these psalms is God's judgment: it is the justice demanded by the one who has sought refuge in the Temple in order to receive a judgment against his enemies. It is the enemies in these psalms who are under fire, not the oppressed individual who pleads his case and expresses his confidence in Yhwh.⁸ Beyerlin's views are in agreement with Delekat's insofar as they both argue that the Temple had a function of asylum, but for Beyerlin, it was only to protect those accused until a clear verdict can be reached. In support of his thesis, he cites several of the same passages cited by Schmidt (e.g., 1 Kings 8 31-32, Exod 22:7-8, Deut 17:8-13, and Num 5:11-31), but several others as well (e.g., Deut 19:16-20, Zeph 3:5, Eccles 9:2).

As for the three psalms under investigation in this dissertation, Beyerlin argues that Psalm 5 and 140 both contain language arising out of a cultic background, but only Psalm 5 contains clear evidence of an institutional setting within the sanctuary. The contrast between Beyerlin's conservative stance and Delekat's bold conclusion is evidenced by the disparity in the number of psalms they identify as being directly connected to a cultic setting. The difference is a matter of method. Delekat's interpretation assumes a cultic setting *a priori*, whereas Beyerlin will confidently assign a cultic setting only when the internal evidence within each psalm warrants such a conclusion.

Beyerlin's less optimistic assessment regarding the possibility of connecting the individual laments he studies to a specific cultic practice represents an opinion closer to Hermann Gunkel's.⁹ On the possibility of identifying and recreating the *Sitz im Leben* of

⁸Ibid., 15-16.

⁹Nevertheless, Beyerlin does ultimately conclude that eleven psalms individually contain enough evidence to support the view that they were used expressly in cultic rituals taking place in the Temple.

individual laments Gunkel was pessimistic. In his interpretations of individual laments, he eschewed any hard identification of one specific *Sitz im Leben* that would account for all of them, and criticized those who did. He viewed Schmidt's thesis as over-reaching in his conclusions, going beyond the evidence both within the psalms and in the Old Testament prose texts.¹⁰ Most of his discussion regarding *Sitz im Leben* of individual laments focused on the idea that they are so vague that the setting is not discernible in many cases, and in the cases where there are indications that suggest a type of setting, the evidence points to several possible scenarios, but no one clear setting that would hold true for all of the individual laments.¹¹

What Gunkel feels he is able to say with confidence about individual laments highlights several difficulties that persist in psalm exegesis. Gunkel believed that the formal aspects of the individual lament psalms reflect an original cultic setting, but that in their current form, many of these psalms have been divorced from the original cultic setting and evolved in a way more suited for individual, private, and even non-cultic use. He writes, "In

¹⁰Gunkel and Begrich, *Introduction to Psalms*, 188-189. Gunkel would have been even harsher in his criticism of Delekat's radically literal interpretations of Psalm 22 and 69, which are the very same psalms Gunkel describes as containing contradictory and figurative language (see esp. p. 134).

¹¹While in most cases the original life-setting of individual laments are too difficult to discern with any certainty, many commentators agree that one circumstance behind several of the individual laments is the desire to be cured from sickness. The life-setting would involve ritual, but not necessarily taking place within the Temple itself. For example, Gunkel (*Introduction to the Psalms*, 135-136) argues that sickness is one cause in some complaint songs and, citing Babylonian parallels, that the root of the illness might have originally been understood to be demonic. A scholar who has defended the thesis that illness was the initial *Sitz im Leben* of individual laments is Klaus Seybold, *Das Gebet des Kranken im Alten Testament: Untersuchungen zur Bestimmung und Zuordnung der Krankheits- und Heilungpsalmen* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1973). Among the psalms he says deal with sickness, Psalm 91 is included as a probable candidate. Gunkel (Gunkel and Begrich, *Introduction to Psalms*, 147) highlights the fact that enemies are described as demonic powers in Psalm 91, but he does not include it among individual laments as a sickness psalm; rather, he argues that it belongs to the genre of wisdom psalm. Mowinckel (*The Psalms in Israel's Worship* [2 vols; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004] 2. 16) defended the view that some psalm's original cultic setting concerned illness (e.g. Psalms 6, 38, 39), and that the enemies were related to the supernatural (demonic, or via magic).

its oldest form, the complaint song should be conceived as *formulaic*, to be utilized by the one praying in different situations. This situation resulted in a specific *formulaic quality, a general nature, and a tediousness* in the forms of expressions” (emphasis his).¹² The formal features and general nature of individual laments are paralleled in Babylonian poetry, which followed strict form but was used to address various situations.¹³ It is precisely the individual psalms’ general and formulaic characteristics which made them suitable for almost any situation, and which frustrates scholarly attempts to find one singular setting that describes the genre.

What this means in regard to the subject of divine protection is that Gunkel would have to look elsewhere than a specific cultic institution in order to find its significance. He does not elaborate upon any ideas regarding God’s protection in his discussion of individual laments, focusing instead upon surrounding issues such as the multifarious causes of the distress (enemies, hardships, demons, illness, etc.). It seems likely, however, that if he had elaborated further, he would have discussed divine protection under the rubric of the general language of prayer available to the psalmists, perhaps noting that expressions indicating trust in God’s protective powers would be a formal element of the genre.¹⁴ In sum, form-critical studies have not sufficiently addressed the content of the formal elements, only commenting on their formulaic and general nature. It is particularly evident, when it comes to the poetic expressions involving ideas of protection, that while their attention was turned toward

¹²Gunkel and Begrich, *Introduction to Psalms*, 194; cf. also pp. 123-30.

¹³Ibid., 7.

¹⁴Cf. Hermann Gunkel, *The Psalms: a Form-Critical Introduction* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967) 34-35.

locating where these expressions might have originated (i.e., Babylonian and Egyptian influence), not enough effort was placed upon exploring what they meant.

Divine Protection and Royal Interpretations

The concept of divine protection also has a secondary role within another current of psalm studies. A number of scholars, whose academic lineage traces back to Sigmund Mowinkel, have developed related theories, all of which stress the royal nature of many psalms. In such interpretations, divine protection is not viewed as a temple institution available to the average citizen. Rather, it is understood within the context of the king, relating in general to the meaning and significance of the office of kingship, and in specific circumstances to the day-to-day activities of the king or his subordinates.

In dealing specifically with individual laments, the arguments Harris Birkeland presented in *Die Feinde des Individuums in der israelitischen Psalmenliteratur* were influential.¹⁵ Part of what he sought to do was resolve an old disagreement regarding the identity of the individual in these psalms. On one side of the debate, the “I” of the psalms was interpreted collectively, a view championed by R. Smend, who understood the “I” collectively as a pious Jewish party who faced persecution from an opposing faction in post-exilic Judaism.¹⁶ On the other side, E. Balla upheld a view defending the “I” as an actual

¹⁵Harris Birkeland, *Die Feinde des Individuums in der israelitischen Psalmenliteratur; ein Beitrag zur kenntnis der semitischen Literatur- und Religionsgeschichte* (Oslo: Grøndahl & Sønns Forlag, 1933). He later defended his views in *The Evildoers in the Book of Psalms* (Oslo: I kommisjon hos Jacob Dybwad, 1955).

¹⁶Rudolf Smend, “Über das Ich der Psalmen,” *ZAW* 8 (1888): 49-147; cf. Birkeland, *Evildoers*, 10-11; and John H. Eaton, *The Psalms: a Historical and Spiritual Commentary with an Introduction and New Translation* (London: T&T Clark International, 2003) 21.

individual.¹⁷ Gunkel had already considered Balla's argument much stronger, and the collectivist position fell by the wayside.¹⁸ Nevertheless, by interpreting the "I" as a royal figure such as a king or a prominent leader, Birkeland maintains that the elements which led some earlier commentators to a collectivist interpretation were better understood in the light of royal ideology.

The second part of his argument, and indeed the primary case Birkeland wanted to make, was that the enemies in the individual laments were in fact all foreigners. He sets out to make his argument by showing that even across several of Gunkel's form-critical genre divisions, the enemies are one and the same. The reoccurrence of similar terms and shared descriptions of the enemies among the psalms of different genres is the basis on which he asserts that they were almost always foreigners. He begins by identifying the vocabulary and descriptions of enemies in communal laments and hymns in which the foreign identity of the enemies is not in question (e.g. Psalms 44, 60, 74, 79, 80, 83, 124, 125). He moves on, crossing form-critical categories, to royal psalms in which well-recognized national enemies are personal (Psalms 18, 20, 21, 28, 61, 63, 89, 144). He then discusses the many individual laments where there has been much more variation regarding the identification of the enemies (e.g. demonic forces, sorcerers, domestic accusers, etc.). He argues, moving from the cases where the foreign identity of the enemy is clear to the instances less clear, that the

¹⁷Emil Balla, *Das ich der Psalmen* (FRLANT16; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1912).

¹⁸Gunkel and Begrich, *Introduction to Psalms*, 122-123. The collectivist interpretation today has little acceptance, and the very late dating that would go along with such an interpretation is highly unlikely as well (See Eaton, *The Psalms*, 21, and Kraus, *Psalms 1-59*, 97). As for the psalms that I have chosen, there is little evidence to argue for a post-exilic date as will be demonstrated in the exegetical sections in the later chapters; e.g., I will not argue an allegorical interpretation of these psalms in which the evildoers were the opposing Jewish faction during Greek rule, as would be the case with a post-exilic date.

enemy is described using similar language because (1) the enemy is one and the same and (2) the types of terms and expressions available for the poet's use is limited to the extent that they find their basis in the similar patterns of thought and belief.

As in other theories, when issue of protection has come up, again it is secondary to the issue of form and setting, and in Birkeland's case the situation or occasion for composing these psalms is determined in large part on the basis of asserting a foreign identity of the enemy.¹⁹ Nevertheless, the idea of protection is not far away. Birkeland argues across Gunkel's form-critical boundary of individual and national psalms, that the psalms which express optimism in the face of an immanent danger, should be called *Schutzpsalmen*, "protection-psalms."²⁰ Only when a devastating blow is certain, as in the immediate aftermath of a catastrophe, should one consider them to be laments. Divine protection is precisely what is being sought in this setting. A king charged with the responsibility of protecting his people participates in a cultic act that would employ these psalms to urge Yhwh to bring about a victory.

Birkeland's teacher, Sigmund Mowinckel, found his thesis convincing, and in later publications Mowinckel altered his earlier opinion regarding the identity of the enemies to one more consistent with his student's.²¹ Other scholars, mainly other Scandinavians of the Myth and Ritual School, adopted a similar point of view as regards the royal identity of many

¹⁹Birkeland's arguments emphasize the content of the psalm as a determiner of setting. Not so much weight is placed on formal features of the literary genre to make his case, as is clear from the fact that he argues across Gunkel's formal categories.

²⁰Birkeland, *Die Feinde*, 104-112.

²¹Mowinckel (*Psalms in Israel's Worship*, 2. 219, 2. 238) adopts Birkeland's term "*Schutzpsalmen*" for psalms expressing confidence in Yhwh when danger is immanent, in both national psalms of lamentation and in national psalms of lamentation in the I-form. Eaton (*Kingship*, 12-13) describes the evolution of Mowinckel's

psalms.²² They accepted the first part of Birkeland's thesis, the royal identity of the "I"; however, they were less inclined to accept his argument regarding foreign identity the enemies.²³ The chief difference between Birkeland and those who were reluctant to accept his thesis regarding enemies can be attributed to the fact that the latter had established for many of these psalms a *Sitz im Leben* connected to annual cultic rituals, such as ones which would have occurred at an annual enthronement festival.

While it is somewhat of an oversimplification of the issue, the fundamental source of divergence between Birkeland and those members of the Myth and Ritual school can be summed up as a difference in views regarding how much and in which ways myth relates to the poet's expressions in the psalms. Birkeland believes myth has receded into the background, giving way to the historical. Mythical and symbolic thought merely provide the terms and expressions the psalmists have used to describe a setting which Birkeland thinks was historical.²⁴ According to Birkeland, mythical language appears, for example, in the descriptions of human enemies, who are often painted as demonic forces. Those in the Myth

thinking, which the latter recounts in the introduction to the 1961 reprint of *Psalmestudien* (Amsterdam: P. Schippers, 1961). Birkeland's influence led him to change some of his earlier opinions regarding individual laments, which he had interpreted as psalms dealing with sickness in ordinary individuals.

²²E.g., Geo Widengren, *The Accadian and Hebrew Psalms of Lamentation as Religious Documents; a Comparative Study* (Stockholm: Bokförlags aktiebolaget Thule, 1937); Helmer Ringgren, *The Messiah in the Old Testament* (SBT 18; Chicago: A.R.Allenson, 1956); Ivan Engnell, *Studies in Divine Kingship in the Ancient Near East* (2nd ed.; Oxford: Blackwell, 1967); Aage Bentzen, *King and Messiah* (2nd ed.; Oxford: B. Blackwell, 1970). Eaton (*Kingship*, 17) recounts how Engnell influenced Bentzen's evolution of opinion toward a greater acceptance of the royal interpretation. In contrast to Birkeland, Bentzen argues that in the majority of individual laments he identifies, their original form was derived from the "royal ritual of combat."

²³Birkeland (*Evildoers*, 11) points this difference of opinion, complaining that Ridderbos only sees gentile enemies in nine psalms, but widely accepts the royal "I." He attributes this to the influence of the "Myth and Ritual School," whose interpretations require a royal "I."

²⁴Birkeland, *Evildoers*, 77-79.

and Ritual school interpret many more expressions as mythic. In many instances, the poems depict mythic events reenacted through a ritual drama that unfolds in the context of an annual enthronement festival of Yhwh.²⁵ The rift is over historical versus ritual interpretations of psalms and is predicated upon differing views on the use of language in the psalms vis-à-vis myth.

A more recent commentator in this line of scholarship tracing back to Mowinckel is John Eaton, who has argued for the largest corpus of royal psalms. Eaton's views are strongly influenced by Birkeland, but showing his affinity with the Myth and Ritual school, he often determines the enemies as symbolic. In a number of psalms he identifies the enemy as the adversary in ritualized combat related to enthronement ceremonies. In his book, *Kingship and the Psalms*, he discusses thirty-one psalms that he claims undoubtedly contain royal content, and another twenty-two that he argues are royal in nature, but do not sufficiently support his thesis standing alone.²⁶ As for the selected psalms in this dissertation, he counts Psalms 91 and 140 as patently royal, and Psalm 5 as royal, but less clearly so. He recounts how he came to accept the royal nature of so many psalms through the process of interpreting them individually, concluding that they make the most sense, without recourse either to major emendation or to unlikely scenarios, when each is interpreted as a composition written for the king.²⁷

²⁵E.g., Psalms 24, 29, 47, 76, and 68.

²⁶Psalms with clearly royal content: 3, 4, 7, 9-10, 17, 22, 23, 27, 28, 35, 40, 41, 57, 59, 61, 62, 63, 66, 69, 70, 71, 75, 89, 91, 92, 94, 108, 118, 138, 140, 143. Psalms less clear: 5, 11, 16, 31, 36, 42-3, 51, 52, 54, 55, 56, 73, 77, 86, 102, 109, 116, 120, 121, 139, 141, 142.

²⁷Eaton, *Kingship*, 19-20.

Divine Protection and the Psalter's Final Form

Recent contributions that approach the subject of divine protection also accept some conclusions regarding the royal nature of the psalms.²⁸ Jerome F. D. Creach, in *Yahweh as Refuge and the Editing of the Hebrew Psalter*, argues that the metaphor of refuge is central to the interpretation of the Psalter.²⁹ He does not address specifically the function of protection in individual psalms. However, he does believe its main metaphor of refuge to be crucial in order to understand the meaning of the Book of Psalms in its final form. He argues that undivided trust in Yhwh for protection, which he terms “refuge piety,” is treated as the “supreme virtue” in the Psalter, relating to every aspect of devotion.³⁰

Creach was not satisfied, however, with studying the metaphor using only synchronic methods. He was compelled to explore the roots of the metaphor from a historical perspective in order to better understand the metaphor in general. Due to the scope of his study, his remarks regarding the metaphor's historical background are limited. Nevertheless, he makes the following points: One, the metaphor generally is rooted in royal ideology, and two, the imagery is adapted from common ancient Near Eastern belief patterns. He says that

²⁸A number of linguistic studies argue in favor of royal origins for many key expressions. For example, James L. Mays (“The Centre of the Psalms,” in *Language, Theology, and The Bible: Essays in Honour of James Barr* [ed. Samuel E. Balentine and John Barton; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994], 231-247, see esp. 232), whose work has been to study the final form of the psalter, argues that the highly debated phrase “YHWH malak” is central to the organization of the psalms (see esp. p. 232). Hugger (*Jahwe meine Zuflucht: Gestalt und Theologie des 91. Psalms* [Münsterschwarzacher Studien 13; Münsterschwarzach: Vier-Türme-Verlag, 1971]) also argues for the centrality of the refuge metaphor in the psalms.

²⁹Jerome F. D. Creach, *Yahweh as Refuge and the Editing of the Hebrew Psalter* (JSOTSup 217; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996).

³⁰Creach, *Yahweh as Refuge*, 48.

“the refuge metaphor is understood perhaps only when it is located in a larger metaphorical schema, namely in relation to the figure of Yhwh’s kingship.”³¹ He offers three possible solutions as to where the metaphor of refuge originates. The first has already been discussed: Temple asylum (and related theories). The second is the protective nature of a mother bird, as evidenced in Egyptian sources.³² The third is the natural landscape of Palestine. He believes all three are possible, but that in the majority of instances, nature is ultimately the source of inspiration behind the metaphor.

Summary and Analysis

A review of previous form-critical studies has suggested the concept of divine protection in the Psalms from three general perspectives. One view understands divine protection to be directly related to a cultic institution involving the Temple. Refuge in the form of asylum within the sanctuary precincts is offered to any Israelite as a form of protection against personal domestic enemies within the nation. A second view holds that the individual laments cannot be assigned any single *Sitz im Leben*, and that some psalms have private settings outside the sanctuary.³³ This view does accept the thesis that some individual laments were originally related to sickness, and that there are several psalms in which the supplicant is seeking deliverance from an illness brought on by inimical (and possibly demonic) powers. Protection from deadly spiritual forces causing sickness would

³¹Ibid., 51.

³²Joel LeMon, (“The Iconography of Yahweh's Winged Form in the Psalms” [Ph. D. diss., Emory University, 2007]), who will be discussed in later chapters, argues the unlikelihood of this possibility.

³³Gunkel (*The Psalms*, 27) cites Pss 16, 42/43, 55, 61, 120.

likely be situated away from the Temple but still linked to the cult through rituals of healing. More importantly, this view casts doubt upon the prospect of defining divine protection in terms of a single cultic institution. Third, there is the royal interpretation of the psalms in which protection is understood as a function of kingship. Royal interpretations range from historical to ritual-mythic, e.g., from a earthly king seeking protection in actual situations from foreign national enemies, to contexts of ritual combat whereby Yhwh's divine power defeats evil forces within the ritual drama.

An overarching problem with past form-critical studies is that the individual theories have offered such divergent interpretations and none of them have gained a significant consensus. One weakness of the theories that seek to establish a single cultic setting for individual laments is that they simply demand too much from the available data. Their appeal to a grand theory has the effect of oversimplification. These theories falter as they fail to account for conflicting data, resulting in unlikely interpretations of particular psalms, interpretations which subsequently diminish the validity of their overall thesis. In light of these facts, defining protection in purely form-critical categories as a specific institution remains a dubious proposition. Being preoccupied with other concerns, the previous studies have tried at best to identify the situation of protection, or describe the context in which divine protection is sought. The result is that an understanding of the concept of divine protection is incomplete because it is either forced into a single setting or institution or is neglected in the debates that try to settle the issues of who is in distress and what is causing the distress.

Creach's study of the refuge metaphor in the Psalms contributes positively to the discussion regarding the underlying meaning of protection in the Psalter. In one regard his study is important because it represents an approach by which the topic of divine protection can be discussed in a way that is not hampered by form-critical concerns. Time will tell whether Creach has achieved his goal of defining the meaning of refuge as it functions in the final form of the Psalter. In the meantime, it is important to stress that Creach's study was not purely a synchronic study of the final form of the Psalter. For by virtue of the fact that he includes in his book a chapter on the historical background of the refuge metaphor, he promotes the belief that one cannot fully grasp the meaning of the metaphor without studying its origins. The main drawback is that his study stops short of what could possibly be achieved by a more penetrating investigation of the metaphor's origins. Any further contribution to study of the concept of divine protection will have to come in part from an intensified examination of comparative data, in the hopes of extracting more from the ever-growing wealth of extra-biblical resources. It would also require a move beyond thematic studies of the Psalter toward using that comparative data to advance interpretations of individual psalms in which divine protection is a major theme.

CHAPTER 2

ICONOGRAPHIC RESEARCH AND BIBLICAL STUDIES

The topic of this dissertation emerges at the intersection of two artistic mediums: the written word in poetry, and the pictorial image in visual art. In the field of biblical studies, at least among those who are dealing primarily with interpreting the texts of the Hebrew Bible, research at this convergence of text and picture is not common. Furthermore, of the two mediums, visual art is the least understood and explored among biblical scholars. The following chapter describes this lesser-known resource, its advantages and challenges, how scholars past and present have made use of it, and how I will utilize it in the chapters that follow. Specifically, the sources of visual art under investigation are the numerous image-bearing materials produced by artists and artisans throughout the ancient Near East. Much of it has been discovered only in the last two-hundred years. The vast quantities of artifacts that have been unearthed far exceed the limited numbers of studies done analyzing them in biblical scholarship. Much of the data that can be gleaned from these discoveries have yet to be integrated into studies bearing directly upon the interpretation of biblical texts. The group of scholars that has been working most directly with this material, particularly with the objective of interpreting the iconography of the visual art of the ancient Near East, is often referred to as the “Fribourg School,” lead by its founder the Swiss scholar Othmar Keel.

A Survey of Ancient Near Eastern Art

The sources of art in the ancient Near East are abundant, and there are many ways in which one can organize a summary of them.¹ My modest goal is to provide a brief overview of these sources in the broadest terms, and then to concentrate upon the medium that is most relevant to this study.² In general, art from the ancient Near East includes not only the great empires of ancient Mesopotamia, but also ancient Egypt, Anatolia, and the Levant, which likewise had direct political, commercial, and cultural ties to the peoples of ancient Israel. These empires took turns controlling the Levant and brought with them their respective artistic traditions. Consequently, all sources and genres of art that span ancient near East are relevant to the discussion, but the focus will be on the most plentiful source in the Levant, the most critical medium for this study: seals.

The sources of art that one encounters in the ancient Near East are easily recognized by way of analogy to modern sources. To be sure, the sources of art have evolved over time, but despite the many changes, much in ancient art is familiar, because the genres have

¹As a source for pictures of the art and architecture being discussed in this summary, I have relied heavily upon Prichard's *ANEP* because it is widely available and easy to use. In some cases, however, I have also cited newer books with better photos. They also have been chosen on the basis of the ease of accessibility. For a survey of photos and drawings from Egypt, Mesopotamia, and region of Syria/Palestine, please consult *ANEP*, chapter IX.

²There are full-length books that introduce the art of the ancient Near East with far greater depth than that presented here. The best known introduction is Henri Frankfort's *The Art and Architecture of the Ancient Near East*, first published in 1954, and now in its fifth edition (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996). It is frequently the required text in introductory courses, and has been a key source that I have consulted in preparing this brief survey. Perhaps a little harder to acquire, but worth consulting because of its many stunning folio-size color photos, is Pierre Amiet's *Art of the Ancient Near East* (ed. Naomi Noble Richard; trans. John Shepley and Claude Choquet; New York: H. N. Abrams, 1980). Another good introduction based solely on collections in the British Museum was written by Dominique Collon, *Ancient Near Eastern Art* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995) and contains beautiful large color prints of the art collection.

essentially remained the same. In order to avoid the entanglements that would arise in discussing the sources grouped according to genre or purpose, or by geography or chronology, I have devised an outline of the sources that is deliberately colloquial. I will proceed using the categories of (1) art in public, (2) art in the home, (3) art in commerce. Nothing more is meant to be achieved by these divisions other than to provide a practical arrangement of the sources according to the way those who lived in an ancient city or village of the Near East might have encountered them. The summary is by no means exhaustive, and there is absolutely no way to avoid overlap. For instance, the statuette is a genre of art that one might encounter in either a public or private setting.

With the category of “art in public,” I am referring to works encountered that are situated in some sort of publicly shared or communal space or are used in connection with a civic event or corporate religious function. Private art, or that which belongs to the individual, would most likely be encountered in the average home. The most dazzling examples of public art are the monumental temples and palaces of the great empires of Mesopotamia and Egypt. Even photographs and drawings of the ruins of ancient civic centers, temples, and palaces prompt a great sense of awe and appreciation for the ability of ancient architects and builders to construct such impossibly large structures without the aid of modern tools and materials. One also gains a tremendous amount of respect for the meticulous attention to detail the artists have given to their work, be it a massive wall relief

or a minute decorative flourish. Even the far smaller civic and religious sites found in the Levantine regions do not fail to impress.

In larger-scale public art, the walls of buildings are the bearers of most of the artwork. The inner and outer wall surfaces of various public buildings, both religious and civic, are often adorned with depictions of many sorts in relief. On these walls one encounters depictions (pictures sculpted in relief, paintings, inscriptions) that exhibit the power and authority of the king,³ portray a religious ritual,⁴ recapitulate a divine myth,⁵ or reference a historical event.⁶ Other forms of art are found within and just outside the buildings. One would encounter when approaching or entering these buildings the statues of kings and queens, deities and other composite supernatural creatures, as well as ordinary but nonetheless ferocious animals.⁷ Once inside, one would see the various furnishings of the buildings. In palaces, ornately decorated furniture of the king or queen (e.g. beds, chairs, sofas) has been found in excavations.⁸ Within the temples and shrines, various implements used in ritual are bearers of artistic adornment. Among these artifacts are podiums, altars,

³*ANEP*, figs. 766, 767, p. 239.

⁴*ANEP*, figs. 624-36, p. 205

⁵*ANEP*, fig. 670, p. 218.

⁶Consult *ANEP*, chapter IV for a wide collection of historical scenes.

⁷Regarding humans, see *ANEP*, chapter V for a nice collection of statues of royalty and dignitaries. Regarding deities, see *ANEP*, figs. 516-517, p. 175, fig. 530, p. 179, fig. 544, p. 183, and fig. 568, p. 190; for animals and composite creatures, see *ANEP* figs. 646-648, pp. 212-13.

⁸For example, the wooden throne of King Tut overlaid with gold, from his tomb at Thebes (*ANEP*, figs. 415-17, p. 145); see also John Banes and Jaromir Malek, *The Cultural Atlas of Ancient Egypt* (New York: Facts on File, 2000) 101.

stands, statuettes, figurines, models of shrines, as well as bowls, pitchers, plates and other items used in food offerings and feasts, many examples of which have been found by archaeologists.⁹

Another form of public art, not necessarily located near large civic or religious buildings, are memorial stelae.¹⁰ Traders, pilgrims, soldiers, and other travelers might encounter these on the major roads or on approaching a village or city. A stele is a large stone slab placed upright, usually bearing inscriptions and artwork. These slabs are frequently erected near a grave or a communal site—near a religious shrine, for example—in commemoration of a person, place, or historical event. The artwork is similar to what is found on the walls of buildings, but usually on a smaller scale.

Tombs, and other types of graves, can be either public or private. Their importance lies precisely in the fact that they have been a great source of material for the archaeologist. Some items discussed elsewhere in this survey such as seals, amulets, and figurines are typically found in graves. Tombs of political rulers, their officials, and other members of the wealthy classes, but particularly of Egyptian royalty, have been important repositories of art. The particular sources include not only the contents of the tombs (precious items made of gold, jewelry, statues, and ritual paraphernalia), but also the wall reliefs and paintings in the

⁹Consult *ANEP*, chapter VII for a pictorial survey of the various items mentioned above.

¹⁰A good selection of stelae are pictured in *ANEP*, chapter IV.

tombs themselves.¹¹ Because of the fragility of the medium, paintings are particularly rare, but are best preserved in tombs where they were preserved from the outside elements.¹²

Modern conceptions of art often tend to separate the works of the artist from the goods fashioned by artisans. In the ancient Near East there was no such distinction. Art from the ancient Near East always had in addition to its aesthetic value some other useful function. This fact is evident in the section above where the sources of art had a civic, religious, ceremonial, or commemorative function. While there was no meaningful distinction between artist and artisan in the ancient Near East, this does not necessarily mean that all sources of art were equally practical. Some things were meant primarily for adornment, but nevertheless all art had some function beyond the aesthetic. Automated machinery and mass production may have nearly eliminated the handcrafted works of the artisan from daily use, but there are some modern examples currently in use and others still vivid in the memories of those living today. This is nowhere more evident than in the home.

Some of the most usable works of art are strikingly familiar if not identical to some things still in use today. These are the items used in daily life, and contemporary versions of them are found in modern households. For the purposes of hygiene and beauty, people still

¹¹A large collection of artifacts has been discovered in the renowned Royal Cemetery at Ur. Some of the most impressive are pictured in Michael Roaf, *Cultural Atlas of Mesopotamia* (New York: Facts on File, 1990) 92-93. See also in the *Cultural Atlas of Ancient Egypt* the many extraordinary objects found in the Royal

Egyptian Tombs, and note especially the list of contents of Tut's tomb (p. 101). The gilded wooden throne pictured in *ANEP* is one of the objects listed.

¹²Cf. the photo of the painted burial chamber (of a non-royal tomb) in "Tomb of the Servant in the Place of Truth Pushed at Deir el-Medina" (TT 3), from the reign of Sety I (*Cultural Atlas of Ancient Egypt*, 104).

use combs and mirrors to coif their hair. Most people, however, do not use on a daily basis a hand-carved ornamented ivory comb, but they may have inherited one from a grandparent.¹³ One can still appreciate the beauty of ornamented containers for precious oils or perfumes, and may if he or she is fortunate enough have a few to keep in use.¹⁴ Jewelry, still highly valued and worn today by both men and women, is perhaps the most obvious example of an art form continuing in use.¹⁵ More mundane are the clay vessels that were used when preparing, serving, or storing food, the modern equivalents of which are in kitchens and dining room cabinets across the globe.¹⁶ While most of it is unadorned, much is still beautifully painted or sculpted.¹⁷

Artwork in its various forms remains today, as it was in ancient societies, a visible indication of wealth and a sign of prestige. Items made with the most precious elements, e.g., gemstones, rare metals, or fashioned by the best artists, or made in the most time consuming way, were the most expensive and desirable, and of course belonged to those who were more wealthy. With the exception of an average person's rare find on PBS's "Antiques Roadshow" not much has changed today.

¹³ANEP, fig. 67, p. 21, and fig. 71, p. 21.

¹⁴ANEP, fig. 69, p. 21.

¹⁵ANEP, fig. 74, and fig. 75, p. 22.

¹⁶ANEP, fig. 148, p. 45.

¹⁷There are some nice photos of decorated pottery in *Cultural Atlas of Mesopotamia*, 38-39.

One of the earliest sources of art, the seal, has its roots in commerce.¹⁸ Seals were administrative tools used in the conduct of commercial and other official state business, as well as in business and other legal transactions among individuals. The invention of writing and the use of seals emerged simultaneously in the regions of the world where large civilizations were first organized, wherein there arose for the first time a need for efficient record keeping. As writing was invented as a convenient way to list and record various transactions—goods sent or received, payments made or charged—in a like manner seals were used as a way of reckoning or verifying such transactions. For example, some of the earliest seals were impressed upon clay balls, which were used to verify the shipments of goods.¹⁹ Another early use was to impress pottery with a seal as a mark of ownership (and for decoration as well).²⁰ Later, seals were used as an official marking, often in conjunction with written documents. Seals were marks of authenticity and confirmed the legality of documents of various sorts: commercial, contractual, and legislative. In sum, seals marked

¹⁸For the following discussion of seals, I rely heavily on the work of Dominique Collon. The best introduction to seals written for a general audience is her book, *Ancient Near Eastern Seals* (Interpreting the Past: Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), but for a far more comprehensive treatment see her book, *First Impressions: Cylinder Seals in the Ancient Near East* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987). The pioneering study that has guided the modern study of seals was written by Henri Frankfort, *Cylinder Seals, a Documentary Essay on the Art and Religion of the Ancient Near East* (London: Macmillan, 1939). Another author who discusses seals from art-historical perspective is Edith Porada. See her *Ancient Art in Seals: Essays by Pierre Amiet, Nimet Özgüç, and John Boardman* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1980), *Corpus of Ancient Near Eastern Seals in North American Collections*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1948), and *Mesopotamian Art in Cylinder Seals of the Pierpont Morgan Library*, (New York: 1947).

¹⁹See Collon, *Near Eastern Seals* (figs. 2a, 2b, p. 13) for two examples of clay bullae.

²⁰*Ibid.*, fig. 3, p. 13.

ownership, identified accounts, verified transactions, and served as emblems of officially sanctioned business.

The act of sealing is something that is practiced even to this day. Some current practices follow in the Roman tradition of sealing official documents with hot wax and then impressing with a small stamp seal, often with the stamp of a signet ring. For most Americans, dreading bureaucratic “red tape” has become simply a figure of speech, but the reality behind the expression is that official government documents were in the past bound by red tape or ribbon and sealed with hot wax, not unlike written documents of the ancient Near East, which were bound together and the knots sealed with a clay bulla. While some governments still bind documents with ribbon and seal them with wax, others who have never observed this can visit the United States National Archives and purchase an actual piece of red tape as a memento. Embossing is another form of sealing currently in practice. Embossing a piece of paper with an official seal, as is done regularly by notaries public, functions the same way as other seals have done in the past: to officially verify or sanction a legal document. Local libraries and even individuals emboss articles to mark ownership. Individuals wear signets and keep stamp seals today or have them made for a particular purpose. For example, to create an air of distinction, some still use hot wax and a stamp to seal formal correspondence like invitations to weddings or exclusive galas.

Beyond their primary reason for existence as a commercial medium, seals acquired significance for other reasons. In all periods, the rarity and quality of the materials of which

seals were made, coupled with their expert and time-consuming engravings, made these items quite valuable. Analogous to the wristwatch today, seals were worn as quasi-functional jewelry and sometimes passed on as heirlooms. Seals also had a recognizable amuletic function that derived from their authoritative status in official business. It was thought that wearing them brought protective powers.

The seals of the ancient Near East generally fall into two categories: the cylinder seal and the stamp seal.²¹ Though the sizes of the seals vary, generally they are quite small. Cylinders average a little over an inch in length and about a half to three quarters of an inch in diameter. Stamp seals vary more in size, but more often they are about the same size in diameter as the cylinder. Their size makes them easily portable, and in fact they were often attached to a string and worn around the neck, making them perhaps the earliest form of ready-made wearable art. Both types of seals are engraved in one of three ways: with a picture and no inscription, with both a picture and an inscription, or with only an inscription. The seals are usually engraved in intaglio, so that the impression made when they are rolled or stamped are positive images in relief. Rarely are they carved in cameo, which makes a negative concave impression. Most seals are made of stone (e.g. lapis lazuli, cornelian, agate, chlorite, steatite, hematite) but many are also made of other materials such as bone, wood, faience, ivory, shell, or metal. These materials were chosen because they were rare, desirable

²¹See the front cover of *Near Eastern Seals*, which pictures a variety of stamp and cylinder seals in color.

for their peculiar attributes (e.g., ease in which they could be carved, durability, hardness), and for their beauty admired greatly.

Not only did the invention of writing coincide with the innovation of seals, the development of each was linked: The two major types of seals correspond roughly to the two major writing systems that developed in the ancient Near East. Cylinder seals were used during times when and in places where people wrote in cuneiform. Correspondingly, the material on which cuneiform was written was on tablets made of clay. Cylinder seals worked well with this medium because the seal could be rolled in the margins or on the back of the actual clay tablet, or repeatedly rolled in order to mark the entire clay envelope in which the tablets were often enclosed.²² In societies where an alphabetic script was adopted, people usually wrote on materials other than clay, namely on animal skins, papyrus, or wood. Often with these media, a stamp seal was more practical. Documents of animal skin or papyrus were bound with string or rope, which was then tied and sealed with a glob of clay, called a bulla. These bullae were small and could not easily take the impression of a whole cylinder, but could easily bear the impression of a stamp. A principal difference between the stamp and the cylinder is that the latter can contain far more information, that is, more data to be considered, both with respect to the length of the inscription and the size and complexity of the artwork.

²²Collon, *Near Eastern Seals*, fig. 13, p. 27, fig. 15, p. 29.

For those engaged in the study of seals, the much greater surface area is but one advantage for the cylinder. Another is the fact that there have been more of them discovered by archaeologists. Primarily this is because the documents and envelopes made of clay have withstood the elements very well over time, sometimes over several thousand years, whereas papyrus, wood, and skin have not survived in most cases. Many clay bullae bearing the impressions of stamp seals have been discovered, but it appears that they are just not as easily found. Despite the disparity of preserved source material between each type of seal, both stamps and cylinders are immensely important to study, and are in fact analyzed by experts in similar ways.

The best way to study both types of seals is to study the sealings that they produce. Often it is only the sealing that has been discovered, and in many cases only fragments of the sealing have been found. It is sometimes possible that an entire seal can be recovered by piecing together the parts of the various fragments of sealings that have been collected. In these cases a composite drawing based on the fragments is the best way to examine the seal.²³ When the seal itself is discovered, it is best viewed by making a new sealing with it. Only rarely have both the seal and its sealing been recovered.²⁴ With the seals being so small and the engraving being so detailed, it is often advantageous to enlarge an image of the seal, as

²³Cf. the drawing based upon fragments in Collon, *Near Eastern Seals*, fig. 4, p. 14.

²⁴One example is illustrated in Collon, *Near Eastern Seals*, fig. 8, p. 18.

has been done in many publications so that it can be viewed with greater ease.²⁵

The original purpose and general use of seals are but one aspect of scholarly interest in seals—there is much more that they reveal. The tools and techniques used to engrave the seals are ascertained not only by finding tools in archeological digs, but also by studying the engravings themselves. Accordingly, the study of seals is one way to trace the advancement of technology, for a particular technique or style of engraving can be traced to a geographic region and time frame, traceable by the provenance of the seal.²⁶ The distribution of provenanced seals over vast regions can be traced to reconstruct ancient trading practices among nations. Likewise, the materials from which seals are made are often rare and indicate

²⁵E.g., Collon, *Near Eastern Seals*, fig. 11, p. 25.

²⁶There has been much discussion about the study of archaeological artifacts with obscure origins. Certainly artifacts found by archeologists in the course of controlled scientific digs where stratification levels are identified and dated yield far more information than those found on the surface of a site, or obviously those purchased from a dealer on the black market. The issue concerns the willingness of scholars, museums, and individual collectors to purchase artifacts from antiquities dealers who often deal with items from the black-market. The argument goes something like this: The willingness of museums to buy or even scholars merely to study or publish non-provenanced artifacts from dealers creates a situation that fosters the looting of protected archeological sites and encourages the manufacturing of forgeries. Without going into detail, I will simply state that the position I take on this matter is essentially that of Christopher A. Rollston, who wrote regarding purely epigraphic sources (“Non-Provenanced Epigraphs I: Pillaged Antiquities, Northwest Semitic Forgeries, and Protocols for Laboratory Tests,” *Maarav* 10 [2003]: 135-193, and “Non-Provenanced Epigraphs II: The Status of Non-Provenanced Epigraphs within the Broader Corpus of Northwest Semitic,” *Maarav* 11 [2004]: 57-79). Like Rollston, I am not willing to accept the opinions of some who argue that artifacts from the antiquities market or even merely found by amateurs are off-limits outright. The discovery of ancient artifacts outside of legally sanctioned archeological expeditions has been a service to the study of the Scripture and the ancient Near East. The quintessential case in point is the discovery Dead Sea Scrolls in the middle of the twentieth century by Bedouin. It is also important to point out that this site was eventually excavated in a controlled dig. My procedure for handling unprovenanced items is to follow what is currently standard scholarly practice: Artifacts that simply appear on the market of course are far more suspect than findings from a verifiable site. I will not actively seek to publish unprovenanced materials in hope that this practice will help slow the appearance of new artifacts on the antiquities market, but I will, when it is helpful, discuss unprovenanced materials in this dissertation, with the caveats that I will clearly identify when provenance is lacking, and include a discussion regarding the possibilities of a forgery.

specific trading contacts. Finally, the iconography of seals is studied as a means to understand the history, culture, and beliefs of the ancient peoples who produced and used them.

Iconography of Ancient Near Eastern Art

There are multiple avenues of inquiry that one can follow in the study of ancient art from the ancient Near East. The discussion above concerning seals has identified a variety of questions posed, along with a number of techniques employed, by those who have studied these ancient art forms. The subject of this study is narrowly focused upon actual images that the artifacts bear. More specifically, the interest centers primarily upon the content of the images or pictures (e.g., subjects, motifs, themes, symbols, etc). The formal study of the content of the pictures is generally subsumed under the field of iconography, as opposed to the other aforementioned areas of inquiry focusing on style, technique, or use.²⁷

Seals

Of the many art forms, seals are not the only source of iconographic material utilized in this dissertation, but they are by far the most plentiful of all the sources, and consequently the most important source. While palaces and temples were destroyed, their precious contents

²⁷Othmar Keel ("Iconography and the Bible," in *ABD* 3:358) defines the field of iconography as "the study of artistic subject matter or content (as opposed to artistic techniques and styles). Iconography therefore strives to describe the appearance, development, and disappearance of certain motifs and compositions, or the substitution of one artistic form by another."

often carried off and used as raw material for new construction, seals and their sealings have survived successive empires in significantly greater numbers.²⁸ More than on any other medium, scenes of various sorts appear on seals that bear witness to the social and religious beliefs and practices of the peoples who produced the seals. One can gain insight into the daily life of these ancient cultures: work, craft, music, fashion, and much more. However, the pictures most important to this study most often will be ones that have preserved iconography touching on religious themes: the gods, ritual, and myth. Even though seals will dominate the discussion, all image-bearing artwork will be relevant to some degree simply because iconography as a system of symbols borrows from all aspects of earthly life in order to convey religious or cosmic ideas.

Difficulty of Interpretation

Before proceeding any further, something must be said about the difficulty in handling this sort of visual material. There are a number of reasons that make such a study of ancient Near Eastern iconography challenging. Some challenges are not unlike those regarding texts. The materials are very old, and only a fraction of what was produced in antiquity still exists today. Another difficulty regarding iconography is that seldom is there clear connection between text and picture, a connection that has served as a critical interpretive key in the

²⁸Collon ("Iconography: Mesopotamian Iconography," in *ER*, 2d. ed. 7:4315) is the most clear on this point, explaining that there is relatively little left in comparison to what once existed. She goes on to say that not only were palaces and temples destroyed, their precious materials dismantled and carried off for scrap, but even in times of peace precious items were smelted to make way for new items. The small articles, statuettes, votives, plaques had the best chance of surviving. Of all the materials, seals are by far the most plentiful, and as a result, the important, knowledge being "scant" without them.

study of iconography in early Christian, Byzantine, and Renaissance art.²⁹ Interpreting iconography is not an innate skill, but one that is acquired by diligent study.³⁰ For the biblical scholar, studying iconography from ancient Near Eastern sources requires further training in at least two more fields: art history and archaeology.³¹ Expanding research into other fields is difficult and even more so in the current climate which is trending toward greater specialization.³² Lastly one must overcome the trend among students of the Bible to

²⁹Collon, "Iconography: Mesopotamian Iconography," in *ER*, 2d. ed. 7:4315.

³⁰I say this in contrast to Keel's arguments in support of using iconography as an comparative source. In his early writing (namely, in the introduction to *Symbolism of the Biblical World*, passim), his advocacy amounted to a fair bit of 'cheerleading' for the iconographic approach. Too often he struck an apologetic tone, and one result is that he severely understated how difficult it is to interpret the iconography.

³¹The fears of wandering outside of one's speciality are not unfounded. In the case of a biblical scholar interested in studying iconography, one has to become versed in the theories art-history and iconography, in addition to keeping up with latest trends in archaeology. An awareness of three separate disciplines that are not static but always in the course of development is not an easy task.

³² William H. Hallo, in his introduction to *COS*, laments the lack of integration between fields of research. He says that while more archaeological discoveries are being made and published, less and less is being used in biblical research. Statistically, he supports this with an article by Moshe Yitzhaki, who in "The relationship between biblical studies and ancient Near East studies : a bibliometric approach," *ZAW* 99 (1987) 232-248, devised a method of analysis that determines how much is being used. K. Lawson Younger (*COS* 3: xxxv) finds this ironic because doing comparative work (with ancient Near Eastern texts let alone iconography) would have been nearly impossible 200 years ago.

favor the text to the exclusion of visual material.³³ Perhaps the strongest indication of how difficult it is to make use of the iconographic/pictorial material as a source of comparison for biblical studies is the rarity in which it is actually utilized. Comparative work using pictorial materials has not become a mainstay in biblical studies.³⁴ This fact stands in contrast with the field of classical studies, whose practitioners are much more apt to draw from textual, visual, and material sources.³⁵

³³There is some speculation as to why this is the case. Diane Apostolos-Cappadona ("Art and Religion" in *ER*, 2nd ed., 1:494) highlights a number of factors that lead to a preferential esteeming of texts over images in Western religions and cultures. She writes: "The authoritative preference, at least in the West, is for the primacy of the text, that is, of the word over the image. Historians of religion reputedly advocate the unconscious act of selection between the image and the word by every religious tradition with appropriate cultural consequences. Religions, like Hinduism and Eastern Christianity, which favor the primacy of the image are differentiated as sacramental, creative, and intuitive in linguistic and cultural attitudes from those religions, such as Protestant Christianity and Judaism, preferring the primacy of the word and labeled as legalistic, pragmatic, and rational in language and cultural reception. Further, the study of religion, particularly in the West, has been predicated upon the authority of the written text, or a series of texts, not upon the image. The disciplined reading of these canons encompasses exegesis as the fundament for study, debate, and interpretation. A hegemony of texts, canons, and scriptures—that is, the written word—results in the incorporation of art simply as illustration for explication and dissemination of textual themes." Preference for either text or image seems to be unavoidable. Yet, scholars must guard against a bias that leads to the neglect of important data, without which research would be lacking. In biblical studies, iconographic sources are but one type of source that has tended to be neglected. Writing from the standpoint of promoting the use of all types of archaeological sources, Milton C. Mooreland, Shannon Burkes, and Melissa Aubin ("Between Text and Artifact," in *Between Text and Artifact: Integrating Archaeology in Biblical Studies Teaching* (ed. Andrew G. Vaughn; Archaeology and Biblical Studies 8; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003) 2-4) bemoan the lack of integration between archeology and the Bible, a cause they share with both Hallo and Lawson. They suggest a reason for this deficiency as well, explaining that those who engage in biblical studies are predisposed to textual sources for an obvious reason: it is a field dedicated to study of a body of texts, and furthermore that this predisposition is reinforced by teaching methods and research tools. Their explanation is a little less theoretical than Apostolos-Cappadona's, still one would be right to see that education in biblical studies has been structured in a way that reflects the Western tendency to favor the text.

³⁴The work has been done primarily in the Fribourg school. However, the study of iconography broadening, e.g., Karel van der Toorn, *The Image and the Book: Iconic Cults, Aniconism, and the Rise of Book Religion in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, (CBET 21; Leuven: Peeters, 1997). Another indication of this increased interest is the creation of a new consultation at the Society of Biblical Literature 2008 Annual Meeting entitled, "Iconography and the Hebrew Bible."

³⁵Moreland, Burkes, and Aubin ("Between Text and Artifact," 1-2) suggest that those who engage in biblical studies are predisposed to textual sources for an obvious reason: is that it is a field dedicated to study of a body of texts.

Iconographic Research in Biblical Studies

Among biblical scholars, there is a small but steadily growing number who have incorporated iconographic materials in their research. Older approaches to iconography relegated it to a mere illustrative role in understanding the history or material culture of the Bible.³⁶ A new direction was taken by the swiss scholar, Othmar Keel with the publication of *Symbolism of the Biblical World* in which he uses iconography to interpret the conceptual/symbolic underpinnings of biblical thought.³⁷ His research was groundbreaking. It inaugurated a new area of study that has attracted a number of scholars to pursue similar research. The majority of the others who have followed in his footsteps (often his students) have published their research in the series *Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis* (OBO), created at the Biblical Institute at the University of Fribourg, Switzerland.³⁸ Because their work, generally speaking, has been shaped by Keel's interest in using iconography as a mode of biblical research, albeit in a number of forms, this group of scholars has been referred to as the "Fribourg School." Notable scholars in this school include Silvia Schroer, Urs Winter,

³⁶See Keel's article, "Iconography and the Bible" in *ABD* 3:361-69 for a summary of these older approaches.

³⁷Othmar Keel, *The Symbolism of the Biblical World: Ancient near Eastern Iconography and the Book of Psalms* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1997); repr. of *The Symbolism of the Biblical World: Ancient near Eastern Iconography and the Book of Psalms* (trans. by Timothy J. Hallett. New York: Seabury Press, 1978); trans. of *Die Welt der altorientalischen Bildsymbolik und das Alte Testament: Am Beispiel der Psalmen* (Zürich: Benziger Verlag and Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1972).

³⁸According to the latest information given on their website, OBO series has published over 225 books authored by scholars representing 20 countries since it was founded in 1971. The series is co-edited by Othmar Keel and Christoph Uehlinger, and Susan Bickel serves as associate editor. See <http://www.unifr.ch/dbs/publication_obo.html>.

Christoph Uehlinger, and Thomas Staubli.³⁹ The corpus of their work is impressive and cannot easily be condensed. Due to the the limitations of this discussion, I will focus on Keel's contribution to the subject of iconography and the Bible in terms of his "iconographic approach," and then turn to those who have worked specifically on iconography as it relates to the Psalms: Martin Klingbeil, William P. Brown, and Joel LeMon.⁴⁰

Othmar Keel

Othmar Keel's research on the iconography of the ancient Near East can be divided into two phases. The earlier phase can be characterized as literary-comparative approach to his study of ancient Near Eastern iconography as a means to understanding the conceptual world of the Bible. The single most important work of this phase is *The Symbolism of the Biblical World*. The later phase is a history-of-religions inquiry; Keel continued to study the iconography of the ancient Near East, this time as a means to better understand the religious history of Palestine/Israel. The most important book exemplifying the latter phase of his

³⁹Christoph Uehlinger, *Weltreich und "eine Rede": eine neue Deutung der sogenannten Turmbauerzählung (Gen 11, 1-9)* (OBO 101; Freiburg: Universitätsverlag; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1990); Raphael Giveon, David Warburton, and Christoph Uehlinger, *Scarabs from Recent Excavations in Israel* (OBO 83; Freiburg: University Press; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1988); Silvia Schroer and Thomas Staubli, *Body symbolism in the Bible*, (Collegeville, Minn: Liturgical Press, 2001); Silvia Schroer, *In Israel gab es Bilder : Nachrichten von darstellender Kunst im Alten Testament* (OBO 74; Freiburg: Universitätsverlag; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1987); Thomas Staubli, *Das Image der Nomaden im alten Israel und in der Ikonographie seiner sesshaften Nachbarn* (OBO 107; Freiburg: Universitätsverlag; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1991); Urs Winter, *Frau und Göttin: exegetische und ikonographische Studien zum weiblichen Gottesbild im alten Israel und in dessen Umwelt* (OBO 53; Freiburg: Universitätsverlag ; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1983).

⁴⁰Joel LeMon, "The Iconography of Yahweh's Winged Form in the Psalms" (Ph.D. diss., Emory University, 2007); Martin Klingbeil, *Yahweh Fighting from Heaven: God as Warrior and as God of Heaven in the Hebrew Psalter and Ancient Near Eastern Iconography* (OBO 169; Fribourg: University Press; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999); William P Brown, *Seeing the Psalms: A Theology of Metaphor* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002).

work is *Gods, Goddesses, and Images of God in Ancient Israel*, which he co-authored with his student Christoph Uehlinger.⁴¹ In the following survey of these two books, I will outline the major accomplishments of Keel's work over the course of his career. In one respect, this involves making clear the differences between the two periods, but in another—and perhaps more important—respect, this requires a careful evaluation of the refinements of what he calls the “iconographic approach,” which has remained an essential constant throughout the two phases. Whether in connection with a systematic study of the conceptual world of a single book in the Bible or a history of Israelite religion, Keel's goal has been to mine thoroughly and systematically the iconography of the ancient Near East as an invaluable source of ideas and concepts.

The Earlier Phase: The Symbolism of the Biblical World

Keel makes the claim in the introduction of *Symbolism* that the book is the first of its kind, and I have not found anything that has led me to think otherwise. *Symbolism* is certainly not the only book ever to consider the artistic materials of ancient Near Eastern cultures with the goal of better understanding the biblical world, but there are several features of the book that make it unparalleled even today. *Symbolism* is the only book which relates concepts found in a single book of the Bible to the iconography of the ancient Near East. Other works, as Keel points out, cover the whole of Scripture and are organized primarily by

⁴¹Othmar Keel and Christoph Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses, and Images of God in Ancient Israel* (trans. by Thomas A. Trapp. Minneapolis, Minnesota: Fortress Press, 1998); trans. of *Göttinnen, Götter und Gottessymbole: neue Erkenntnisse zur Religionsgeschichte Kanaans und Israels aufgrund bislang unerschlossener ikonographischer Quellen* (Freiburg: Herder, 1992), hereafter cited as *GGG*.

historical concerns.⁴² The book closest in kind to *Symbolism* is Benjamin Mazar's *Views of the Biblical World*, which is the only other book that reproduces a sizable collection of iconographic material; Mazar organizes it in a format that corresponds to each book of the Bible.⁴³ The book falls short in Keel's view on two accounts: there are relatively few pictures for each book and the pictures are not organized thematically.

Keel begins to correct the tendencies and resultant shortcomings of previous works in his own book. *Symbolism* is far more comprehensive than *Views of the Biblical World* in covering a single book of the Bible. The latter has only twenty illustrations devoted to the Book of Psalms whereas the former contains 556 line drawings. In contrast to *ANEP* and *ABAT2*, Keel presents the material thematically, which affords him the opportunity to focus on concepts and ideas as opposed to the older collections' emphasis on codifying historical claims. A listing of the chapters in *Symbolism* reveal Keel's emphasis on the conceptual world: 1. Conceptions of the Cosmos; 2. Destructive Forces; 3. The Temple: Place of Yahweh's Presence and the Sphere of Life; 4. Conceptions of God; 5. The King; 6. Man Before God.

Throughout the book, Keel draws on comparative materials from all regions of the ancient Near East: Syria/Palestine, Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Anatolia. In the first chapter, for example, Keel demonstrates vividly with the use of iconography not only how vastly different the ancient Near Eastern perception of the world was from our own. He also shows

⁴²Namely Pritchard's *ANEP* and Gressmann's *ABAT2*; Keel, *Symbolism*, 11.

⁴³Benjamin Mazar, ed., *Views of the Biblical World* (5 vols.; Jerusalem: International Publishing, 1958).

the more subtle differences in perception among ancient cultures in Egypt and Mesopotamia, such as varying ideas regarding cosmic systems and the differing roles deities had in them. In the chapter on destructive forces, Keel's marshalling of iconographic materials illuminates well several common concepts in the Psalms: spheres of death (such as the grave, desert, sea, night), enemies of the individual (demons, animals), and of the nation. The spheres of life are the primary locations where one encounters Yhwh's presence: the mountain and the temple. There is some overlap in the material from this chapter in the next covering the conceptions of God, which includes a section on God in the temple. Concepts key to my study such as wings, shelter, and other forms of protection are covered in this chapter. As in the other chapters, Keel draws important comparisons and contrasts from the ancient Near East while discussing ideas concerning kingship: birth, enthronement, priesthood, and protection. Keel in the final chapter discusses ideas regarding the various components of worship: prayer (thanks, praise, lamentation, petition), cult, music and dance.

More important than a summary with greater detail is a discussion of what Keel has accomplished in this book and also of the ways it is insufficient and in need of further study. As noted in the book reviews, *Symbolism* is a significant contribution to the project of collecting, cataloging, and analyzing the iconographic material relevant to the study of the Bible.⁴⁴ Keel's own claims of originality, both in terms of the quantity of material he has

⁴⁴E.g., Samuel Sandmel, review of Othmar Keel, *Die Welt der altorientalischen Bildsymbolik und das Alte Testament: Am Beispiel der Psalmen*, *CBQ* 36 (1974): 113-15; Joseph Jensen, review of Othmar Keel, *The Symbolism of the Biblical World: Ancient Near Eastern Iconography and the Book of Psalms*, *CBQ* 43 (1981): 445; James B. Pritchard, review of *The Symbolism of the Biblical World: Ancient Near Eastern Iconography*

assembled for one book and the manner in which he has organized the material in order to focus on ideas and concepts, are undisputed.

Before turning to others' criticisms of the book, I will address one shortcoming Keel already acknowledges in his introduction. He admits:

A problem arises the moment one examines the psalms from a thematic point of view, for each psalm represents a whole which is fragmented by a systematic-thematic treatments. The same holds true of ancient Near Eastern pictures and their context. Our procedure requires a double fragmentation. At the conclusion of this repeated process of decomposition and reconstruction, there will of course be room for argument regarding the placement of particular details. Nevertheless, the advantages of this procedure are obvious; in a thematic arrangement, one picture or one psalm can illustrate another, and a positive overall impression can be obtained. The treatment of individual psalm verses in their specific context is the concern of commentaries.⁴⁵

An overall impression is a satisfactory objective if one is trying to acquire an initial familiarity with certain concepts in the Psalms, and *Symbolism* far exceeds this goal.

However, for the biblical scholar who is interested in the interpretation of biblical texts, the ultimate goal is sound exegesis. The "double fragmentation" of which Keel speaks means also a double loss of inherent complexity in both artistic forms—poetry and visual art—a complexity which must be duly accounted for and explained if sound exegesis is to result.

Another key criticism of *Symbolism* centers on the appropriateness of using materials from contexts so greatly removed from the biblical text in both distance and time. Until there

and the Book of Psalms, *BA* 43 (1980): 63; Patrick D. Miller, review of *The Symbolism of the Biblical World: Ancient Near Eastern Iconography and the Book of Psalms*, *Int* 33 (1979): 208; Frederick L. Moriarty, review of *The Symbolism of the Biblical World: Ancient Near Eastern Iconography and the Book of Psalms*, *TS* 40 (1979): 173-75.

⁴⁵Keel, *Symbolism*, 12.

is greater clarity on this issue, commentators will likely be hesitant to use iconographic materials. In his review, Samuel Sandmel writes:

K.'s procedures make for the greatest possible utility of this book, and I do not think that it is possible seriously to fault K. as respects intention and achievement. Yet, certain questions arise; these relate, though, to matters more basic than this fascinating book. Thus, how far is it legitimate to use Egyptian and Babylonian material in clarification of OT materials? Manifestly, relationships did exist; manifestly, differences existed. Is there not in K.'s procedure, despite his caution, an implication that the proper explanation for the Hebrew civilization lies in turning to the adjacent civilizations? Has there not been a tendency in biblical scholarship to be a bit highhanded in the use of the ancient Semitic world in explaining the Hebrew? Again, is there not a potential distortion latent in the circumstance that the accidental availability of the relics from Egypt and Babylonia provides the substance for such a book? If relics that relate directly to the OT have not turned up, then naturally they cannot be presented; but the unwary reader may forget that much that we should like to know is simply not available for our knowing.⁴⁶

Sandmel's comments apparently express the sentiments of many who have examined Keel's book, and his later work reflects his desire to answer these questions.

The Latter Phase: Gods, Goddesses, and Images of God in Ancient Israel (GGG)

What I have called the latter phase of Keel's work has been driven largely by the goal of establishing the use of iconographic materials as a legitimate and indispensable component of biblical research.⁴⁷ Rather than moving forward by producing more detailed studies using the range of comparative-literary methods applied in *Symbolism*, Keel focused his energy in another direction, but still well within his iconographic approach. While the Psalter was the

⁴⁶Sandmel, review of Keel, 115; cf. also Moriarty, review of Keel, 174.

⁴⁷It is important to note again that Keel has not pursued this alone, but in collaboration with many other scholars (mainly European and Israeli), a number of whom have already been mentioned as part of the Fribourg School.

single book on which Keel focused in *Symbolism*, he compared the limited and difficult textual material to iconographic data from all over the ancient Near East, not indiscriminately but without much discussion of historical or geographical concerns. He did so openly, electing to focus on the world of ideas and concepts rather than repeat the historical treatments found in some of the earlier collections of iconography. In the end, however, this was an area of weakness, raised notably in Sandmel's questioning. The thrust of Keel's research since *Symbolism* has been to expand the knowledge of iconographic material within Palestine/Israel. One element of this work has been the actual collecting and cataloguing of ancient artifacts. Since 1981 he has lead a major project at the University of Fribourg in Switzerland which, at the time *GGG* was published, had documented and catalogued over 8500 stamp seals from Palestine/Israel.⁴⁸ This corpus was one of the primary sources for his book *GGG*, in which Keel and his student Christoph Uehlinger have written a religious history of the region of Palestine/Israel. Their focus is limited geographically—they support all conclusions with iconographic data from the region, and historical interests are paramount—and it is a diachronic study of religious ideas within Palestine/Israel. The fact

⁴⁸*GGG*, xiii. The work of cataloging and collecting has continued. The Bibel+Orient Museum project began in 2001, headed by Thomas Staubli, and currently has 14,000 items in its collection at the University of Fribourg. The collecting is being digitized and made available online. See <<http://www.bible-orient-museum.ch>>.

that Keel is working again with religion (i.e., the world of ideas) and iconography places this work securely within the scope of his iconographic approach.⁴⁹

With iconographic rather than textual sources being the principal focus of the book, Keel and Uehlinger have produced a religious history of Palestine/Israel like no other. They cover a period of history beginning with the Middle Bronze Age IIB and ending at the close of the Iron Age (from 1800 to 450 B.C.E.), a period delimited partially because it contains no temporal gaps of iconographic source material. The chapters are organized chronologically, and the prevailing themes identified in the iconographic material from each epoch are discussed as a part of a larger symbol system. The authors trace these changing themes and emphases as time progresses from one era to the next. For example, the Middle Bronze Age IIB (ch. 3) judged by the iconographic sources, can be characterized as a time when there was a relative equality of the sexes evidenced by the prevalence of the goddess in many forms, mostly with a strong emphasis in fertility. This equality, however, was replaced by an emphasis in warrior deities under the influence of Egyptian colonialism in the Late Bronze Age (ch. 4).

⁴⁹Another reason for Keel's shift in direction is that he wished to address several enticing and controversial topics that had taken center stage during the ten years preceding the publication of *GGG*. By their own account, Keel and Uehlinger wanted to enter the debate, in part spurred on by the important discovery of drawings and inscriptions in Kuntillet 'Ajrud in 1978, over the possibility of a female deity worshiped alongside Yhwh, specifically a consort in the mold of the Canaanite Asherah (*GGG*, 1). This is but one facet of a wider discussion that they were entering concerning the origins of Hebrew monotheism. Within this discussion there is debate about the likelihood and nature of Israel's polytheistic past, including the factors that facilitated the move toward monotheism, the timing and nature of such a transition to monotheism, and the move toward aniconism. Concerning all of these issues, Keel and Uehlinger scrutinize the iconographic materials for clues as they produce an unparalleled history of Palestine/ Israel based primarily on iconographic data from the region.

Rather than summarizing the authors' findings, I will survey a few iconographic images found in both books to get a sense of how the material is being used differently in each. There are six artifacts from *Symbolism* that also appear in *GGG*.⁵⁰ In the latter, these artifacts are discussed in the chapter in which Keel highlights his application of the current archeological models. Unlike older models that established archeological eras with clear timing and broad geographical divisions, the newer models not only perceive the shifts between archaeological eras as more gradual, with more overlap, and having more intermediate periods, but also recognize greater complexity within each time period in the form of regional differences within and across eras.⁵¹ In chapter 4, Keel demonstrates the regional differences in Late Bronze Age Palestine/Israel evidenced by the archeological data from four cities: Hazor, Megiddo, Lachish, and Beth-Shan. In *Symbolism*, these same artifacts are placed in different chapters and linked to varying subjects ranging from temple furnishings to attitudes of prayer.

One artifact is an image of a pair of arms outstretched to a moon crescent and disk found in the stela temple in area C of Hazor (**fig. 2.1**). Keel believes that the crescent, which

⁵⁰These are images Keel actually reprints, and not including the artifacts to which he only makes reference. From this point forward, I will refer mainly to Keel even though *GGG* was co-authored with Uehlinger because my interest is in tracing Keel's ideas through the course of his career. It is by no means meant to diminish Uehlinger's contribution. The introduction to *GGG* states that Keel wrote chapter 4, which is my focus in what follows.

⁵¹Cf. Keel and Uehlinger, *GGG*, 13-16.

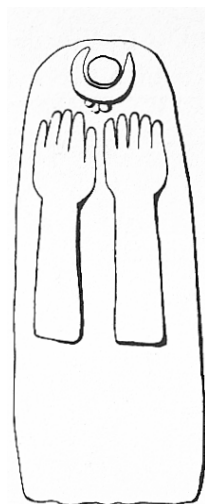


Figure 2.1. Stele; Hazor; Late Bronze Age. After Keel, *Symbolism*, illus. 431; Keel and Uehlinger, *GGG*, illus. 46.

has the two tassels hanging down, is the symbol of the moon god of Haran, and that this artifact along with others, some with links to the moon god and others to the worship of a bull-riding weather god, imply influence from northern Syria that persevered despite the growing pressures from Egypt, which asserted its power over the region following expulsion of the Hyksos at the end of the Middle Bronze Age.⁵² Keel discusses this same artifact in *Symbolism* in the section entitled “Attitudes of Prayer” located in the final chapter of the book “Man Before God.” The discussion within this section on prayer is framed by the exploration of the principle that the dichotomy of body and soul commonly recognized today is non-existent in biblical thought. Body postures such as kneeling or full prostration, the position of hands and arms, the tilt of the head, the use of the voice, are inextricable from what might be called one’s inner attitude. Physical gestures are the actual means of

⁵²Ibid., 49-53.

signifying one's attitude toward the deity. With this in mind, Keel includes a quotation of Ps 28:1-2 "as I lift my hands" together with the line drawing, and in the text of his discussion interprets the outstretched hands in this image as signifying the earnest petitioning of one reaching out to a distant but still accessible deity residing in the heavens.⁵³

Two of the artifacts depicted in both books contain sacred trees (**figs. 2.2-2.3**). The primary artifact under discussion in *GGG* (**fig. 2.2**) was found in Megiddo, where he argues there is much more evidence of Egyptian influence than in the other regions he discusses in the chapter.⁵⁴ The primary artifact is a painted cult stand (illustrated with two scenes, 55a) and the secondary artifact (**fig. 2.3**) is a ceramic fragment from Tell el-Far'ah (south, 55b). Both feature the sacred tree and water flowing out of them, in illustration 55a with wavy lines running vertically from the branches to the base of the tree and 55b with two streams of water with fish nearby. As in other sections of the book, Keel maintains that such scenes come from the sphere of the goddess, who was worshiped with equal status alongside male deities during the Middle Bronze age IIB in the form of the "Naked Goddess," a common

⁵³Keel, *Symbolism*, 321-22.

⁵⁴Keel and Uehlinger, *GGG*, 53-65.

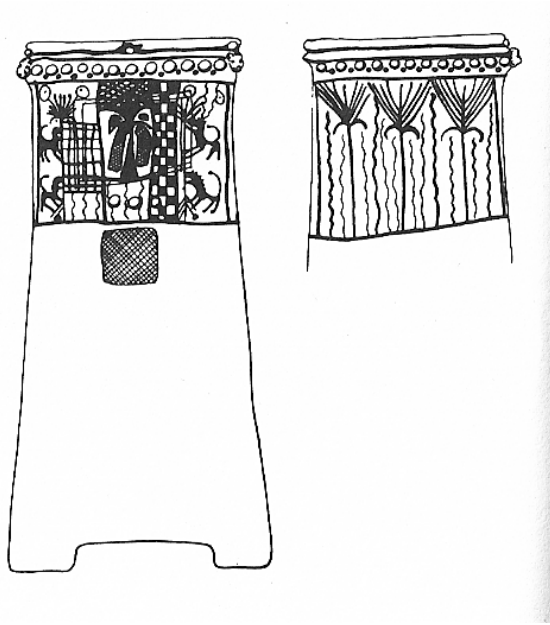


Figure 2.2. Cult stand; Megiddo; 1350-1150 B.C.E. After Keel and Uehlinger, *GGG*, illus. 55a; Keel, *Symbolism*, illus. 182.



Figure 2.3. Ceramic fragment; Tel Far'ah; 19th Dynasty. After Keel, *Symbolism*, illus. 181; Keel and Uehlinger, *GGG*, illus. 55b.

deity in the ancient Near East whose presence in Palestine/Israel is most likely traced back to northern Syria.⁵⁵ The prevailing trends in Megiddo beginning in the Late Bronze Age, however, include themes of war and the dominance of male deities, both Egyptian in origin. This trend is evidenced in the next two artifacts (**figs. 2.4-2.5**). One is an ivory piece with two common Egyptian scenes and made popular under Ramses III. In one scene the prince is returning victorious from battle with two bound captives, and in the other he sits on his throne during the victory celebration.⁵⁶ The second item is a sculpted miniature relief of a throne in the shape of cherubim wings (illus. 66b). Citing as evidence this fragmented sculpture along with several other artifacts bearing different elements also in the ivory piece (cf. 66a, c), Keel argues that the cherubim throne in the ivory piece was not uncommon in Megiddo. In the victory scene, a princess serves the prince a drink and offers him a lotus flower. The fact that women either appear in these and other images in serving roles or not at all indicate, according to Keel, a reduction of status for women, who had had equal status with men in the previous era.⁵⁷

⁵⁵Cf. Ibid., 26-29.

⁵⁶Ibid., illus. 65

⁵⁷Ibid., 64-65.

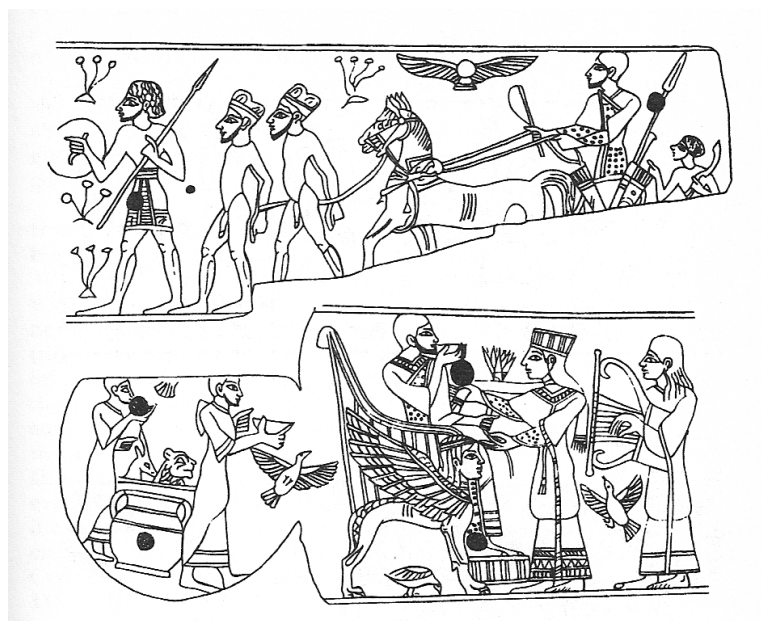


Figure 2.4. Ivory carving; Megiddo; 1350-1150 B.C.E. After, Keel and Uehlinger, *GGG*, illus. 65; Keel, *Symbolism*, illus. 233, 321.

Keel discusses the two scenes on the ivory separately in *Symbolism*.⁵⁸ The chariot scene (*Symbolism*, illus. 321) is placed within larger discussion on “renunciation” in the chapter covering the conceptions of God.⁵⁹ The root of the idea that he explores in the excursus on renunciation is the belief in the unequalled power of God in all aspects of life. The primary result of this belief is the rejection of all other gods in worship, but it reaches into the realm of warfare as well. Not only was the Israelite to renounce other deities, choosing not to worship their idols or engage in any of their cultic practices, but also to recognize that the power to win in war was not a result of having superior weaponry such as war chariots, but

⁵⁸Keel, *Symbolism*, illus. 233, 321.

⁵⁹*Ibid.*, 231-242.

derives solely from the superior power of Yhwh.⁶⁰ The celebration scene (*Symbolism*, illus. 233) is discussed in the chapter on temples within the section concerning their furnishings, as are the sculpted cherubim wings (illus. 234) and the painted cult stand and clay fragment (illus. 181-182). In this section, Keel discusses one of the subjects that in the past have traditionally been debated using archaeological discoveries in its arguments—the

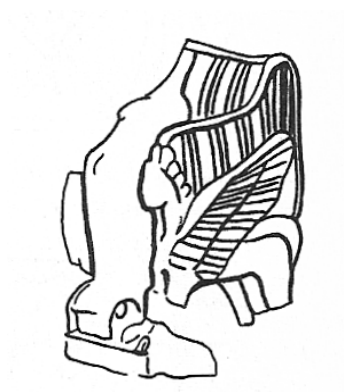


Figure 2.5. Ivory model of a throne; Megiddo; 1350-1150 B.C.E. After Keel and Uehlinger, *GGG*, illus. 66b; Keel, *Symbolism*, illus. 234.

recreation of the actual Israelite Temple furnishings.⁶¹ Without going over the many opinions about the cherubim, the throne, and how they relate to one another, suffice it to say that Keel argues, based on these and other artifacts that demonstrate the prevalence of cherub thrones, that this profession of Yhwh's superiority is the likely meaning behind passages like Ps 80:2 and 99:1.

⁶⁰He quotes Ps 20:7, and cites Pss 33:16-18, 44:3, 6-7, 147:10.

⁶¹The discussion of temples in *Symbolism* (as well as in *GGG*) comes closest to the older archeological pursuits in that he with the latest information available tries to reconstruct the Jerusalem Temple and its contents; nevertheless, Keel's ultimate goal is to interpret the symbolic and conceptual ideas preserved in temple art and architecture.

The final shared artifact is a cylinder seal depicting a deity holding back by the tail a lion, who along with a winged demon is attacking (or poised to attack) a human (**fig. 2.6**).



Figure 2.6. Cylinder seal; Tell el-‘Ajjul; 15-12th cent. B.C.E. After Keel and Uehlinger, *GGG*, illus. 90a; Keel, *Symbolism*, illus. 96.

Since it is a Late Bronze Age seal from Tel el-Ajjul, the discussion of it in *GGG* is placed in the section on Lachish. Keel’s main argument in the section on Lachish and the southern regions of Palestine/Israel is that the areas closer to the south were more influenced by Egypt than the areas in the northern region. Keel interprets the god depicted on this seal as a universal savior figure, a composite of Baal and Seth, who appears on a number of seals from that region and time period. In contrast, Keel’s emphasis in *Symbolism* is not on the god, but on the demonic figure. He briefly talks about the demon in this artifact as he explores the various ideas about demons among Mesopotamians, Egyptians, and Canaanites. The discussion is placed in the section covering the enemies of the individual, the demonic representing the inimical forces that in general threaten the good of one’s life.⁶² Incidentally, one cannot help but notice Keel’s interpretation of the deity changed drastically from one

⁶²Keel, *Symbolism*, 78-85.

book to the next. In *Symbolism*, he interprets the god not as a male Baal-Seth, but as the female savior-goddess Ishtar/Astarte!

Refining the Iconographic Approach: Methodology

For the purposes of highlighting the differences between the two phases of Keel's work, I have avoided as much as possible any discussion of the methodology of the iconographic approach. While the differences between a literary-comparative pursuit and a history-of-religions inquiry can at times be striking—we have seen how one person can ask distinctive questions and find different answers while examining the same artifacts—the methodology of Keel's iconographic approach is consistent. From the first phase to the next, there is primarily a refinement of ideas and a maturing of methods.

The Earlier Period—Laying the Foundation

In the introduction of *Symbolism*, Keel begins to establish a rationale for pursuing an iconographic approach in the field of biblical studies.⁶³ In order to fulfill this primary objective, Keel establishes the iconographic approach as a method distinct from literary methods, an approach that he says will never replace the study of written sources, but one which has some definite advantages. Secondly, Keel provides for the reader in the course of his arguments a concise introduction to interpreting the art of the ancient Near East, including some practical tips.

⁶³Keel's earlier discussions regarding methodology amounted to an apologetic defense of the importance of iconography. One may see the introduction to *Symbolism* (7-14), for a fuller explanation, or consult his article "Iconography and the Bible," *ABD* 3:358-59, for an abbreviated defense of the merits of studying iconography.

Like others who have made similar arguments encouraging biblical scholars to incorporate into their research data from the material culture of the ancient Near East, Keel argues that the vast wealth of iconographic material from the ancient Near East alone should be an obvious reason to regard it as an indispensable source of comparative material for biblical studies. Of the various reasons this material has been overlooked, Keel believes one reason that stands out is that there likely has been a failure to appreciate the value of studying such material. He begins to remedy this deficiency by addressing the advantages of analyzing iconographic material as a means to understanding the conceptual world of the Bible, a conceptual world that is part of the greater ancient Near East. Moreover, it is a world knowable to us today not only through the written record of its texts, but also through the iconographic record preserved in its visual arts. His goal is not to make an iconographic approach superior to a textual approach, but to convince others that it is indispensable to the scholarly pursuit of understanding the conceptual world of the Bible. He maintains that together the two approaches should benefit one another and mutually advance the scholarly enterprise.

Including more details of this early period at this point in the discussion would simply amount to a rehashing of his original arguments. Some of his earlier arguments were overdrawn, and over time there has been needed corrections and refinements, some instituted by Keel himself, some by his collaborators and other scholars working with iconography. Instead, the discussion that follows will essentially trace the evolution of the iconographic

approach to its current understanding, an obvious necessity for further research.

The Latter Period: Answering the critics, refining and developing the approach

Keel in the latter phase of his work has refined and improved on the methods he employed in his earlier work. His arguments have been recast and further developed in order to engage more directly views prevalent among biblical archaeologists and historians rather than literary expositors of the Bible. I will discuss the developments in his approach in accord with his own organization of three interrelated issues in *GGG*: symbol systems, the role of textual and pictorial sources, and the evaluation and organization of the iconographic data. In all respects, Keel is much less deferential than before to those who would eschew the study of image-bearing artifacts: “Anyone who systematically ignores the pictorial evidence that a culture had produced can hardly expect to recreate even a minimally adequate description of that culture itself.”⁶⁴

Symbol systems. Based on what he says directly in the introduction and by observing the methods he employs throughout the book, it seems to me that Keel is relatively comfortable assuming an anthropological approach that

regards not only religion, but human culture as a whole, as a system of signs, usually termed a “symbol system” in English. All realms of human existence—biological, economic, social, political, religious, etc.—when understood rightly, take shape within such symbol systems. Various cultures differentiate themselves from one another by their different symbol systems. If a culture has the time and opportunity to develop independently, it will construct a system whose various elements—economic, social, religious, etc.—form an interdependent and coherent whole. As a

⁶⁴Keel and Uehlinger, *GGG*, xi.

rule, whatever is created by such a culture is simultaneously relevant in the arenas of the economy, the society and politics, religion, etc.⁶⁵

Keel criticizes archaeologist W. G. Dever, who develops in one of his essays a definition from the same anthropological perspective, but which nevertheless establishes a principle for looking at material culture, including pictorial evidence, that in fact wrongfully limits the useful scope of material culture to the understanding of cult alone and to the exclusion of belief, which is ascertained instead by the study of texts.⁶⁶ Keel finds this especially troubling because Dever develops a principle that creates a dichotomy not just across various segments of human life, such as economic and political, which would be a more likely mistake, but within a *single* one: the religious.⁶⁷ Keel ends the section essentially with a pledge to be cognizant of the interrelatedness of all cultural arenas, but provides a more detailed explanation of symbol systems in the final section on iconographic data.

Texts and pictorial sources. Keel's criticism of the principle that relegates the usefulness of material culture to knowledge of the cult is unrelenting. He easily refutes the principle by appealing to a textual source: the many ritual texts from Ugarit, and one can add to that the numerous ritual texts from Egypt as well. All are prime examples of texts being useful in reconstructing cultic practices. As for image-bearing artifacts, Keel reiterates briefly what he has already illustrated and defended so well in *Symbolism*: the merits of

⁶⁵Ibid., 7.

⁶⁶William G. Dever, "The Contribution of Archaeology to the Study of Canaanite and Early Israelite Religion," in *Ancient Israelite Religion: Essays in Honor of Frank Moore Cross* (ed. P. D. Miller, et al.; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 209-247.

⁶⁷Keel and Uehlinger, *GGG*, 8.

pictorial data in understanding belief and ideas. Of great importance are the archaeological gains made since the publication of *Symbolism* which have resulted in a significant increase in the amount of iconographic material available for research.

Much credit should be given to Keel, his students and his collaborators at the Biblical Institute of the University of Fribourg for their work of collecting and cataloging over 8500 stamp seals from Palestine/Israel. The sheer increase in the amount of iconographic material available for research has enhanced the methodology, and has allowed Keel to establish a procedure by which one should evaluate the relative significance of each artifact. I have already alluded to two methodological advances above: one, the accumulation of iconographic data from Palestine/Israel allows for the first time a diachronic survey of the materials, and two, the wealth of new evidence allows one to home in on artifacts strictly from the region of Palestine/Israel. These two advances reduce the possibility of making not only “pointless comparisons,” as Keel has said, but also lessens the likelihood of producing faulty conclusions.⁶⁸ The criticism of those who might, hypothetically speaking, use evidence from Middle Bronze Age northern Syria to interpret a cultural practice in Iron Age Israel is valid, yet in the debate over the profit of a textual versus an iconographic approach, the argument cuts both ways. Keel is right to point out that those who have criticized Urs Winter’s analysis of iconographic material as being possibly overly dependent on Middle Bronze Age sources from Syria must see the same danger in research dependent on written

⁶⁸Ibid., 11.

sources from equally distant places and times.⁶⁹ He says sharply, “Anyone who prefers to work exclusively with texts (e.g., to reconstruct ‘Canaanite’ religion using nothing but textual sources from Ugarit) ought to get little or no hearing.”⁷⁰ Overall, Keel’s judgment on the matter is fair and evenhanded. He recognizes the value of textual sources from places like Ebla (Early Bronze Age III), Mari (Middle Bronze II A-B), and Ugarit (Late Bronze Age II A-B) in research in ancient Israel and Canaan, but contends that the same value should be recognized for the iconographic material. As a better means of control, and this is the procedure I have mentioned above, Keel proposes an approach to evaluating textual and iconographic material:

Conclusions drawn from an interpretation of Bronze Age texts discovered in northern Syria, and the religio-historical hypotheses developed from such evidence, cannot be used uncritically to explain the religious history of Canaan during the second millennium and, though it has happened repeatedly, certainly not to clarify what happened in Israel during the first millennium. Such evidence ought to be compared initially with contemporary evidence from Canaan. When there is a positive correlation, that is, when specific iconographic or textual evidence is actually found or makes it at least probable that comparable religious concepts are at work in Bronze Age Canaan, only then can we take the second step and make a hypothetical correlation with Iron Age finds in Palestine. The primary context for *Palestine* is provided by iconographic and textual evidence recovered from those peoples who lived contemporaneously with and geographically close to Israel and Judah (i.e., documents from Syrian-Canaanite religions dating to the first millennium) and not by data from northern Syrian religious texts (or images) that date to the second millennium.⁷¹

⁶⁹Urs Winter, *Frau und Göttin: exegetische und ikonographische Studien zum weiblichen Gottesbild im alten Israel und in dessen Umwelt* (OBO 53; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1983).

⁷⁰Keel and Uehlinger, *GGG*, 11. Perhaps Keel is more aggressive in defense of his students’ work rather than his own

⁷¹*Ibid.*, 11.

Keel and Uehlinger follow this procedure closely in *GGG*, and Keel's more recent book *Goddesses and Trees, New Moon and Yahweh: Ancient Near Eastern Art and the Hebrew Bible* is a study which applies this method in an exemplary manner.⁷² In the second half of the book, Keel meticulously traces the presence of astral themes in iconography from Iron Age IIc Palestine/Israel to Assyrian sources. Specifically, he identifies the appearance of the crescent moon standard appearing on some of the artifacts as the emblem of the moon god of Haran, which he argues was imported into the region during this period of Assyrian hegemony.⁷³

Evaluation and organization of the iconographic data. What has been discussed so far amounts to a superior strategy for evaluating the importance of iconographic material relative to geographical and temporal factors. This result is due in part to having more materials from Palestine/Israel and in part to the well-developed process for judging how materials from distant places and other time periods can properly be brought into a discussion regarding the religion of Palestine/Israel. Keel follows with a methodological discussion concerning the interpretation of the content of the data. It is at this point that the idea of symbol systems comes into play once again, and this time the discussion is aimed more directly at the meaning within the images.

⁷²Othmar Keel, *Goddesses and Trees, New Moon and Yahweh: Ancient Near Eastern art and the Hebrew Bible* (JSOTSup 261; Sheffield : Sheffield Academic Press, 1998).

⁷³He strengthens the arguments he presented in *GGG* by providing arguments developed more fully and adding much more iconographic data.

A consideration of the title of the section is somewhat helpful: “Methodology of the Iconographic Approach: Myth, Iconicity, Constellations.” In this brief section of just less than two pages Keel lays out in a bare-bones fashion the relationship between the concepts that these three terms represent. Before the particulars of these terms are discussed, it is helpful to have in mind a basic working definition of one key term to build upon: a “constellation” refers to a central theme centered around a one or more individuals who interact in a specified situation; thus, constellations are the building blocks of myth, which can appear in either a narrative or non-narrative form. Because of Keel’s brevity on the subject, one may need to become familiar with the works of the author he cites, the Egyptologist Jan Assmann, in order to gain a fuller understanding of the concepts at work.⁷⁴ At first glance, Keel’s views on myth, icon, and constellations might appear to be inconsistent with Assmann’s in some areas, but this is not the case. Keel’s views, on icon and constellations in particular, represent a broader understanding of Assmann’s ideas which he has applied to the religious situation of Palestine/Israel.

Although Assmann was careful to apply his notions of myth, constellation, and icon to his analysis of Egyptian religion, he nevertheless developed a conceptual framework pertinent to the study of other religions that are rooted in myth. Keel has distilled some of

⁷⁴Jan Assmann, *Egyptian Solar Religion in the New Kingdom: Re, Amun and the Crisis of Polytheism* (trans. Anthony Alcock; London: Kegan Paul International, 1995); trans. of *Re and Amun: Die Krise des polytheistischen Weltbilds im Ägypten der 18.–20. Dynastie* (OBO 51; Freiburg: Universitätsverlag; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1983); Jan Assmann, *The Search for God in Ancient Egypt* (trans. David Lorton; Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001).

the key elements of this framework to shape his own study of religion in Palestine/Israel.

Keel differs from Assmann chiefly in that he establishes a broader view of constellations to uncover and explore the elementary themes in the religion of the Israelites. Take for example the following excerpt:

“The myth owes its ‘iconic constancy’ to a few basic constellations.” The constellations or “icons,” as images, are “reference points” that can be detached from a narrative sequence. They provide a place where mythical expressions can take a crystallized form, being related to certain *relationships* and *basic situations* that contain their own meaning and need not derive their meaning from a particular story and from the way that story shapes the narrative. Significance and enduring character are not found in names that change and not in easily forgotten narratives. Priority and the constancy of the motif is portrayed in the way icons depict these few basic constellations (themes that survive in the depiction of Mary with the child as the nursing mother of God and the way the resurrected one is shown as the victor, etc.). Mythic texts are nothing other than icons (or else constellations) that have been presented in story form. Myths are able to retreat from the story line at any time a restate the real message depicted on the icon without losing their identity.⁷⁵

The consistencies between Keel and Assmann are evident within this brief excerpt. Keel, when he begins a sentence, “Constellations, or icons...” and later “Mythic texts are nothing other than icons (or else constellations)...” demonstrates his agreement with Assmann’s assessment that “icon” and “constellation” are essentially interchangeable.⁷⁶ Keel’s explanation that constellations (or icons) can be detached from the narrative sequence completely is in tune with Assmann’s arguments that mythological expression exists both

⁷⁵Keel and Uehlinger, *GGG*, 12-13. Keel’s reference is to Jan Assmann, “Die Zeugung des Sohnes. Bild, Spiel, Erzählung und das Problem des ägyptischen Mythos” in *Funktionen und Leistungen des Mythos: Drei altorientalische Beispiele* (OBO 48; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1982), 13-61.

⁷⁶Assmann, *Search for God*, 107.

within and outside of narrative.⁷⁷ Keel's reference to "relationships" and "basic situations" is in step with Assmann's understanding that gods constituted as persons act in relationship to one another (in polytheistic religions) or with human beings (in monotheistic religions).⁷⁸

Where Keel differs is that he is concerned with constellations that extend across cultures and times, such as the nursing of an infant god (e.g. Nut and Re, Mary and Jesus), or the ubiquitous monster representing Chaos in the ancient Near East, as opposed to Assmann's focus solely on the developments within Egypt. Assmann strains the concept of constellation in order to fulfill his greater goal of defending his thesis pertaining strictly to the religious developments peculiar to Egypt. Regarding the essential elements of the concept of constellations as an organizing structure, Keel's views are consistent.

Keel's contribution has been to bring the concept of constellation (and with it the concomitant notions of myth and icon) into a more direct discussion of symbol systems. His work is not pioneering in the sense of creating the concept of constellation but in the novel way he has implemented the use of the concept as a tool to interpret varying symbol systems from diverse regions and over extended time periods. He writes:

A culture, or one aspect of a culture such as its religion, is made up of a limited number of visible and audible signs that form a distinct framework or network. The first task of those who study a particular culture is to describe these signs as precisely and comprehensively as possible. The clearer this principle is, and the more carefully principles such as these are applied, the better job the researcher will do. One must search for what gives shape to the order and coherence in this network of concepts. One must determine the role played by individual signs, their relationship to one

⁷⁷Assmann, *Egyptian Solar Religion*, 38-39.

⁷⁸Ibid., 41.

another, and the relative importance attached to each. Just as language cannot be reconstructed from its vocabulary alone, the religious framework for a specific culture cannot be reconstructed from disconnected pictorial elements. Anyone wishing to understand a language must know the syntax and analyze the sentences. Anyone who wants to understand the pictorial evidence must pay attention to complex constellations wherever they are to be found.⁷⁹

Throughout the course of his latter work, Keel has tried to do this very thing.

Thus far, his work on the iconography as it relates to ancient Israel has not reached the same level of comprehensiveness that Assmann has been able to attain with Egypt. The great disparity between the paucity of materials in Palestine/Israel and the great wealth of data from Egypt is largely responsible; nevertheless, Keel's overall success with applying the concept of constellations has been significant. First, he has been able to trace back a single constellation to its origins. Second, he has been able to isolate a number of constellations present in the iconography of a given time and place in the religious history of Palestine/Israel, using this as a basis for outlining a particular symbol system.⁸⁰

Recent Iconographic Studies of the Psalms

In recent years there has been a return to the literary-critical type of approach that was reflected in Keel's earlier work. Keel himself has written a commentary on the Song of Songs in which many of his interpretations are guided by insights gained by studying ancient

⁷⁹Keel and Uehlinger, *GGG*, 13.

⁸⁰An example already mentioned above will suffice: In the chapter of *GGG* covering Egyptian colonialism, Keel remarked that the shift toward male dominance and themes of war were indicative of the dominant symbol system of Megiddo during the Late Bronze Age. The constellations he isolated in these images were the evidence he used to make his argument.

Near Eastern iconography.⁸¹ As for the Book of Psalms, other scholars have produced studies that have furthered the interpretation of the psalms in light of ancient Near Eastern iconography. The best-known book is *Seeing the Psalms: A Theology of Metaphor* by William P. Brown.⁸² However, the two scholars whose work builds most closely upon Keel's initial study of the Psalms are Martin Klingbeil and Joel LeMon. In their respective writings, each one has attempted to remedy some of the shortcomings of Keel's original study. For both scholars, building upon and improving *Symbolism* includes taking on a much narrower subject as a way to be comprehensive and to avoid the pitfalls of "fragmentation." It also involves a shared desire to improve upon the methods used in studies prior to their own. Methodological issues such as determining which sources are compatible and the correct way to engage those sources in comparative study take center stage in both works. Both studies mark somewhat of a departure from Keel's earlier approach to the comparison of iconography and biblical texts by framing it within a discussion focused more sharply upon the theories of metaphor.

Martin Klingbeil

Klingbeil's *Yahweh Fighting* constitutes the first extensive study of the Book of Psalms and iconography following Keel's *Symbolism*. Unfortunately, it still reads like a dissertation, but apart from aesthetics there is much to admire in it. His prudent and careful attention to matters of methodology will be instrumental for others who endeavor to do the

⁸¹Othmar Keel, *The Song of Songs: A Continental Commentary* (trans. Frederick J. Gaiser; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994).

⁸²William P Brown, *Seeing the Psalms: A Theology of Metaphor* (Louisville: John Knox, 2002).

same sort of comparative work. He not only offers a more detailed defense of the methodologies he employs in dealing with iconographic materials, providing firmer footing for future research, he also employs several new strategies when it comes to relating the textual materials with the visual.

Through computer-aided statistical analysis, Klingbeil found 507 metaphors referring to God in the Hebrew Psalter. Out of those many metaphors, he discovered that they can be placed into a relatively small number of groupings, seventeen to be exact, each defined by a main metaphor. The two main metaphor types which dominated statistically were “God of heaven” and “God as warrior.” He first studies these metaphors as they appear in eight psalms, gleaning as much as possible from the context of Scripture alone. In the next chapter he analyses the iconographic sources which display the “God of heaven” and “God as warrior” themes, describing the various ways these themes are depicted in pictures. Only after he has discussed the the biblical texts and the visual images independently in separate chapters, does he go on to compare and contrast his findings in a third chapter.

Klingbeil approaches the task of comparative work with a theoretical perspective similar to Keel’s. How much he differs from Keel is not certain because he provides more background whereas Keel is less forthcoming. Klingbeil made it one of his objectives to speak more openly regarding methodology in order to combat further the criticisms regarding the appropriateness of comparisons made between biblical texts and ancient Near Eastern visual art. He explains that the “comparative method refers to the method of comparing biblical phenomena with other phenomena that occur in the whole realm of the ancient Near

East setting in general.”⁸³ He goes on to clarify, using terminology similar to Keel’s, saying that the “comparisons have to work on the level of cultural systems without isolating individual phenomena from their respective cultural context.”⁸⁴ It is clear that they are working from a similar anthropological perspective as well when he writes, “The underlying principles of the comparative method are based on the assumption that there are common characteristics between societies and cultures, which allow the researcher to make valid comparisons.”⁸⁵ Klingbeil identifies the type of comparative approach he takes as “the historio-geographical method,” or the “historical comparison.”⁸⁶ Klingbeil’s views are most like that those of Hallo and Talmon, who both take an intermediate position between those

⁸³Klingbeil, *Yahweh Fighting from Heaven*, 269.

⁸⁴Ibid.

⁸⁵His view echos Keel’s, but he presents it with a much fuller discussion of its ideological background. Klingbeil cites Meir Malul’s book *The Comparative Method in Ancient Near Eastern and Biblical Legal Studies* (AOAT 227; Kevelaer: Butzon and Bercker; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1990) as his primary source upon which he came to understand the history and ideology of the various comparative approaches. There are two main schools of thought that arise out of a philosophical debate in anthropology. On one side, there are the Evolutionists, who assert a underlying connection between cultures deriving from the universality of the human mind. On the other side, the Diffusionists who assert connections between cultures are historical.

⁸⁶Klingbeil (*Yahweh Fighting from Heaven*, 270) explains this is the approach taken by the Diffusionists, who argue that the comparisons must be made using methods (e.g., archeological or literary) that must also demonstrate that the cultures being compared are located in the same “historical stream” both geographically and chronologically. Klingbeil further explains that the Evolutionists model of “typological comparison” has been criticized in biblical scholarship because the results, while sweeping a dramatic, often go unsubstantiated (e.g., “the unity of the human spirit”), and often conflict with now-established conclusions made from observed historical phenomena. It is no surprise that the historical approach is preferred among biblical scholars. (See idem, 270-273).

who emphasize commonalities (comparisons) between the Bible and its surrounding cultures, and those who see only differences (contrasts).⁸⁷

Klingbeil's ability to write clearly concerning matters of method aids those who wish to achieve better results from comparative study. His methodology not only adheres to the advances of the iconographic approach made over time, he moves beyond them to apply those advances in a literary-critical study of the Psalms in which he follows a strict "contextual" approach. He is able to take a more manageable amount of iconographic data and explore it more thoroughly than ever in the past, examining ninety-three images which bear upon the "God as warrior" and "God of Heaven" metaphors. In terms of examining the psalms, he expands Keel's limits of a word or line to chunks of text, usually a stanza or two of a psalm, which further mitigates the effects of contextual "fragmentation."

Joel LeMon

The most recent study of the Psalter and iconography was written by Joel LeMon. Like Klingbeil, he tries to refine the methodologies employed when iconographic materials are brought to bear on the interpretation of a biblical texts. He is critical of previous studies

⁸⁷See Shemaryahu Talmon, "The Comparative Method in Biblical Interpretation-Principles and Problems," in *Congress Volume: Gottingen 1977* (VTSup 29; Leiden: 1978); William W Hallo, "Compare and Contrast: The Contextual Approach to Biblical Literature," in *The Bible in the Light of Cuneiform Literature* (ANETS 8; Lewiston, N.Y.: E. Mellen Press, 1990); William W. Hallo, "Biblical History in Its Near East Setting; the Contextual Approach," in *Scripture in Context: Essays on the Comparative Method* (ed. Carl D Evans, William W. Hallo, and John Bradley White; Pittsburgh: Pickwick Press, 1980). Hallo called his synthesis of the two approaches the "contextual approach." Similar is Talmon's "holistic" approach, but with one key difference: Talmon urges the exhaustion first of all possibilities within the context of scripture alone and only then, after no reliable results are achieved, should one turn to outside sources from the ancient Near East. Klingbeil notes Malul's criticism that Talmon's approach is based upon an erroneous conception of the Bible as uniform and consistent throughout (Klingbeil, *Yahweh Fighting from Heaven*, 279, n. 35). Klingbeil hedges by saying that a scholar's view on the unity of Scripture influences one's opinion on that matter. Admitting his own religious bias, he tries to find middle ground by discussing the biblical text first and in isolation, then in a separate chapter he compares and contrasts those results with what he has discovered from the ancient Near Eastern iconographic sources.

using iconography because he finds them suffering from “fragmentation” of the literary context.⁸⁸ The same criticism Keel leveled against prior analyses of visual art in biblical scholarship, mainly that they are lacking because they divide up elements of a picture instead of discussing the composition as a whole, LeMon now levels at Keel for fragmenting the biblical text as well. This criticism is the same one I made earlier in reference to *Symbolism* in which Keel fragments the literary context. LeMon extends this criticism to his own teacher Brent Strawn, as well as to Klingbeil.⁸⁹

LeMon’s remedy is to deal with a smaller amount of material much more thoroughly. Thus he chooses a subject that is much more limited in scope, addressing only one motif: the winged image of Yhwh.⁹⁰ As a result he is able to discuss every instance in the psalms where this image occurs.⁹¹ Moreover, he does something that nobody else has done with each psalm. He analyses each psalm individually and as a whole, a procedure which I also advocate as an important advance to the iconographic approach and the only way in which fragmentation of the literary context can be eliminated.

His narrowly-focused study leads him to question further the topic of the appropriateness of comparisons made between biblical texts and extra-biblical visual materials, especially as he discovers that the iconographic data he analyzes reveals

⁸⁸LeMon, “Yahweh's Winged Form,” 18; In addition to Keel’s own self-admission of fragmentation that I’ve discussed above, see also Keel’s article “Iconography and the Bible,” *ABD* 3:367-69, regarding the fragmentation of iconography by his predecessors.

⁸⁹For example, LeMon (“Yahweh's Winged Form,” 18) criticizes Klingbeil for being too limited in terms of the number of psalms selected (a total of eight).

⁹⁰This is just one of several attributes in Klingbeil’s “god of heaven” metaphor.

⁹¹Six times: Pss 17:8, 36:8, 57:2, 61:5, 63:8, 91:4.

conflicting motifs. Which iconographic motif would carry more weight if the other key factors (e.g. geographical, temporal) are equal? His study of winged Yhwh finds that the literary image does not correspond to one single iconographic motif, but that the situation is much more complex. He concludes that the image is “multistable” and draws concurrently upon multiple motifs that he identifies in iconographic materials. His study shows that more complexity is uncovered as a more narrowly-focused investigation delves further into a particular subject.

William P. Brown

LeMon also draws attention to an important book written by William P. Brown, *Seeing the Psalms: A Theology of Metaphor*. Brown uses iconography in his interpretation of the Psalms, but at the same time he is someone who cannot be considered part of the Fribourg School.⁹² Brown’s independence from the Fribourg school is evident in the way he approaches his subject. As his subtitle reflects, the topic is centered on subject of metaphor. Brown is very competent when he interprets individual psalms, where he is well able to describe the meaning of the metaphors. The best chapter is his last where he is able to articulate so well the subtle nuances of Psalm 139.⁹³ However, when he works directly with the visual materials, his ideas are not nearly as convincing.

Iconography is an integral element upon which Brown formulates his views on metaphor. However, his use of iconography to interpret biblical metaphors is much more

⁹²It is striking that Brown never mentions Keel even once in his introductory chapter covering background, previous work, and methodology.

⁹³Brown, *Seeing the Psalms*, 207-16.

limited in comparison to Klingbeil and LeMon. If the number of images he includes in his book is any indication—he includes a total of twenty-one used to illustrate not one but several motifs—then he makes less use of the material than Klingbeil (ninety-three) illustrations and LeMon (seventy-one). His goals and conclusions are far more sweeping than the other recent studies on the psalms and iconography. A key thesis he tries to argue in the book is that the unity of the Book of Psalms can be expressed by two overarching metaphors: “refuge” and “pathway.”⁹⁴ His thesis represents a departure from previous studies in that he attempts to persuade one of a thematic unity of the Psalter based upon arguments that are partially derived from iconographic evidence.

Brown’s thesis is not convincing, in part because his explanation of the interplay of verbal and pictorial images on a theoretical level is lacking. LeMon is keen on this issue, and he rightly criticizes Brown for interpreting Assmann’s theory of icons in a loose and uncritical way.⁹⁵ Brown applies a theory devised by Jan Assmann who, in his dealing with Egyptian solar hymns, argues that the verbal and visual representations of the same mythic event are equivalent.⁹⁶ Brown explains that Assmann uses the term “icon” to denote the articulation of meaning in both verbal and visual forms, then he adds, “So also in biblical poetry.”⁹⁷ From his uncritical interpretation of Assmann, Brown comes up with his notion of

⁹⁴Brown (*Seeing the Psalms*, 39) calls these two a “metaphorical dyad.” It appears that he interprets the various images from perspective of the final form of the book. In making an argument regarding the organization of the Psalter, he is engaging James Luther Mays and Gerald Wilson’s prior work on the unity of the Book of Psalms. See especially pp. 48-53, where Brown summarizes his arguments.

⁹⁵LeMon, “Yahweh’s Winged Form,” 24.

⁹⁶Brown, *Seeing the Psalms*, 5.

⁹⁷Ibid., 5.

the “iconic metaphor” which he sets out to expound in his treatment of the Psalms. LeMon identifies the weaknesses in Brown’s theoretical underpinnings: he has applied a theory which fits well within (1) a purely Egyptian context, and (2) a unique context in which word and text are inextricably intertwined, oftentimes with word and image locked upon the same “canvas.” Brown has not, according to LeMon, dealt adequately with the issue of “cultural particularity,” citing the fact that (1) comparisons made with biblical texts and ancient Near East art not only do not share that same uniquely close relationship between word and image as in Egyptian, but also (2) must take place across cultural lines.⁹⁸

It is noteworthy that LeMon, through the course of his critique of Brown, does not discuss how Keel integrates Assmann’s theories within his own work in a way that is sensitive to the issue of cultural particularity. He does not draw attention to the way in which Keel reshapes the category of “constellations” as one that can extend across cultures as I have done. LeMon’s answer is to employ a more rigorous methodology for determining which items are most relevant in a way that combines the methods of his predecessors. He avoids any discussion of the theoretical underpinnings of comparing divergent cultures, which was a concern of Keel, who addressed the issue under the rubrics of symbol systems and constellations. LeMon, however, does employ the phrase “constellation of images” but without discussion as to what it means.

⁹⁸LeMon, “Yahweh's Winged Form,” 24.

Summary

The method by which one should proceed to relate biblical and iconographic sources in a comparative study is an area in which there seems to be a building consensus. LeMon has distilled the key elements of the method in a way that is comprehensive yet simple enough to follow. His list of key concerns addresses many of the methodological issues discussed above, in connection with both Keel and the recent iconographic studies of the psalms. They will serve as guideline in the chapters that follow. Research will proceed with attention given to the following issues:

1. The psalmic context of the literary image;
2. The iconographic contexts;
3. The periodization (or historical context) of an artifact;
4. The geographical distribution of the artifact;
5. The material of the artifact.⁹⁹

One characteristic of each of the most recent books written about the psalms with an iconographic approach is that they tend to treat the biblical/textual side of the equation from the perspective of metaphor. There is nothing wrong with discussing metaphor per se. However, these studies suffer because there is too great of an emphasis on it, particularly when it is examined in a way that chokes out other literary-critical issues that also deserve attention. Klingbeil's study, being in part a computer-aided statistical analysis of metaphors, stands out in this regard. LeMon's work is an improvement over Klingbeil because he has addressed more of the literary-critical issues by offering a verse-by-verse analysis of each

⁹⁹Ibid., 28-29.

psalm, including an analysis of its text, structure, and rhetoric. In this regard, there is room for improvement. For example, there is a lack of comprehensive or consistent analysis of the poetics of each psalm in the previous studies.

Because the way in which these previous studies narrowly address the issue of metaphor, the subject of symbol and myth are neglected. Klingbeil avoids having to discuss any concept of “symbol” in his book by substituting the word “representation” in its place.¹⁰⁰ LeMon does not shy away from talking about symbolism (and myth to a lesser degree) in his analysis of the iconography, but he does not bring it up in his introductory chapter. Instead he focuses upon the subject of metaphor as he surveys Brown’s own introductory discussion which surveys various theories of metaphor. Ultimately, it seems Brown discusses metaphor in a way that allows him to demythologize the biblical text. For him, the mythic background of extra-biblical sources serves merely as metaphorical fodder for the biblical writer. The symbolic-mythical world simply offers a treasure-trove of images that are available to the poet looking for just the right metaphor to present an idea. With this manner of comparing textual and visual materials, the content of the former is being relegated to a discussion of literary devices.

My contribution to this emerging area of study should be viewed as one that builds upon previous scholarship. My methodology, in terms of determining the relative value of extra-biblical data, and in particular iconographic comparative materials, follows what was developed by Keel and Uehlinger, and refined by Klingbeil and LeMon. My refinement of the method is to attend even more closely to issues concerning the fragmentation of the

¹⁰⁰Klingbeil, *Yahweh Fighting*, 13.

biblical text beyond what LeMon has achieved. One deficiency with the previous work on the psalms is that so far no one who works within the iconographic approach also deals with the most basic literary form of the text—until now nobody has studied the psalms with regard to the fact that it is written in verse, which is a key contextual element that has been ignored. My study will discuss the poetics of the psalms and treat each psalm as an individual poem.

The primary departure I take from the recent studies on the psalms and iconography is the hyper-focus on the theory of metaphor when it comes to interpreting the imagery of the text. It is impossible to discuss meaning in literature without any recourse to metaphor, but the way in which metaphor has been discussed previously has led to a lack of discussion regarding how theoretically one could or should relate themes, motifs, concepts and ideas, not just across artistic mediums, but also across different cultures. A better strategy for doing such comparative work is by applying the broader category of “symbol systems” organized by the concept of “constellations,” which is the approach spelled out by Keel and Uehlinger.

Broadening the the discussion to include a comparison of symbol systems allows for some different avenues of inquiry. It opens new possibilities for the study of the psalms that takes the discussion beyond a comparison of literary themes or motifs. Specifically, it puts back into play a discussion of myth, and in particular Assmann’s argument that myth existed in a non-narrative form. It seems that this is a promising way to interpret the mythic elements of the psalms. In addition, discussing myth in this way allows one to question in a more direct way how an author might have shaped mythic elements in a way that contrasted with other compositions.

CHAPTER 3

PSALM 5

At the outset of this study, I proposed to explore the concepts of divine protection by comparing ideas expressed within two artistic modes: the art of the ancient Near East and the poetry of the Psalms. In the preceding chapter, I criticized the most recent iconographic studies on the Psalms for treating the visual material separately from the textual. Essentially, I found that segregating the material into separate chapters had the effect of diminishing the quality of the exegesis. I have chosen to address the subject of divine protection in Psalm 5 with an outline that has as its goal a presentation that integrates a discussion of these two artistic mediums into a single discourse. The discussion will highlight the elements in the poem that in particular give insight into the concept of protection. However, identifying metaphors of protection only begins the task; more is required than just illustrating with ancient Near Eastern iconography the specific metaphors of protection. The investigation must go on to explore the imagery of divine protection as it works in the poem as a whole. In the case of Psalm 5 the poet does not give us much by way of precise and vivid metaphors. The poem's imagery, its figurative language and metaphor—shaped by the overall structure of the poem—is what furnishes the limited and nuanced depiction of divine protection that this study intends to explore.

The language descriptive of protection in Psalm 5 includes the following: the “cover” offered to “refuge seekers” (v. 12), and the encompassing “shield” (v.13). While these locutions are perhaps the most obvious expressions that signify protection, their meaning is enigmatic. In order to grasp the significance of these images as they function in Psalm 5, one must view them in context. By context I mean the situation that is presented within the psalm as a complete poem. The psalmist sets a scene in which he pleads for Yhwh to listen to his prayer and provide guidance, due to unspecified trouble caused by enemies (v. 8). There is much that is uncertain in this psalm, for it is the nature of poetry to be enigmatic. However, one opening through which we can begin to interpret the poem is the psalmist’s identification of Yhwh as king, when he calls out to his lord in the locative “my King and my God.” Likewise, a temple setting (v. 3) will be a decisive interpreting factor, as the analysis below will reveal.

After presenting a new translation of Psalm 5 along with several textual and grammatical notes, the study will proceed with an exploration of the king’s role to protect against enemies as it is portrayed in iconography from the ancient Near East. Then direction will turn toward the significance of the Temple and a literary/poetic analysis of Psalm 5. The Temple’s significance in the psalm as the location of divine protection will be borne out by the literary study, which includes an analysis of its poetics following Michael O’Connor’s syntactic approach in *Hebrew Verse Structure* as it relates primarily to the gross (i.e., strophic) structure of the poem.¹ Finally, the chapter will conclude with a discussion of the

¹Michael Patrick O’Connor, *Hebrew Verse Structure* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1997).

possible meaning of “cover” and “shield,” framed within a summary of the overall findings of the research.

Psalm 5: Translation and Textual Notes

1. For the leader: with flute accompaniment;² A psalm of David

2. Give ear to my words, O Lord.

Consider my sighing.³

3. Pay attention to the sound of my cry for help, my King and my God,
for to you I pray, [4] O Lord.

4. At daybreak, you will hear my voice.

At daybreak I will prepare⁴ for you and keep watch.

²The meaning of נְחִילֹת is not certain, occurring only once in the Old Testament. The LXX (ὑπὲρ τῆς κληρονομώσεως) connects it to the word נַחֲלָה (from the root נָחַל) and would possibly denote the type of tune (e.g., “according to ‘the Inheritance’”; see Kraus, *Psalms*, 27). The favored possibility among modern translations (and mine above) assumes a connection to הַלִּיל (flute; from II-הָלַל) meaning “with flutes” or “with flute accompaniment.” Another suggestion has been to emend נְחִילֹת to נְחֹלֹת from חָלָה “to grow weak, be sick”; cf. *HALOT*, and Mowinckel (*Psalms in Israel’s Worship*, 2:210), who relates the title to Babylonian laments.

³The word הִגִּיג is rare, occurring only one other time in the OT (Ps 39:4). The meaning of the word as well as its root is uncertain. BDB and *HALOT* list it as a derivative of הִגָּה, distinct from the slightly more common root הִגָּה. Dahood, argues, using evidence from Ugaritic, that there is only one root, הִגָּה (Mitchell. Dahood, *Psalms* [Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1966]; see also Peter C. Craigie *Psalms 1-50* [WBC 19; Waco, Tex.: Word Books, 1983], 84, who disagrees). Whether there is a single or two separate roots, the meaning that can be gleaned does not change significantly. The word could denote an audible expression in prayer, like sighing or muttering, or could be silent musing or meditating as seems to be the case in Ps 39:4. The LXX translates הִגִּיג using μελέτη in Ps 39:4, but in Ps 5:2 it uses κραυγή. Allowing for such a range of meaning, the word “sighing” was chosen for its audible component, which seems to be in line with the sense of the other verbs denoting audible prayer in vv 1-3, and is an interpretation that agrees with the LXX.

⁴The phrase is elliptic. The verb עָרַךְ usually takes an object. There are two options to fill out the ellipsis, one with a legal/juridical overtone and the other with a sacrificial/cultic overtone. With the general sense of the verb meaning “to lay out, arrange, prepare,” it can denote the preparation of words, namely arguments in a legal context (with מִשְׁפָּט in Job 13:18; 23:4; מִלִּין “words” in Job 32:14). An ellipsis of such a word is reflected in

5. Because you are not a God who delights in wickedness,
 an evil person will not be able to dwell with you.
6. The boastful⁵ will not be able to stand before your eyes.
 You hate all evildoers.
7. You will destroy those who speak falsehood.⁶
 A man of blood and deceit the Lord will detest.
8. But I, because of your great love, can enter your house.
 I can bow down toward your holy palace in awe of you.⁷
9. O Lord, lead me in your righteousness, on account of my enemies.

several modern translations, e.g., NRSV, NAB, NJPS, NJB, NET. One also cannot rule out the idea of “preparing words” in a more general sense of prayer (cf. NKJV, NIV). In cultic contexts, עֲרֹךְ can denote preparation for sacrifice, either the implements used in a sacrifice/feasting (often with שֻׁלְחָן cf. Isa 21:5, 65:11, Ezek 23:41; Pss 23:5, 78:19, Prov 9:2) or the sacrifice itself (with עֹלָה in Lev 6:5; cf. REB). The other instances where the object is lacking are likely juridical (cf. Job 33:5, Ps 50:21). However, without an object, the meaning in v. 4 remains unclear; thus, the translation above also reflects the ambiguity of the Hebrew.

⁵Regarding הוֹלָלִים, the dictionaries vary regarding its root. BDB lists two roots: I-הִלֵּל “shine” and II-הָלַל “be boastful” (G), “to praise” (D). There is no issue with the first root, but the second root here in question is treated as two separate roots in *HALOT* and *DCH*, one with positive connotations and the other with negative (III-הָלַל in *HALOT*). “Boasters” or “the arrogant” is typically how it is rendered in most modern translations. *HALOT* glosses it as “be infatuated” while *DCH* suggests “act foolishly” or possibly “boast.” It remains unclear in exactly what sense הוֹלָלִים is being used disparagingly by the psalmist.

⁶LXX adds πάντα before the participle. NAB follows LXX, but Kraus says the addition of כָּל in MT would disrupt the meter. Although not addressing directly the issue of meter, most modern translations follow the MT (e.g. NRSV, NIV, REB, NJPS, NET). The כָּל would have no effect upon the syntactic constraints set forth in *HVS*. The MT reading is retained. LXX seems to be an explanatory addition with a negligible effect upon the sense of the verse.

⁷The noun phrase בְּיִרְאָתְךָ “in awe of you” is joined to v. 9 in the Syriac.

Make straight⁸ before me your way.⁹

10. For there is nothing trustworthy in their mouths:¹⁰

Their innards are destruction.

Their throat is an open grave.

They flatter with their tongue.

11. Make them suffer their guilt, O God.

May they fall by their own schemes.

Expel them for their many offenses,

for they have rebelled against you.¹¹

12. But may they rejoice, all who take refuge in you.

Forever may they exult,

for you will cover over him.

And may they rejoice in you, those who love your name,

⁸Kethib הִיִּשֵּׁר; Qere הִיִּשֵּׁר a hiph. inv. of יִשֵּׁר. The Kethib is a result of treating the root as a I-ל rather than a I-י; see GKC §70b.

⁹There are several variations regarding the pronouns in this verse. Regarding the first occurrence of the 1cs pronoun suffix, the first person is to be preferred over the isolated LXX variant τῶν ἐχθρῶν σὺς “your enemies.” A widespread variant regards the second occurrence of the 1cs pronoun. Some Greek witnesses (Alexandrinus, Vaticanus, and others) reflect the MT ἐνώπιόν μου = לְפָנַי, while some have σὺς instead of μου modifying ἐνώπιόν. Only two MSS have the second person. Finally, regarding the pronoun which modifies “way,” a few Greek witnesses and the Vulgate read “my way” against the MT “your way,” thus completely reversing the role of the suffixes in the MT with the result being, “make straight before you my way” I have retained the MT reading as have many modern translations (NAB, NRSV, NJPS, NJB, EU).

¹⁰Another variant involving a pronominal suffix. Reading בְּפִיהֶם against MT בְּפִיהֶם with strong support from the versions (LXX, Syr) and Targums. BHS and most modern translations agree with the versions: NRSV, REB, NAB, NJB, NJPS. In support of the emendation, see GKC § 145m. Craigie emends differently: בְּפִיהֶם “in their mouth” which is attested in one Hebrew Ms.

¹¹The phrase κατὰ τὸ πλῆθος in the LXX possibly reflects a Hebrew *Vorlage* of וְכָרֶם attested in Qumran Mss rather than MT בָּרֶם. Overall, the difference between the two possibilities is negligible.

13. for you will bless the righteous one, O Lord,
 encompassing him¹² with favor like a shield.¹³

Divine Protection and the King: Iconographic Comparisons

A distinctive attribute of Psalm 5 is its economy of imagery. While other psalms combine multiple metaphors with numerous and (sometimes seemingly unrelated) images, the poet who wrote this psalm was focused upon one central metaphor: Yhwh as King, and with one role: the king's responsibility and capacity to protect. Consequently, this poem serves well to illustrate a concept of protection that is evident in one key descriptive remark the psalmist makes when he cries out for help—"my King and my God." Recognizing the king's protective role *vis-à-vis* enemies is the key to unlocking the significance of the psalmist's expression. The concepts of kingship in Mesopotamia and Egypt involve subjects that have been well researched, and obviously a comprehensive discussion is impossible. Focus must be limited to the king's protective role as illustrated by the iconography of the ancient Near East, and particularly to the images that have the closest connection to Psalm 5.

¹²LXX has 1c pl; Syriac has 1cs. Singular suffix may refer to collective "the righteous," justifying the translation of "them" without emendation (cf., Craigie; cf. also NET notes). Modern either translations take as collective or follow LXX, e.g., NRSV, REB, NAB, NJB. Kraus and Dahood maintain 3 ms suffix as in MT, and likewise in ESV and EV.

¹³The **מגן** is a large body shield, different from the smaller **מגן** used in close combat. See Keel, *Symbolism*, 222-24.

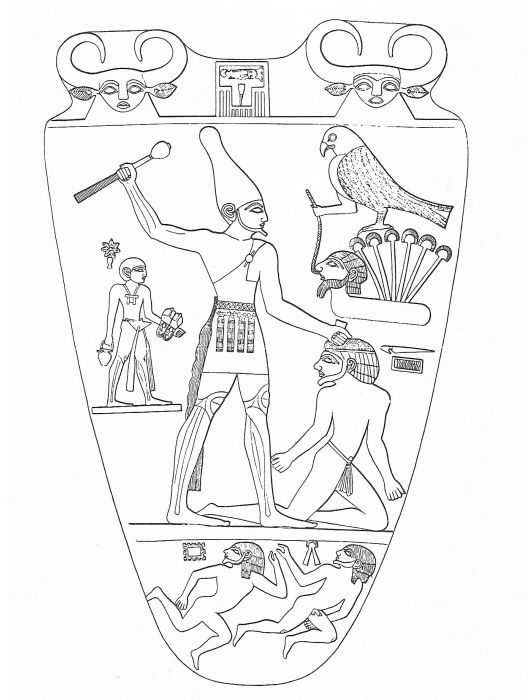


Figure 3.1. Narmer palette; Hierakonopolis; c. 2850 B.C.E. After Keel, *Symbolism*, illus.

397.

I will begin with examples from Egypt and Mesopotamia, then discuss artifacts originating in Palestine. As the analysis will bear out, the Egyptian ideal seems to be the most influential, depicted numerous times with the well-known iconographic motif of the pharaoh smiting his enemies.

Egyptian Iconographic Motif of the King Smiting the Enemy

The Narmer Palette (**fig. 3.1**) is perhaps the most famous artifact bearing the motif of the king striking down the enemy. It depicts the king standing above a kneeling victim, whom he is about to strike with a weapon. The king is grasping his victim by the hair with his left hand, and with his right hand he holds a mace above his head as he is about to deliver

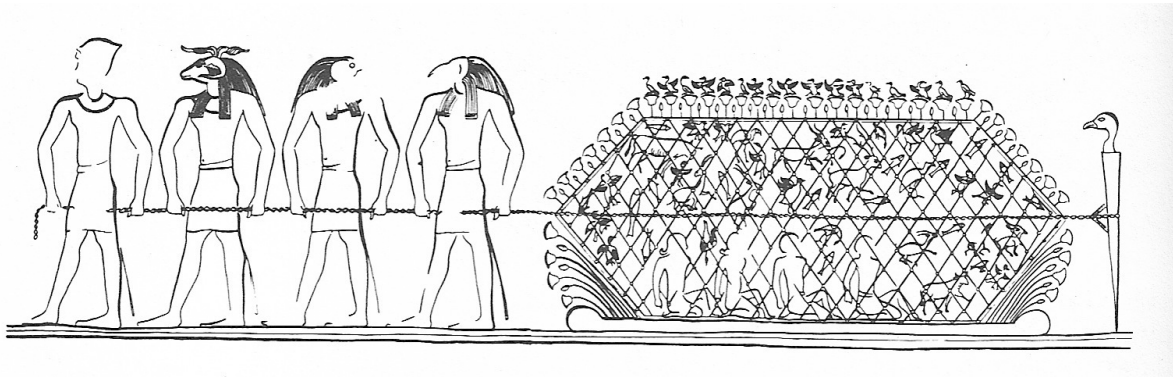


Figure 3.2. Relief; Temple at Edfu; eastern enclosure wall; Ptolemaic (237-57 B.C.E.).

After Keel, *Symbolism*, illus. 111.

a smiting blow. Without ambiguity, this image displays the king's power to dispatch the enemy with ease. It appears regularly in Egyptian iconography, and it signifies an Egyptian perspective on kingship—on Egyptian iconography, the king is depicted in such an idealized way that he appears as a deity along with the high gods.¹⁴ For example, on a sandstone relief from the Edfu Temple (**fig. 3.2**) the pharaoh is shown working hand in hand with Khnum, Horus, and Thoth, moving a net filled with all earth's inhabitants, both human and animal, signifying their mastery over the world.¹⁵ The iconographic depictions of the king in war and hunting scenes are related in that they both demonstrate the power of the king over adversaries, whether they be foreign soldiers in war, or ferocious animals on the hunt. The

¹⁴Heinrich Shaefer, "Das Niederschlagen der Feinde," *WZKM* 54; Emma Swan Hall, *The Pharaoh Smites His Enemies: A Comparative Study* (Münchner ägyptologische Studien 44; München: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 1986).

¹⁵Even though the Edfu Temple dates to the Ptolemaic period, centuries later than the formative period for most of the Psalms, the concepts represented in its iconography is older, much of it having been crystalized during the Egyptian New Kingdom or earlier. A similar motif is the relief at Karnak of Ramses II (1279-1213 BCE) netting birds with the gods Horus and Khnum. See Henri Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), fig. 14.

two scenes on **Plate I** illustrate this connection.¹⁶ Whether the hunting scene on the upper portion or the battle scene below, in both King Tutankhamun is gigantic, larger than life, about three or four times larger than his adversaries. Terrorizing and trampling all in his path, he destroys both animal and enemy with ease.

This depiction contrasts with presentation of royal power and legitimacy on iconographic sources originating in Mesopotamia in which the king's mortality, in contrast to the gods' divinity, is in plain view.¹⁷ An early example is a stele depicting Eannatum leading his troops to battle (**Plate II**).¹⁸ In the upper register, the king is on the battlefield leading his men to battle. Notice that in no way is there a suggestion that his status is divine. Even though he is somewhat larger in the lower register on his chariot, the image does not seem to suggest anything beyond high status as the king. The monumental art from Assyria also illustrates the difference. On the walls of Nimrud, scenes depict king Assurnasirpal II

¹⁶Box no. 21 from tomb of Tut-ankh-Amon, (after, Keel, *Symbolism*, pl. XVI; cf. *ANEP*, the hunting scene is fig. 190, the battle with Asiatics is fig. 319, and fig 318 is a photo of the entire chest.

¹⁷The interpretation I present is based upon a reading of ancient Near Eastern iconography put forward by Henri Frankfort (*Kingship and the Gods*, 3-14). It is a reading of the iconography that Keel (*Symbolism*, 291-306) accepts and develops further, along with more iconographic sources. The differences that I am laying out between Egypt and Mesopotamia are not historical arguments—in the grand sense of a comprehensive and nuanced history—they are limited to the presentation or projection of royal power in visual art. Older studies on kingship tended to over emphasize the evidence—pictorial and textual—that espoused the official or orthodox views making them universal (e.g., from the myth and ritual perspective, see Herbert Walter Fairman ("The Kingship Rituals of Egypt," in *Myth, Ritual, and Kingship* [ed. Samuel Henry Hooke; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958] 74-104). More recent studies (David B. O'Connor and David P. Silverman, *Ancient Egyptian kingship* [Probleme der Ägyptologie, 9; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995]) present a more nuanced perspective on the actual practice of kingship in Egypt, which exhibited practical and theoretical variations throughout its existence. Ultimately, the historical reality of the practice of kingship in Egypt is moot. I am concerned primarily with how the idea of the king's power is presented in the iconographic material. The idealized projection of the king in Egyptian iconography is what is relevant in terms of understanding the conceptual framework from which the psalmist writes. The interpretation of the iconography is not so much in question. For example, while John Baines ("Kingship, Definition of Culture, and Legitimization," in *Ancient Egyptian Kingship* [eds. David B. O'Connor and David P. Silverman; Probleme Der Ägyptologie, 9; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995] 5, 10) criticizes Frankfort for overreaching, he largely accepts his interpretation of the iconography.

¹⁸After *ANEP*, fig. 300 = Keel, *Symbolism*, pl. XVIII

(883-859 BCE) both victorious at war and successful on the hunt. The similarities between the two scenes also suggest they share the same royal ideology, one that distinguishes between the divinity of the gods and the humanity of the king. On **plate III**, the war scene is quite realistic in contrast to the dramatically idealized Egyptian scenes. Assurnasirpal is depicted in the heat of battle, fighting side by side with his men. He appears fully human, risking his own life, with enemy arrows pointed at him. On the hunt, he is portrayed at risk in a similar fashion (**plate IV**). Protected by his men, Assurnasirpal appears to be in danger of being mauled by a lion attacking his rear. The king does not appear either as a god, or god-like, nor does he even stand next to them on the same level, yet it is clear that his fight involves the participation of divine beings: In the battle scene (**Plate III**), the god Assur is depicted at a distance in the sky above the king, holding the same pose as the king, suggesting divine participation from the heavens in bringing about the king's victory in the battle on the ground.

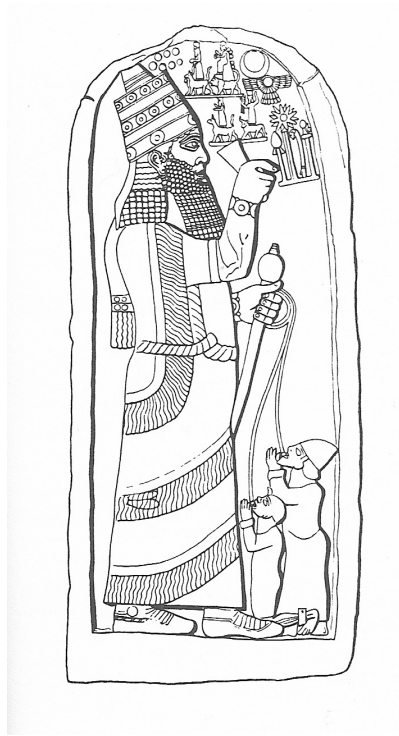
The iconography of kings involved in conflict is revealing. In Egyptian iconography, the king appears as an invincible god, while iconography from Mesopotamian contexts displays a powerful yet human king, a royal figure who prevails but is at the same time depicted as being in danger of opposing forces. While these differences regarding the divine status of the king exist, it must be recognized that the subjugation of an enemy is a universal royal theme relating to the concept of protection in a most basic way—the king has the

divinely sanctioned power and responsibility to protect his subjects.¹⁹ With some possible exceptions, the depiction of a king smiting the enemy does not appear in Mesopotamian contexts.²⁰ However, images that depict the king's power over an enemy do occur. The king's power over enemies depicted with a different motif appears on the victory stele of Esarhaddon (**fig. 3.3**). The gods by their emblems are depicted above in the sky. Here one can see that he is a powerful figure (depicted much larger than his enemies), yet still on the human plane in contrast to the gods who appear distant above in the heavens.

Since Yhwh is the king to which the poet refers in Psalm 5, one might consider this discussion of the divine status of kings in the ancient Near East as irrelevant. Certainly the deity of Yhwh is not in question; rather, the purpose of the discussion is to clarify the conceptual import behind the expression calling Yhwh, "my King." If the metaphor of Yhwh as king in Psalm 5 has as its conceptual core an ideology of kingship that is primarily Egyptian, as I am arguing, some effort at drawing out the Egyptian peculiarities is in order.

¹⁹In ancient Near Eastern thought, the idea is most often conceptualized mythically: with his responsibility to protect, the king participates in maintaining order; by defeating enemies he is exercising his control over the forces of chaos. Mythic accounts describing chaos differ significantly (e.g., Myth of Osiris, Enuma Elish), but the core role of the king is essentially the same: the king functions to keep chaos at bay by maintaining peace, order, and stability in the nation. The particulars of Egyptian and Mesopotamian mythology and theology, as well as the natural and political realities that shaped their differing conceptions are diverse and complex, but not so limiting by their complexity that basic differences cannot be grasped via the iconographic data.

²⁰Keel (*Symbolism*, 297) mentions several images on seals that might depict the king smiting the enemy, but in each case the meaning is too obscure. The images he cites are found in E. Edith Porada, *Corpus of ancient Near Eastern seals in North American collections* (New York: Pantheon, 1948), nos. 382, 877, and Henri Frankfort, *Cylinder seals, a documentary essay on the art and religion of the ancient Near East* (London: Macmillan, 1939), figs. 38d, 42f.



**Figure 3.3. Stele from Zinjirli; Esarhaddon (680-669 B.C.E.). After Keel, *Symbolism*,
illus. 407²¹**

The motif of the pharaoh smiting the enemy, because of its ubiquitousness and its power, is the epitome of the concept. So pervasive was it that it has influenced the way Yhwh is depicted as having mastery over enemies in many instances in the Book of Psalms. The motif is most clearly on display in Psalm 5. However, before turning to the biblical evidence, the thesis has further iconographic support from Palestinian sources.

²¹Cf. the photo of the stele in *ANEP*, fig. 447.

Evidence of the King Smiting the Enemy Motif in Palestine

With the meaning and significance of the motif of the king smiting the enemy outlined, and its presence in Egypt established, what remains to be explored is the prevalence and influence of the motif in the Levant, and Palestine in particular. There is no doubt that Egypt exercised control over the region of Palestine, particularly between the Late Bronze Age II and Iron Age I, but evidence also suggests that influence did not completely disappear even into Iron Age II. While textual data attest to Egyptian influence in Palestine, the focus again is on the archaeological and iconographic sources. For the argument to stand that the protection motif in Psalm 5 is related to the striking image in Egyptian iconography, there does not necessarily have to be physical evidence of the Egyptian motif in Palestine, given that Egyptian influence has been well established from other textual and archaeological data. It does, however, add a great deal of strength to the argument that the iconographic data does exist. In fact, the evidence suggests that among the many Egyptian iconographic motifs that have been uncovered in Palestine, the motif of the king striking the enemy was well-known, and one that had an influence that endured as the the Egyptian power over the region wained in the political sphere.²²

Iconographic evidence from archaeological finds in Palestine comes from several sites and dates between the Late Bronze Age II to the Iron Age II, roughly between 1300-800

²²Othmar Keel and Christoph Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses, and Images of God in Ancient Israel* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998) 138 n. 8.

BCE (e.g. from Egyptian dominance in the 19-30 Dynasties until the rise in Assyrian hegemony in the region). A handful of scarabs found in Late Bronze Age contexts bear the image of the smiting pharaoh. On a scarab from Beth-Shan (**Fig. 3.4**), the king holds the enemy by the forelock with his left hand, and with his right hand he is about to smite him with a scimitar he holds above his head. Meanwhile, the enemy is holding his hands up, pleading but defenseless against the king's might. The enemy's pose is similar in the example from Beit Mirsim (**Fig. 3.5**). A slight variation is the depiction of the enemy on two scarabs from Tell el-Far'ah (South) in which each



Figure 3.4. Scarab; Beth-Shan; 19th Dynasty. After Keel, *Symbolism*, illus. 400a.



Figure 3.5. Scarab; Tell Beit Mirsim; Rameses II (1301-1324 B.C.E.). After Keel, *Symbolism*, illus. 400b.

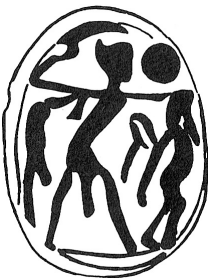


Figure 3.6. Scarab; Tell el-Far'ah; 19th Dynasty. After Keel, *Symbolism*, illus 400c



Figure 3.7. Seal amulet; Lachish; Late Bronze Age. After Keel and Uehlinger, *GGG*, illus. 97a



Figure 3.8. Seal amulet; Lachish; Late Bronze Age. After Keel and Uehlinger, *GGG*, illus. 97b



Figure 3.9. Scarab; Beth Shan; Rameses II (1279-1213 B.C.E.). After Keel and Uehlinger, *GGG*, illus. 114a.



Figure 3.10. Scarab; Tell el-Ajjul; Rameses II (1279-1213 B.C.E.). After Keel and Uehlinger, *GGG*, illus. 114b.

appears to have his hands bound (**fig. 3.6**).²³ Likewise, an enemy with bound hands appears on two scarabs from Late Bronze Age Lachish (**figs. 3.7 and 3.8**). Aside from minor variations of the king's clothing and headdress, the essence of the motif is unchanged. The ever-dominant king has little trouble with the enemy, who is depicted in submission on his knees, either bound or holding arms up for mercy, or perhaps shielding himself out of fear. Notice as well that in all of these examples, the king wields a scimitar, not a mace or club as in the older representations of the motif (e.g., the Narmer Palette). The next group, a scarab from Beth-Shan (**fig. 3.9**) and one from Tell el-Ajjul (**fig. 3.10**), adds a different element: the addition of a deity overseeing the execution of the enemy. This variation is not unique, appearing in Egyptian contexts such as Ramses III depicted smiting the enemies on the first pylon of his mortuary temple, Medinet Habu (**Plates V and VI**).²⁴ A related piece is a cylinder seal from Beth-Shan (**fig. 3.11**) which contains a similar motif with the scimitar. It is not a smiting scene, but rather it has the same element of the deity holding the scimitar in support of the pharaoh as he shoots arrows at two bound prisoners.

The last two examples dating to the Iron Age I have a different element (which perhaps might have an even greater connection to Psalm 5). The addition of a third individual

²³The first and third examples are dated to 19th dynasty by Alan Rowe, *A Catalogue of Egyptian Scarabs, Scaraboids, Seals and Amulets in the Palestine Archaeological Museum* (Cairo: Imprimerie de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 1936); cf. Keel (*Symbolism*, 405 n. 400) who dates it 1345-1200 B.C.E. The second is dated to Rameses II by William Foxwell Albright, *The excavation of Tell Beit Mirsim* (New Haven: American Schools of Oriental Research, 1932) 51; cf. Keel (*Symbolism*, 405 n. 400) who also dates it 1301-1234 B.C.E. The excavation of Tell Farah south (modern city of Tel Sharuhen, Israel) was published by Starkey and Harding as *Beth-Pelet II* (BSAE 52; London: British school of archaeology in Egypt, 1932).

²⁴See also Keel, *Symbolism*, plate XXI, Rameses III (1197-1165), Medinet Habu, First pylon; cf. ostrakon of Rameses III (idem, *illus.* 399). The notion of the deity overseeing the king's smiting the enemy harks back to the Narmer Palette on which Horus, in the form of the falcon, is holding the enemy by a rope that is attached to his nose.

with one hand raised as on the scarab from Tel Masos (**fig 3.12**) or both hands raised as on the scarab from Tell el-Far'ah South (**fig. 3.13**) witnessing the king's smiting of the enemy.



Figure 3.11. Cylinder seal of Rameses II; Beth-Shan. After Keel and Uehlinger, *GGG*, illus. 113.



Figure 3.12. Scarab; Tel Masos; Iron Age I. After Keel and Uehlinger, *GGG*, illus. 144b



Figure 3.13. Scarab; Tell el-Far'ah South; Iron Age I. After Keel and Uehlinger, *GGG*, illus 144c.

The presence of this third person is rare and is difficult to interpret. One possibility is that he could be another enemy, in which case his arm(s) are raised in submission, in fear, or in a plea for mercy. Another is that the third individual can be someone who is on the side of the king. Keel argues that the arms of the third individual could be raising his arms either out of awe for the irresistible power of his lord, or perhaps the raising of the arms is to call down the blessings of heaven. It is this latter interpretation that Keel accepts. Citing his own previous work, he says it has both iconographic antecedents and a parallel in the Old Testament when Moses has to keep his hands raised in order for Joshua to succeed in the battle against Amalek (Exod 17:8-13).²⁵ There is the possibility that one can view the third person as one who merely reverences the power of the king. It is not unlikely that the third individual could be an adorant of the king. The smiting motif appears on one ivory piece dating to the Iron Age II from Samaria that shows local development (**fig. 3.14**). The stylized plant design behind the striking king appears only here and not on any artifacts of Egyptian origin.²⁶

²⁵Keel (*Studien zu den Stempelsiegeln aus Palästina/Israel* [OBO 100; Freiburg, Schweiz: Universitätsverlag, 1985] 343) cites his earlier comments in *Wirkmächtige Siegeszeichen im Alten Testament: ikonographische Studien zu Jos 8, 18-26, Ex 17, 8-13, 2 Kön 13, 14-19 und 1 Kön 22, 11* (OBO 5; Freiburg, Schweiz: Universitätsverlag, 1974), 89-109, figs. 44-53.

²⁶With this piece, and several others from Ugarit, Keel (*Symbolism*, 296) suggests the “Egyptianizing portrayal of the king in the psalms may be traced in part to Canaanite mediation.”

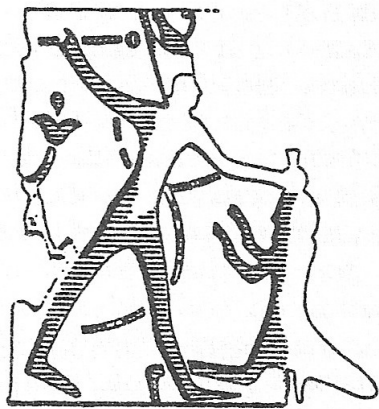


Figure 3.14. Ivory; Samaria; Iron Age II. After Keel and Uehlinger, *GGG*, illus. 262b.

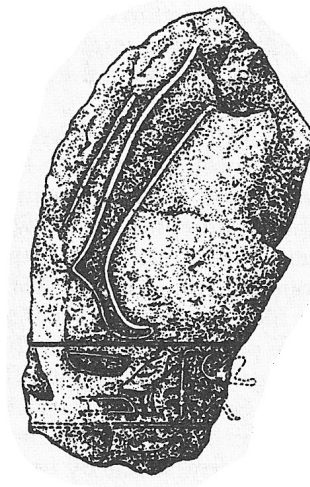


Figure 3.15. Stele fragment; Beth-Shan; Ramses II. After Keel and Uehlinger, *GGG*, illus. 115.

Thus far, miniature art has served as the only source of pictorial evidence from Palestine. There is one important piece of monumental art from the Late Bronze Age. It is a fragment of a stele erected by Ramses II in which only portion of the pharaoh's foot is visible (**fig 3.15**). Even though one can only see one foot up to the knee, it is apparent that the pharaoh stands in the exact striding position as is found in so many smiting of the enemy scenes on monumental art in Egypt. While the iconographic motif of the king smiting the

enemy appears on a variety of media, its appearance on monuments, especially on temple walls and on stelae surrounding temples which produces the most evocative image for interpreting Psalm 5. In the literary analysis of the psalm, I will return to the examples already cited and add several more in order to demonstrate the connection this motif has to the temple in both iconographic and biblical sources.

The King who Protects and His House: Literary Analysis

I am not aware of any study in which the discussion of metaphorical or figurative language has been conducted in connection with a syntactic analysis of a poem in the Hebrew Bible. The nearest approximation would be an article by Adele Berlin in which she argues that metaphor should be seen as a constitutive element of biblical poetry, as integral as parallelism.²⁷ In the article, Berlin makes several noteworthy observations. Berlin sees a partition between linguistic studies and literary studies of biblical Hebrew poetry, noting the irony that more work has been done with the former than with the latter. She asks, “What genre can be more literary?”²⁸ Moving forward, she hopes for more of the latter.²⁹ She discusses metaphor in part by comparing the similarities she sees between her previous study

²⁷Adele Berlin, “On Reading Biblical Poetry: The Role of Metaphor,” in *Congress Volume Cambridge 1995* (ed. J. A. Emerton; Leiden: Brill, 1997), see especially 28-29, 35. A more recent study by Brian Doyle, (“God as a Dog: Metaphorical Allusions in Psalm 59,” in *Metaphor in the Hebrew Bible*, ed. Pierre van Hecke, BETL 187 [Leuven: University Press, 2005] 41-53), in part inspired by Berlin’s “The Role of Metaphor,” examines metaphor within the overall structure of the psalm. His article is one of several in the volume that study metaphor in relation to individual psalms.

²⁸Berlin, “The Role of Metaphor,” 25.

²⁹*Ibid.*,” 25-27 (and passim).

on parallelism, which was a study driven much by linguistic theory, and what she observes concerning the role of metaphor in biblical verse.³⁰ In my own study, I also will pursue a literary study of the psalm, and I will proceed with a view that Berlin espouses, namely that a literary study would ultimately require a reading of the “whole poem.” Like Berlin, I will turn to earlier work based upon linguistic research.³¹ Unfortunately, she does not address the matter of how metaphors structure entire poems, which is essentially the issue with which I am most concerned.³²

While much attention has been given to the level of the line (i.e., the problem of understanding the nature of poetic verse *per se*), what O’Connor calls “fine structure,” my interest concerns the regulation of the larger units of poetry, what O’Connor refers to as “gross structure,” i.e., the overall structure of a poem (its divisions into stanzas and strophes). I wish to consider how the division of poems into strophes (a largely linguistic pursuit with O’Connor’s syntactic approach) aligns with the role of metaphor in the shaping of a poem’s overall meaning (ultimately a literary pursuit). The analysis proceeds from an observation Samuel Terrien made in his commentary on the Book of Psalms. He writes, “Strophes bring a

³⁰In a way similar to grammatical parallelism, the juxtaposition of metaphor between lines also functions to create tension of similarity and dissimilarity; cf. Berlin’s example (“Role of Metaphor,” 30-31) of Ps 42:2-3.

³¹Berlin (*Parallelism*, 25) points out that her intention was a description of parallelism *per se*, and was not an attempt to determine what constitutes verse in biblical Hebrew; this contrasts with O’Connor’s syntactic approach which was chiefly concerned with what governs the regulation of Hebrew verse.

³²*Ibid.*, 30.

certain discipline over the multiplicity of metaphors.”³³ Terrien has perhaps identified a key interpretive principle; he has at least suggested an area of research that should be pursued. In previous chapters, I have discussed the limits of thematic studies of conceptual metaphors and have proposed a new direction which begins with seeing a psalm as a complete poem.

Excursus: *HVS* Analysis

Before turning to the ‘literary’ part of the study, I first must give an account of the linguistic analysis that informs the literary analysis. In essence, I have subjected the poem (Psalm 5) to the type of analysis initiated by Michael O’Connor in his book *Hebrew Verse Structure*. He often referred to his method simply as “a syntactic description.” But given the fact that other work on Hebrew poetry can be described as “syntactic,” any reference made in this study to a “syntactic approach” or “syntactic analysis” unless otherwise stated is referring to O’Connor’s approach, which also will be referred to simply as *HVS*.³⁴

O’Connor’s theory and method are not the subject of this chapter or the dissertation, and my purpose in introducing his ideas into this dissertation is not to engage in a critical study of his theory, but to use his syntactic approach as a pathway to better understanding the poem. My

³³Samuel L. Terrien, *The Psalms: Strophic Structure and Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2003) 41.

³⁴Cf. Terence Collins, *Line-forms in Hebrew Poetry: A grammatical Approach to the Stylistic Study of the Hebrew Prophets* (Rome: Biblical Institute, 1978); Stephen A. Geller, *Parallelism in Early Biblical Poetry* (Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1979).

view is that it contributes significantly to the study of “whole poems,” and its worth will be evident as the analysis of the psalm is presented below.

Given the reality that O’Connor’s syntactic approach is not widely utilized, this excursus aims to serve as a brief introduction to *HVS*. A lengthy exposition of his theory and his methods is simply not feasible. Otherwise, this excursus could itself grow into a major survey. What is possible in the given space of an excursus is an overview of what is central to *HVS*, how it contrasts with previous descriptions of biblical Hebrew verse, and what about it has led me to favor *HVS* over other descriptions of biblical Hebrew verse which can be broadly categorized as dependent upon the Standard Description.

The Standard Description

The designation of “Standard Description” of biblical Hebrew poetry is borrowed from O’Connor’s own nomenclature which he developed in order to differentiate his own work as a significant break from the long-accepted formulation of what constitutes poetry in the Bible. That formulation goes back to Robert Lowth, whose lectures at Oxford published in 1753 have been seminal for the study of Hebrew poetry for the rest of the eighteenth century to the present.³⁵ His *Lectures*, and later his *Commentary on Isaiah*, Lowth expounds upon a two-part description of biblical Hebrew poetry that became the basis for nearly all the

³⁵Robert Lowth, *Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews* (trans. G. Gregory; fourth ed. London: Thomas Tegg, 1839) and *Isaiah: A New Translation, with a Preliminary Dissertation and Notes, Critical, Philological and Explanatory* (London: Thomas Tegg, 1824).

research that follows. His lasting contribution was to identify two defining characteristics of Hebrew poetry as that of (1) metered verse arranged in couplets (or sometimes triplets) in a manner he called (2) parallel (i.e. *parallelismus membrorum*). His more succinct statement on parallelism is found in his later commentary on Isaiah when he writes,

The correspondence of one Verse, or Line, with another, I call Parallelism. When a Proposition is delivered, and a second is subjoined to it, or drawn under it, equivalent, or contrasted with it, in Sense; or similar to it in the form of Grammatical Construction; these I call Parallel Lines; and the words, or phrases, answering on to another in the corresponding Lines, Parallel Terms. Parallel Lines may be reduced to Three sorts; Parallels Synonymous, Parallels Antithetic, and Parallels Synthetic.³⁶

However, earlier in his *Lectures*, Lowth articulates several observations regarding this phenomena which he later defined as parallelism:

In the Hebrew poetry...there may be observed a certain conformation of the sentences, the nature of which is, that a complete sense is almost equally infused into every component part, and that every member constitutes an entire verse: so that, as the poems divide themselves in a manner spontaneously into periods, for the most part equal; so the periods themselves are divided into verses, most commonly couplets, though frequently of greater length. This is chiefly observable in those passages which frequently occur in the Hebrew poetry, in which they treat one subject in many different ways, and dwell upon the same sentiment; when they express the same thing in different words, or different things in a similar form of words; when equals refer to equals, and opposites to opposites: and since this artifice of composition seldom fails to produce even in prose an agreeable and measured cadence, we can scarcely doubt that it must have imparted to their poetry, were we masters of the versification, an exquisite degree of beauty and grace.³⁷

His observations regarding the phenomena of parallelism are the contribution for which Lowth has received the most acclaim; however, his description of Hebrew poetry has two

³⁶Robert Lowth, *Isaiah*, x-xi.

³⁷ Lowth, *Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews*, Lecture III, p. 34.

parts, the second being meter. This second or metrical component of his description has received less attention, likely because he did not think it was possible to recover the metrical system he alleged to exist. Lowth warns, “and since the regulation of the metre of any language must depend upon two particulars, I mean the number and the length of the syllables, the knowledge of which is utterly unattainable in the Hebrew, he who attempts to restore the true and genuine Hebrew versification, erects an edifice without a foundation.”³⁸

His identification of meter and parallelism as the two essential characteristics of biblical Hebrew poetry has subsequently shaped the form of the discussion into the present. Many scholars have since taken issue with this his description. For example, O’Connor characterizes Gray’s *The Forms of Hebrew Poetry* as “the major restatement of of the [Standard] Description in the twentieth century” being one that is dissatisfied with Lowth’s description, but nevertheless one that still maintains Lowth’s general framework of meter and parallelism.³⁹ Studies that have subsequently followed Lowth’s original formulation have sought to improve the two-part description of parallelism and meter, and have indeed been successful on the issue of parallelism. In contrast, a number of nineteenth century scholars tried unsuccessfully to articulate the metrical system which Lowth believed to be hopelessly lost.⁴⁰ Gray, following the work of Ley and Sievers, was a proponent of monitoring accents loosely as a way to measure the regularity of lines.⁴¹ His approach of using a loose accentual

³⁸Ibid., Lecture III, p. 33

³⁹O’Connor, *HVS*, 33; George Buchanan Gray, *The Forms of Hebrew Poetry; Considered with Special Reference to the Criticism and Interpretation of the Old Testament* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1915).

⁴⁰Cf. O’Connor, *HVS*, 33.

⁴¹Julius Ley, *Grundzüge des Rhythmus, des Vers- und Strophenbaues in der hebräischen Poesie* (Halle: 1875); Eduard Sievers, *Studien zur hebräischen Metrik* (Metrische Studien 1; Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1901).

accounting system in rejection of a strict metrical system has been the approach most twentieth-century scholars have adopted.⁴² However, a few other scholars have instead measured the lines of biblical Hebrew verse by the counting of syllables. Most notably, David N. Freedman and Frank M. Cross have practiced the use of syllable counts as a means to describe the structure of verse, not in a strict metrical system, but in a loose way that tracked the regularity exhibited in the lines of verse.⁴³ Their approach using syllable counts falls under what O'Connor refers to as "Modified Standard Descriptions" in which there have been substantive alterations to the Standard Description.⁴⁴

Despite the criticisms his description has received by critics past and present, Lowth's original contribution remains intact. One way this is evidenced is by the fact that the current discussion is still guided by Lowth's original description of meter and parallelism. It remains easiest to engage in a discussion of what is central to *HVS* by demonstrating how it seeks to address the shortcomings of the Standard Description.

⁴²One such proponent is Aloysius Fitzgerald, "Hebrew Poetry," in *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary* (eds. Raymond Edward. Brown et al.; Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1990) 205-208.

⁴³David Noel Freedman, "Archaic Forms in Early Hebrew Poetry," *ZAW* 72 (1960): 101-107; idem, *Pottery, Poetry, and Prophecy: Studies in early Hebrew Poetry* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1980); Frank Moore Cross, "Studies in the Structure of Hebrew Verse: The Prosody of Lamentations 1:1-22," in *The Word of the Lord Shall Go Forth : Essays in Honor of David Noel Freedman in Celebration of His Sixtieth Birthday* (eds. David Noel Freedman et al.; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1983); Frank Moore Cross and David Noel Freedman, *Studies in ancient Yahwistic poetry* (Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1975) 8-12.

⁴⁴O'Connor, *HVS*, 38-39.

HVS and Its Place among Contemporary Perspectives on Biblical Hebrew Poetry

By pitting the Standard Description against his syntactic description, O'Connor is signaling that he is proposing a significant break with past treatments of Hebrew poetry. Nevertheless, it would be a mistake to view O'Connor's system, though the break might be viewed by some as radical, as existing outside mainstream discussion. O'Connor was not alone in his effort to advance the discussion of biblical Hebrew poetry beyond Lowth's description. His contribution to the subject of Hebrew verse came during a period in which a number of biblical scholars, working independently, were reassessing the long-held understanding of biblical Hebrew poetry espoused by Lowth. Likewise, O'Connor can be counted among these same scholars who, under the influence of modern linguistics, challenged the long venerated standard description of Hebrew poetry as inadequate.⁴⁵ Contemporary research has resulted in two major contributions that have continued to gain acceptance. The first, is the abandonment of traditional metrics, and the second is a redefining of parallelism, both being direct results of the application of modern grammar and linguistic theory. On both counts, O'Connor's views are consistent with the general direction of scholarship. He rejects the conventional understanding that biblical Hebrew poetry is

⁴⁵Terrence Collins, *Line-forms in Hebrew Poetry*, and Stephen Geller, *Parallelism in Early Biblical Poetry* have already been mentioned; in addition the list includes: Alan M. Cooper, "Biblical Poetics: A Linguistic Approach" (Ph.D. diss. Yale University, 1976); Adele Berlin, *The Dynamics of Biblical Parallelism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985); Dennis G. Pardee, *Ugaritic and Hebrew Poetic Parallelism: A Trial Cut* [‘*nt I and Proverbs 2*’] (VTSup 39; Brill, 1988); idem "Acrostics and Parallelism: The Parallelistic Structure of Psalm 111," *Maarav* 8 (1992): 117-38. For more background on the influence of linguistics, see Berlin, *Dynamics*, 18-30.

metrically constrained, and he espouses an understanding of parallelism, not in terms of Lowth's three classic categories, but in accord with modern linguistics which sees parallelism as a feature that is common to language in general.

The Central Features of *HVS*

In comparison to his contemporaries, O'Connor does three things that stand out. First, he tackles unflinchingly the metrical question, arguing that biblical Hebrew verse is one of a number of poetries that is regulated by a system of syntactic constraints rather than by meter.⁴⁶ By proposing a system of syntactic constraints, he opposes those of the previous generation who proposed syllable or accent counting, and likewise the free or non-verse advocates of his own era.⁴⁷ Proponents of either case espouse a weak or free form of verse, but in the case of the latter, parallelism becomes the meter in the sense that parallelism is that which regulates the poetic lines. In contrast, O'Connor advocates for a highly regulated form of biblical Hebrew verse. The issue of verse constraints (in whatever form) is the most

⁴⁶On meter and non-meter, cf. O'Connor, *HVS*, 64-67.

⁴⁷James L. Kugel (*The Idea of Biblical Poetry: Parallelism and its History* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981] 310), who essentially rejects the category of poetry in the Hebrew Bible, believes that in Biblical Hebrew poetry "no meter has been found because none exists," and in its place he sees parallelism as the primary regulating element. Similarly, Francis Landy ("Poetics and Parallelism: Some Comments on James Kugel's the Idea of Biblical Poetry," *JSOT* 28 [1984]: 75-76) writes, "In my view, then, parallelism is the Biblical equivalent of metre, a frequent but not mandatory marker of poetry." Dennis Pardee (*Ugaritic and Hebrew Poetic Parallelism*, 168) argues that "parallelism is the constitutive feature of Ugaritic and Hebrew poetry, with the parallelism expected to fit into certain quantitative bounds too loosely defined to merit the appellation 'meter.'" Adele Berlin (*Introduction to Hebrew Poetry* [NIB 4; Nashville: Abingdon, 1994]) avoids the term "verse" and writes only of "poetry" when describing Biblical Hebrew poetry. She does this as a way of differentiating biblical Hebrew poetry from other forms of poetry that are characterized by metrically constrained lines.

challenging because it is the most speculative, and as a result it is the most disputed.

Nevertheless, given the choice between a weak and a strong form of biblical Hebrew verse, I am sufficiently convinced by O'Connor's theory that Hebrew verse is regulated by syntactic constraints that I am willing to work further with his hypothesis. The second feature is his treatment of parallelism. In common with a number of his peers, he broadly recognizes the pervasiveness of parallelism, but his system of tropes in which he distinguishes between two types of parallel features—those which are structural and those which are not—is unique to *HVS*. Third is his definition of the larger units of poetry (e.g., structures variously referred to as stanzas and strophes) based upon the smaller unit (the line). Each one of these three key contributions will be taken up with greater detail in the three sections that follow, beginning with (1) the line and the subject of syntactic constraints, then with (2) the tropes and the subject of parallelism, and finally with the (3) gross structure and the analysis of whole poems.

The Line

The feature that most distinguishes O'Connor's approach from his contemporaries is his hypothesis that the lines of biblical Hebrew verse are regulated syntactically. He develops his theory of Hebrew verse constriction based upon comparisons to other poetries which exhibit lines regulated by syntactic constriction, including Qur'ānic *sajʿ*, Chinese *fu*, Chinese

Parallel Prose, the folk poetry of Ostyaks and Voguls, and the Rotinese texts.⁴⁸ He calls this basis of comparison “the uniformitarian axiom,” which, on one hand, simply means that one cannot reconstruct a poetic system in which there is no known system similar to it in existence.⁴⁹ On the other hand, the mere existence of poeties that exhibit syntactic constraints, which correspond in greater or lesser degrees to what is observed in Hebrew poetry, at the very least allows for the possibility that syntactic constraints are at work in biblical Hebrew verse.

The definition of the line

In O’Connor’s syntactic approach, the line—or a single cola of a bicolon—is the basic unit of verse, not the bicolon (and tricolon) which predominates in discussions that follow the Standard Description.⁵⁰ O’Connor’s most general statement about a line of biblical Hebrew verse is that it “is generally a sentence with two or three grammatical elements (constituents) consisting of a total of two or three words.”⁵¹ This statement describes the vast majority of lines in biblical Hebrew verse, but it does so only in a general sense and without accounting for the relatively few lines that do not fit this simplified description. The system

⁴⁸ See O’Connor, *HVS*, 152-59 “Constriction in other languages;” cf. further “Origins of constrictional verse,” 159-63. Not only did developments in the study of linguistics bring about renewed interest in studying biblical Hebrew poetry, the discoveries from Ugarit and the Qumran provided new evidence available for comparison. O’Connor’s pursuit of syntax as the basis for a description of biblical Hebrew verse is rooted in his observation that the shared features between these forms of poetry are largely syntactic (see *HVS*, 24-29).

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 21-24 especially 22.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 32.

⁵¹ Michael Patrick O’Connor, “The Contours of Biblical Hebrew Verse: An Afterword to Hebrew Verse Structure,” in *Hebrew Verse Structure* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1997) 643.

of syntactic constraints in *HVS* is obviously more complex, but certainly not impenetrable.⁵²

There are three principal constraints in a line of Hebrew verse: clause predictors, constituents, and units; the definitions of each are excerpted from *HVS*.⁵³

A clause predictor is:

a finite verb

an infinitive which (1) is not used absolutely, or (2) which governs only an agent

a participle which (1) not used absolutely or (2) which governs only an agent, object or possessor

a \emptyset predictor of a verbless clause (the major predictors)

or a vocative or focus marker (the minor predictors)

A constituent is:

a verb

or an argument of a predictor which appears on the surface, unless it includes a prepositional phrase, in which case it is split

A unit is:

a verb or individual nomen.

These three constraints function within a matrix in which a line of biblical Hebrew verse may consist of 0-3 clause predications, 1-4 constituents, and 2-5 units. The possible permutations within a single line of biblical Hebrew verse are charted in the following matrix:

⁵²A simplified way to understand O'Connor's system of constraints is to see it as an attempt to quantifiably measure a quality of Hebrew poetry that others have called "terseness," as does Berlin (*Introduction to Hebrew Poetry*, 303; cf. also Kugel, *Idea*, 85). The key difference between Berlin and O'Connor on this subject is that Berlin does not believe Hebrew verse is constrained syntactically. Essentially, she defines terseness as an aesthetic quality of biblical poetry, which along with pervasive parallelism sets poetry apart from prose (Berlin, *Dynamics*, 5-6).

⁵³O'Connor, *HVS*, 86-87. Additionally, the relevant passages discussing the system of constraints are: "A preliminary statement of Hebrew verse constriction" (pp. 67-78)," and "The structure, system, and texture of Hebrew verse" (pp. 137-41). For a detailed description of the syntactic constraints, see pp. 306-320. Alternatively, one can look at the pair of William J. Holladay's articles ("Hebrew Verse Structure Revisited (I): Which Words 'Count'?", *JBL* 118 [1999] 19-32 and "Hebrew Verse Structure Revisited (II): Conjoint Cola, and Further Suggestions," *JBL* 118 [1999] 401-16), but in my view, these articles create more confusion than clarity.

clause constraint	∅	1	2	3
constituent constraint	1	2	3	4
unit constraint	2	3	4	5

There are several other limitations upon the individual constituents that are not addressed by the matrix chart; they are the following:

4. *On the units of constituents.* No constituent contains more than four units. Constituents of four units occur only in lines with no clause predicator. Constituents of three units occur either alone in lines with no clause predicator; or as one of two constituents in 1-clause lines. 5. *On the constituents of clauses.* No line of three clause predicators contains any dependent nominal phrases. In lines with two clause predicators, only one had dependent nominal phrases.⁵⁴ 6. *On the integrity of the lines.* If a line contains one or more clause predicators, it contains only nominal phrases dependent upon them. *The dominant line form.* Most lines of Hebrew verse contain one clause and either two or three constituents of two or three units. A lineation which yields lines of these constellations is preferred to other lineations.⁵⁵

The system of syntactic constraints that O'Connor establishes in *HVS* was based upon an inductive approach to the text; they were not externally imposed. The constraints were developed from his observations regarding the behavior of the 1225 poetic lines that formed the basis of his analysis in *HVS*. The matrix charted above along with the additional enumerated constraints are open to revision. For example, in latter years, O'Connor revised a rule regarding the constituents of clauses; namely, he has set aside the requirements that lines with two clause predicators can have either no dependent nominal phrases, or that only one clause can have nominal dependencies, since there are a number of counterexamples that

⁵⁴According to class notes, O'Connor has generally set aside this rule regarding lines with two clause predicators having either none or one having nominal dependencies due to the fact that there are a number of counterexamples occurring outside of the original *HVS* corpus.

⁵⁵O'Connor, *HVS*, 86-87.

occur outside of the original *HVS* corpus.⁵⁶ These counterexamples do not necessitate the rejection of hypothesis of syntactic constraints as a whole, but call for a reevaluation of the matrix. Such a reevaluation should be viewed as a refinement of the hypothesis, and it is something that is required as more poetic sections of the Hebrew Bible are evaluated using *HVS*.

Once the constraints of the line have been established, O'Connor can further say, "A line of Hebrew poetry is a passage of poetic discourse which obeys the overall constraints, i.e., which contains no fewer than no clause predicators and no more than three in its base structure, no fewer than one constituent and no more than four constituents in its surface structure, and no fewer than two units and no more than five in its surface structure, and which obeys the nominal phrase constraints and the major clause predicator constraints."⁵⁷ The *HVS* matrix yields 35 different constellations or combinations of the three syntactic variants (clause predicators, constituents, units; several of which are not attested in the *HVS* sample). Just three line constellations (#13, #14, #17) account for 749 of the 1225 lines (or 62%).

#13 1 cl 2 con 2 units 245 exx 20%

#14 1 cl 2 con 3 units 229 exx 19%

#17 1 cl 3 con 3 units 275 exx 23%

⁵⁶O'Connor, "An Afterword to *HVS*," 644. For criticism of the specific constraints with examples, see: Paul R. Raabe, *Psalms structures: a study of Psalms with refrains* (JSOTSup 104; Sheffield: JSOT Press) 17.

⁵⁷O'Connor, *HVS*, 316.

O'Connor writes, "this submatrix would define the most common line types of biblical Hebrew verse, and I have occasionally used this as the core definition of the syntactic constraints, or, more simply, the line."⁵⁸

O'Connor further categorizes each line of verse in the *HVS* corpus based upon its syntactic structure dividing the 1225 lines of poetry into line types of four classes based on frequency.⁵⁹ Class I lines (comprised of the three constellations cited above) are the most frequent, and classes II-IV occur less frequently, with class IV being the least of all. For our purposes, we most often will divide the lines into two groups: 1) the common or class I lines, and 2) the rare or class II, III, and IV lines, which will be referred to in general as "heavy lines." O'Connor's breakdown of lines into frequency types helps one to consider the function of the "irregular" or rarely occurring lines. Rather than viewing the rare lines as merely irregular, the patterning of lines based on frequency suggests a structural significance. What the analysis bears out is that the heavy lines appear at the seams of each strophe, indicating the end of one strophe and the beginning of another.

Tropes

The influence of modern study of grammar and linguistics has resulted in a much greater area of agreement on the subject of parallelism. What has happened is not simply a refining or even a redefining of Lowth's three categories; rather, many contemporary scholars understand parallelism as being a feature common to all language and having

⁵⁸From class notes.

⁵⁹On line types in particular and their frequency of occurrence within the *HVS* corpus, see O'Connor, *HVS*, 316-20.

potentially infinite variations.⁶⁰ Much of this research has been influenced by linguist Roman Jakobson, whose work on parallelism is central in this area. The vast possibilities of parallel structures in biblical Hebrew poetry are best worked out by Berlin.⁶¹ O'Connor and Berlin share similar views on the subject of parallelism, both following Jakobson's core observation that, "Pervasive parallelism inevitably activates all the levels of language—the distinctive features both inherent and prosodic, the morphological and syntactic categories and forms, the lexical units and their semantic classes in both their convergences and divergences acquire an autonomous poetic value."⁶²

O'Connor's approach diverges most from his contemporaries when he sets out to achieve the organizational task that Jakobson identifies. "The structure of parallelism which underlies biblical and Ugaritic poetry requires a rigorous linguistic analysis, and the seemingly infinite variety of extant parallels must yield to a precise and comprehensive typology."⁶³ O'Connor assumes this task but concludes that another level of organization of the phenomena is in order, one which differentiates between structural and non-structural parallels. He writes, "We take it up, however in the framework of a reformulation of the Standard Description of Hebrew poetry and we shall not actually provide a typology. We will contend that poetic structure is determined by certain parallelistic phenomena which we call

⁶⁰For example, Adele Berlin ("Parallelism," *ABD* 5.157) explains that parallelism "can be viewed as a linguistic phenomena involving linguistic equivalences and/or contrasts that may occur on the level of the word, line, or larger areas of text." And later in the same article she explains, "Because there are infinite possibilities for activating linguistic equivalences, there are infinite possibilities for construction parallelisms (5.160)."

⁶¹Especially in *The Dynamics of Biblical Parallelism*.

⁶²Roman Jakobson, "Grammatical Parallelism and Its Russian Facet," *Language* 42 (1966) 423.

⁶³Jakobson, "Grammatical Parallelism," 400-401.

tropes. There are many other parallelistic phenomena which fall into two groups: (a) ornamentation and (b) those which result from the cooccurrence of tropes. In fact, previous descriptions of parallelism have failed in general because they combined in description phenomena which do not always occur together.”⁶⁴ O’Connor’s core concern in *HVS* is strictly “with parallelism as a component of structural description of poetry; if there were a single feature of parallelism which is a major structuring device of the verse system, it would be available for definition and close examination. No such definition exists because no such single feature exists. Rather a small group of parallelistic features are central to the system and all others occur sporadically.”⁶⁵

In short, tropes are parallelistic phenomena that occur regularly enough that they are deemed to have structural significance; these are separated from less frequently occurring parallel structures which are called ornaments or figures.⁶⁶ Out of the many features that occur in parallel lines, O’Connor singles out six general types of tropes: the word-level tropes of “repetition” and “coloration,” line-level tropes of “matching” and “gapping,” and the supralinear-level tropes of “syntactic dependency” and “mixing.”⁶⁷ These phenomena are not the only types of features between lines that create parallels, but they are specifically the features that occur with such regularity that they can be considered part of verse structure. In

⁶⁴O’Connor, *HVS*, 96.

⁶⁵*Ibid.*, 89.

⁶⁶For preliminary remarks, see, *Ibid.*, 87, 96, and for a more detailed explanation see pp. 142-43.

⁶⁷ For more on the relationship between the tropes and parallelism, see *Ibid.*, 87-136, especially, 87-96.

my analysis of Psalm 5 below, I will discuss several of the tropes active in the poem, how they function structurally, and how they aid in the interpretation of the poem.

In addition to identifying as tropes the parallel phenomena that are structural, O'Connor parses the tropes into two types: (1) tropes of parallelism, and (2) tropes of continuity. This sort of parsing corresponds to the broadening of the conception of parallelism among contemporary scholars who no longer focus so much on the similarities between lines, but consider contrasts among paired lines as elements of parallelism.⁶⁸ In traditional accounts (following the Standard Description), the phenomena corresponding to coloration, matching, and mixing were regarded as parallel, whereas those corresponding to repetition, gapping, and syntactic dependency simply were not. The tropes are viewed in a slightly different way in *HVS*: coloration, matching, and mixing are treated tropes of parallelism, while repetition, gapping, syntactic dependency are treated as tropes of continuity.⁶⁹

Word-level tropes

Repetition. In essence, the trope of repetition is the occurrence of the same word in adjacent lines.⁷⁰ The repeated word can either be a noun or a verb. The occurrence of two words from

⁶⁸Cf. Berlin's description of parallelism in note 60 above.

⁶⁹O'Connor, *HVS*, 86-88.

⁷⁰O'Connor is uncertain if word repetition in lines that are not adjacent qualifies as a trope; however, because of its prevalence, in *HVS* repetitions with one line intervening are counted as instances of the trope of repetition.

the same root (the *figura etymologica*) is rare and consequently is considered an element of ornamentation and not a trope (i.e. it has no structural significance).⁷¹

An example of repetition is Psalm 5:4 in which בִּקֵּר is repeated in adjacent lines:

יְהוָה בִּקֵּר תִּשְׁמַע קוֹלִי
בִּקֵּר אֶעֱרֹךְ לָךְ וְאַצְפֶּה:

Coloration and its three subtypes: binomination, coordination, and combination. The word-level trope of coloration, like repetition, results from dyading, but is its polar opposite.⁷²

While repetition is a trope of parallelism, coloration is a trope of continuity. In other words, one might say the former is a trope of similarity, while the latter is a trope of contrast. He writes, “These we shall group together as the tropes of coloration; we shall distinguish three subgroups. In each trope, words which constitute as single phrase in ordinary language are split apart and the parts are set in “parallel” slots. In binomination, the phrase is a single name; in coordination, it is a pair of words; and in combination, it is a phrase with construct

⁷¹O’Connor, *HVS*, 109

⁷²This group of phenomena has been treated in the past as the “breakup of stereotyped phrases” since E. Z. Melamed (“Break-Up of Stereotype Phrases as an Artistic Device in Biblical Poetry,” in *ScrHier* 8 [ed. Chaim Rabin; Jerusalem: Magnes, 1961] 115-53) coined the expression (cf. Berlin, *Dynamics*, 76 and O’Connor, *HVS*, 108, 112). The original notion of a poet’s dictionary of word-pairs has been abandoned based upon linguistic research (psycholinguistics; cf. Berlin, “Parallelism,” 157-59). Both O’Connor and Berlin espouse a view that word-pairing is a basic function of language. O’Connor deals with it under the rubrics of “dyading” and Berlin “word pairs.” Her insights regarding this particular type of linguistic behavior approaches my interest in conceptual metaphor and the poets creative and dynamic use of common metaphors in poetry. She writes: “The lists of pairs that scholars have collected are not part of a poetic or even literary tradition. They are much more: they are a window into what psycholinguists would call the language behavior, and ultimately the whole conceptual world, of speakers of biblical Hebrew and Ugaritic. They evince mundane connections like *ox* and *ass* and ethnic prejudices like *Philistine* and *uncircumcised*. Not only should we continue to collect them, but we should document their frequencies and patterns to the extent that textual remains permit. This is the linguistic task. The literary task is to see how a given author or verse uses a specific pair for his own purpose—to create his own emphasis or meaning. Does he use an unexpected or rare association to shock his readers? Does he originate a new association of words much as he does in a simile or metaphor? Or does he give new life to a common association? Poets after all, use the same language and the same linguistic rules as their audience, but it is the way in which they use these that makes them poets” (*Dynamics*, 79-80).

or adjectival modification. There are some cases in which there are not enough attestations of the putative phrase to allow us to be sure about the trope; nonetheless, there more than enough certain cases for us to proceed.”⁷³ A lack of evidence is indeed the greatest hindrance to corroboration especially as it pertains to combination. The examples I have provided are relatively straightforward and defensible.

Binomination. An example from Psalm 91:2 is relatively straightforward:

אֶמֶר לַיהוָה מַחְסִי וּמִצְוֹדָתִי
אֱלֹהֵי אֲבֹטָחָבוּ:

will say to the Lord, “My refuge and my fortress;
my God, in whom I trust.” (NRSV)

Broken up across the two lines is the phrase לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֵי “to the Lord my God.”⁷⁴

Binomination also occurs in Ps 5:3 if one recognizes יְהוָה as the last word of verse 3b, as I have done.

הִקְשִׁיבָה לְקוֹל שׁוֹעִי מֶלְכִי וְאֱלֹהֵי
כִּי־אֵלֶיךָ אֶתְפַּלֵּל יְהוָה

Pay attention to the sound of my cry for help, my King and my God
for to you I pray, O Lord.

The name that is divided across the two lines is יְהוָה מֶלְכִי וְאֱלֹהֵי “O Lord, my King and my God.”

Coordination. The divine name might be coordinated in Ps 91:1 Most High/Almighty

יֵשֵׁב בְּסֻתֵּר עֲלִיוֹן

⁷³Ibid., 112

⁷⁴This is more specifically an example of divine binomination; see Ibid., 372-73; cf. Psalm 91:9 “the Lord, Most High”

בְּצֵל שְׁדֵי יִתְלוֹנֵן:

You who live in the shelter of the Most High,
who abide in the shadow of the Almighty (NRSV)

In Ps 5:8 house בֵּית is coordinated with the holy palace הַיֵּכָל.

וְאֲנִי בָּרַב חֶסֶדְךָ אָבוֹא בֵּיתְךָ
אֲשַׁתְּחֻנָּה אֶל־הַיֵּכָל־קֹדֶשְׁךָ בֵּיתְךָ אֲתָדָּ:

But I, because of your great love, can enter your house
I can bow down toward your holy palace in awe of you

In Ps 5:10, a verse that divides into a quatrain, coordinates four human physiological terms

that denote the source of human passions and motives: mouth (פֶּה)/ heart-inward parts

(לִשׁוֹן)/ throat (גְּרוֹן)/ tongue (לְשׁוֹן).

כִּי אֵין בְּפִיהֶם נִכּוֹנָה
קִרְבָּם חַוֹּת
קֶבֶר־פֶּתוּחַ גְּרוֹנָם
לְשׁוֹנָם יַחֲלִיקוּן:

For there is nothing trustworthy in their mouths
their innards are destruction
their throat is an open grave
they flatter with their tongue.

Ps 91:7 exhibits a coordination of numbers 1,000 and 10,000:

יִפֹּל מֵצִדְךָ אֶלֶף
וְרִבְבָּהּ מִיְּמִינְךָ

A thousand may fall at your side,
ten thousand at your right hand,

Psalms 5:9 is an instance of combination, splitting the phrase “your way of justice” across two lines.

יְהוָה נִחַנִּי בְּצִדְקָתְךָ לְמַעַן שׁוֹרְרֵי
הַיָּשָׁר [הַיָּשָׁר] לְפָנַי דִּרְכְּךָ:

O Lord, lead me in your righteousness, on account of my enemies
make straight before me your way.

The phrase is conjectural because it is not attested elsewhere; however, the two words, way (דֶּרֶךְ) and justice (צֶדֶק) are often split across two adjoining lines in biblical Hebrew poetry (cf. Prov 2:8, 8:20; Prov 12:28, Jer 5:28). The possible breakup of the phrase “words of my sighing” might be the trope of combination in Ps 5:2, but there is also the possibility that the terms might be coordinates as well.

אָמְרֵי הָאָזִינָה יְהוָה
בִּינָה הַגִּיגִיה

Give ear to my words, O Lord
consider my sighing.

Line-level tropes

O'Connor explains the function of the line-level tropes by comparing them to the word-level tropes. He writes, “like dyading, the use of syntactically corresponding units pervades language.”⁷⁵ In other words, the correspondence of syntactic units on level of the line as on the level of the word are both pervasive features common to all forms of language, and are not particular to poetry. However, when some of these phenomena have a structural role, they are tropological. On the line-level there are two tropes: Matching and gapping. *Matching*. The trope of matching in *HVS* has its counterpart as parallelism in the Standard Description, or “grammatical parallelism” on level of the line in more recent descriptions.⁷⁶

⁷⁵Ibid., 118.

⁷⁶Cf. Berlin, *Dynamics*, 21-26.

Matching is more precise description than grammatical parallelism because matching refers only to the line-level. O'Connor warns that dyading and the word-level tropes that flow from it must be separated from the line-level tropes; they do not always occur together, but oftentimes do.⁷⁷ Matching lines are those in which the the whole syntactic structure is identical.⁷⁸ Furthermore, in *HVS*, matching is observed only on the surface structure of the line (as opposed to descriptions which include analysis of the deep structure) and is carried out on the level of constituents. In addition, the number and type clauses (verbal or verbless) must match. Word order can vary, as others have noticed under the rubrics of chiasm, and as it occurs in the example of Ps 5:12b-12c

PV 122 לְעוֹלָם יִרְנְנוּ
VP 122 וְתִסָּדֵךְ עָלֵינוּ

forever may they exult
for you will cover over him

Another example where this occurs, this time within in a single-verse couplet is Ps 91:10:

VPS 133 לֹא־תֵאָנֶה אֵלֶיךָ רָע
SVP133 וְנִגַּע לֹא־יִקְרָב בְּאֶהְלֶיךָ :

no evil shall befall you,
no scourge come near your tent. (NRSV)

Gapping. The trope of gapping is a simplification or ellipsis of an element in one line that is understood in the other. Gapping often occurs with matching, but not always.⁷⁹

⁷⁷O'Connor, *HVS*, 119.

⁷⁸Ibid., 391-92.

⁷⁹Ibid., 120. Various tropes can and do appear in the same lines. From the other examples given, overlapping of tropes occurs in Ps 5:3; 91:1; 91:7.

Psalm 91:7 contains an example of gapping and matching: the verb נפל in Ps 91:7a is gapped out of the second line 7b. When the gapped verb is inserted, then the lines match.

יפל מצדך אֵלֶיךָ
וּרְבָכָה מִיְמִינֶךָ

A thousand may fall at your side,
ten thousand at your right hand, (NRSV)

No more instances of gapping occur in Psalms 5, 91, and 140, but another example from the Psalter is Ps 132:4 in which the verb נתן is gapped out of verse 4b.

אֶם־אֶתֶּן שְׁנַת לַעֲיֵנִי
לַעֲפָעַפִּי תִנוּמָה:

I will not give sleep to my eyes
or slumber to my eyelids (NRSV)

Supralinear-level tropes

Syntactic dependency. The trope of syntactic dependency describes a case in which “an independent clause line and any lines dependent on it, be they clause or phrase lines, are said to be interdependent.”⁸⁰ The psalms selected for this study (5, 91, 140) contain many examples of dependency: Ps 5:5-6a:

כִּי לֹא אֱלֹהִים חֲפִיץ רָשָׁע אֶתָּה
לֹא יִגְרָךְ רָע:
לֹא־יִתְיַצְּבוּ הוֹלָלִים לְגִגְד עֵינֶיךָ

Because you are not a God who delights in wickedness,
an evil person will not be able to dwell with you;

⁸⁰Ibid., 129.

the boastful will not be able to stand before your eyes.

Mixing. The trope of mixing is a quatrain-like structure, in which the first two lines modify and depend on the second two lines. Mixing does not occur in Ps 5, 91, or 140, but it does occur in Ps 106:47

הוֹשִׁיעֵנוּ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ
וְקַבְּצֵנוּ מִן־הַגּוֹיִם
לְהוֹדוֹת לְשִׁם קְדֹשְׁךָ
לְהַשְׁתַּבַּח בְּתִהְלֹתֶךָ:

Save us, O Lord our God,
and gather us from among the nations,
that we may give thanks to your holy name
and glory in your praise. (NRSV)

Gross Structure

The structure and limits of larger units of poetry remains a matter of debate. No consensus has been reached among scholars regarding the larger units of poetry.⁸¹ Working within the Standard Description of Hebrew poetry or a modified version of it, some research has focused upon the areas of acrostics, where boundaries are clear, and that has been extrapolated into notions of literary units in non-acrostic biblical poems.⁸² O'Connor mentions one other method that can be used to determine gross structure in non-acrostic

⁸¹ A brief survey of the problem, with discussion covering both literary criticism and biblical criticism, see David W. Cotter, *A study of Job 4-5 in the light of contemporary literary theory* (SBLDS 124; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992) 90-96; for a detailed discussion of over four-dozen scholars who have addressed this issue since the nineteenth century, see Pieter van der Lugt, *Cantos and Strophes in Biblical Hebrew Poetry: With a Special Reference to the First Book of the Psalter* (Leiden: Brill, 2006) 1-66.

⁸² e.g., Gray, *The Forms of Hebrew Poetry*; David Noel Freedman, "Acrostics and Metrics in Hebrew Poetry," *HTR* 65 (1972): 367-92; Patrick W. Skehan, *Studies in Israelite Poetry and Wisdom* (CBQMS 1; Washington: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1971).

psalms, the poetic lines of the poem itself. However, since consensus regarding the lines of verse in Hebrew has remained a matter of debate, its use as a means to determine gross structure has been minimal. There is yet another approach which seems to have gathered more support in recent times. Perhaps due to the fact that the poetic line remains an occasion for debate, this approach determines the larger poetic units based primarily on sense. It is not necessarily a new idea; for example, it was advocated by James A. Montgomery in response to C. C. Torrey, who rejected the idea of stanza and strophe divisions.⁸³ A prime proponent of this approach is Watson.⁸⁴ Another proponent is Eric D. Reymond, whose recent contribution in the area of biblical poetic research is his book *Innovations in Hebrew Poetry*.⁸⁵ He rejects all arguments for particular divisions based upon minor or intermittently occurring formal/structural elements in favor of recognizing unit divisions based solely upon their status as sense units identifying “semantics and content.”⁸⁶ O’Connor’s approach in *HVS* differs from these approaches in that his starting point is the syntactic description of the line; neither is it an extrapolation from acrostic poems, nor is it based upon the isolation of sense units. In *HVS*, the structure of the smaller unit determines the structure of the larger unit.

⁸³James A. Montgomery, “Stanza-Formation in Hebrew Poetry,” *JBL* 64 (1945): 379-84.

⁸⁴Wilfred G. E. Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry: a Guide to Its Techniques* (JSOTSup 26; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1984) 161.

⁸⁵One reason I mention Reymond’s *Innovations in Hebrew Poetry: Parallelism and the Poems of Sirach* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2004) is because his research applies modern linguistic approaches to biblical Hebrew verse. He is one of the few who uses O’Connor’s syntactic analysis of constraints regarding the lines of Hebrew verse, but does not comment on O’Connor’s research on the structure of larger units of poetry.

⁸⁶Reymond, *Innovations in Hebrew Poetry*, 11-14. Terrien (*Psalms*, 41) falls back even further upon the idea that strophic structure is an indication of style, and moreover, when strophic structure is not clear, one can consider its literary genre or Gattung; the circularity of his argument becomes apparent when he says “some coherence between architecture and style may be observed.”

One byproduct of the debate is the problem of what to call these variously-sized units of biblical Hebrew poetry. The terms “stanza” and “strophe” are perhaps the most common currently, but with them come the most baggage. Both terms connote metrical units in classical definitions. In modern usage, strophe is used more loosely in non-metrical poetry and approximates a stanza. Another problem is that biblical scholars have used both terms to refer to units that significantly vary in size. Reymond avoids these designations altogether and opts for terms such as “verse paragraph,” “semantic subdivision,” or “sense unit.”⁸⁷ O’Connor’s proposal was to use the term “stave” to refer to what is more commonly called a stanza in biblical circles.⁸⁸ The subdivision of the stave he calls the “batch,” which corresponds to the strophe, but these terms have never caught on.⁸⁹ Watson’s use of the term “stanza” to refer to the larger unit of poetry and the “strophe” as the sub-unit of the stanza seems to have garnered some acceptance, with these designations used roughly in the same way by Fokkelman.⁹⁰ The debate over terminology should not be an impediment, so long as it is clear what type of unit is being considered. It should be noted that both units are essentially the same in terms of their relative size and in how much that size can vary in both *HVS* and the Standard Description. Both sets of terms will be used, O’Connor’s primarily when his approach is being discussed and applied in order to determine the poetic divisions. Again, what is of interest regarding the structure of Psalm 5 is not the length of the stanza (or

⁸⁷Reymond, *Innovations in Hebrew Poetry*, 14.

⁸⁸O’Connor, *HVS*, 455.

⁸⁹*Ibid.*, 457.

⁹⁰J. P. Fokkelman, *Reading Biblical Poetry: An Introductory Guide* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 87, 117.

stave), because it fits either description, nor is it the size of the strophes (or batches). It is precisely where those strophes are divided that will affect the reading of the poem. The advantage of O'Connor's approach is that it is an inductive method, providing one with objective evidence to support the strophic divisions; the added level of objectivity allows one a means to improve upon the far more subjective notion of sense units as the primary basis to determine poetic divisions. The syntactic approach does not necessarily conflict with any other consideration (sense, semantics, content, genre), but only adds a layer of objectivity to the process.

How does the structure of the lines (fine structure) lead to a overall structure of the poem (gross structure)? O'Connor explains, "The core concept of Aristotelian rhetoric, which distinguishes beginnings, middles, and ends, we take as one formulation of a crucial structural principle. For a phenomenon to be discretely defined, its margins (beginning and end, temporally; edges, spatially) must be more marked than its middle."⁹¹ He does not elaborate on this point with much more than a page of discussion, which he provides mainly to substantiate the universality of the simple notion that endings are somehow marked so that one knows one has been reached.⁹² The point of his brevity is his desire is to allow the analysis of the texts to form the basis of evidence, and in his words, to "avoid tarting up the facts too much; indeed to avoid directing the reader's attention anywhere but to the texts."⁹³

⁹¹O'Connor, *HVS*, 424

⁹²Notable studies mentioned in the discussion include Barbara Herrnstein Smith, *Poetic Closure: A Study of How Poems End*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968); and Joseph H. Greenberg, *Universals of Language* (Cambridge: M.I.T. Press, 1963).

⁹³O'Connor, *HVS*, 425.

Having given a brief orientation covering a syntactic description of lines in biblical Hebrew verse, along with an introduction to the phenomena of troping, I can now turn to the text of Psalm 5 and show these features have led to the batch divisions I have identified.

A Syntactic Analysis of Psalm 5—Gross Structure

The psalm is most commonly divided into five strophes that alternate between the psalmist, who is aligned with the just or righteous on one hand, and his evil enemies on the other. Terrien's division of strophes is typical: I. Moaning of the poet (vv. 2-4), II. Abhorrence of Fools (vv. 5-7), III. Love of God for the Poet (vv. 8-9), IV. Punishment of Fools (vv. 10-11), V. Rejoicing of Poet (vv. 12-13).⁹⁴ This five-part division conforms to the standard form-critical category. Dahood explains that the psalm is "usually classified as an individual lament comprised of five strophes which alternately contrast the just with the wicked."⁹⁵ Rather than observing a five-part structure, my syntactic analysis suggests a four-part division of the poem.⁹⁶

Psalm 5: 1 Stave of 30 lines, 4 batches

Batch a: 2a-4b, 6 lines

Batch b: 5a-8b, 8 lines

Batch c: 9a-10b2, 6 lines

Batch d: 11a1-13b, 10 lines

⁹⁴Terrien, *The Psalms*, 102-03; likewise, Craigie, *Psalms 1-50*, 85-86 maintains the same strophic structure: I. A prayer that god would listen (vv. 2-4), II. Evil persons may not enter (vv 5-7), III desire to worship (vv 8-9) IV. rejection of wicked vv 10-11), V. prayer for protection (vv 12-13). Cf. also Craig C. Broyles, *Psalms* (NIBC 11; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Paternoster Press, 1999). who also adheres to the same five-part structure, which carries over as well into the NRSV and NAB.

⁹⁵Dahood, *Psalms*, 29.

⁹⁶John Goldingay in his recent commentary (John. Goldingay, *Psalms 1-41* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2006), 125-27) has supplied a batch structure similar to mine; the only difference is that his first strophic break is at the end of verse 3 whereas I have placed it at the end of verse 4.

As I mentioned previously, the heavy lines appear at the seams of each batch. With the exception of batch a, which begins the poem, each batch begins with a heavy line, either class III or IV. With the exception of batch c, each batch ends with a heavy line. There are a couple of places where heavy lines occur in the middle of a batch. This is not uncommon, but it does make one examine other structural elements of the poem in order to determine the breaks. The most difficult break to determine is at the end of batch b. Lines 7b, 8a, 8b, and 9a are all heavy lines, and 8a, 8b, and 9a are not troped as well. There are essentially two choices: one could recognize a break at the end of 7b, which would be supported grammatically by the disjunctive *waw* in 8a. The other option is to recognize a break at the end of 8b. This latter option, which I find more convincing, is supported by the shift to imperatives in the following verse (line 9a); thus batch c begins with an imperative as do batches a and d.

The troping of the lines is the other structural element that determines the batch breaks. Lines that are linked together by troping typically do not cross the boundaries of the batch. In Psalm 5, the clustering of multi-troped lines within a batch reinforces the batch divisions that have been identified thus far by line type alone. As for the specific tropes, there is one occurrence of the word-level trope of repetition in v. 4 with בִּקְרָה. There are several instances of the word-level trope of coloration (binomination and coordination). The recognition of the trope of coloration is somewhat subjective, simply because there is often a lack of evidence. It is not easy to prove the existence of a word pair or that a group of related words belong in a coordinated set if the words themselves are rare, as they often are in poetry. The appearance of verbal forms of אָזַן and בִּין in parallel lines (v. 2) constitute an

instance of coloration (specifically, coordination). This observation is supported by the appearance of these verbal roots in parallel lines in Job 37:14. In the case of Psalm 5, the lines which I suspect are coordinated also exhibit one or more other tropes: syntactic dependency and/or matching. Consequently, I have not necessarily sought to prove every case of coloration because of the difficulty involved and because the gross structure of the poem can be ascertained without it.

In addition to coloration, the two other tropes that predominate are the line-level trope of matching and the supralinear-level trope of syntactic dependency.⁹⁷ It is the latter which has a greater impact on the structuring of the poem. O'Connor explains, "The most unobtrusive and least remarked way of giving coherence to a passage of Hebrew poetic discourse is simple syntactic dependency."⁹⁸ The break between 10b2 and 11a1 is apparent due to the fact that the previous four lines, 10a1, 10a2, 10b1, and 10b2, are all class I lines linked together by the trope of syntactic dependency (and possibly with the trope of coloration). Line 11a1 is a heavy line, which is then followed by seven class I lines. Furthermore, lines 10a1, 10a2, 10b1 are connected together in batch c by the trope of matching, and likewise lines 11a2, 11b1, and 11b2 are also brought together by matching. These lines in batch d, and additionally line 11a1, are further connected by the trope of syntactic dependency. In addition to the syntactic features, several grammatical features also suggest the batch breaks that I have identified, mainly through the patterning of verbs. For example, batches a, c, and d both begin with an imperative, or a string of imperatives.

⁹⁷A basic definition of syntactic dependency: "an independent clause line and any lines dependent on it, be they clause or phrase lines, are said to be interdependent (O'Connor, *HVS*, 129)."

⁹⁸*Ibid.*, 409.

Syntactic dependency is achieved in this psalm through the multiple instances of the particle **כִּי**.⁹⁹ Along with several other grammatical elements, the particle **כִּי** guides the rhetoric of the poet, and drives the sense drama in this psalm. Each instance of **כִּי** is used to highlight the contrast between the righteous poet and the evil enemies. In batch a, the poet uses beseeching language that implies audible prayer. The verb **הִגִּיגִי** in 2b, in parallel with **הִאֲזִינָה** in 2a (coordination), is a word that suggests audible prayer in the form of anguished speech. Likewise, he asks Yhwh to pay attention to the sound of his cries for help (**לְקוֹלִי שְׁוֹעִי**), which is again something that is vocalized. The crux of the poet's pleading comes in line 3b, with the **כִּי** which is causal, making the line syntactically dependent on 3a. The poet asks Yhwh to listen because he is praying to him, and he further provides the reason why: Yhwh is his King and God. Lines 3a and 3b are further linked with the trope of coloration, with the binomes of **וְאֵלֹהֵי**, **מֶלֶכִּי**, and **יְהוָה** occurring in parallel.¹⁰⁰

The first **כִּי** clause in line 3b contrasts with the second **כִּי** in 5a. The first **כִּי** associates the poet to Yhwh in a positive way, while the second **כִּי** clause relates Yhwh negatively to the evil person (5b). Not until later in the poem does one learn the evil person is to be identified with the psalmist's enemies (9a). Like the first instance of **כִּי** in 3b, the second instance in 5a constitutes a case of syntactic dependency. Line 5a, beginning with a

⁹⁹Regarding the particle **כִּי** in subordinate clauses, cf. IBHS §38, especially §38.4 for its use to form causal clauses.

¹⁰⁰Notice that my lineation does not agree with the MT; with textual support from the LXX, I have placed **יְהוָה** at the end of verse 3 rather than at the beginning of verse 4.

causal כִּי, is syntactically dependent upon 5b, and possibly 6a if one considers the 5b and 6a to be a compound sentence with two independent clauses. Because of Yhwh's disposition against wickedness, the evil person cannot dwell (לֹא יִגְרֶה) in Yhwh's presence, and the boastful cannot stand (לֹא יִתְיַצֵּב) before him.

The use of כִּי and the resultant cases of syntactically dependent lines occur three more times in the poem (10a1, 11b2, and 13a). Likewise, contrast persists between the the psalmist and his enemies. The first and the last (3b and 13a) highlight the positive association between the poet and Yhwh, while the middle three (5a, 10a1, and 11b2) highlight the negative association between the evil enemies and Yhwh. The drama does not entail a conflict between the poet and his enemies; rather, the rhetoric centers on the poet's ability to approach Yhwh, and his enemies inability. It is in this context one can further piece together the concepts of divine protection within this psalm.

In two places in the poem, the poet suggests that the drama of who is able to approach Yhwh unfolds in a temple setting. The most direct indication is in lines 8a and 8b, a case of coloration in which the coordinated pair of house (בֵּית) and holy palace (הֵיכָל) occur in parallel lines.¹⁰¹ More veiled are lines 4a and 4b, which suggest a possible sacrifice to be offered. Though there is not enough evidence in the psalm to determine a possible *Sitz im Leben*, the imagery does allow one to acknowledge a Temple setting, at least within the drama that unfolds within the psalm. Lines 4a, 4b, 8a, and 8b form an extended parallel. At the end of batch a, after pleading for Yhwh to listen, the poet is confident that he will be able

¹⁰¹This word-pair also occurs in Ps 27:4 and 65:5.

to approach in the morning; and at the end of batch b, he is confident, because of Yhwh's love, that he can enter his house (8a). In contrast, the evil person cannot approach Yhwh. He, being associated with wickedness and the evildoers (פֹּעַלֵי אָוֶן), is hated by Yhwh (6b). In this psalm, the ability to approach Yhwh is predicated Yhwh's love. By extension, the morality of the poet, as it contrasts with the wickedness of the enemy, is perceivable, but not at the forefront. The ability to approach Yhwh is not determined so much by specific moral acts (although the righteous are mentioned in line 13a); rather, the ability to approach Yhwh belongs to those whom Yhwh loves, and those who love him (12b).¹⁰²

Overall, there is no significant realignment of the stophes that initiates an entirely new interpretation of the poem. However, the realignment does produce some subtle shifts in one's perceptions of this psalm. Instead of alternating batches between the psalmist and his enemies, my batch structure contrasts psalmist with his enemies within batches b,c, and d. It frames the dramatic flow into perspective such that it is not a back-and-forth contest between the psalmist and his enemies; rather, the drama centers on who can approach Yhwh. The poet insists that he, allied with the righteous as among those who are loved by Yhwh, can approach and thus find protection in his house. He is confident that Yhwh his king will easily destroy any enemy that comes near, as it is so vividly depicted on Egyptian temple iconography.

¹⁰²Cf. Psalm 15.

Divine Protection in Psalm 5

The idea that there is a struggle between the psalmist and his enemies is present in the psalm in the sense that the lines of the poem open with the psalmist pleading in prayer. But for the most part, this conflict is secondary. The primary clash is between Yhwh and the enemies, as has been revealed by the strophic analysis. The image of the Yhwh destroying the enemies in the psalm and depiction of the king smiting his enemy in Egyptian iconography mirror one another. Both artistic representations judge the conflict as no contest. The king wins with ease. Both detail the immense superiority of the king over his enemies. In Egyptian art, it is with the sheer size of the king; in the psalm it is by the absence of any description of a struggle. The poet displays a profound confidence in Yhwh as his king.¹⁰³ Other psalms recount the mighty acts of Yhwh in order to evoke confidence. The poet of Psalm 5 evokes confidence in the opposite way—the absence of any depiction of conflict suggests Yhwh’s victory is not in question. Instead, the poet, with more poetic flourish than in any other part of the poem, details the depravity and danger of the the enemy. The graphic description of the enemies has the effect of heightening the sense of the king’s power. Even though the enemies are fierce, they are still easily destroyed by the king.

This emphasis of the king’s power *vis-a-vis* a greater enemy threat also has its counterpart in the iconography. In the depiction of Ramses III from Medinet Habu (**plates V and VI**), he smites not just one but many simultaneously.¹⁰⁴ In commenting on an ostrakon

¹⁰³Contrast the unchallenged confidence in Psalm 5 with Psalm 74 in which the poet struggles to believe in God his King after the destruction of the Temple, yet still voices confidence.

¹⁰⁴Shaefer (“Das Niederschlagen der Feinde,” 173-76) detects this development in the motif at the close of the pyramid period.

depicting Ramses III (**fig. 3.16**), Keel suggests that this a graphic way to depict the idea of chaos.¹⁰⁵



Figure 3.16. Ostracon; Rameses III (1197-1165 B.C.E.). After Keel, *Symbolism*, illus.

399.

In Psalm 5, the magnification of the enemy is achieved poetically by two quatrains of short lines, one quatrain in batch c and one in batch d. The first quatrain is verse 10. Lines 10a1, 10a2, 10b1 are verbless clauses, led by a **כִּי** clause in 10a1, they are syntactically dependent upon 10b2, a verbal clause (*hiphil* inf.). One could argue that this is a case of coloration (coordination) as well. The appearance of the various parts of the body naturally pair together (mouth, gut, throat, and tongue), and the often used description of enemies in the psalms as liars as they are in this psalm (v. 7) also suggest that they are coordinated. However, aside from the description of the lines in the syntactic approach, it is obvious that

¹⁰⁵Keel, *Symbolism*, 295.

these lines are parallel, and the cadence of these four short lines certainly heightens the sense of their destructive deadly force. It would leave one with a great sense of fear if it were not for the four lines that follow. In a structure similar to the previous verse, the poet calls upon Yhwh to make them suffer the fate of their guilt (11a1). It is a result of their own offenses (11b1), and their own schemes (11a2). Like the previous quatrain in verse 10, the four lines of verse 11 are troped with syntactic dependency. In chiastic arrangement, the **כִּי** appears in last line of verse 11, whereas it occurs in the first line of verse 10.¹⁰⁶ The poet reveals no hint of concern regarding these enemies or the chaos they represent.

The poem makes clear that the enemies' fate is not exclusion from Yhwh's presence in a general or abstract sense (11b1), it is exclusion specifically from Yhwh who is present in his house or palace (v. 8). This idea becomes more clear when one moves beyond a consideration of the iconographic image of the king smiting the enemy *per se* to consider as well how the media on which the image appears also contributes to its significance. Of the many types of media the motif of the king smiting his enemy appears, it is the appearance of this image on Egyptian temple walls and precincts that approximates most closely the drama that unfolds within the poem and with it the symbolism that the poet's words convey. In addition to the photographs already discussed (**Plates V-VI**), several more pictures of the motif of the king smiting his enemy depicted upon ancient Egyptian temples allow one to imagine what it was like to approach one of these holy places in ancient times (**Plates VII-**

¹⁰⁶Given the fact that biblical poetry is pervasively chiasmic, this is just one of many chiasmic structures in the poem. To give one more immediate example, the final two batches in which these quatrains occur are chiasmically structured, alternating ab/ba between the psalmist and the enemies in batch c, and the enemies and the righteous in batch d.

IX). Richard Wilkinson summarizes the significance of the symbolism of Egyptian temple art, including the smiting motif we have been considering. He writes, “Throughout most of the New Kingdom as well as at other times, specific examples of the king’s military and hunting exploits were represented in great detail on the outer walls and courts of royal and divine cult temples. In all periods, however, the function of these scenes is largely symbolic and apotropaic, providing visual examples of the defense of the temple against its enemies—the forces of chaos which existed beyond the sacred precinct.”¹⁰⁷ Upon approaching the temple, one is greeted with the image of the king smiting the enemy. It is a symbol of security and protection to those who are on the side of the king on one hand, and a sign of doom to all who appose the king on the other. One might only see this as merely a form of ancient propaganda, which no doubt is true. Yet, one must allow for the possibility that as in the mind of the faithful Egyptian, these images of the king smiting the enemy evoked same sort of sentiment about approaching the house of Yhwh that the poet expresses in Psalm 5.

Considering the function that the psalm itself might have had in ancient Israel leads one to issues that concern the form critic and to an area beyond the scope of this study. However, one comment must be made in reference to the form-critical studies of protection that were reviewed in chapter 1. Contrary to the categorization of Psalm 5 as a lament of the individual, one commentator, Craig C. Broyles, has instead suggested that the psalm connects instead to a “liturgy of temple entry.”¹⁰⁸ He notes corresponding elements between Psalm 5

¹⁰⁷Richard H. Wilkinson, *The Complete Temples of Ancient Egypt* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2000) 46.

¹⁰⁸Broyles, *Psalms*, 57.

and two other psalms that he regards as typical “entrance torahs,” Psalm 15 and 24.¹⁰⁹ These elements include mainly items I have already noted: (1) the temple setting (cf 15:1, 24:3 with 5:8); (2) ability to stand before Yhwh (cf. 24:3 with 5:5); (3) the question of who can *dwell* with Yhwh (5:4) or in his abode (15:1) is answered: (4) yes, for the doer of righteousness (15:2) and no, for the doers of iniquity. The man of blood and *deceit* is destroyed (5:7) whereas the one who does not swear *deceitfully* is welcomed in (24:4). Finally, the doer of righteousness is blessed by Yhwh (cf. 24:5 with 5:13). The suggestion that Psalm 5 might have a liturgical connection to entering a house of worship comports well with the imagery and symbolism of the psalm as I have interpreted it.

Cover and shield, and Conclusion

In the final analysis, the images of protection that stood out at first—the notion of covering, the image of the shield—turn out to be secondary and supportive to the main theme. The notion of covering, although not entirely clear, can be inferred within the context as a reference the house or Temple of Yhwh. The concept of Yhwh’s house or Temple being a source of covering or shelter is more apparent in other psalms and sheds light upon its use in Psalm 5.¹¹⁰ Further study of Yhwh’s house or Temple might allow one to be more precise about sheltering themes in the Temple, but it is a complicated subject and ultimately exceeds the scope of this chapter. At the very least, the meaning of the terms “house” and “temple,” understood in most basic and ancient sense as the palace of the king, is unambiguous in Psalm 5. I will leave the subject of shields (and their iconography) in general for the chapter

¹⁰⁹Ibid.

¹¹⁰Cf. Ps 27:4-6, 61:5

on Psalm 91 which has several references to them. However, I will mention that the shield metaphor might be a veiled reference to divine warfare, which has antecedents in the *Chaoskampf* myth, the closest parallels of which to the psalms are Canaanite.¹¹¹

The possibility that Canaanite and Egyptian influences are both present in Psalm 5 does not negate the thesis that the overarching conceptual framework of the psalm is Egyptian in origin. One reason is that some Egyptian influences upon ancient Israel are thought to have been mediated through Canaanite channels, so one should expect both societies to have an effect. The second reason can be addressed by returning to the concept of constellations that was introduced previously in chapter 2. To review, a “constellation” refers to a central theme centered around one or more individuals or individual motifs interacting in a specified situation, and further, constellations are the building blocks of myth, which can appear in either a narrative or non-narrative form. I up to now have avoided using the term “constellation” and instead have used more conventional terms like “motif,” “theme,” or “image” when referring to the king smiting his enemy. However, what I have been arguing all along is that the Egyptian constellation of the king smiting his enemy is the conceptual framework behind Psalm 5. Setting aside the peculiar mythology that surrounds this constellation in an Egyptian symbol system—a system based upon a number of myths specific to Egypt—I am suggesting that only the constellation, the basic situation of the almighty king who smites his enemy, has its counterpart the Psalm 5, and has found its own

¹¹¹One of the most pressing issues is the dearth of evidence linking shields to the panoply of weapons used in divine warfare. For a survey of the textual (as well as some of the iconographic) evidence, see Nicolas Wyatt, “Arms and the King: The Earliest Allusions to the Chaoskampf Motif and their Implications for the Interpretation of the Ugaritic and Biblical Traditions,” in *Und Mose schrieb dieses Lied auf: Studien Zum Alten Testament und zum Alten Orient* (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1998) 833-882, and Steven W. Holloway, “KTU 1:162 and the offering of a shield,” *UF* 30, (1999): 353-361.

place in the symbol system of ancient Israel. Furthermore, labeling the motif of the king smiting his enemy as a constellation and not simply a metaphor opens up an avenue to consider the ways it is unique to the psalms in ways that mere literary categories cannot express. The narratives that surround the basic constellation in the psalms are unique and varied, but most importantly, they belong to a symbol system unique to ancient Israel.

CHAPTER 4

PSALM 140

While the topic of divine protection in the previous chapter on Psalm 5 was driven by the psalmist's exclamation, "My King and my God," to study the Egyptian image of the king smiting his enemy, with special attention to its appearance in Egyptian temple iconography, the question of "King" arises as well in Psalm 140, but this time the king in question would be of the human variety. Similarly, the shift from temple motifs to themes of hunting and warfare move the loci of activity away from the deity's residence to his actions on the battlefield and to the protection of a battlefield warrior—perhaps a king?

While this chapter aims to present a reading of Psalm 140 as a complete poem, one line from of the poem will receive most of the attention:

סִכַּתָּה לְרֹאשִׁי בְיוֹם נֶשֶׁק

you have covered my head on the day of battle

Although the line (8b) is located in a passage of the psalm (vv. 7-8) that attracted the attention of Eaton, who cites it as evidence that the psalm is clearly royal, my interest is different.¹ Eaton saw in these lines a relationship that could only involve a king and his god,

¹John H. Eaton, *Kingship and the Psalms* (SBT 2nd. Series 32; London: S.C.M. Press, 1976), 64.

that the very words spoken to Yhwh in these lines could only befit a king. This old debate over the identity of the “I” in the psalms is worthwhile, but not one in which I wish to engage. My intent is to study the content of these lines, specifically v. 8b, in light of the iconography of the ancient Near East. The results of the study will confirm Eaton’s contention that the psalm is royal, not in the form-critical sense of a royal psalm, but rather the research will indicate that the source of the imagery and metaphor upon which the poet draws comes from the royal domain.

The structure of this chapter is similar to the previous one. A translation of Psalm 140, including textual and grammatical notes, will be presented first. The translation will be followed by a lexical and iconographic study of סכך and Psalm 140:8, which contains the key literary image of protection in the poem. There is no need to repeat the material explaining O’Connor’s syntactic approach (found in the excursus in chapter 3). The chapter will proceed directly to a literary study of the psalm that has been informed by insights gained from a syntactic analysis of the poem. The chapter will conclude with a close reading of the poem that integrates insights from both text and image.

Psalm 140: Translation and Textual Notes

1. *To the director: a Psalm of David*

2. Rescue me, O Lord, from evildoers,

from those who are violent, protect me:

3. who plan evil things in their hearts,

who constantly stir up² wars,

4. who sharpen their tongues like a serpent,

venom of a viper³ is under their lips. *Selah*

5. Keep me, O Lord, from the hands of the wicked,

from those who are violent, protect me:

who plot to trip my feet.⁴

²The root is rare: the MT has יְגַרְרִי from גָּרַר II “to attack, treat with hostility.” The Versions reveal some difficulty with this word. LXX has παρατάσσοντο πολέμους “they prepare wars/battles;” 11QPs^a reads יְגַרְרִי from גָּרַר “to stir up strife.” Some have emended the MT accordingly (eg., BHS, *HALOT*, NAB Notes).

³עֲכָשׂוּב is a *hapax legomenon*. In Mishnaic Hebrew it is a type of spider, but in Arabic sources, it is the poisonous horned viper or adder. Latter is preferred by *HALOT*. Goldingay (Psalms, 3.641) emends the MT to עֲכָבִישׁ (spider, a rare word which also appears at Isa 59:5, Job 8:14, conj. in Job 27:18 for כְּעָשׂוּב) which appears in 11QPs^a and the Targums. The complete absence of spiders in the OT or on any iconographic sources suggests the interpretation of a of the term as a type of viper. In contrast to spiders, snakes regularly appear in ancient Near Eastern iconography.

⁴Literally “push down my feet;” LXX has “to trip up my steps” (lit. overthrow my steps). Based upon the verse that follows, this is likely an image of being netted or trapped.

6. Arrogant ones have hidden a trap⁵ for me.

Villains⁶ have spread a net along the road.

Snares they have set for me. *Selah*

7. I have said to the Lord, “You are my God.

Give ear, O Lord, to the sound of my pleading.

8 O Lord, my Lord, strength of my salvation,

you have covered my head in the day of battle.

9. Do not grant, O Lord, the desires⁷ of the wicked.

⁵Regarding the various sorts of traps, see Keel, *Symbolism*, 89-95.

⁶A repointing of וְחַבְלִים “and ropes” to a participial form of the verb חָבַל “to act corruptly” (*Qal*), “to ruin” (*Piel*) is correct. There is no need to emend to מְחַבְלִים (*Piel*) as does Kraus. A mere repointing the word is more justified, either to Gunkel’s (*Die Psalmen*, 594) וְחַבְלִים (*Qal*) or Driver’s (“Textual and Linguistic Problems of the Book of Psalms,” *HTR* 29 (1936) 192; cf., also G. R. Driver, “Reflections of Recent Articles,” *JBL* 73 (1954) 136) וְחַבְלִים (*qattāl*). Dahood (*Psalms* (3 vols.; AB; Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1966) 3.302) follows Driver; Allen (*Psalms* [3. vols.; WBC; Waco, TX: Word Books, 1983] 3.264) and Barkde, *BHS* follow Gunkel, as I do. For Gunkel, Driver, Dahood, Kraus, and Allen, a primary consideration is maintaining a parallel with נְאֻמִּים. In addition to maintaining parallelism, Dahood also takes into consideration the chiasmic structure. The syntactic approach does not necessarily demand that וְחַבְלִים be repointed, but doing so makes the lines 6a1 and 6a2 syntactically match. The trope of matching, however, only occurs if one does not move the *athnah* forward to רִשְׁתָּה, as the others have done for metrical reasons. (Translations that repoint include NAB, NEB, REB, NET; those that do not include MT, RSV, KJV, ASV, NIV, JPS.

⁷מִצְאוֹתֵי is a *hapax legomenon* which appears to be derived from the root צָוָה (cf. *HALOT* which glosses Niphal: be beautiful, lovely, *Piel*: wish, desire, *Hithpael*: crave, and gives as its absolute form מִצְאוֹתִים, and מִצְאוֹתֵי as a variant). Related noun forms include צָוָה, desire, longing and תַּצְוָה longing, wish, yearning, sighing, craving. However, מִצְאוֹתֵי requires a slight emendation in order for it to match; E.g., *HALOT* suggests the possibility that one should instead read מִצְאוֹתֵי; Barkde suggests possibly emending it to מִצְאוֹתֵי (with a *lcs* suffix) due to LXX: μὴ παραδῶς με, κύριε, ἀπὸ τῆς ἐπιθυμίας μου ἀμαρτωλῶ “do not deliver me, O Lord, out of my desire, to the sinner.”

Do not promote his plan, O Exalted.”⁸ *Selah*

10 As for the heads of those who encircle me, may the harm of their own lips cover them.⁹

⁸There is an apparent corruption of the text at this point, making the reading of the text difficult from v 8b through v. 9. One way to resolve the difficulty has been to repoint the verb יְרוּמוֹ (*Qal* imperfect 3 m. pl.) to יְרִימוֹ (*Hiphil* imperfect 3 m. pl.) and transpose it after סָלָה (cf. NRSV), or to omit סָלָה and join יְרִימוֹ to the following verse (cf. NAB). This suggests that the placement of סָלָה was a later addition and was an error. Another type of solution has been to treat the misunderstanding of סָלָה as one source of the corruption. Gunkel's (*Die Psalmen*, 595) emendation is: אֶל-יְרוּמוֹ סָלָה רֹאשׁ מְסָבִים. “nicht mögen meine Verächter das haupt ringsum erheben.” The main emendation is סָלָה to סָלִי “ones who despise me,” a pl ptc +1cs suffix from root סָלָה, “*verachten*” (the root is glossed in *HALOT* as: *Qal* “treat as worthless,” *Piel* “throw away”). Kraus' (*Psalms*, 3.520) emendation follows Gunkel; Kraus translates: “May those who despise me round about not rear their heads!” Some have offered readings suggested by the Versions. Bardke (*BHS*; cf. *HALOT* which is in agreement) also emends the יְרוּמוֹ (understood as a *Qal* imperfect 3 m. pl.) to יְרִימוֹ (*Hiphil* 3 m.pl; occurring in in 2 Mss) and, following the LXX, places אֶל before verb, but reads the verb as part of v. 9b, and not what follows: “do not grant their desires, lest they be exalted.” Dahood takes יְרוּמוֹ as a vocative “O Exalted” from the root *ym* (Dahood, *Psalms*, 3.301); cf. also Mitchell J. Dahood, “The Composite Divine Name in Psalms 89, 16-17 and 140, 9,” *Biblica* 61 (1980) 277-278). Another emendation including a vocative is Allen's (Allen, *Psalms 101-150*, 3.265). He suggests an interesting emendation of יְרוּמוֹ אֶל-תִּפְקֶן to אֶל תִּפְקֶן יְרוּמוֹ, in which he has transposed the *resh* with the *qoph*, eliminated the *yod*, and pointing the resulting verb either as a *Qal* or *Piel* of *prq* “O God, tear them away.”

Of all the possibilities, Allen and Dahood's proposals treat the text of the MT with the least amount of emendation to the consonantal text. In contrast, the other proposals that have required more deliberate changes to the MT favor the LXX, which itself appears to have preserved a glossed-over version of what is preserved in the MT. I do not favor the emendations that require the transposition or removal of סָלָה. Gunkel's suggestion, that סָלָה was misunderstood is not convincing, and his emendation produces a grammatically awkward clause as well. The most likely scenario is that misunderstanding arose out of the use of rare vocabulary coupled with an unusual usage of the vocative. The placement of the סָלָה at the end of verse 9 seems to be correct, and argues against the emendations involving its removal or transposition. A number of grammatical and poetic features confirm that the סָלָה is properly placed. Grammatically it is acceptable and even preferable: the line following (10a) begins with a *casus pendens*, which not only is common, but also seems to be a deliberate stylistic choice by the poet, who uses the same construction again in v. 12. In addition, the way I interpret יְרוּמוֹ—as vocative concluding an extended quotation—supports my contention that the strophic break has been rightly marked with סָלָה. This break is further confirmed by the change in the verbs that follow the vocative from second to third person, and thus it adds even more strength to the argument that the third batch of the poem is an extended quotation.

⁹Reading the *Qere*.

11. May burning charcoal be made to tumble upon them.¹⁰

Into the fire may it¹¹ throw them.

In the pits they will never rise.

12. As for a man of tongue—may he not be established in the land.

As for a man of violence—may evil hunt him to the pens.¹²

13. I know that the Lord will carry out the cause of the afflicted,
the justice of the needy.

14. Only the righteous will praise your name.

The upright will dwell in your presence.

Psalm 140:8 “You Have Covered My Head in the Day of Battle”

In the poem, which as a whole can be taken as a plea for divine help and protection, there are several specific instances when the poet expresses his desire for divine help (e.g., positively: “rescue” in v. 2, “keep” in v. 5, and negatively: “do not grant” in v. 9, etc.).

¹⁰ Reading the *Qere* (*Niphal* 3pl; the *Ketiv* is *Hiphil*) with John Goldingay, *Psalms* (3 vols.; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008) 3.642; Some emend to יִמְטֵר, H impf. 3ms, “may he rain” a denom vb from מָטַר rain; Bardke also suggests reading it as a *Niphal* 3m.pl. of מָטַר. A number of translations (eg. NAB, NET) read יִמְטֵר as “let him rain down.” See NAB notes, which also cite Ps 11:6. Translations which appear to read the *Qere*: NRSV, NIV, REB, NJB.

¹¹The “it” referring to the “harm” in v. 9b.

¹²Lit: “blow upon blow” from כָּדַד thrust, urge (cf. *HALOT*). LXX has διαφθοράν (n. “decay, rot,” i.e., return to organic matter).

However, as far as the imagery of divine protection is concerned, the central literary image of the deity providing protection is found in verse 8:

סִכְתָּה לְרֹאשִׁי בְיוֹם נֶשֶׁק
you have covered my head on the day of battle

Aside from psalmist's plea that God "give ear" (v. 7), this acknowledgment of God's action in v. 8 represents the only locution that approaches the possibility of an anthropomorphism.

The line is unambiguously an image of war. What I am concerned with is what it means for a deity to cover one's head in battle. How would this expression have been understood by those who were among the first to encounter it in this psalm—regardless of the cultic or religious setting in which it was used? Should it conjure a concrete image, or is it meant to remain an abstract concept? Does the poet want one to imagine the concept in multiple ways?

The source of the image is certainly military, but within the military frame, a precise image of protection on the battlefield is elusive. Specifically, the question that arises when one considers this line is, what does it mean to "cover" (סִכְתָּה) one's head in the context of a battle? Most modern translations translate it as I have with the generic term "cover" (e.g., ASV, KJV, NRSV). Some translations have been more bold, interpreting סִכְתָּה using the image of a shield (e.g., NIV, REB, NET), but the most daring translation of all has been

“helmet” (e.g., NAB).¹³ Regarding the latter two options, either words in English can be taken either literally or figuratively, as perhaps was the intention of the English translators. However they are taken, these translations still represent a rare instance when a modern translation offers a somewhat more concrete image than the original Hebrew, which usually is the more concrete language. As these issues are considered, the discussion will proceed in two parts: first is a word study of סִכָּךְ, its use in the MT and how it compares to usages in cognate languages. Second is a study of the iconographic data, comparing the biblical image to what occurs in ancient Near Eastern art.

A Study of סִכָּךְ

When comparing the Akkadian (*sakāku*) and Arabic (*sakka*) cognates, the basic meaning of the root סִכָּךְ is that of impeding or prevention of passage.¹⁴ In biblical Hebrew, it is often used to communicate the idea of screening or shelter, both literally and figuratively, and usually—but not always—to protect against various external elements. The root has applications in the art and architecture of temporary (tabernacle) and permanent (temple) structures. Both verbal (*Qal* and *Hiphil*) and nominal (מִסְכָּךְ) forms of the root are used to

¹³NAB: “My revered LORD, my strong helper, my helmet on the day of battle”

¹⁴This root occurs in my other psalms (Ps 5:12 and 91:4). In all three instances, BDB places them in סִכָּךְ I: “overshadow, screen, cover.” In Psalm 5, it is a general word for protection, but without clear and direct imagery connected to it, except for the image of the shield in the next line, and on the basis of the whole psalm, a connection to the Temple. In Ps 91:4, the covering is done with “pinions” i.e., with wings.

name the screens or curtains of the tabernacle: 1) the gate, 2) the entrance, and 3) the holy of holies.¹⁵ In connection to the tabernacle and later to the Temple, the cherubim, with their wings in particular, cover protectively the Ark of the Covenant (Exod 25:20, 37:9, 40:3, 1 Kgs 8:7, 1 Chr 28:18). The term can be used to describe a function of nature. For example, in Job 40:22 the lotus tree covers the Behemoth, providing shade for it. With the verb being used reflexively, Yhwh covers himself with anger and then simultaneously screens himself with cloud through which prayer cannot penetrate (Lam 3:43-44). In Ps 105:39, Yhwh spreads a cloud for a cover (לְמָסָךְ), a reference to the wilderness wanderings of the Exodus.

There is at least a second homophonic root סכך. On this the dictionaries agree; however, there are slight differences over its principle meaning. Take for example, the words סֶךְ “thicket, refuge, lair” and סִכָּה “thicket, booth.” The feminine סִכָּה most frequently designates the temporary booths built for the annual harvest festival (cf. Lev 23:33-44, Neh 8:14-18). In BDB, both are listed as noun forms from the verbal root סכך II, which is glossed as “weave together” with Late Hebrew cited as evidence. Three separate roots, however, are proposed in *HALOT*, with the nominal forms סֶךְ and סִכָּה related to סכך III. *HALOT* sites late (Mishnaic) Hebrew as evidence for both סכך II and III, but the idea gleaned from it with regard to סכך III is not so much “to weave” but “to cover” or “bedeck a roof with twigs or matting,” along the lines of the Arabic root *skk* VIII “to be thick with

¹⁵See Exodus 26-27, 35-36, 38-40.

leaves.” סכך II in *HALOT* is glossed “weave” or “shape,” and it includes the two verbal forms cited in BDB under סכך II (Ps 139:13 and Job 10:11). In other words, the verbal forms categorized in BDB under סכך II are in agreement with *HALOT*’s סכך II, but the nominal forms in BDB under סכך II are associated with a different root סכך III in *HALOT*.¹⁶ The distinguishing of BDB סכך I and II into three separate roots in *HALOT* brings into focus the protective nature of סכך III in *HALOT* and the peculiarity of the uses of סכך II. Concerning the word סִכָּה, the idea of basic protection comes into focus, whether it be literal shelters for cattle (Gen 33:17), or warriors (2 Sam 11:11; 1 Kgs 20:12, 16), or in vineyards (Isa 1:8).

In the Psalms (and with poetry in general), it is more difficult to discern literal and figurative usages.¹⁷ Likewise, one must consider usages ranging from the concrete to the abstract. In Isaiah 4:6, the shelter is supernatural. A סִי is a lion’s lair in some passages (Ps 10:9 cf. Jer 25:38), and in others it is Yhwh’s (Ps 76:3). In the former, the poet uses סִי to produce a literal image of a lion lurking in a hideout as a metaphor to describe the wicked. In the latter, סִי is entirely metaphoric from the start as way to depict Yhwh’s dwelling. An important example with respect to Psalm 140 is found in Isaiah 22:8, because it takes place in

¹⁶A factor that further hinders clarity with regard to the number of verbal roots and their meanings, it must be noted that there is at least one root of שִׁכַּח, the meanings of which correspond to סִכַּח.

¹⁷E.g., Ps 27:5. A further complication in this verse is the Ketiv בִּסְכָה “his hiding place” and the Qere סִכָּה “a booth” found in some Mss.

the context of war; is used here in a negative sense: destruction came when **מִסֵּף** over Judah was removed. With **מִסֵּף** having no concrete metaphor, it is a remarkably abstract notion in this verse.

In particular, the verbal forms of **סָכַךְ** are of primary concern for two reasons: 1) the verbal forms in the Psalms tend to be more vague than the nominal forms with respect to what is actually the form of cover, and 2) verbal forms of **סָכַךְ** occur in all three psalms under investigation in this study (Pss 5:12, 91:4, and 140:8). These occurrences provided some of the basis for initially choosing these three psalms for the study. The desire to interpret more clearly what the particular expressions with **סָכַךְ** mean in each of these psalms is in part what drives the research. In Psalm 5, cover (v. 12) was linked to the house or Temple of Yhwh as the source of protection, and not so much to a single protective instrument, namely, the shield in the following verse (v. 13). This interpretation was based largely on the reading of the poem as a whole. Even then, the particular form or shape that the covering might involve was left undefined. However, after more research is presented on Psalms 140 and 91, there might be more evidence to form a preliminary hypothesis. I did not focus as much on the meaning of “cover” in Psalm 5 simply because it was not as central to the poem, whereas it is perhaps the most important concept in Psalm 140 with respect to divine protection.

As in Psalm 5, the interpretation of Psalm 140:8 will depend largely upon the interpretation of the whole poem, as opposed to considering primarily what “covering” might mean in

isolation. Nevertheless, there is of necessity some need to isolate the image when considering possible iconographic congruencies. The literary image as a whole—that of covering one’s head in battle—provides several areas in which a study of ancient Near Eastern iconography will be of help. But as one explores the implications of the visual evidence, one must not forget what the word study has revealed. After considering all of the examples, the following becomes clear: when divine or semi-divine beings are depicted as providing protective cover (using a form of סכך), that protection is manifested either concretely with either wings or clouds or as an abstraction.

Divine Protection in the Day of Battle: Iconographic Comparisons

Proceeding from what is clear, namely that the phrase **בְּיוֹם נִשְׁקָן** (v. 8b) situates an aspect of divine protection in the context of warfare, it will be useful to consider the iconographic sources in which gods appear with warrior attributes or in which deities are depicted as providing protection in the context of warfare.¹⁸ A survey of the evidence will indicate that the iconographic depictions of gods with warrior attributes have points of contact with the Book of Psalms by confirming a number of warrior attributes associated with Yhwh. However, with regard to Psalm 140, more congruent are other depictions that combine heavenly or celestial motifs with elements of warfare, particularly images in which

¹⁸ Following the parameters I established in chapter 2 regarding the inclusion of sources and their relevance, the discussion will proceed by highlighting the iconographic evidence in Syro-Palestinian contexts dating from the Late Bronze Age to the close of the Persian Period (1550 BCE to 333 BCE), as well as sources linked to the empires which were in contact with the region during the same period of time. Primarily these will be Egyptian and Neo-Assyrian artifacts.

deities are depicted more abstractly, with symbols and emblems, and with fewer anthropomorphic characteristics.

Weapons, Shields, and Anthropomorphic Warrior Deities

While there have been a number of iconographic studies which have dealt with depictions of gods with warrior attributes in Syro-Palestinian artistic contexts, the study most closely related to the Book of Psalms is Martin Klingbeil's *Yahweh Fighting from Heaven*.¹⁹ Previously (in chapter 2), I have summarized Klingbeil's thesis that there are two overarching metaphors in the Psalter: (1) God as warrior and (2) God of Heaven. I will focus on his discussion of the iconographic sources that he connects to the warrior aspects of Yhwh. It is important to note that he does not attempt to reproduce or discuss every single published artifact; rather, he develops a typological presentation of the various types of depictions of deities with warrior attributes. Dealing first with iconographic objects that primarily display warrior attributes—as opposed to objects that display heavenly or cosmic elements—Klingbeil proposes a typology of four basic types: (1) the smiting/menacing god,

¹⁹Martin Klingbeil, *Yahweh Fighting from Heaven: God as Warrior and as God of Heaven in the Hebrew Psalter and Ancient Near Eastern Iconography* (OBO 169; Fribourg: University Press, 1999). Additional studies include, Dominique Collon, "The Smiting God: a Study of a Bronze in the Pomerance Collection in New York," *Levant* 4 (1972) 111-134; Ora Negbi, *Canaanite Gods in Metal: An Archaeological Study of Ancient Syro-Palestinian Figurines* (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University, 1976); and Izak Cornelius, *The Iconography of the Canaanite Gods Reshef and Ba'al: Late Bronze and Iron Age I Periods (c 1500-1000 BCE)* (OBO 140; Fribourg: University Press, 1994). It is worthwhile to note that the focus of Klingbeil's presentation is different from the other studies I have cited. For example, in contrast to his teacher Cornelius, who tries to identify the the specific iconography of the two deities Ba'al and Reshef, Klingbeil is interested in categorizing the iconographical motifs in order that they may be used in comparison to the metaphors he is studying in the Psalms.

(2) god as an archer, (3) god with a spear, (4) god/goddess in arms. The panoply of weapons implemented in the visual materials also occur in biblical sources, particularly in warring scenes that take place in the Book of Psalms and in the Prophets.²⁰



Figure 4.1. Bronze figurine of a “smiting god”; Megiddo; Late Bronze Age. After Keel and Uehlinger, *GGG*, illus. 139.

Figure 4.1²¹ is an example of what Dominique Collon calls “the smiting god,” a class of bronze figurines she studies in relation to an unprovenanced bronze statuette belonging to the collection of Leon Pomerance.²² The statuette is of a striding god brandishing with his

²⁰Cf., Klingbeil’s (*Yahweh Fighting from Heaven*, 29-33) extensive list of weapons, including swords, spears, bows, arrows, etc.

²¹Photographs of the statuette can also be found in: Collon, “The Smiting God,” fig. 2 no. 18. = *ANEP*, fig. 404.

²²“The smiting god” is a term she popularized, but it was R. H. Smith (“Near Eastern Forerunners of the Striding Zeus,” *Archaeology* 15 [1963] 176-183) who first coined it. According to Collon (“The Smiting God,” 130) the “smiting god” motif is related to the royal smiting motif I discussed in Chapter 3 on Psalm 5. She goes on to explain that the Egyptian smiting position (with the Pharaoh), a symbol of victory, was at first confined to Egypt, but in the nineteenth and eighteenth centuries it began to appear in the Levant and Anatolia. However,

right hand a weapon (club or mace) over his head and holding a small figure-eight (Hittite) shield in his left hand. It was found near a shrine in Megiddo in an Iron Age I context (Area BB Stratum V B, ca. 1050-975); however, as Keel points out, it is likely that it was produced in the Late Bronze age but remained in use into the Iron Age.²³ Another Late Bronze Age example from Megiddo (**fig. 4.2**) was discovered in tomb 4 and dates to 1350-1150).²⁴



Figure 4.2. Bronze figurine of a “smiting god”; Late Bronze Age. After Keel and Uehlinger, *GGG*, illus. 57.

Similar to **fig. 4.1**, the individual in **fig. 4.2** is wearing a conical headdress and a short kilt.

Likewise he wields a weapon above his head; however, a notable difference is his square

instead of depicting the Pharaoh (or a ruler), it was used as a way to represent the storm god, who would typically have lightening in one hand and another weapon in the other. Collon maintains that the presence of the enemy was no longer needed in the motif because the image of the deity alone in such a pose was enough to convey power. Furthermore, she rightly argues that the exportation of this motif serves as evidence that there was a tremendous amount of commercial interaction at this time. For more examples of this motif on Anatolia seals, see Edith Porada, *Corpus of ancient Near Eastern seals in North American collections* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1948) pl. CXLVI.

²³Cf., Keel and Uehlinger, *GGG*, 116.

²⁴Cornelius, *Reshef and Ba'al*, 130; Keel and Uehlinger, *GGG*, illus. 57 = Cornelius, *Reshef and Ba'al*, RB 2.

shield, which contrasts with the figure-eight shield in **fig. 4.1**. Collon dates these and all of her examples, of which there are many from the Levant, within the range from 1550 BCE to 1150 BCE; within that range she generally prefers to date them to around the first half of the fourteenth century.²⁵

The identity of the deity depicted in these bronze statuettes is a matter of debate, and certainly one that will not be settled here.²⁶ For the sake of the discussion, I will assume that Cornelius correctly identifies Reshef as the god being depicted in the statuettes.²⁷ My interest in doing so is to engage specifically his argument that the shield in these depictions is a symbol of his protective power. For even if he is right with respect to his identification of Reshef as the god being depicted in the bronze statuette, on a more basic level I do not think

²⁵Collon, "The Smiting God," 128; Out of the numerous objects of smiting gods that have been published, Collon's study includes 36 from the Levant, 10 from Anatolia, 7 from Cyprus, 17 from more distant provenances, and 7 of uncertain provenance. Of the Levantine examples, two more are from Meggido (nos. 16-17) one from Gezer (no.19) and one from Shechem (no. 20). Collon's no. 16 from Megiddo is reproduced as line sketches in Keel and Uehlinger (*GGG*, illus. 57.) and Keel (*Symbolism*, 300).

²⁶Cornelius attempts to establish a methodological process by which one can identify artistic representations of Ba'al and Reshef. Essentially, he attempts to identify the characteristic attributes of each deity by studying the representations of each deity appearing on artifacts that also have a clear textual reference. For example, one has to first consider inscribed stelae from within Egypt to identify Reshef (e.g., Cornelius, *Reshef and Ba'al*, RR7 and RR11), for no inscribed reliefs of Reshef have been found outside Egypt (cf. Cornelius, *Reshef and Ba'al*, 50), and extrapolate those findings to representations which are not inscribed. Edward Lipiński ("Egypto-Canaanite Iconography of Reshef, Ba'al, Ḥoron, and Anat," *Chronique D'Égypte* 71 [1996] 254-262) takes issue with Cornelius' book in his critique. Of the many observations he makes, he argues that there is not conclusive evidence to associate the bronzes of smiting gods with Reshef. The shield as an identifying element often fails with the bronze statuettes because they are often thin, delicate, and have broken off (see. p. 258). As for Ba'al, there is only one source which connects him positively iconographically to an artifact, and that is the famous Mami Stele (cf. *ANEP*, fig. 485). For Cornelius' response to Lipiński's criticism see, Izak Cornelius, "The Iconography of the Canaanite Gods Reshef and Baal: A Rejoinder," *JNSL* 24, (1998) 167-177.

²⁷His determination in these cases is based solely upon the presence of the shield has been challenged (cf. the previous note).

he is on target with his interpretation of the shield in general, including the instances where Reshef's identity is not in doubt.

In order to evaluate Cornelius' argument regarding the significance of the shield, one has to consider artifacts in which Reshef's identity is not in doubt, namely inscribed stelae, which are all located in Egypt (e.g., Cornelius' RR 1-38). In an example (**fig. 4.3**) purchased in Memphis and dating to the 19th-20th dynasties (ca. 1300-1100), one can see him in one of his characteristic poses, striding with weapon in his right hand raised above his head, and a shield and spear in his left. A number of key attributes distinguish him iconographically, but the most important is the gazelle on his forehead. He is wearing a short kilt and the conical white crown. The two streamers that are attached to the crown distinguish him as a foreign



Figure 4.3. Stele; Reshef, from Memphis, 19-20th Dynasties. After Cornelius, *Reshef and Ba'al*, RR7.

deity and so does his Asiatic beard. The inscription designates him as “the great god” as well as a “giver of health.” Inscriptions on other reliefs call him “healer” and “hearer of prayers.”²⁸

Textual sources highlight his negative aspects in addition to those which are positive. Some texts identify him as a god of sickness. For example, in the Ugaritic Epic of Kirta (KTU 1.14 I 16-20), Reshef is associated with an unidentifiable disease that brought death to Kirta’s family. As one who causes death through pestilence or disease, he parallels his Mesopotamian counterpart Nergal, who also at times depicted as warlike and responsible for plagues.²⁹ Cornelius writes, “In the iconographic sources which have been studied it seems that only the one aspect of Reshef is represented, namely the positive aspect of life and healing. He is never shown attacking an enemy, but only his protective aspect is represented as an aggressive figure with raised arm in a menacing way to protect the worshiper and dedicator against all evil, but mostly sickness.”³⁰

It is at this point, one can begin to assess Cornelius’ interpretation of the shield. After arguing that the iconography depicts only the god’s positive aspects, he goes on to say that “it is not without reason that Reshef has a shield as this is used to *protect*. The shield, like the raised hand as a gesture of power, is used apotropaic [sic?] to ward off evil, mostly sickness.”³¹ This interpretation fits into a greater interpretive scheme in which the bronze

²⁸See, Cornelius, *Reshef and Ba'al*, 25, 258, cf. RR 2, 12, 19.

²⁹*Ibid.*, 285; cf. Jeremy A. Black and Anthony Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols of Ancient Mesopotamia: An Illustrated Dictionary* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1992), 135-136.

³⁰Cornelius, *Reshef and Ba'al*, 259.

³¹*Ibid.*

statuettes or images in relief function apotropaically to ward off the evils besetting those who are seeking the protection of the deity. The apotropaic function of the objects is not in doubt; however, I question the specific symbolism Cornelius attaches to the shield. In this case, the shield does not work iconographically as a symbol of protection for deity's patron. In many of the objects in question, the deity carries a very small shield. In **fig. 4.3**, the shield does not appear to be held protectively at all. Instead, the shield is merely part of the god's weaponry he uses to fight effectively. Cornelius is right to point out that the shield functions iconographically to make the god appear more difficult to defeat, and that ultimately heightens the apotropaic function of the object. However, he is overstepping when he isolates the shield as a symbol of protection for the deity's patrons. The shield is merely a protective implement for the deity, whose belligerent disposition as a whole symbolizes protection.³²

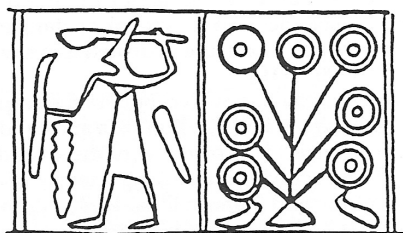


Figure 4.4. Cylinder seal; Lachish; Fosse Temple; Late Bronze Age. After Keel and Uehlinger, *GGG*, illus. 85a.

In addition to the bronzes, deities in the smiting pose are also depicted in miniature art from the Levant. Some examples depict the deity alone in a smiting pose, as does a

³²I have not encountered any iconographic sources where a deity uses a shield to protect his or her patrons, be it an individual, city, or nation. Deities who carry shields use them to fight. The mention of shields as symbols of protection in the texts of the psalms appears to derive from the natural realm: images of human warriors using shields are numerous.

cylinder seal (**fig 4.4**) from the Lachish Fosse Temple dating to the Late Bronze Age.³³ It is also common to find depictions of a deity slaying an animal, either a horned snake or a lion. On another seal from Lachish (**fig 4.5**), a striding god wielding a scimitar in his right hand is about to strike a horned serpent which he is holding with his left hand.³⁴



Figure 4.5. Scarab; Lachish; Ramesside era. After Keel and Uehlinger, *GGG*, illus. 87a.

A similar scene is portrayed on a scarab (**fig. 4.6**) from Tell el-Far‘ah (south), from about the same time period (Ramesside era). Notable differences include the weapon (which places this iteration of the motif in Klingbeil’s “god with a spear” category), the sun over the deity’s head, and the depiction of wings on the deity. In addition to gods combating snakes, there are other animals that are depicted as foes, the most important of which is the lion. On a Late Bronze Age cylinder seal from Beth-Shan (**fig. 4.7**), the deity is striking a lion which he is holding by the hind legs. Similarly, a deity is depicted twice on a Late Bronze Age cylinder seal (**fig. 4.8**) from Tell es-Safi, once slaying a horned snake and once slaying a lion.

³³Cf. Keel and Uehlinger, *GGG*, 76; *GGG*, illus. 87a = Klingbeil, *Yahweh Fighting from Heaven*, fig. 3.

³⁴The seal comes from a Late Bronze Age gale which was reused until Iron Age IIc (720/700-600 BCE); stylistically it belongs to 19th to 22nd Dynasty (Ramesside era, 1295-900 BCE), See Cornelius, *Reshef and Ba‘al*, 171; cf., Keel and Uehlinger, *GGG*, 76.



Figure 4.6. Scarab; Tell el-Far'ah (south); Ramesside era. After Keel and Uehlinger, *GGG*, illus. 87b.



Figure 4.7. Cylinder Seal; Beth-Shan; Late Bronze Age. After Keel and Uehlinger, *GGG*, illus. 88b.

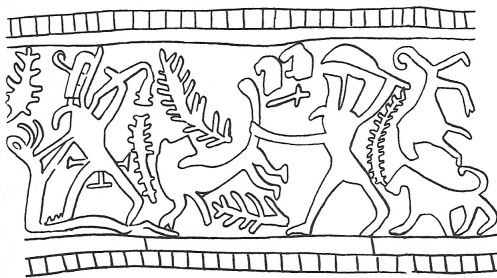


Figure 4.8. Cylinder seal; Tell es-Safi; Late Bronze Age. After Keel and Uehlinger, *GGG*, illus. 89.

As I mentioned earlier, the addition of the enemy complicates the interpretation of the scene. I will begin with what is least controversial: there is no question that the items depict a warrior god, and that it is likely that the snake being slain represents a chaos monster akin to those portrayed in Canaanite and Egyptian mythology.³⁵ The difficulty lies in determining the identity of the warrior god. On the interpretation of this constellation of images, Keel

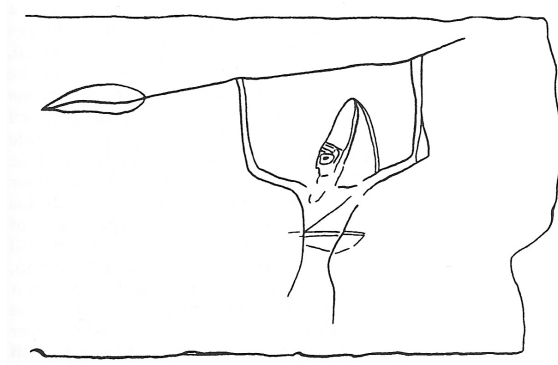


Figure 4.9. Graffiti; Egyptian-Canaanite Temple; Lachish. After Keel and Uehlinger, *GGG*, illus. 86.

(and members of the Fribourg School) is the most confident. In contrast, E. Lipiński maintains a more pessimistic perspective.

As for **figs. 4.5 –4.6**, Keel and Uehlinger assign them to a constellation involving a deity they describe as a “Ba‘al-Seth.”³⁶ An object included in this constellation is an incised graffiti-like depiction found on an Egyptian-Canaanite temple of a deity with raised spear

³⁵cf. Ronald Hendel, “Serpent,” *DDD*, 1404-1412 esp. 1407.

³⁶Keel and Uehlinger, *GGG*, 74; cf. Klingbeil, *Yahweh Fighting*, 184-85.

(fig 4.9). By comparing fig. 4.9 with figs. 4.5–4.6, they infer, based on the similarities in the depictions, that the deity in fig. 4.9 is positioned to spear a serpent. As for the deity itself, Keel and Uehlinger interpret him as a combination of the Canaanite Ba'al who defeats the sea serpent (*lītānu*) and Egyptian Seth who overcomes the Aphophis serpent.³⁷ They write, “By means of the combination of Ba'al and Seth as serpent conquerers, the serpent, an Egyptian symbol of the danger in the dark of night and a Canaanite symbol of the stormy sea, became a symbol of danger in general. The god who could defeat such a creature is treated as savior pure and simple.”³⁸ In an earlier assessment of the Ba'al-Seth, Keel includes another motif in which he associates a winged weather god standing in triumph over lion. He associates the lion with the god Mot.³⁹

Keel and Uehlinger may very well be right in their assessment; however, no consensus has been reached on this identification. Lipiński questions, for example, when critiquing Cornelius' thesis, whether one can even differentiate so clearly between Ba'al and Seth, let alone combine them into such a heroic deity. He cites several of Cornelius' figures

³⁷Keel and Uehlinger, *GGG*, 76.; See also Othmar Keel, Menakhem Shuval, and Christoph Uehlinger, *Studien zu den Stempelsiegeln aus Palästina/Israel III* (OBO 100; Freiburg: Universitätsverlag, 1990) 233-36, 309-21, and esp. Cornelius (*Reshef and Ba'al*, 212) for more on the dragon/serpent slaying motif along with bibliography.

³⁸Keel and Uehlinger, *GGG*, 78.

³⁹Keel, Shuval, and Uehlinger, *Studien zu den Stempelsiegeln aus Palästina/Israel III*, pp. 111-12, figs. 45-48, 77-79. Keel (*Studien zu den Stempelsiegeln aus Palästina/Israel III*, p. 411) was far more ambitious in his earlier assessment when he wrote, “Die Verbindung Seths, des Siegers über die den heilbringenden Sonnenlauf hindernde Apophisschlange, mit Ba'al, der zur Bewahrung des fruchtbaren Landes gegen den schlangengestaltigen Meergott und gegen den löwengestaltigen Mot als Verkörperung der Dürre und des Todes kämpft, ergab eine kohärentere und energiegeladene Verbindung als der Wettergott-Horus.”

(eg., BM 76, 78, 80, 82-84, BM 76 = **fig. 4.6**) as instances where the winged deity displays none of Ba'al's Canaanite characteristics, where only Egyptian motifs appear, and suggests that it might simply be a depiction of Seth or perhaps Ḥoron, the latter of whom is associated with the curing of snakebites in some Ugaritic texts.⁴⁰ Part of the difference in opinion stems from the relative weight these scholars give to textual parallels. Lipiński is much more dependent upon texts than Cornelius, and by extension Keel and the Fribourg School, whose methodologies aims to produce reliable interpretations that can be deduced from iconographic data alone when textual evidence is not available.

Insofar as it relates to the reading of iconography for its uses of symbol and metaphor, I do not think that one must identify a deity depicted in a image with absolute certainty in order for one to make sense of the symbolic import of an image. A prime example of this is **fig. 4.8** where both the snake and the lion appear in one scene. Keel and Uehlinger's interpretation of this image is much more limited. They rightly contend that in the battle against both snake and lion, the deity in the scene is not fighting "against just one natural power but is rather a comprehensive war against everything that is inimical to life."⁴¹ I am perhaps more apt to extend this more limited interpretation of of the warrior god fighting the snake as a general depiction of the work or action of that deity in its essence: the defeat of chaotic forces. Whether that force has its root in the Egyptian mythology of the Aphophis or in a Canaanite version of the *Chaoskampf*, a serpent serves as as a very powerful symbol of that chaos. The resolution of the question of the deities' identity and their related mythology

⁴⁰Lipiński, "Egypto-Canaanite Iconography of Reshef, Ba'al, Ḥoron, and Anat," 260; KTU 1.100

⁴¹Keel and Uehlinger, *GGG*, 78.

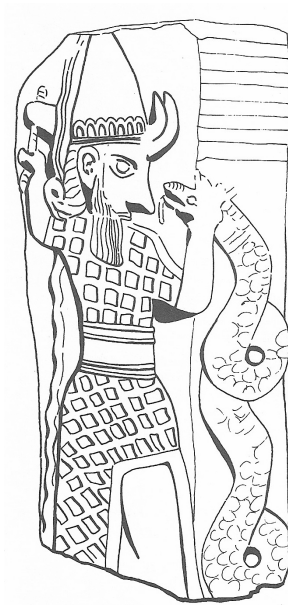


Figure 4.10. Stele; Tell Ashara; Tukulti-Ninurta II (888-884 B.C.E.). After Keel,

Symbolism, illus. 142.

may never be achieved, but a greater appreciation for the power of the serpent as a symbol undoubtedly is reached as one considers the the serpent in its iconographic form.

One of the most intriguing images (**fig 4.10**) is found on the Stele of Tukulti-Ninurta II (888-884 B.C.E.).⁴² The inscription on the stele is heavily damaged, but according to Keel, one is able to connect the image of the serpent to the rebellious inhabitants of Laqē. The stele commemorates their defeat by Tukulti-Ninurta II, represented by the storm deity who slays the serpent. Thus one can see how the serpent serves as a symbol of the chaos posed by one's enemies. In this case, its a king's national enemies who collectively represent the forces of

⁴²Object information: basalt stele, h. 90 cm found near Tell Ashara (Terqa)

chaos.⁴³ With regard to Psalm 140, the question remains: what is the symbolic import of the serpent in v. 4? Without a doubt, the serpent is a metaphor of the psalmist's enemies. One must consider, however, whether that metaphor is drawing merely from the symbolic nature of the serpent's natural characteristics, in this case the deadly power of its poisonous bite, or is there another level at which the symbol has been chosen as a metaphor. Some commentators have related the serpent to the story in Genesis 3.⁴⁴ Some have pointed out the onomonoepic sound of the line of poetry.⁴⁵ The inference drawn from the comparison of the text with the iconography is that the poet just might be hinting at the symbolic import of the snake as an enemy representing chaotic forces *vis a vis* a warrior deity. If this is the case, then it is very subtle, only apparent by considering how warrior deities who are often called to defend his patrons are often depicted slaying a serpent.

The last two of Klingbeil's categories—deities in archery scenes and the god/goddess in arms—date later on in the Iron Age. The motifs are Neo-Assyrian in origin. A seal from Megiddo (**fig. 4.11**) depicts what is likely a god who appears to be hunting *Mischwesen*.⁴⁶ Keel and Uehlinger note the contrast between this type of scene in miniature art and the scenes depicted on Neo-Assyrian monumental art. In contrast to the monuments in which the king's power is on display in war and hunting scenes, they explain that this seal (**fig. 4.11**)

⁴³Keel, *Symbolism*, 107.

⁴⁴Goldingay, *Psalms*, 3.645.

⁴⁵Dahood, *Psalms*, 3.301.

⁴⁶GGG, illus, 282c = Klingbeil, *Yahweh Fighting*, fig. 14.

conforms to many other Neo-Assyrian seals in which “military conflicts...take place in the mythological realms and are intended to show a way to secure cosmic order.”⁴⁷ Though the mythological scenes on seals contrast with the naturalistic hunting and war motifs in monumental art, both types of scenes aim to project a sense of order in the world.

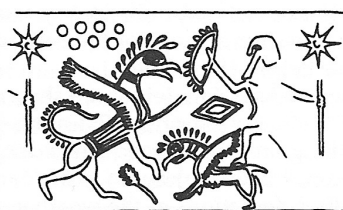


Figure 4.11. Cylinder seal; Neo-Assyrian; from Megiddo; Iron Age II. After Keel and Uehlinger, *GGG*, illus. 282c.

There are several noteworthy differences between the older (Late Bronze-Iron Age I) representations of anthropomorphic warrior deities and the later (Iron Age II) combat motifs influenced by Neo-Assyrian sources. A notable contrast between the objects depicting smiting gods (with or without symbolic enemies) and the divine figures depicted in the Neo-Assyrian hunting depictions is the level of the deity with respect to hierarchy. It appears that the Neo-Assyrian depictions are usually of minor deities, whereas the smiting god and the

⁴⁷Keel and Uehlinger, *GGG*, 290; The motif on miniature art includes scenes of heroic figures hunting with bow other animals (e.g. a bull) or mythical creatures (griffons or other *mischwesen*); contrasts include the king's official seal (the king kills a lion in *GGG*, illus. 278b) and the natural hunting scene on a seal from Gezer (Ronny Reich and Baruch Brandl, “Gezer under Assyrian Rule,” *PEQ* 117 [1985] 46 fig. 6.4) in which a both a human and a gazelle are being hunted simultaneously.

spearing god (with the snake) likely depict major deities.⁴⁸ Keel and Uehlinger report that only four major Neo-Assyrian deities are represented anthropomorphically in Palestinian contexts: the warrior god Ninurta depicted fighting against the winged Anzu Dragon, the weather god Adad, and the goddesses Ishtar and Gula.⁴⁹ The weather god Adad appears as an archer killing a horned snake (Akk: *bašmu*) on a seal from Gezer (**fig. 4.12**), a motif

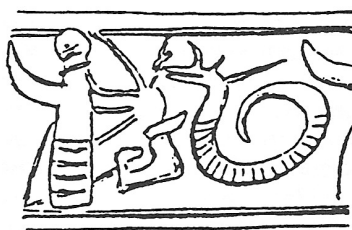


Figure 4.12. Cylinder Seal; Adad and a horned snake; Gezer; Iron Age II. After Keel and Uehlinger, *GGG*, illus. 284b.

that corresponds to Klingbeil's god as archer type.⁵⁰ Finally, the depictions of Ishtar show her not in combat, but in cultic scenes of adoration.⁵¹ These cultic (i.e. non-combat) scenes

⁴⁸ Tallay Ornan (*The Triumph of the Symbol: Pictorial Representation of Deities in Mesopotamia and the Biblical Image Ban* [OBO 213: Fribourg: Academic Press, 2005] 87) argues that these are deities of lesser rank; however, Joel LeMon ("The Iconography of Yahweh's Winged Form in the Psalms" [Emory University, 2007], 44.) believes that Egyptian influences (e.g., the regular depiction of high gods as animals or having mixed human and animal forms) on Syro-Palestinian art keeps one from categorically assigning mixed creatures as lesser deities.

⁴⁹See Keel and Uehlinger, *GGG*, 290-92.

⁵⁰The faience cylinder was mass produced, examples of which have been found in Khorsabad, Nineveh, Nimrud, and Assur (cf. Keel and Uehlinger, *GGG*, 291). Klingbeil (*Yahweh Fighting*, 182-83) argues that in this case the horned snake would be a Canaanite adaptation of Anzu as a representation of chaotic forces.

⁵¹See *GGG* §171, illuss. 287, 288c.

represent the final category in Klingbeil's typology: "the god/goddess in arms," which appears on a cylinder seal from Natanya (**fig. 4.13**).⁵² The scene is typical of the weather god Adad: armed with a bow, quiver, club, and sword, he stands on a bull while two worshippers stand before him with their arms and hands displaying the characteristic signs of adoration.⁵³

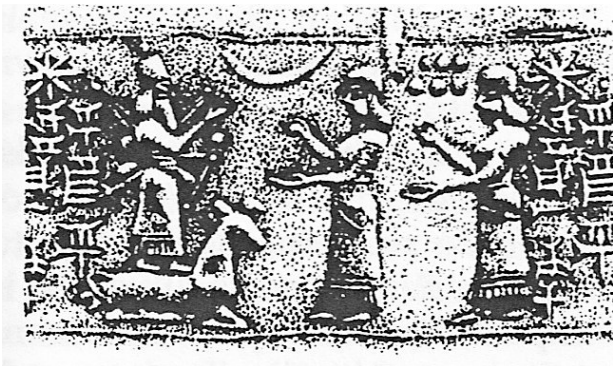


Figure 4.13. Cylinder seal; goddess in arms; Natanya; Iron Age II. After Keel and Uehlinger, *GGG*, illus. 285a.

Evaluation of anthropomorphic warrior god motifs

I have tried to minimize the relevance of disagreement regarding the identification of the particular deities represented in the sources above as it relates to the endeavor to make sense of the symbolism in the depictions. Notwithstanding the enormous contributions the Fribourg School has made with regard to interpreting iconographic sources without a

⁵²*GGG*, illus. 285a = Klingbeil, *Yahweh Fighting*, fig. 22. Klingbeil (*Yahweh Fighting*, 190) reports that the seal in the Neo-Assyrian style was a surface find dating 9th-8th centuries BCE.

⁵³See Klingbeil (*Yahweh Fighting*, figs. 23-27) for other examples from more distant archeological contexts.

dependency upon texts, identification will remain a difficult task as long as there is a dearth of corroborative texts, and as long as scholars do not agree on how to evaluate the textual evidence when it is available. These factors should be a caution against proposing interpretations that too strongly correlate the attributes of a particular god to one's understanding of Yhwh. With regard to interpreting the symbolism of the artistic data, the warrior motifs discussed above offer some important comparisons as well as contrasts to Psalm 140 and other psalms that depict Yhwh as a warrior.

The typology of warrior gods in the survey above display motifs that are common to many biblical psalms, but the typology does not offer images congruent to the depiction of divine protection in Psalm 140. Mainly this is due to the fact that the warrior gods in the artifacts above are portrayed as belligerent, aggressive, or attacking an enemy rather than defending a benefactor. Nowhere are warrior gods depicted ready to protect with defensive tactics. The only defensive weapon that appears is the shield, which is most likely related to the depictions of Reshef. However, I have found fault with Cornelius' interpretation that the shield is a symbol of the protection the deity provides to his benefactors. Rather, I have argued that the shield is part of the god's weaponry he uses to protect himself.

In Psalm 140, like in Ps 5, there is no description of a battle between Yhwh and the enemies or any details on the weapons he would use. The single battle scene in Psalm 140, which is a recollection of Yhwh's past intervention in battle, lacks any details of a fight. Protection in the form of covering the head in v. 8, if it should be envisioned at all concretely, is not in the form of a shield. The idea that the protective covering could be

envisioned as a shield wielded by an anthropomorphic god is simply not represented in the iconographic record in a way that is congruent with the image in Psalm 140. Attention must

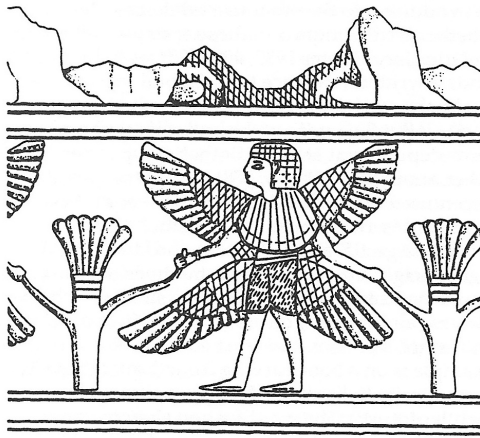


Figure 4.14. Bone carving; Hazor; 8th cent. B.C.E. After Keel and Uehlinger, *GGG*, illus. 210.

now turn to how divine protection was more typically represented in a tangible way in Syro-Palestinian art, namely with the use of wings.

Protective Wings and Anthropomorphic Deities

In Syro-Palestinian art, there are depictions of deities that exhibit purely protective properties. What is common to all of these depictions is the appearance of wings as the key element that symbolizes protection. However, even though the most tangible way divine protection is depicted iconographically is with the use of wings—whether a deity is depicted anthropomorphically, theriomorphically, or purely symbolically—wings do not automatically equal protection. As LeMon has demonstrated, several different functions of wings can be

discerned.⁵⁴ Reading the images contextually is imperative. For example, a warrior deity with wings is shown above slaying a serpent (**fig. 4.6**), but the wings in this context do not signal protection; instead, they signify the divine nature of the fighting figure. However, there is another motif commonly occurring in the Iron Age in which what is likely a Ba'al figure appears as a youthful deity with protective wings. In contrast to portrayals of Ba'al as a warrior, in this motif, there is no sign of warfare or weapons. The youthful god's wings on an ivory (**fig. 4.14**) found in a private home from Hazor emphasize his divine nature.⁵⁵ However, objects belonging to the same group of artifacts (representations of youthful winged deities) depict a similar youthful god with his wings folded forward to about a 45 degree angle in a protective posture.⁵⁶

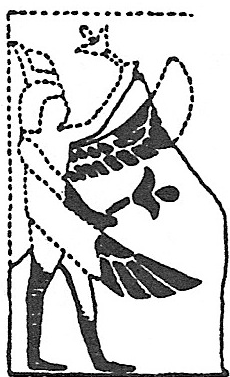


Figure 4.15. Ivory; Samaria, Iron Age IIB. After Keel and Uehlinger, *GGG*, illus. 212a.

⁵⁴LeMon, "Yahweh's Winged Form," 65-66.

⁵⁵An ivory bone carving, 8th cent (first half), from Hazor, str VI; see, Keel and Uehlinger, *GGG*, 185.

⁵⁶These types of portrayals were widespread throughout Iron Age IIA Samaria, but do not occur in Judah. See, Keel and Uehlinger, *GGG*, 195.



Figure 4.16. Inscribed Israelite Seal; 8th cent. B.C.E. (found in a Carthage tomb. After *GGG*, illus. 212b.



Figure 4.17. Seal; Tel el-Far'ah (south); Iron Age IIB. After Keel and Uehlinger, *GGG*, illus 213.

The wings' celestial aspect is an important component in Keel and Uehlinger's interpretation, namely that the Ba'al figure is related to a larger class of objects displaying winged protective powers associated with the sun, rooted in Egyptian theology.⁵⁷ They argue that the concept of Ba'al as a warrior deity begins to transform as it comes into contact with

⁵⁷Keel and Uehlinger (*GGG*, 251) explain that "winged creatures of every kind, falcons, uraei, scarabs, etc., are the most important iconographic symbols during the ninth and eighth centuries that help one to identify this Phoenician/Israelite monument group. The wings stress the celestial aspect (see above, illuss. 210-213) as well as the idea of protection. In combination with the sun god, they convey the idea of a mysterious connection between unapproachable distance and effective protection."

Egyptian concepts of the sun god.⁵⁸ Keel and Uehlinger associate the winged figure holding vegetal elements in **fig. 4.14** with **fig. 4.17** in which the figure has a falcon head and a sun disk above him. They contend that this figure exhibits the development of Baʿal into a solar(ized) “Lord of Heaven,” arguing in part that an intermediate stage of this development is evident with the scarab beetle (a symbol of the sun god), which becomes interchangeable with the youthful winged god.⁵⁹

LeMon professes agnosticism regarding the identity the youthful figure. He instead focuses on the idea that style might indicate something of substance when it comes to the meaning of the wings as a symbol of protection. Observing the similarity of style in which these wings are depicted on the youthful deity, LeMon comments that this protective stance (protective posture of the youthful god) compares with several of the objects in which winged creatures serve as representations of various deities (specifically the visual attributes of the winged uraeus and Horus falcon).⁶⁰ Keel and Uehlinger and LeMon—concerned with same group of artifacts produced in by Phoenician/Israelite specialty crafts in which protective wings occur on many creatures: falcons, uraei, scarab beetles, hybrid creatures—all draw attention to the strong Egyptian influence, particularly with regard to the sun.⁶¹

Protective Wings in Egyptian Art

⁵⁸Ibid., 198.

⁵⁹See Ibid., §120, §151- §153.

⁶⁰LeMon, “Yahweh’s Winged Form,” 62.

⁶¹For more examples of these motifs, see Keel and Uehlinger, *GGG*, illuss. 244-261.

Given the fact that the survey of art thus far has identified wing imagery as the primary source for symbols of protection in Syro-Palestinian iconographic sources (some of which has yet to be discussed), it is important to consider what these symbolic elements meant in the cultures from which they originated. The following section includes a brief discussion of solar and avian imagery in ancient Egypt, with special attention given to the theological implications of divine protection. Out of the vast repertoire of Egyptian art, focus will be placed upon the the three most relevant images: the the winged sun disk, the Horus falcon and the Nekhbet vulture.

The Winged Sun Disk

In Egyptian iconography, the winged sun disk is a combination of the sun disk and the wings of the Horus falcon. Of the two symbols, the sun-disk is the most frequently used as well as the one which is the most varied iconographically. Wilkinson attributes this to the fact that “the sun was the most important element in Egyptian religion throughout most of Egypt’s history” and that “many of the major Egyptian gods were solar deities.”⁶² Of the many associations of the sun, the ones which have been encountered in the Israelite/Phoenician specialty crafts include: the falcon, round disk, winged disk, beetle scarab, disk with uraeus, lion, sphinx, griffon, plants, lotus, etc. The symbol of the winged sun disk itself bears witness to the syncretism of the god Horus and the sun god Re, which took place starting in the Fourth Dynasty when the reigning king first adopted the title “the son of Re.”

⁶²Richard H. Wilkinson, *Reading Egyptian Art: A Hieroglyphic Guide to Ancient Egyptian Painting and Sculpture* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1992) 129.

This was further solidified in the fifth dynasty when members of that dynasty built the first open-air solar temples adjacent to the necropolis of Abusir.⁶³ As for the development of the symbolism and its ongoing significance in Egypt, Wilkinson writes:

Beginning in the Fifth Dynasty and concurrent with the rise in importance of the solar cult, a sun disk was placed between the two wings which then became the attributes of the sun god Re. The winged disk could still be associated with Horus, however, especially under the name of Behdety, the god of the southern city of Edfu and as the composite deity Re-Herakhty. In the later periods the image of the winged sun disk occurs universally as a protective symbol above the entrance doors and temples and their inner rooms, and also along the central axis of the temple roof as a symbol of the daily procession of the sun. Winged disks also appear on round-topped votive stele of the Saite and Late Periods which were erected along processional ways as well as in shrines and tombs.⁶⁴

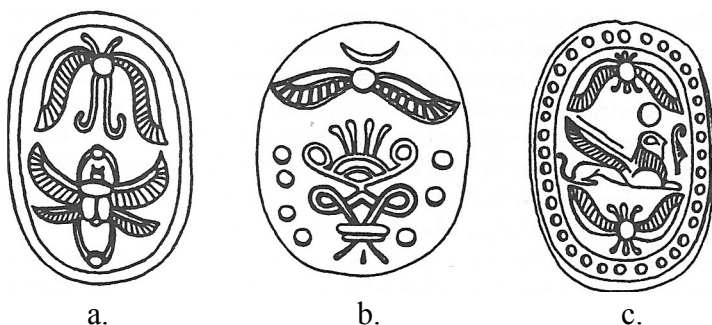


Figure 4.18. Winged sun disk scarabs; from Samaria (a) and Shechem (b, c); Iron Age IIB. After Keel and Uehlinger, *GGG*, illus. 258a-c.

Proceeding from the observation that a number of Syro-Palestinian winged sun disk scarabs (**fig. 4.18a-c**) reflect Egyptian artistic styling, LeMon suggests that likewise the symbolism may be compatible as well to Egyptian thought. Noting the similarity in style (e.g., the articulation of the feathers and the curving arch of the wingspan) between the seals

⁶³Maya Müller, "Re and Re-Horakhty," *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt* 3 (2001) 123.

⁶⁴Wilkinson, *Reading Egyptian Art*, 101.

and several funerary stelae dating to the beginning with the New Kingdom and later, LeMon suggests that they symbolize the the winged sun disk in its general protective and authorizing function.⁶⁵ LeMon further develops the concept of protection symbolized by the winged sun disk by differentiating images in which overarching wings symbolize the heavens from those in which they symbolize protection. LeMon contends that the wings depicted on the funerary stele of the high priest of Onnuris, Amenhotep (**plate X**) are not symbols of the heavens *per se*, but represent the protection of the sun god in terms of divine sanction and authorization. Instead of arched wings stretching across the entire scene as a symbols of the heavens, the wings extend only over the gods and the throne name of the king (Thutmose IV), whose name appears in a cartouche directly below the winged sun disk.⁶⁶ The two cartouches to the right and left, with a uraeus facing each, both contain the king's "Son of Re" name. The wings, however, do not extend to cover the high priest Amenhotep. LeMon explains that this convention of protective wings was at one time limited to gods and royalty, but in an example dating to the Third Intermediate period (**plate XI**), the symbol of protection is used in connection to a non-royal figure, "Deniuenkhons, mistress of the house and musician of Amun."⁶⁷ The winged sun disk in these stelae contrast with the winged sun disk in the famous Sphinx Stele (**fig. 4.19**).

⁶⁵LeMon, "Yahweh's Winged Form," 117-122.

⁶⁶Ibid., fig. 3.20; regarding the interpretation of **fig. 4.20**, cf. Wilkinson, *Reading Egyptian Art*, 101.

⁶⁷LeMon, "Yahweh's Winged Form," 120, fig. 3.21.

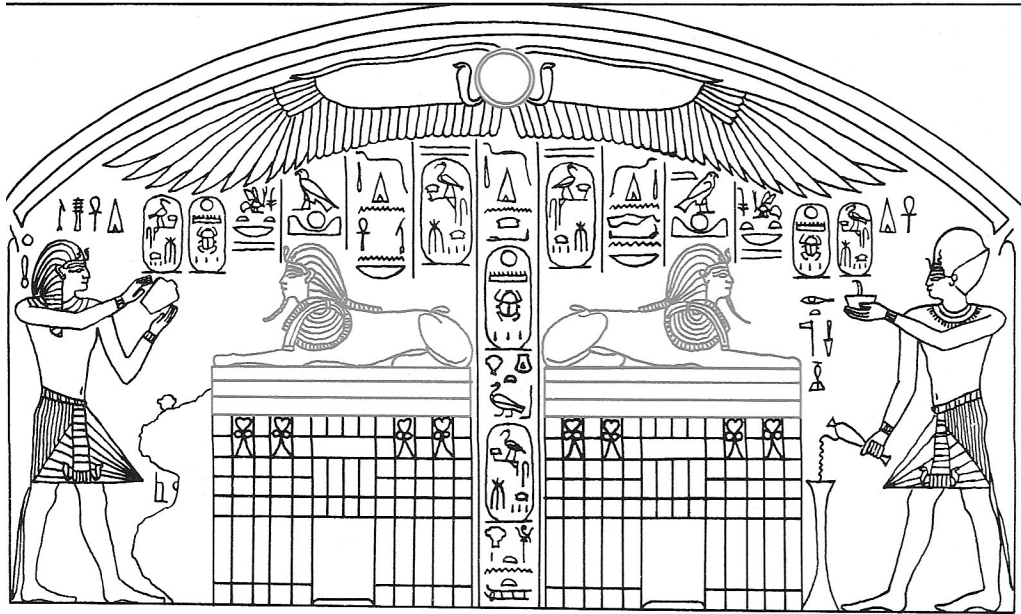


Figure 4.19. Sphinx Stele of Thutmose IV with “horizon” composition, Giza, Eighteenth Dynasty, after Wilkinson, *Reading Egyptian Art*, illus. 3 p. 134.

The association of the winged sun disk with the heavens is accentuated by the sign for sky (N1) arching alongside of it. Wilkinson explains how the composition itself symbolizes the sign for the horizon (N27), wherein the two sphinxes represent the mountains from which the sun disk emerges.⁶⁸ The element of protection in this composition is found in the two sphinxes who guard the beginning and end of the sun’s daily journey. The Sphinx stele attests to a most ancient Egyptian conception that the heavens were thought of as the wings of the great falcon god Horus.⁶⁹ This conception of the cosmos is also evident on an ivory

⁶⁸Wilkinson, *Reading Egyptian Art*, 135.

⁶⁹Cf. Keel, *Symbolism*, 25-26. and Wilkinson, *Reading Egyptian Art*, 101.

comb dating to the First Dynasty (**fig. 4.20**) in which the Horus falcon rides on his barque as it traverses the heavens, which are depicted as wings.

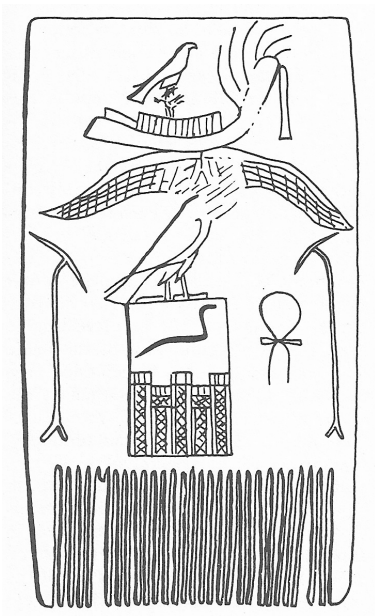


Figure 4.20. An ivory comb of King Djet, First Dynasty, after Keel, *Symbolism*, illus. 19.

Horus and Horus-Re: Royal Ideology

A more ancient title than “son of Re” is the king’s Horus name, which goes back to the first king of the First Dynasty: the king’s name was Horus Aha “The Fighter.” These two names together suggest that the king is a manifestation of both deities.⁷⁰ Iconographically, the notion that the king is a manifestation of Horus is evident in the statue depicting a Horus as a falcon with its wings wrapped around the head of King Khefren (**plate XII**). Interpreting

⁷⁰Cf. John Baines, “Kingship, Definition of Culture, and Legitimization,” in *Ancient Egyptian Kingship* (ed. David B. O’Connor and David P. Silverman; Probleme der Ägyptologie 9; Leiden: Brill, 1995) 9.

the significance of composition, Robbins writes, “This image is a concrete expression of the notions that the king is both under the protection of Horus and the manifestation of the god on earth.”⁷¹ Wilkinson interprets the statue similarly, and compares it to another statue (**plate XIII**) from the Thirtieth Dynasty in which the Horus falcon dwarfs the image of the king.⁷²

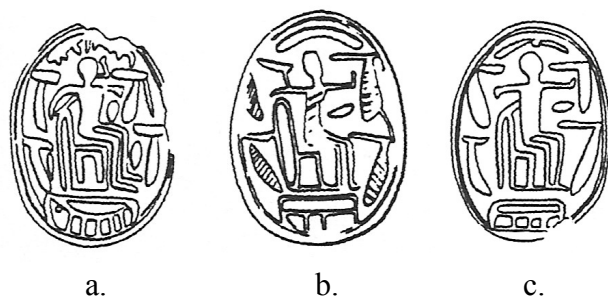


Figure 4.21. Scarabs of an enthroned figure; Iron Age IIA. After Keel and Uehlinger, *GGG*, illus 158a-c.

The iconographic motif of the Horus falcon protecting the Pharaoh is well represented in Syro-Palestinian art dating to the tenth-ninth centuries.⁷³ The motif combining the pharaoh, the Horus falcon, and the winged sun disk appear on many seals including one from Tel Zeror (**fig. 4.21a**), one from Gezer (**fig. 4.21b**), and one from Tell el-Ajjul (**fig. 4.21c**). In this constellation the Horus falcon, Re, and the king are brought together in a tightly constructed

⁷¹Gay Robins, *The Art of Ancient Egypt* (rev. ed.; Cambridge: Harvard University, 2008) 51; cf., Wilkinson (*Reading Egyptian Art*, 83) who also interprets the falcon in this statue as protective. He also cites the statue from the 30th dynasty in which the falcon is 5 times larger than the pharaoh.

⁷²Wilkinson, *Reading Egyptian Art*, 83.

⁷³cf. Keel and Uehlinger, *GGG*, 136-137; numerous examples come from southeastern Levant (Achzib, Megiddo, Taanach, Tel Zeror, Gezer, Tell el-Ajjul, and Tell el-Yehudiyeh); for a detailed study of the motif see Othmar Keel, “Der Pharao als Sonnengott: Eine Gruppe ägypto-palästinischer Siegelamulette des 10./9. Jahrhunderts,” in *Studien zu den Stempelsiegeln aus Palästina/Israel IV* (OBO 135; Freiburg: Universitätsverlag, 1994).

but potent combination signifying the divine protection of the king.⁷⁴ It encapsulates a key facet of Egyptian royal ideology that emerged beginning in the fourth century with syncretism of Re and Horus. The motifs involving Horus' protection of the king are common in Egyptian iconography (**fig 4.22**). However, these images—specifically ones in which

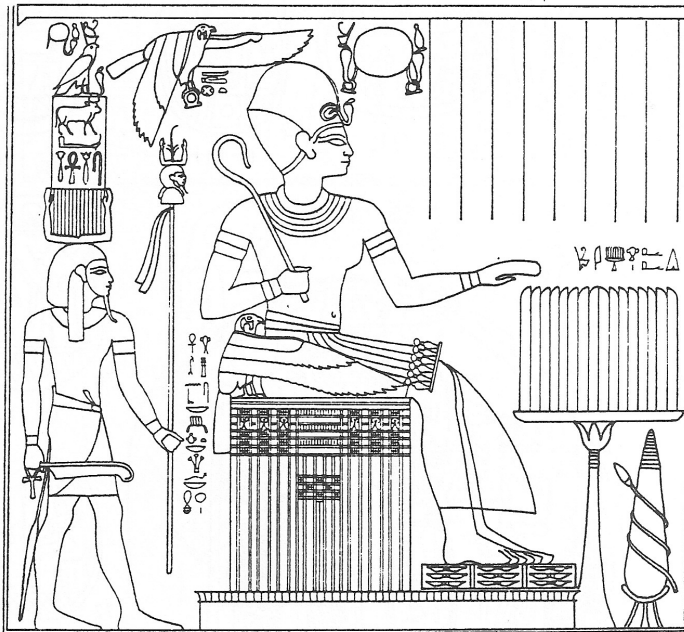



Figure 4.22. Wall relief of Seti I; Abydos; 19th Dynasty. After Keel, *Studien zu den Stempelsiegeln aus Palästina/Israel IV*, abb. 54, p. 131.

protecting wings cover the king—occur outside of clear contexts of warfare. Iconographic representations of divine protection of the king in warfare is provided by another deity who is represented by another bird: Nekhbet and the vulture.

⁷⁴Keel later revised his position on the human figure in the scene. Earlier he and Uehlinger (Keel and Uehlinger, *GGG*, 137) speculated that it was likely a representation of the sun god, but later Keel (Keel, “Der Pharaon als Sonnengott,” 116) argued that the human figure was the pharaoh.

Nekhet: Royal Protection in Warfare

There are at least five different species of vultures in Egypt, but the one that appears most frequently in Egyptian art and the one that occurs as well in Syro-Palestinian art is one resembling the griffon vulture (*Gyps fulvus*).⁷⁵ In Egyptian writing, the griffon vulture appears as the hieroglyph  *neret* (G 14). Depictions of the vulture are used to represent a number of female deities; however, it most regularly represents Nekhet, who very early on in the Dynastic period took on the role of the national goddess of Upper Egypt. Her counterpart in Lower Egypt was Wadjet, who was represented by the uraeus serpent. Once Upper and Lower Egypt were unified, their symbols appeared together signifying the unification of the Two Lands and the divine kingship who brought them together. The combination of the vulture and the serpent appear as the *nebtj* or “Two Ladies” (one of the five formal names of the king). In other circumstances the vulture can represent the goddess Mut, Isis, Hathor, Neith, and even the god Ptah. Regarding the images in which I am most interested, namely the ones in which the vulture's wings are outstretched in flight protecting the king, the vulture typically represents the goddess Nekhet.

The images of the vulture are not unlike those of the falcon protectively hovering over the king, and both strongly convey the royal ideology that his actions are protected by the gods. The element that differentiates the vulture, however, is that it frequently occurs specifically in the context of conflict, in scenes which depict the tumult of battle (lower panel of **plate I**), in which the pharaoh smites his enemies (**plate IX**), or even in the midst of a hunt

⁷⁵The following summary is based on Wilkinson (*Reading Egyptian Art*, 85); cf. also Silvia Schroer, “Die Göttin und der Geier,” *ZDPV* 111 (1995) 60-80.

(upper panel of **plate I**).⁷⁶ When considering the literary image created by the biblical text (Ps 140:8b), the conflict scenes involving the protection of the vulture provide one of the most congruent images of protection. Silvia Schroer has argued that each of the six times Yhwh's wings are mentioned in the Psalms is a reference pertaining to the wings of a vulture.⁷⁷ She interprets the imagery as relating to a goddess in a motherly role protecting her young. As comparative evidence, she cites a number of artifacts suggesting Egyptian

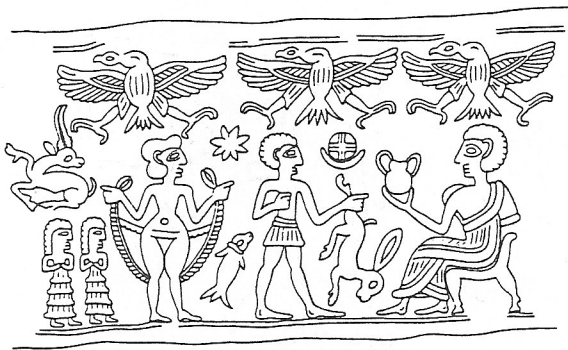


Figure 4.23. Syrian Cylinder seal; Middle Bronze Age. After Schroer, “Die Göttin und der Geier,” abb. 6c.

influence in which vultures appear in Syro-Palestinian contexts, most notably a Middle Bronze Age IIB cylinder seal from Syria in which vultures hover protectively over a monarch.⁷⁸

⁷⁶Cf. also *ANEP*, figs 314-316, 323, 327-238, 245.

⁷⁷Schroer, “Die Göttin und der Geier,” 70; see also Silvia Schroer, “Im Schatten deiner Flügel: Religionsgeschichtliche und Feministische Blicke auf die Metaphorik der Flügel Gottes in den Psalmen, in Ex 19,4; Dtn 31, 11 und in Mal 3,20,” in *“Ihr Völker alle, klatscht in die Hände!”: Festschrift für Erhard S. Gerstenberger zum 65. Geburtstag* (ed. Rainer Kessler; Garden City, N.Y.: LIT, 1997), 296-299.

⁷⁸The image was published earlier in Porada, *Corpus of ancient Near Eastern seals in North American collections*, No. 937.

LeMon rejects her argument that the image of the vulture lies behind the wings of Yhwh in the Psalms. Instead, he maintains that the wings of the falcon most likely provide a better comparison. His primary argument is that the paucity of avian imagery in the form of the vulture in Syro-Palestinian art during the formative period for biblical texts (Late Bronze Age to the close of the Persian Period) makes it less significant as an iconographic trope than avian imagery in the form of a falcon.⁷⁹ LeMon's assessment certainly has merit with regard to the material data originating in Syria-Palestine. However, his case against the image of the vulture weakens when one considers the fact that the winged protective imagery in the Bible often occurs in the context of battle, including the very psalm he discusses when making his argument (Psalm 17). In Ps 140:8, there is no explicit mention of wings, but if they are implied, the most compelling parallel in terms of Egyptian art is that of the vulture protecting the king, especially as one considers the winged protection covering the entire person of the king, but especially his head. It should be noted, however, that I found one image (**fig. 4.24**) in which the falcon hovers protectively in battle along with the vulture. Of the two birds that hover protectively over the king as the king battles, the one on the left of Sety I is a falcon, and a on the right is a vulture.

⁷⁹LeMon, "Yahweh's Winged Form," 87-88.

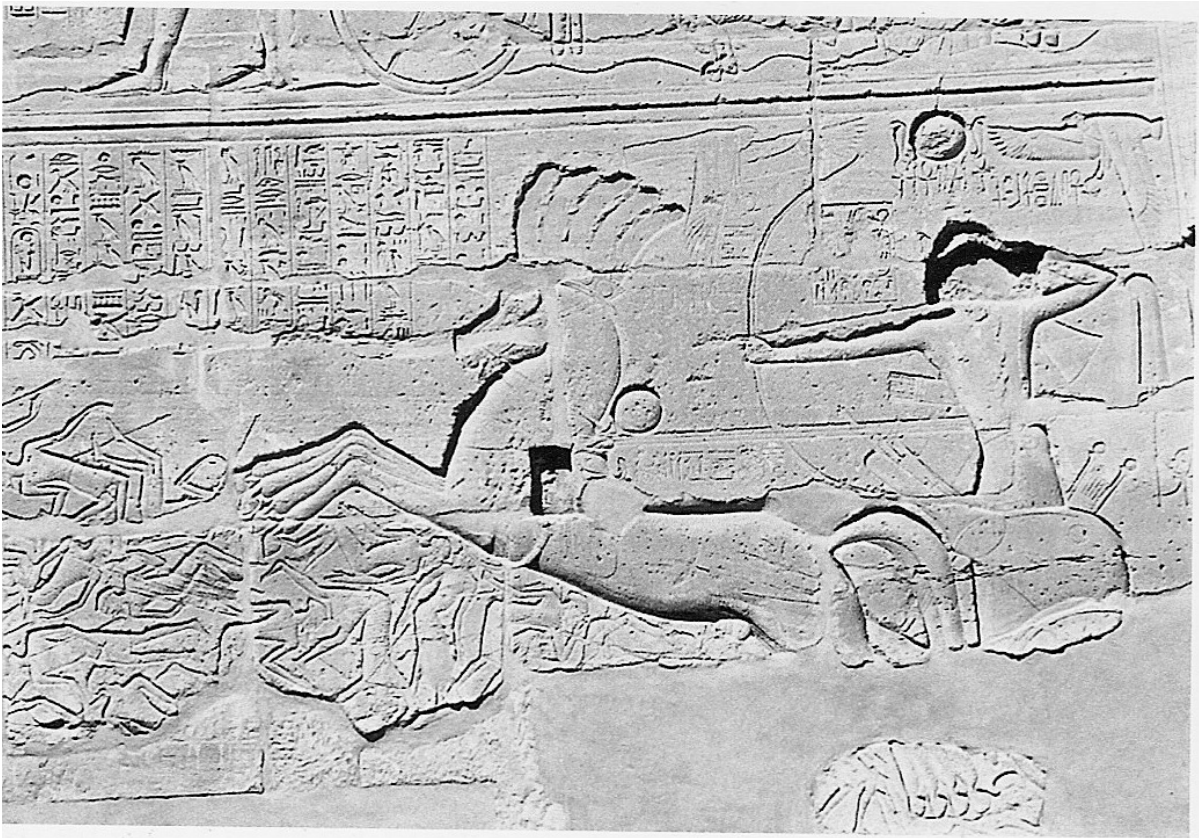


Figure 4.24. A portion of a battle scene, exterior north wall of the the hypostyle hall, Karnak. After Robins, *Art of Ancient Egypt*, illus 209.

In addition to these types of images in Egyptian art depicting deities hovering protectively over the king, there are other types of images from elsewhere that depict divine protection in battle, ones that also integrate imagery involving winged deities who provide protection. Specifically, these depictions incorporate an Egyptian image which was discussed earlier in this section on Egyptian art: the winged sun disk. Now it will be considered outside of its originally Egyptian context, for the winged sun disk had become an international symbol, finding its way into the symbol systems of other nations of the ancient Near East.

Warfare and Winged Protective Powers in Neo-Assyrian Art

While the Egyptian winged sun disk does not have a strong connection to war *per se*, this not the case with a number of Neo-Assyrian depictions of the winged disk.⁸⁰ An arresting set of images that incorporate similar versions of the winged disk and which display the idea of divine protection in the context of warfare occur on two Neo-Assyrian sources. Both depict battle scenes in which a deity—as a winged disk with anthropomorphic features—actively participates. The deity in neither scene is passive; the deity is either drawing bow and arrow himself or offering these weapons to the king. The first is well-known as the “broken obelisk” from Nineveh (1073-1056 BCE), and the second is a glazed tile from Assur dating to the reign of Tukulti Ninurta II (888-884 BCE).⁸¹

⁸⁰Following Ornan (“A Complex System of Religious Symbols: The Case of the Winged Disk in Near Eastern Imagery of the First Millennium BCE,” in *Crafts and Images In Contact: Studies on Eastern Mediterranean Art of the First Millennium BCE*, [ed. Claudia E. Suter and Christoph Uehlinger; OBO 210; Fribourg: Academic Press, 2005] 207), I use the term winged disk in reference to the image on non-Egyptian artifacts that lack a clear connection to a solar deity and which might be have been appropriated as a symbol of other non-solar deities (e.g., national gods such as Assur).

⁸¹For more on the “Broken Obelisk,” see Anton Moortgat, *The Art of Ancient Mesopotamia: The Classical Art of the Near East* (London: Phaidon, 1969), 122, and for the glazed tile see, *ANEP*, fig. 536 and p. 314.

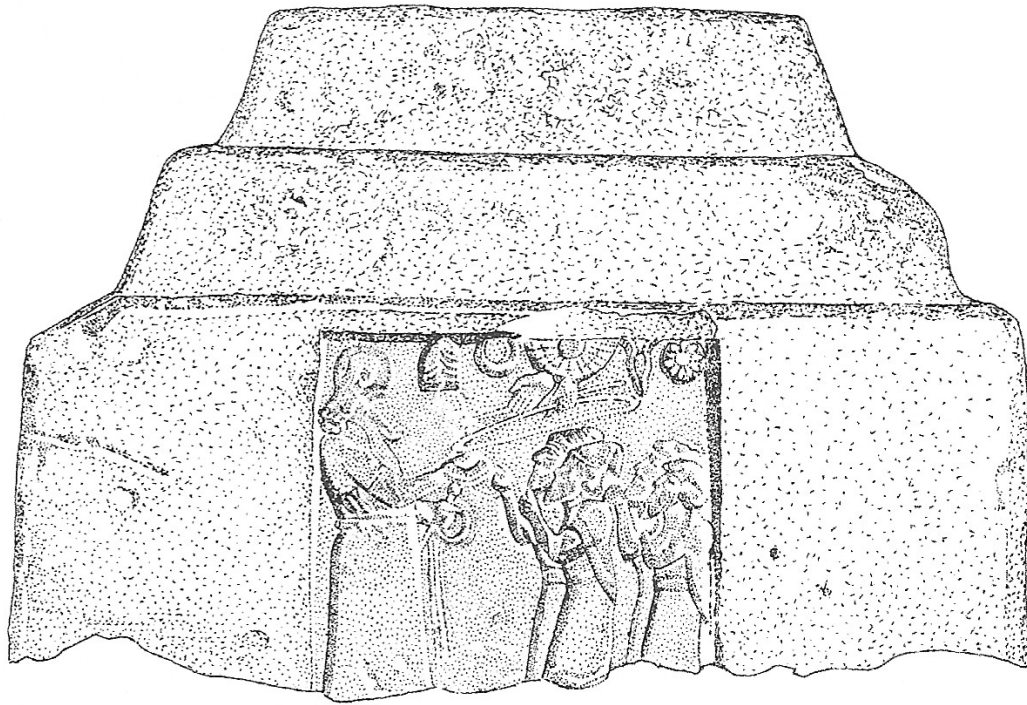


Figure 4.25. Broken Obelisk; After Ornan, "A Complex System of Religious Symbols,"

fig. 1.

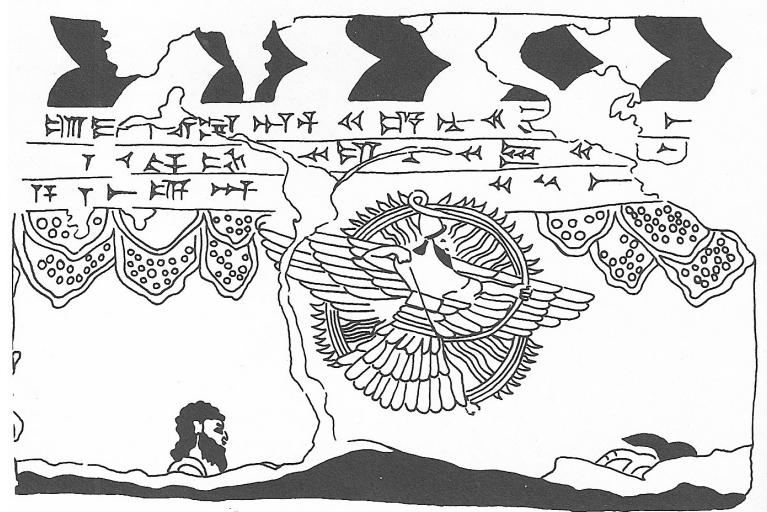


Figure 4.26. Glazed tile of Tukulti Ninurta III; 888-884 B.C.E. After Keel, *Symbolism*,

illus. 295.

The image on the “broken obelisk” (**fig. 4.25**) is quite compelling because it visually portrays a deity offering protection to a person (here a king) within a patently military context. The scene depicts an Assyrian king holding rod and ring in his left hand while elevating his right hand in a gesture of reception of adoration. Before him stand four people holding their hands in the typical sign of worship. It is likely they are subjugated enemies who were recently defeated by the king. The key Assyrian development visible in this depiction—the anthropomorphizing and militarizing of the originally Egyptian motif—are the hands extending from the winged disk, one extended toward the king and the other holding the bow. Ornan rightly cites these anthropomorphic features as highlighting the “warrior aspect” and “belligerent nature” of the deity being depicted.⁸² As for the entire composition, Frankfort rightly interprets the scene as one in which the deity extends military protection to the ruler.⁸³

A similar depiction with an even more aggressive deity is the glazed tile of Tukulti Ninurta II (**fig. 4.26**). In this image, the deity is portrayed in an aggressive stance with drawn bow. Instead of handing over the weapons, he rides above his royal protege, protecting him amidst the battle. The deity is drawn with much more detail than the figure on the “broken obelisk.” He appears in human form from the waist up, but he has fully developed wings, and has a birdlike tail-fan in place of his legs and feet. The deity is also placed within the disk of the sun, which is drawn with little licks of fire surrounding its edges. One can also see the

⁸²Ornan, “A Complex System of Religious Symbols,” 211.

⁸³Henri Frankfort, *Cylinder Seals: A Documentary Essay on the Art and Religion of the Ancient Near East* (London: Macmillan, 1939) 211.

rainclouds as well which are above the deity and are somewhat differentiated from the winged disk. Slightly less bellicose is the portrayal of a deity with drawn bow on a wall relief from the Northwest palace at Nimrud (**fig. 4.27**). As in the previous two examples, meteorological elements associate the winged figure as a storm deity. In this example, an identification of this deity as a weather god is possible because of the forked arrow symbolizing lightening. The figure is a close-up drawing of the deity on in **fig. 4.28** who hovers over warriors, mirroring them with drawn bow.

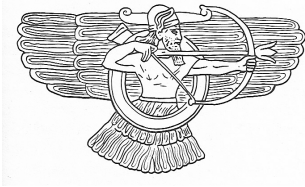


Figure 4.27. Detail of a relief; Nimrud. After Keel, *Symbolism*, illus. 296.

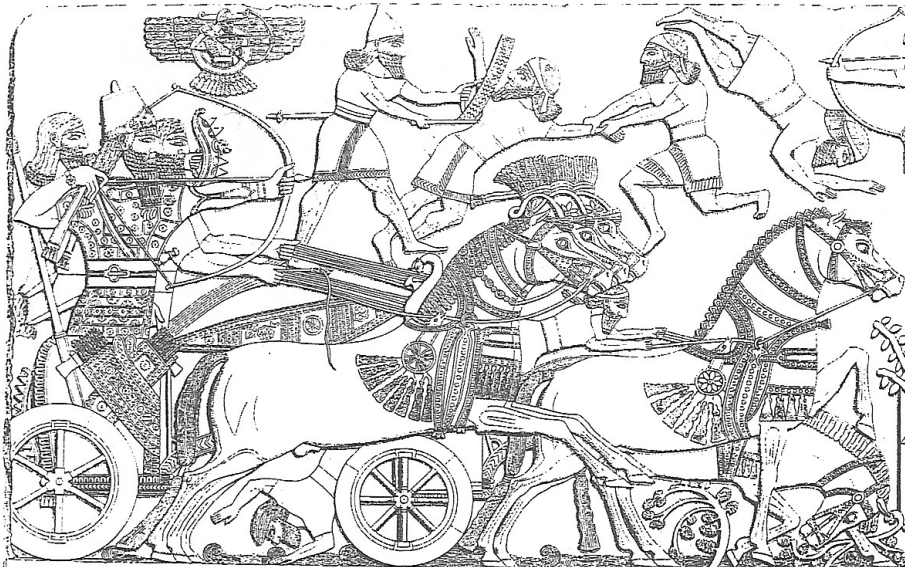


Figure 4.28. Nimrud, North-West Palace (slab 3), after Ornan, *Triumph*, illus. 110.

As I mentioned earlier, the winged sun disk originated in Egypt, but the symbol spread across the ancient Near East in the latter part of the second millennium BCE, the primary evidence being its appearance on mid-eighteenth century Syrian cylinder seals and locally produced Canaanite scarabs.⁸⁴ Ornan reports that the winged sun disk appears on Palestinian scarabs before it ever does so on the Egyptian Middle Kingdom scarabs. She speculates that the symbol of the winged disk, which would have appeared on different media, was imported via Phoenician sources and thus suggests that this is an example of cross-cultural influences.⁸⁵ As for the significance of the symbol outside of Egypt, Ornan calls the winged disk, because of its ubiquity, an “almost ‘international’ ancient Near Eastern emblem.”⁸⁶ She believes it can be used to illustrate how “visual borrowing” occurs, that in each iteration it “is charged with a new and distinct meaning that is adjusted to a particular religious and political system.”⁸⁷ The most important developments that are apparent in the Neo-Assyrian examples above are the anthropomorphizing and militarizing aspects which do not appear in the Egyptian sources.

⁸⁴Ornan, “A Complex System of Religious Symbols,” 208.

⁸⁵Ibid.; cf. LeMon, “Yahweh’s Winged Form,” 114.

⁸⁶Ibid., 212.

⁸⁷Ibid.

There must be some mention made of the debate as to which deity is depicted by the winged disk in Neo-Assyrian sources.⁸⁸ Typically, scholars have treated the winged disk as an icon of either Shamash or Assur. In the company of Frankfort and others, I have interpreted the images presented above as likely depictions of the Assyrian national god Assur.⁸⁹ However, the winged disk also served as the symbol of the sun god Shamash, and there are certainly instances when this is clear, particularly when the the symbol is grouped with other symbols representing other gods in the pantheon (**fig 3.3**). I generally agree with W. G. Lambert's opinion that the iconographic context suggests the image is of Assur when the winged disk serves as the emblem of the king in military settings.⁹⁰ Ornan makes a persuasive argument that the evidence of borrowing in the case of the winged disk strongly supports the idea that a national god would adopt the iconography of other deities. One can see this phenomena of borrowing with Assur, who not having an iconography of his own

⁸⁸Regarding the debate, see Klingbeil, *Yahweh Fighting from Heaven*, 258-29 and n. 289. and LeMon, "Yahweh's Winged Form," 213-216.

⁸⁹Keel (Keel, *Symbolism*, 217) likewise sees interprets the images as portrayals of Assur. On the other hand, Mayer-Opificus (Ruth Mayer-Opificus, "Die geflügelte Sonne: Himmels- und Regendarstellungen im Alten Vorderasien," *UF* 16 (1984) 199) tends to associate the winged sun disk with Shamash.

⁹⁰W. G. Lambert, "Trees, Snakes, and Gods in Ancient Syria and Anatolia," *BSO(A)S* 48 (1985) 439 n. 27 ; cf. LeMon (LeMon, "Yahweh's Winged Form," 114) who hedges his interpretation and suggests that qualities of both deities can be detected within Psalm 17.

assumed the emblems of other deities.⁹¹ Moreover, this phenomenon lies behind Ornan's interpretation of the winged disk on the *lmlk* seals (fig 4.29) is a symbol of Yhwh.⁹²



Figure 4.29. *lmlk* seal; Judah; 8th cent. B.C.E. After Keel and Uehlinger, *GGG*, illus 276b.

The winged disk also appears on several other media that combine the emblematic representation of a deity with military hardware, a phenomena which further attests to its militarization. On a relief from Tiglath Pileser III's Central palace in Nimrud, one finds the winged disk inscribed upon a draft pole.⁹³ It is not unreasonable to assume that the image on the relief depicts how that pole might have been decorated in reality. An actual material artifact bearing the winged disk is a soldier's helmet (fig. 4.30). The helmet in particular is interesting because it connects the concept of divine protection to a concrete object via an emblematic representation of a deity. One will notice that instead of the sun disk between the

⁹¹cf. Anthony Green, "Ancient Mesopotamian Religious Iconography," in *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East* (ed. Jack M. Sasson; New York: Scribner, 1995).

⁹²Ornan ("A Complex System of Religious Symbols," 232) makes this argument against other interpretations which identify the symbol of the winged disk as an emblem of Judahite royalty. Keel and Uehlinger (*GGG*, 276-277) are less direct regarding the question as to whether the emblem should be associated primarily with the king or Yhwh; however, they argue in favor of interpreting the solar imagery as purely Egyptian, maintaining that the solar imagery, distinct from the solar imagery from the north in Israel (cf. my discussion above on the solar imagery of Israelite/Phoenician art), "was fed by its own streams and was nourished by springs from Egypt."

⁹³Ornan, "A Complex System of Religious Symbols," fig. 3

wings, it is a moon and crescent. Ornan explains that the incorporation of lunar symbolism into the winged disk represents another development of the Egyptian symbol, and that it attests to the assimilation of the winged disk among several Mesopotamian deities.⁹⁴ In isolation, the lunar emblems represent Sin, but in a number of depictions in which an icon is formed by an amalgamation of both solar and lunar symbols, that icon is linked neither to solar nor lunar deities, but to third deity such as the weather god depicted with the icon in **fig 4.31**. Ornan argues that wings perform a double function representing both lunar symbolism and the weather god in **fig 4.31** as well as on other stelae.⁹⁵ Also noteworthy is a relief (**fig. 4.32**) that depicts a standard topped by an anthropomorphic warrior deity, whose bellicose stance is reminiscent of the many examples of warrior gods discussed above. The placement of the standard with the warrior god directly above the heads of the soldiers also might bear upon one's interpretation of the literary image in Psalm 140:8.

⁹⁴Ibid., 222-227.

⁹⁵Ibid., 223.

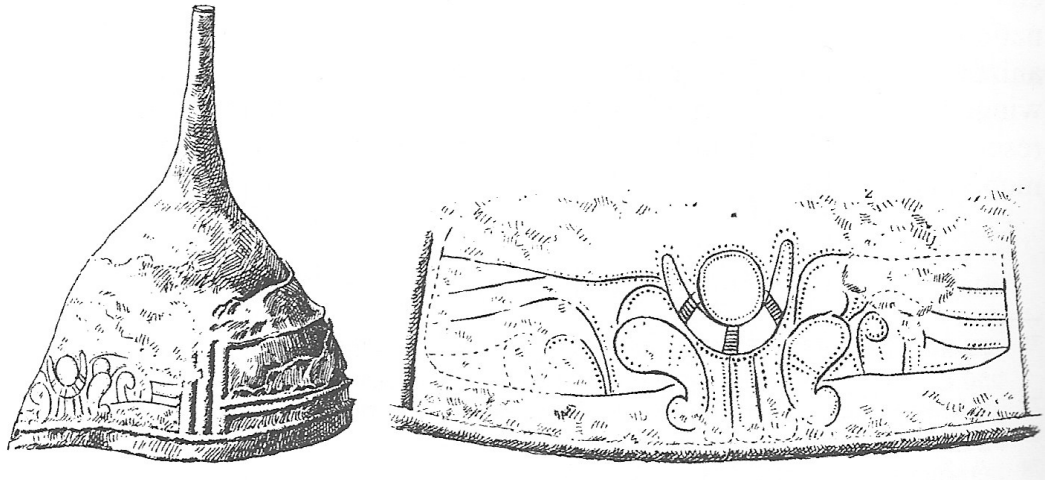


Figure 4.30. Winged crescent and disk on a bronze helmet from Zincirli, after Ornan, A

Complex System of Religious Symbols, fig. 20-b



Figure 4.31. Relief from the vicinity of Tell Barsip. After Ornan, *A Complex System of*

Religious Symbols, fig. 18.

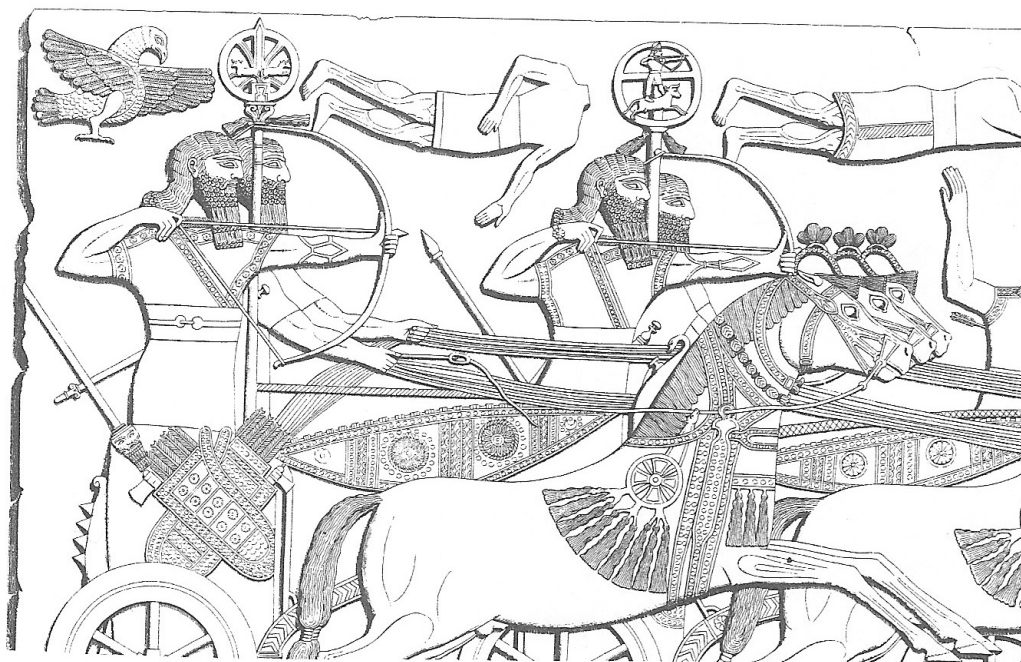


Figure 4.32. Relief, North-West Palace, Nimrud (slab 6), after Ornan, *Triumph*, illus.

113.

Preliminary Interpretation of the Image

When considering how to interpret the concept of protection in Psalm 140:8, I struggle with two related matters: 1) The first considers how one should one imagine the expression סִכְתָּה לְרֹאשִׁי בַּיּוֹם נָשֶׁק as a literary image. Should one envision a theophany in battle? An anthropomorphic winged deity? Yhwh in the form of a protective bird? And within that range, how concrete or opaque should one imagine the image to be? 2) The second considers the theological implications of the image, and nature of the deity who is depicted as a protector to which it refers. I can address the narrow topic of poetic *imagery* here, but will engage the *theological* question after a fuller literary-poetic analysis of the

psalm. The evidence presented above, highlighting possible ways of understanding the uniquely phrased image of protection in Psalm 140:8, has covered a vast amount of comparative material. Congruent iconographic parallels can be drawn from several motifs arising from Egyptian solar theology, the gods Re and Horus, Mut and Nekhbet, the falcon and the vulture, the winged sun disk in both Egypt and throughout the ancient Near East, the Neo-Assyrian deities Assur and Shamash, and a number of other warrior and weather deities from Syro-Palestinian art. However, out of the wide array of possibilities, I have identified along the way several iconographic motifs that seem to offer the most congruent images. I will further relate these images to the possible interpretations of סכך that I introduced earlier.

Modern translations of the Bible gave three basic options for conceptualizing the specific image in Psalm 140:8. None of them are fully satisfying, neither the neutral translation of סכך as “cover,” nor the more colorful translations of the phrase using the image of the shield or the helmet. A survey of the textual and visual data confirms that none of the translations are simply incorrect, but given the fact that the image is absent in the textual and visual data, evoking the image of a shield is the least appropriate. As for the other two alternative translations—the vague term “cover” and the concrete term “helmet”—the iconographic evidence (in tandem the textual data) provide several congruent images that offer more vivid and compelling options for understanding the biblical image.

One of the results of the study is that the lack of clarity inherent in סכך is mitigated as one considers the textual and visual data in tandem. The word study revealed wide variation with regard to the uses of סכך, a situation further complicated by differing

opinions still lingering as to the number and meaning of its roots. However, when one considers the uses of סכך in cases in which the subject is patently divine (either Yhwh, or an angelic being), a key general observation can be made: the literary data suggests it is used to denote instances either of a continuing divine presence with winged and/or solar elements, or of a theophany accompanied by weather related phenomena. The widespread use of avian imagery to symbolize protection in art of the ancient Near East weigh heavily when evaluating the possibility that the idea of “cover” might evoke avian imagery even when wings are not explicitly specified. Regarding the meaning of סכך in the literary image presented in Psalm 140:8, a fuller sense of clarity is possible when one then considers congruent iconographic data, mainly motifs appearing on larger scale Egyptian and Neo-Assyrian reliefs.

In Egyptian art, divine protection is depicted more concretely than in Neo-Assyrian portrayals. Egyptian gods depicted as birds use their wings to protect the king. Specifically, protection in battle is depicted concretely with the the image of the vulture hovering with her wing extended directly over the head of the king. If the deity is depicted twice, the body of one bird is placed above and slightly behind the king while the other is placed above and slightly in front. If depicted once, the bird is placed slightly above and slightly behind the king. In non-military settings, the Horus falcon either wraps his wings around the king from behind, or towers over the king who is either sitting or standing.⁹⁶ In Neo-Assyrian

⁹⁶Regarding Egyptian artistic conventions, Wilkinson (*Symbol and Magic in Egyptian Art* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1994) 64) explains that the relative placement of the deities signifying protection is “reflected in the hieroglyphic formula *sa ha.ef* ‘protection behind him’ which was commonly written immediately behind the king in royal representations.”

iconography, the deity appears above, not directly above, but slightly off to the side toward which the king (or other human figure) is facing.

Neo-Assyrian images in which the winged disk is incorporated give shape to the martial aspects of the concept of divine protection in Psalm 140 in ways that are less concrete than in Egyptian portrayals. In particular, the “broken obelisk” and the glazed tile of Tukulti Ninurta II, both of which portray the theophanic presence of a deity with avian attributes (i.e., wings or wing-like features) and accompanied by meteorological elements in the context of warfare. The literary image of “cover” on the day of battle is represented iconographically by the placement of the divine figure above the human figure, often with the deity having the same bellicose stance. The spatial relationship between the deity and the warrior (usually the king) symbolizes iconographically the relationship between the deity and his protege. The concept is somewhat abstract or opaque, yet unambiguous: the deity offers his divine authorization and secures success by participating in the battle on a supernatural level, evidenced by divine weapons, and meteorological and solar elements.⁹⁷ The winged elements are not obvious symbols of protection, but the protective aspects apparent in the Egyptian material might not lurk too far in the background. Frankfort interprets the feathers surrounding the disk on the “broken obelisk” as a rendering of cloud, comparing it to the Exodus accounts of the pillar of cloud guiding the Israelites (Exodus 13) and the clouds surrounding Sinai (e.g., Exodus 19).⁹⁸ Psalm 105:39 recounts the Exodus and describes the

⁹⁷Regarding the glazed tile, Frankfort (*Cylinder Seals*, 212) associates the wings with glory and power, of terrifying the enemy. Reminiscent of Keel’s (cf. *Symbolism*, 197) observations, Klingbeil (*Yahweh Fighting from Heaven*, 260-261) contends the clouds and wide wings suggest connections with a storm and weather god.

⁹⁸Frankfort, *Cylinder Seals*, 211.

phenomena of the cloud as an element spread for cover (לְמִסְדָּה). The wings on the glazed tile are suggestive of cloud as well, but also being fixed to such bellicose deity, they hint at being meteorological weapons. While the war- and weather-related phenomena accompanying the deity vary in the iconography, it is this basic *relationship* between the deity and his protege that is emphasized in Psalm 140:8.

The concrete translation which imagines protection as a “helmet”—a translation that was perhaps inspired by the mention of “salvation” in the previous line of the poem (Ps 140:8a) and influenced by the New Testament metaphor of the “helmet of salvation” in Eph 6:17—has a parallel with the an actual helmet displaying an iconographic image in the form of a divine emblem that suggests supernatural protection in battle.⁹⁹ It can be granted that the combination of a winged disk on a helmet is somewhat of an isolated find. However, in a more general sense, artifacts that combine visual images of the deities on physical war hardware suggest an iconographic congruency. It does lend credence to the notion that concrete and abstract ideas about divine protection are not mutually exclusive, but instead are frequently combined. A similar phenomena might be at work in Psalm 140, where there is just one concrete depiction of divine protection in battle in a poem which otherwise lacks concrete imagery of the deity in action. Furthermore, the helmet with the winged crescent and the standard bearing a warrior deity overshadowing the heads of the soldiers, while one is emblematic and the other anthropomorphic, both connect the protection of a weather god

⁹⁹When mentioning Eph 6:17, I do not mean to imply that choosing the metaphor of a helmet as a suitable translation was not also influenced by the reality that helmets were worn by warriors and soldiers as protective headgear throughout history. In ancient Near Eastern art, soldiers are depicted many times with helmets, shields and other accouterments war. In biblical accounts, Goliath and Saul wore helmets and mail (1 Sam 17:5, 38), and other soldiers were decked out with helmets and other armor (2 Ch 26:14).

in a way that relates to the concept of protection in Psalm 140:8 as an abstraction but one that is metonymically located to one's head.

Of the several options that I have given in terms of exploring the congruent iconographic images, it is not possible to single out one congruent image as the exact image the poet was trying to achieve. In actuality, the poet might be employing language that deliberately elicits one or more of the comparisons I have presented. I have suggested what I think are the more compelling of the possibilities in terms of the poetic image of protection, but more can be gleaned from further consideration of the image of of divine protection in Ps 140:8, which will be addressed again later as part of an overall interpretation of the poem in the literary analysis of Psalm 140.

Literary Analysis

Following the pattern established in chapter 3, I will present a syntactic analysis of Psalm 140 following Michael O'Connor's methodology that he introduced in *HVS*. Any issue not specifically addressed in the excursus on *HVS* will be discussed in the footnotes. The concluding section of the chapter will attempt to integrate the findings from the lexical, iconographic, and poetic analysis into a final reading of the poem.

A Syntactic Analysis

Psalm 140: Batch Structure

As I demonstrated earlier with Psalm 5, the batch structure of a psalm can be discerned by the evaluation of the lines and tropes. To review, it is the variation in the line types together with the patterns of troping that will suggest the batch divisions. How these two elements are able to make clear the batch divisions will not be exactly the same in the case of each poem. A couple of factors make distinguishing the batches in Psalm 140 easier than in Psalm 5. The first factor concerns the thematic shifts in motif, alternating from war to hunt, with the war theme occurring in batches a and c, and the hunt in b and d. The second factor is repetition of editorial marker סָלָה, which (in this psalm) coincides with the batch divisions that I have identified:

Psalm 140: 1 Stave of 28 lines, 4 batches

Batch a: verses 1-4, 6 lines

Batch b: verses 5-6, 6 lines

Batch c: verses 7-9, 6 lines

Batch d: verses 10-14, 10 lines

In fact, there is virtually no disagreement as to where the unit divisions are in this poem, with the only exception being v. 9 where there is a clear corruption of the text.

My proposed resolution to the textual corruption in v. 9 is presented in the notes to the translation above. Additionally, I will comment further on how insights from *HVS* have contributed to my evaluation of the problem and its resolution. Without recourse to lineal

and tropological analysis, the reconstruction I propose is strong enough to stand on its own. However, adding such analysis, while it does not necessarily support my exact reconstruction to the exclusion of all others, confirms that editorial placement of each סָלָה is correct. In addition to the shift in use from verbs in the second person within a series of vocatives in batch c and culminating in v. 9, to a *casus pendens* construction and the use of the third person in batch d, beginning in v. 10—factors which have a pronounced disjunctive effect—a further form of disjunction between v. 9 and v. 10 is apparent from the analysis of the lines using *HVS*: Line 10a is a non-trope heavy line (class IV) which suggests a structural break, and the matching of lines 9a and 9b indicate that these two lines belong together:

אֶל־תִּתֶּן יְהוָה מֵאֲוִי רָשָׁע VVocO 234
 וְלֹא־תִפְּקֵן יְרוֹמוֹ OVVoc 233

Do not grant, O Lord, the desires of the wicked
 Do not promote his plan, O Exalted

This is one of several instances when the poet uses the trope of matching to bind together rare line types (e.g., 6a2 and 6b in batch b, 12a and 12 b in batch d), lines which one might otherwise expect to find at the seams of each batch.

In general, there are three tropes in operation in Psalm 140: the word-level trope of repetition, the line-level trope of matching, and the supralinear-level trope of syntactic dependency. Each of the three tropes has a role in unifying each batch and clarifying the boundaries of each batch. As in Psalm 5, the distribution of tropes in Psalm 140 never

transgresses the boundaries of the batch. The trope of matching factors in significantly in terms of establishing batch boundaries by binding together rare line types. The tropes of repetition and syntactic dependency not only function structurally to unify each batch, they also figure into my assessment of the thematic interests of the poet. I will develop further the thematic structure of each batch below.

The trope of repetition occurs twice, once in batch c (lines 7b, 8a, 9a) and once in batch d (lines 12a, 12b). The repetition of the vocative יהוה in batch c unifies the batch as a passage of direct speech to Yhwh. This contrasts with the poet's focus on the enemy in the final batch. Compound descriptions of the psalmist's opponent leading with איש in lines 12a and 12b constitute an instance of repetition. Furthermore, one should note that lines 12a and 12b are doubly troped lines since they are matched grammatically as well.

אִישׁ לְשׁוֹן בְּלִיבוֹן בְּאָרֶץ	FocVP 234
אִישׁ־חָמָס רָע יִצְוֹדְנוּ לְמַדְחַבְתָּ:	FocVP 235

As for a man of tongue—may he not be established in the land
As for a man of violence—evil will hunt him “blow upon blow”

The subject of these lines is the same as in line 10a—the psalmist's evil adversaries. The unity of subject is further encoded in the text by the poet's use of a similar construction: all three lines employ the *casus pendens*. The connection between line 10a to lines 12a and 12b is not tropological, but the connection occurring on the level of figuration is clear nonetheless.

Regarding gross structure, one should recall from chapter 3 that one of the most reliable ways to unify a passage is by the use of syntactic dependency. In Psalm 140, the poet has implemented dependency in first three of the poem's four batches. Because syntactic dependency is achieved in precisely the same way in batches a and b (e.g., with the use of the relative particle **אֲשֶׁר**), I will address them together. The syntactic dependency in batch c, created by the use of direct speech, deserves separate attention.¹⁰⁰ In batches a and b, the trope of syntactic dependency is that which structures the batch formally. This formal unity, however, is complemented by a number of interconnected elements functioning on the level of figuration. Though these figures are separated from tropes in terms of gross structure, they nonetheless are critical elements in the poem's composition.

The figures are critical because they occur entwined with the tropes, linked in a way that makes the two batches mirror each other with astonishing similarity.¹⁰¹ The core lines of the dependency respective to each batch (e.g., the independent clause upon which the other lines are dependent syntactically, lines 2b and 5a2) are identical:

¹⁰⁰There are essentially two ways in which syntactic dependencies are created. The dependencies discussed thus far have been the type in which there is the subordination of clauses. The other type of syntactic dependency is constituted by the use of quotation. The latter type is exemplified in batch c. For more see the sections covering "quotative passages," in O'Connor, *HVS* 400-414.

¹⁰¹This is astonishing especially for those who reject altogether the proposition that formal poetic structure exists beyond the couplet, e.g., James Kugel, who remarked at the 2010 Society of Biblical Literature Annual Meeting held in Atlanta that he believes biblical Hebrew poetry consists of a series of "dual-line poems." He said this as a respondent to Andrea Weiss' paper, "Unravelling Mixed Metaphors in Jeremiah: Theology or Poetry," in which she cited examples of grammatical parallelism ("matching" in *HVS*) that extend beyond the couplet.

חֲלֹצֵנִי יְהוָה מֵאֲדָם רָע VVocP 234
מֵאִישׁ חֲמָסִים תִּנְצֶרְנִי PV 123

Rescue me, O Lord, from evildoers
from those who are violent, protect me

שְׁמֶרְנִי יְהוָה מִיַּדִּי רָשָׁע VVocP 234
מֵאִישׁ חֲמָסִים תִּנְצֶרְנִי PV 123

Keep me, O Lord, from the hands of the wicked
from those who are violent, protect me

All four lines syntactically match (2a-2b and 5a1-5a2), two of which (2b and 5a2) match identically, but because of the rarity of this phenomena, it does not meet the criteria of a trope in *HVS*. Nevertheless, the repeated lines would most certainly qualify as an example of parallelism to both O'Connor and Berlin, and furthermore one that occurs long-distance. One might consider the repetition of the four matched lines a *refrain*, but that would imply verbatim repetition of the entire unit. Instead, as is usually the case, one of the matched lines is repeated verbatim while the other line(s) is similar. Hence, O'Connor adopts the term *burden* to describe the phenomenon of duplicate lines, and their mates, which vary in terms of similarity.¹⁰² While in other instances, the second line of the burden is the one which exhibits some modulation, in Psalm 140 it is the first line.¹⁰³ The primary correspondence

¹⁰²O'Connor (*HVS*, 467) also explains that the term is also able to account for instances when the phenomena involves much larger units of verse, for example, the verbatim duplication of seven lines in the Oracles of Balaam (Num 24:3a-4c = 24:15a-16:d For his full treatment of poems with burdens, see *HVS*, 466-82.

between lines 2a and 5a1 is that they are grammatically parallel (e.g., they match with identical word order). Other elements of equivalence are the imperative verbs and the repetition of the vocative **יְהוָה** followed by a prepositional phase with **בְּ**. The lines contrast with variation in the root verb for the two imperatives (**שָׁמַר/חָלִיץ**), the enemy (**אֹדֶם**) in line 2a is referenced metonymically with hand (**יָד**) in 5a1, and finally there is the slight variance between the terms **רָשָׁע/רָע**, which are similar meaning but which parallel each other on the phonetic level (assonance).

The burden in each batch connects to the lines that follow because of the use of the relative **אֲשֶׁר**, which begins the third line of both batches. One might view the third line of each batch as being part of the burden, or one might view the **אֲשֶׁר** merely as an example of long-distance repetition. Though I favor the first option, either view ultimately sees the **אֲשֶׁר** as a further element of figuration that formally binds together batches a and b. Within each batch, the **אֲשֶׁר** binds the burden to the descriptive lines that follow in each batch because the relative particle makes the lines subordinate. In batch a, the particle has been gapped out of the three succeeding lines; thus lines 2b-4a are troped with syntactic dependency.¹⁰⁴ Grammatically, the relative is not gapped in the second batch. Instead, the two lines (6a1-6a2) that follow the syntactically dependent line (5b) are troped with matching.

¹⁰³cf. Ps 59:7, 15.

¹⁰⁴Cf. my translation above. Gapping of particles is not a trope, but a *figura etymologica* (See O'Connor, *HVS*, 107).

The use of direct address is one way to subordinate lines of biblical Hebrew verse as syntactically dependent. One can interpret the portion of direct speech in batch c as entirely consisting of only the second half of verse 7, **אֱלֹהֵי אֲתָהּ**, (line 7b), or as an extensive address to Yhwh that is introduced by **אֲמַרְתִּי לַיהוָה** (line 7a) and includes the rest of the batch, ending with line 9b. Understanding of the phrase **אֲמַרְתִּי לַיהוָה** as one introducing direct speech is not problematic. What is difficult is discerning where exactly the psalmist's direct address to Yhwh ends. The latter option, that the direct speech continues until the end of v. 9, is preferable. While inconclusive, the evidence: (1) the use of the second person throughout the batch, (2) the shift to third person in the following batch, (3) the use of the vocative four times (the repetition of **יְהוָה**, and the emended reading of line 9b) points strongly to accepting the whole batch as passage of direct speech.

Divine Protection in Psalm 140

The numerous and intricate ways in which batches a and b parallel each other clearly demonstrate that the poets of biblical Hebrew poetry constructed verse with larger units in mind. However, cataloguing how these two batches correspond structurally does not go far enough as to provide an adequate interpretation of the poem. As I have argued previously, attention to the gross structure of the poem as a whole guides one's interpretation because it contextualizes the use of metaphoric language employed throughout the poem. The high level of correspondence between the first two batches invites one to compare the two

overarching metaphors that are presented in each batch: the metaphor of war in the first and the metaphor of the hunt in the second.¹⁰⁵ To be more precise, at this point I am not referring to specific metaphors involving either war or hunt, as in “my brother is a tank.” Rather, I am speaking of metaphorical language related to warfare and hunting in general. In this respect, both the artistic and textual evidence make it clear that these common metaphors are used together quite often. While I will focus upon textual evidence from the Bible and artistic evidence from the art of the ancient Near East, I would like to suggest that the metaphorical imagery of hunting and warfare are so conventionalized in our own culture that we often do not recognize it. For example, one might speak of a “hunt” for an escaped convict rather than a “search.” Some metaphors are more easy to spot, such as having to answer a “barrage of questions,” or respond to a “salvo of verbal attacks.” Others might illicit a negative reaction when the image is perceived as too suggestive of actual violence, such as it recently occurred when a well-known political figure spoke of having her political opponents “in the cross-hairs.”

In ancient Near Eastern art the metaphors of war and hunt appear side by side in a number of contexts. In chapter 3 I cited a number of images in order to illustrate how war and hunting themes were used in tandem to portray the power and prowess of the king (cf.

¹⁰⁵Andrea Weiss also points out how in biblical Hebrew poetry, divergent (or even mixed metaphors) are brought into contact (consideration side by side/ used to mutually interpret) with one another by means of grammatical parallelism in contexts larger than the couplet. One example she gave: Jer 14:8-9 stranger/mighty warrior. See note 344.

plates I, III, IV). A number of psalms combine the imagery of warfare and hunting, the latter to describe the potency of the threat posed by the psalmist's enemies and the former to characterize the nature of Yhwh's response to the psalmist's request for help. In Psalm 7 for example, the enemies are first depicted with animal imagery, as lions on the hunt for prey (vv. 2-3), but later in the poem as humans, trappers who prepared a pit (vv. 15-16). On the other hand, Yhwh is depicted as a warrior poised to attack the unrepentant enemies with sword and bow (vv. 13-14). A similar pattern involving the same trio of individuals appears in several other psalms (cf. Psalms 17, 35, 57).

Given the fact that the two main metaphors of war and hunt in the psalm are rather common, one way the artistry of the poem can be appreciated is the strict structural relationship between the batches. The genius of the first half of the poem was not achieved by the new creation of a metaphor, or even a novel use of a conventional one. Rather, the beauty and originality of this section of the poem is evidenced by the multiple levels of correspondence between the first two batches. To me, the way the poem presents the two metaphors is reminiscent of the way these two metaphors are depicted in visual art in several instances. It seems that the two images are depicted paratactically. What I mean by that is that it lacks the progress of any narrative development. The poet is describing his scenario of being under threat of enemies with two equal, matching, and mirrored metaphors, a description that is purely synchronic. While the combination of these two metaphors occurs

elsewhere in the Psalter, no other poem in the Hebrew Bible illustrates just how well these two metaphors belong together. The strict structural correspondence between batches a and b is highly reminiscent of the the pair of images on King Tutankhamun's chest (**plate I**) in which the hunting and battle scenes bear so much resemblance.

The final two batches of the poem match the first two, mainly by each focusing on one of the two metaphors already presented: batch c returns to the war metaphor of batch a, batch d returns to the hunt metaphor of batch b. It is in these two batches that one detects more innovation as it regards the use of the two conventional metaphors of war and hunt. A great deal of emphasis in this chapter has already been placed on the concept of protection conveyed by the literary image in Psalm 140:8, commenting how this unique expression has no clear textual comparison in the Old Testament. The author of Psalm 140 is allusive, whereas it is more common in the Psalms to be overt with the use of warrior imagery. Thus, Yhwh is often depicted fighting with weapons of war (e.g., sword, spear, bow, arrow, etc.).¹⁰⁶

Batch d returns to the metaphor of the hunt, but a number of rare words make the sense of the passage somewhat ambiguous. Perhaps the poet is once again deliberately being allusive, but in a different way. Nevertheless, the gross structure of the poem gives the reader some clues. The Hebrew word in v. 11 מַהְמֹרֹת, which I have translated as “pits” is one of two *hapax legomena* in the batch. The poet could perhaps have used a much more common

¹⁰⁶E.g., Ps 17, 18, 21, 35, 46, 68, 144 etc. Contrast the difficulty interpreting the נִחָלִים בְּאֵשׁ in Ps 140:11 as an example of the poem's allusiveness with the unambiguous nature of the נִחָלֵי-אֵשׁ in Ps 18:13-14.

term for pit, such as בֹּר or שַׁחַת. As for מַהְמְרוֹת, the Arabic and Ugaritic cognates of *hmr* suggest that it is some sort of opening in the ground that serves as receptacle for rain water; hence, the translation “watery pit” in BDB or “bottomless pit” in *HALOT*. Dahood draws extra attention to the Ugaritic material, equating מַהְמְרוֹת with *mhmrt*. Furthermore, he notes also that *mhmrt* is paralleled in Ugaritic poetry with *npš*, and that *hmry* name of the city of Mot, the city of Death.¹⁰⁷

Indeed, the pit as a symbol of death is well established.¹⁰⁸ What is not recognized well enough, or at least what I would like to argue, is that the מַהְמְרוֹת in v. 11 is used as a hunting/trapping device, regardless of whether it was man-made or formed by the forces of nature. One can see this connection between the use of pits as a trapping technique in instances where the more well known שַׁחַת is placed in parallel with רֶשֶׁת “trap” (Pss 7:15, 9:16). In Psalm 140, שַׁחַת (v. 6) is in parallel with מַהְמְרוֹת, but the connection is distant, functioning on the gross-structural level of the poem. Batch b and d in their entirety parallel each other with the deployment of metaphorical hunting imagery. Given my view that parallelistic structures exist on the gross-structural level in biblical Hebrew poetry, the clear connection between מַהְמְרוֹת and רֶשֶׁת (since similar versions of which have been attested elsewhere) suggests to me that all three elements in v. 11 (“burning coals” in line 11a, “fire”

¹⁰⁷Dahood, *Psalms*, 3.305; cf., *HALOT*.

¹⁰⁸For example, Keel (Keel, *Symbolism*, 69-73) establishes well the connection between death and the pit using both Canaanite and Egyptian material.

in 11b1 and “pit” in 11b2) are paralleling the three hunting/trapping implements in v. 6 (“trap” in 6a1, “net” in 6a2, and “snares” in 6b). All six lines are equivalent with respect to the deployment of metaphorical hunting language, yet the lines in v. 6 contrast with those in v. 11 with regard to the object. The would-be sufferer, if he were to come into contact with the hunting/trapping implements in v. 6 is the psalmist, while the sufferers of calamity in v. 11 would be the psalmist’s enemies.

Another *hapax legomenon* I will argue is related to hunting is לְמִדְחָפַת in v. 12. Views on the meaning of the word are wide ranging, but all somehow related to the root from which it is derived: דָּחַף, “drive out, thrust.” The translation “blow upon blow” is suggested in *HALOT*; it is “disaster” in the NIV; it becomes an adjectival expression in the NRSV “speedily” and in the NAB “quickly.” On one end of the spectrum, Dahood pushes for a figurative understanding of the term as “exile,” which he sees as related to מִדְּמָרוֹת in v. 11 both being expressions for the place of death or Sheol.¹⁰⁹ On the other end is the Goldingay’s very concrete translation as “pens,” which he says is influenced by the JPS translation “corrals.”¹¹⁰ Goldingay’s translation, which I have adopted, is based upon the proposition that, although the text is very difficult to understand, there are rabbinic accounts (*m. shabbat*

¹⁰⁹Dahood, *Psalms*, 3.306; Kraus (*Psalms*, 3.521) treats the difficulty posed by לְמִדְחָפַת in the least acceptable way. He simply removes it from his translation (!) because in his view it “forsakes the conceptual connection and is also problematical in respect to the meter.”

¹¹⁰Goldingay, *Psalms*, 3.649 n. 24.

13.5) as well as archaeological evidence which suggest that the imagery in the psalm might have been derived from an actual technique of trapping common to the Sinai and the Levant, in which a number of people would use fire as a means to scare gazelles into enclosed areas in which they could be caught with both nets and pits. Unfortunately it is well beyond the scope of the dissertation to pursue the archaeological and rabbinic sources any further.¹¹¹

To some, the use of fire imagery in v. 11 is also problematic. Schmidt connected it to a cultic ordeal, in which there would be some literal trial by fire, such as a walk upon hot coals.¹¹² Following Beyerlin, Kraus doubts the institutional context, but believes that the point is clear, that the psalm hints at a process by which parties are judged.¹¹³ The question is one of agency. From whom or where is the fire coming? Reading as I have done the *Qere*

¹¹¹See Moshe Greenberg, "Two New Hunting Terms in Psalm 140:12," *HAR* 1 (1977) 149-153 and Moshe Greenberg, "Psalm 140," *ErIsr* 14 (1978) 88-99, 125. Additionally, I will mention two studies that discuss the use of "desert kites" as a means of trapping wild animals. Garth Fowden ("Desert Kites": Ethnography, Archeology, Art," in *The Roman And Byzantine Near East* 2, [ed. J. H. Humphrey; Journal of Roman Archaeology Supplementary Series 31; Portsmouth, R.I.] 131) quotes a third-century C.E. Syrian poet (Oppian of Apamea) who describes this hunting practice in *Cynegetia*. Oppian describes how an ambush is set up within an enclosed area. The men beat shields like drums to startle the animals into the trap. Likewise, they use fire to guide them to the animal's doom. He also presents some artistic evidence. One in particular (his fig. 9, Hippo Regious [Annabe, Algeria] hunt mosaic in the House of Isguntus) illustrates well how men would use fire to force their lured prey into the trap. These additional sources shed light on how fire would have been used to hunt animals into pens, thus keeping the hunting/trapping imagery in between batches b and d intact as I have proposed. At the very least, this image should cause one not to try to be concerned that the the images of fire are inconsistent with that of the watery pit. See also Ze'ev Meshel, "New Data about the 'Desert Kites'," *Tel Aviv* 1 (1974) 129-143, and idem, "'Desert Kites' in Sinai and the Southern Negev," in *Sinai: Excavation and Studies* (BAR International Series 876; Oxford: Archaeopress, 2000).

¹¹²Hans Schmidt, *Das Gebet der Angeklagten im Alten Testament* (Giessen: A. Töpelmann, 1928)

¹¹³Walter Beyerlin, *Die Rettung der Bedrängten in den Feindpsalmen der Einzelnen auf institutionelle Zusammenhänge untersucht* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1970) 33;cf., Kraus, *Psalms* 3.521-522.

יִמְרוֹטוּ, a *niphal* of מָרַט, is unusual but not impossible. While some have thought to emend the text, I do not think it is necessary. The key to understanding the passage is that the burning charcoal falling on the enemy and their being thrown into the pit (עֵמֶל שְׁפָתֵימֹו v. 10) is brought about by their own actions. The antecedent of the verb in 11b is the “harm” in v. 10. A concept of justice is conveyed in this passage, namely that the source of the evil enemies’ retribution will be their very own works, an idea that is also found in Pss 5:11, 7:15-16, 35:8, 59:11-12.

Considering the thrust of the entire poem, one sees that the *head* plays a critical role. While Yhwh is depicted as protecting the *head* of the psalmist in battle, harm comes upon the *head* of the enemies, who bring calamity upon themselves, much in the same way the evildoers in Psalm 5 bring about their own destruction. The psalmist uses the exact same language he used to describe his protection to describe the devastation of his foes. As for the psalmist, his head was *covered* (סָכַךְ) on the day of battle, but for his enemies, their own misdeeds *covered* (סָכַךְ) their heads. The importance of one’s head is graphically demonstrated in the iconography of the ancient Near East, but one does not need to look further than the images I have already discussed to see it illustrated (e.g., the Neo-Assyrian palace reliefs: [fig. 4.32]).¹¹⁴ In the iconography the contrast is stark. While the heads of the soldiers are symbolically protected with the standards, all around are the decapitated bodies of

¹¹⁴cf., *ANEP*, figs. 360, 361, 365, 375.

the slain enemies. Likewise, King Tutankhamun's head is covered by the vulture (**plate I**), but if one looks carefully, one will notice a number of severed heads and decapitated bodies in the battle scene as well. This evidence leads one to conclude the imagery of the head speaks to the seriousness of the matter, it being one of life and death.

As for the theological implications relating to Yhwh himself, which I brought up above in my preliminary interpretation of the literary image of divine protection in Psalm 140:8, they bear similarities to what I observed regarding Psalm 5. Again, in contrast to other psalms which depict Yhwh very graphically fighting enemies with various weapons, there is only one verse in which Yhwh is being portrayed as taking action: v. 8. This is an interesting phenomenon in the Book of Psalms (and one can include the prophetic literature as well) in which there is a spectrum that ranges from highly anthropomorphic portrayals of Yhwh proving protection as a warrior to those in which there is very little that is obvious. In the case of Psalm 140, the poet alludes to past experience in which Yhwh has covered his head on the day of battle, but he does so in a way that is difficult for a modern reader to imagine. The iconographic data has pointed us toward a number of possible ways to envision the literary image, but an even greater clarity was achieved with reading the literary image in the context of the psalm as a singular poem.

CHAPTER 5

PSALM 91

The final poem examined in this study is Psalm 91. One will notice that the progression through the three selected psalms was not based upon the order of appearance in the Psalter. Instead of moving by numeric order, I have set Psalm 91 somewhat apart, partially because most scholars have argued that it belongs to a genre different from Psalms 5 and 140, and in part because I wanted the themes and motifs present in Psalms 5 and 140 to guide the discussion of Psalm 91, rather than the other way around. Psalm 91 is a poem in which one encounters a significantly greater number of metaphors that also seem to range widely in terms of source. Although I intend to discuss Psalm 91 holistically as a single poem, I will direct much of the focus on images of protection that incorporate shield and wing metaphors, in other words, upon those themes which are also present in Psalms 5 and 140. While the protective themes center upon the Temple as Yhwh's house in Psalm 5 and Yhwh's protective action in battle in Psalm 140, both themes are combined in Psalm 91.

Adhering to the pattern that has been established in the previous two chapters, a translation of Psalm 91 is presented first. After the translation and notes comes a discussion of the iconographic data, which is then followed by a syntactic analysis of the poem. Finally

a close reading of the poem will be presented in light of both the iconographic and poetic analysis. The syntactic analysis yields a gross structure of the poem that to my knowledge has never been proposed for Psalm 91, although it is not substantially different from proposals driven by form-critical concerns, and likewise it bears similarities to other proposals developed out of a holistic reading of the psalm. Out of the various form-critical interpretations, my reading is most sympathetic to those who argue for its royal origins.

Psalm 91: Translation and Textual Notes

1. Let the one who dwells in the protection of the Most High,
 who abides in the shadow of Almighty,
2. say¹ to the Lord, “my refuge, my stronghold,
 my God in whom I trust.”²
3. For he will deliver you from the snare of the fowler,

¹LXX reads “he will say” ἐρεῖ; cf., Kraus (*Psalms 60-150*, 220) who accepts the LXX; with Dahood (*Psalms 51-100*, 330) I am repointing MT אָמַר to the imperative אָמַר.

²The syntax of vv. 1-2 is complex. My translation closely follows Dahood, *Psalms 51-100*, 329. Regarding the syntax of v. 1, see GKC §116x, which says the finite verb continues the force of the participle. Furthermore, vv. 1-2 should be read together and not separated; see Tate (*Psalms 51-100*, 446); cf. Hossfeld and Zenger (*Psalms 2*, 426), who translate similarly, but retain the first person pointing אָמַר; cf. Aubrey Johnson (*The Cultic Prophet and Israel's Psalmody* [Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1979] 186), who points it as a participle אָמַר corresponding to יֵשֵׁב in v. 1.

from the thorn³ of destruction.

4. He will cover you with his pinions.⁴

Under his wings you will seek refuge.

His faithfulness is a shield and a bulwark.⁵

5. You will not fear the terror of the night,

or the arrow that flies by day,

6. the pestilence⁶ that walks in darkness,

the plague that devastates⁷ at midday.

7. Though a thousand fall at your side,

and a myriad at your right hand,

it will not come near you.

³Although there is question as to the existence of **דְּבַר** meaning “sting, thorn” in addition to the meaning “plague, pestilence” (cf. *HALOT*), I tentatively read it according to Hossfeld and Zenger’s (*Psalms* 2, 427) suggestion that **דְּבַר** represents the fowler’s arrow point. Alternatively, one could read like the LXX (cf. Syriac) λόγον παραχώδους “terrifying thing,” repointing the MT to the more common **דְּבַר** “word, thing, affair.” Similarly, in v. 6, the LXX has πράγματος for **דְּבַר**.

⁴**אֲבִירָה** occurs only four times in the MT. Since the LXX and Syriac treat it as a plural, some emend to plural (e.g., Barkde, *BHS*; Kraus, *Psalms* 60-150, 220); it is plural in Ps 68:14, but singular in Job 39:13 and Deut 32:11. Tate (*Psalms* 51-100, 448) takes the noun as collective.

⁵This verse will be the focus of the philological and iconographic analysis in the following section below.

⁶As in v. 3, LXX, Aquila and Syriac reflect **דְּבַר** “word, thing.”

⁷The LXX has δαίμονίου “demon,” likely reading **דִּמּוֹן** “demon” instead of the MT (cf., Barkde, *BHS*), which I have retained. An identification of the calamitous forces—whether they are supernatural or human, related to either war or illness or both—in vv. 5-6 is difficult. The problems and proposals regarding this issue require more attention than can be given in a study that is focused upon protective imagery. For more details on the problems, cf. Kraus, *Psalms* 60-150, 223 and Tate, *Psalms* 51-150, 454-55.

8. Only with your eyes you will look,
and the retribution of the wicked you will see.
9. Because you took the Lord as your refuge,⁸
the Most High, your dwelling,
10. evil will not befall you,
and affliction will not come near your tent.
11. For he will give his messengers charge of you,
to watch over you in all your ways.
12. Upon their hands they will bear you up,
lest you strike your foot against a stone.
13. Upon a lion⁹ and viper you will tread.

⁸The trope of gapping informs my reading of v. 9 (see my comments in the syntactic analysis below). I am reading v. 9a with the understanding that the line is governed by the verb in 9b, which has been gapped. In the MT, the pointing of the consonantal text מַחֲסִי reads as if the י is a first person singular suffix. Some (eg. Kraus, [*Psalm 60-150*, 220] and Gunkel [*Die Psalmen*, 107]) have emended the text to מַחֲסֶךְ (cf. Bardke, *BHS*). I am following Dahood (*Psalms 51-100*, 333) and Johnson (*Cultic Prophet*, 189) who explain the י as preserving an archaic spelling (מַחֲסִי) which has been preserved elsewhere in the MT (e.g., Ps 57:2). Dahood's view that the verb in v. 9b is understood in 9a is consistent with my argument that the verb is gapped. Similarly, if the י is in fact archaic, then the second person singular pronoun is gapped in v. 9a as well.

⁹LXX (and Syriac) read ἄσπιδά “asp.” The meaning of שָׁחַל in the MT is a matter of debate; although most often it is understood to be a lion, some have argued that it be a lizard or another type of reptile (e.g., Mowinckel; see *HALOT*). The main concern with this verse is that some scholars have found it hard to imagine someone treading upon a lion; hence, there have been many proposed emendations going back to Duhm, such as emending שָׁחַל to זֶחַל “snake,” but extending to the other three creatures as well; see Tate (*Psalms 51-100*, 449-50) for a detailed summary of the various proposals. I have retained the MT reading of שָׁחַל as lion; Given the fact that treading on lions—symbolizing either demons or mythological enemies—is a well known motif in ancient Near Eastern iconography (figs. 4.7 and 4.8 above and Keel and Uehlinger, *GGG*, illuss. 134a, 138a,b); aversion to the image of treading upon lions is a modern one.

You will trample a young lion and serpent.

14. Because he clings to me, I will deliver him.

I will make him high and inaccessible, for he knows my name.

15. He will call me, and I will answer him.

I am with him in distress.

I will rescue him and honor him.

16. With long life I will satisfy him.

I will show him my salvation.

Psalm 91:4: Wings and Shields as Metaphors in Light of Ancient Near Eastern

Iconography

In limiting the scope of this chapter to key themes related to Psalm 5 and 140—primarily wing and shield imagery—the focus of the linguistic and iconographic analysis will be on the three lines of Psalm 91:4:

בְּאַבְרָתוֹ יִסְדֵּךְ לְךָ 4a1
וְתַחַת־כְּנָפָיו תִּחְסֶה 4a2
צִנָּה וְסִחָרָה אִמְתּוֹ 4b

He will cover you with his pinions.
Under his wings you will seek refuge.
His faithfulness is a shield and a bulwark.

Furthermore, because the iconographic data concerning winged imagery was a prime focus of the previous chapter, emphasis will be placed in this chapter upon shield imagery, which is

also present in Psalm 5. Its discussion has been reserved until now so that the shield metaphors present in both Psalm 5 and 91 can be addressed together.

Wings

The reference to wings in v. 4a2 is one of six in the Psalter (Ps 17:8; 36:8; 57:2, 61:5; 63:8; 91:4). This passage, however, is noteworthy because it contains two whole lines devoted to winged imagery as a metaphor of Yhwh's protection. The relevant iconographic images have been presented in chapter 4, in which I discuss the prevalence of winged imagery as the iconographic motif *par excellence* for symbolizing divine protection. While I deliberated a great deal over how one might envision Yhwh's winged form in Psalm 140, the literary image in Psalm 91 is congruent in particular to the artistic depictions of protective birds, namely the protective falcon and vulture in Egyptian iconography. The Egyptian deities these birds usually represent—Horus and Nekhbet—provide a conceptual framework from which to understand the literary image in the psalm: both are indicative of protection the gods provide to the to the *king*. Whether it is Horus who protects the enthroned king within whom he is embodied, or Nekhbet who is charged with a motherly role protecting the king from the moment of his birth and especially on the battlefield, the *royal* aspect is a constant. Though I argue in this chapter that the literary image of Yhwh's protection as a bird is the dominant metaphor of divine protection in the psalm, more space is devoted within this section on iconography to the imagery in that follows in v. 4b. Having surveyed the

avian iconographic motifs in the previous chapter, I have yet to discuss the iconographic data relevant to the shield metaphors, not only in this psalm, but also in Psalm 5.

Shields

The final line of Psalm 91:4 (line 4b) contains imagery borrowed from warfare. Two defensive weapons serve as a metaphor of Yhwh's faithfulness. Between the two, **צִנְהָה** is relatively well known, whereas **סִחָרְהָה** is a *hapax legomenon*, the definition of which is less than certain; nevertheless, attention must be given to both terms in order to understand the meaning of the line. These two terms are usually treated as denoting two defensive war implements, most commonly two different types of shields. In older English translations (e.g., KJV, ASV, NRSV; cf. BDB) they are "shield and buckler," the former being a large body shield and the latter a smaller and lightweight round shield. This treatment of **סִחָרְהָה** appears to be guided by a view that it is analogous to the better known term for the small round shield, the **מִגֵּן**, which is often paired with **צִנְהָה**. Of the twenty occurrences of **צִנְהָה**, it appears six times in parallel with **מִגֵּן** in poetry.¹⁰ Although **מִגֵּן** is not in Psalm 91, its relevance requires it to be included in the discussion.

Regarding **סִחָרְהָה**, the Septuagint and the Peshitta possibly preserve a different *Vorlage* in which a form of **סָחַר** "to go around, about, travel about in" (possibly related to

¹⁰According to Freedman and O'Connor ("מִגֵּן" *TDOT*, 8.74), **מִגֵּן**, which designates "a round shield or buckler, often with embossed sheathing," occurs in combination with **צִנְהָה**, which designates the larger body shield in Jer 46:3; Ezek 23:24; 38:4; 39:9; Ps 35:2.

the Syriac *shr* “go about as beggar, be beggar”; cf., *HALOT*), is being read: ὅπλω κυκλώσει σε ἢ ἀλήθεια αὐτοῦ.¹¹ The Septuagint’s handing of **שָׁרַר** is not very helpful either, using no less than ten different words to translate it, thus indicating that by the time it was written a clear understanding of **שָׁרַר** had been lost. For example, it renders **שָׁרַר** as the generic ὅπλον (Pss 5:12; 35:2, 91:4), ἀσπίς (Jer 26:3), θυρεός (Ps 35:2), πέλτη (Ezek 39:9), and even as a spear, δόρυ (1 Kgs 10:16) and λόγχη (Ezek 26:8).

Several other semitic cognates suggest more likely possibilities for **שָׁרַר**, especially when considered along with evidence from iconographic sources, which will actually help to shed light on both **שָׁרַר** and **שָׁרַר**. Most of the evidence informing our knowledge of shields has come from the iconographic sources of Israel’s neighbors, especially Egypt and Assyria.¹² The artistic sources cited below, mostly from monuments, illustrate a variety of shield designs as military hardware and tactics had evolved over time.¹³ Yet the basic division between **שָׁרַר** and **שָׁרַר** remain relevant categories, the latter being lighter and more mobile, but offering less protection than the former, which though heavy and cumbersome, offers significantly more protection.

¹¹Cf. A. A. Macintosh (“Psalm XCI 4 and the Root **שָׁרַר**” *VT* 23, [1973] 56), who suggests the possibility that the LXX renders a *Qal* feminine participle **שָׁרַרְתְּ**, and rejects Bardke’s (*BHS*) reconstruction **שָׁרַרְתְּ** as unnecessary.

¹²Graham Philip, “Weapons and Warfare in Ancient Syria-Palestine,” in *Near Eastern Archaeology: A Reader* (ed. Suzanne Richard; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2003) 188.

¹³Yigael Yadin, *The Art of Warfare in Biblical Lands: In the Light of Archaeological Study* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1963) 1.13-15, 64-65.

Scenes from monumental art depict a variety of both large and small shields, often in the same picture. Some body shields stood about neck high from the ground (**Plate II**) while other shields (Neo-Assyrian) cover the entire body (e.g., the larger shields in **figs. 5.1** and **5.4**). Some of the smaller body shields are designed to curve protectively around one's body (**fig. 5.2**), and similarly some of the larger ones curve over the top (eg., the larger shields in **fig. 5.3**).

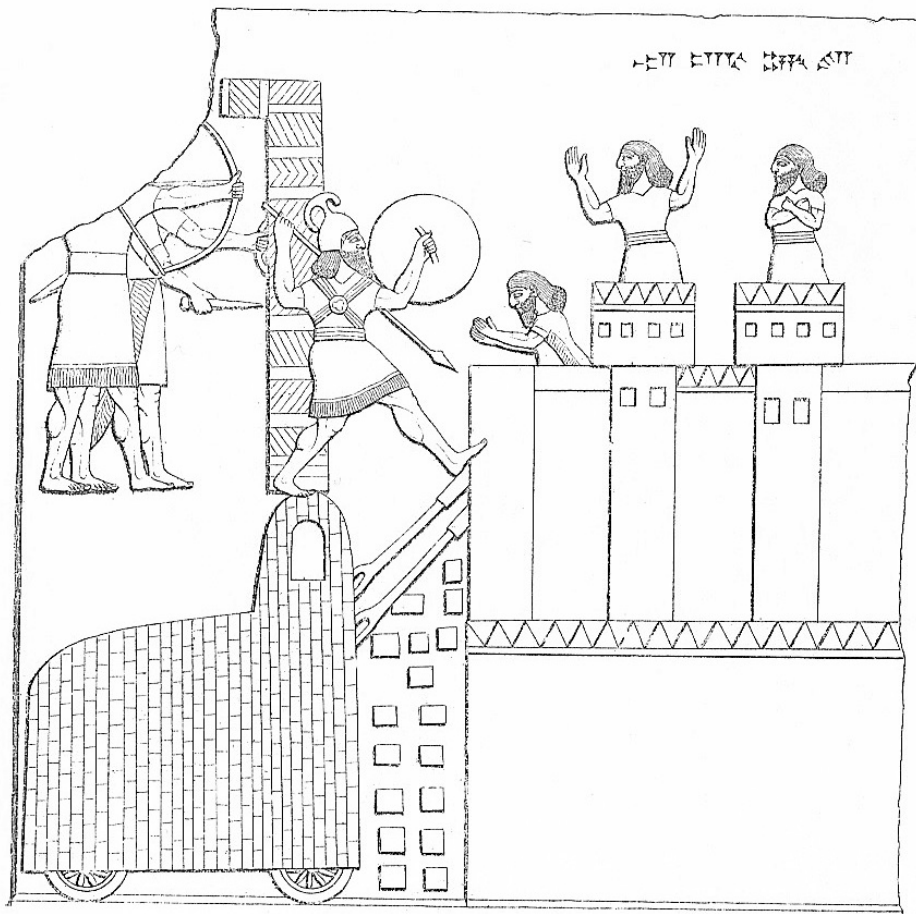


Figure 5.1. Drawing of a relief now lost, Nimrud, Tiglath Pileser III (744-727 B.C.E.).

After ANEP, fig. 368.

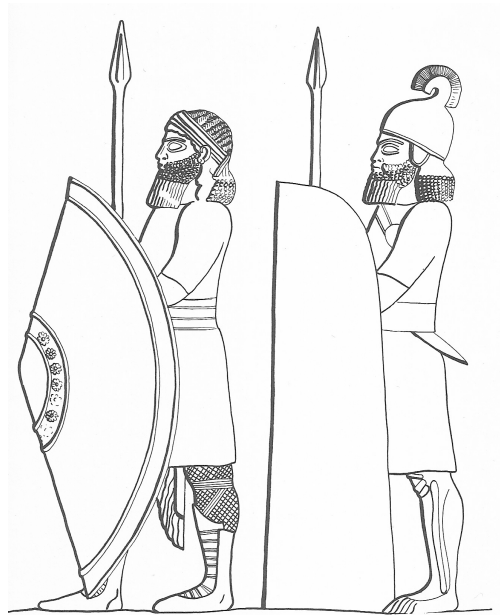


Figure 5.2. Drawing from a relief, Nineveh, Assurbanipal (668-626 B.C.E.). After Keel, *Symbolism*, illus. 307.

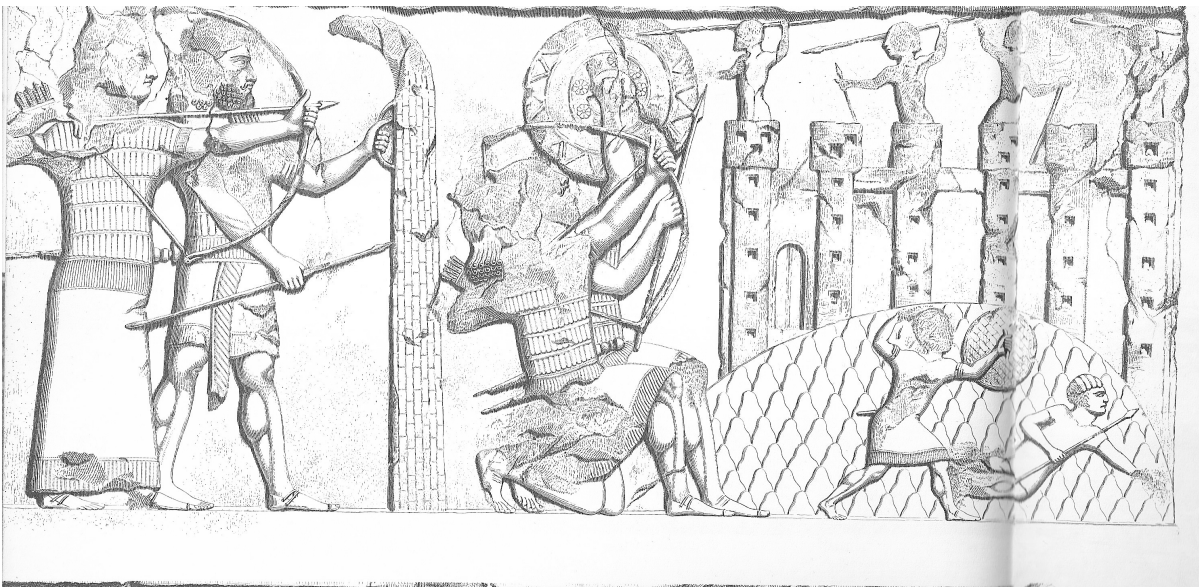


Figure 5.3. Sargon's palace at Khorsabad (721-705 B.C.E.). After Yadin, *Art of Warfare*, p. 418.

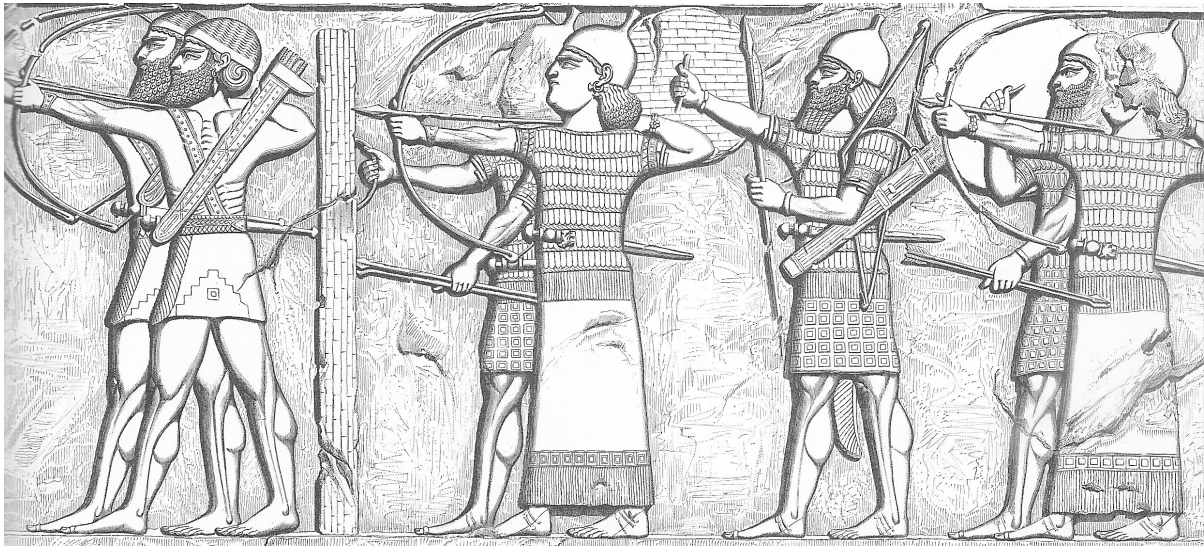


Figure 5.4. Sargon's palace at Khorsabad (721-705 B.C.E.). After Yadin, *Art of Warfare*, p. 419.

Egyptians also had both the body shields covering the entire body and the slightly smaller body shields, either with a pointed top (**plate XIV**) or a rounded top (**plate XV**). The smaller shields were made of wood or wicker and covered with leather (**plate XVI**); some were square (**plate XVII, no. 2**), and some were shaped like a figure eight (**plate XVII, no. 1**). During the Middle Bronze age, the shield was a defensive weapon typically carried by all soldiers along with an offensive weapon such as lance or spear. In later times, starting in the Late Bronze age, archers and slingers were protected by shield bearers who accompanied them; however, as time progressed, there was even further differentiation of roles among soldiers, and those who bore the large shields were used either as shield bearers, or as lines of

defense in a siege.¹⁴ Several of the examples of sieges I have included (eg., **figs 5.1, 5.3 and 5.4**) have at least two types of shields in operation.

While the pictorial data offer a fairly clear sense of the differences between the **זָנָה** and **מִגֵּן**, the question as to where **סִחְרָה** might fit into this remains. Although one cannot be certain, the linguistic evidence points to it designating a physical wall or barrier of some sort.¹⁵ The noun **סִחְרָה** is glossed in *HALOT* as “wall” in view of the Syr and Akk evidence: In Syriac *shartā* “fortress,” or perhaps *sahrā* “tower” are likely cognates; likewise, one must consider also complementary evidence from Akkadan: *sihirtu* “circumference, surroundings, total extent,” and *igar sihirti* “enclosure wall.” Several recent commentators have rightly understood **סִחְרָה** as a protective wall.¹⁶ Keel’s suggestion that it might be a type of *movable* wall, such as the massive siege shield depicted in **fig. 5.5** (cf. also **plate XVIII**), is perhaps the most appealing suggestion. The **סִחְרָה** might be used to differentiate between the large body shields that cover from the neck down to the feet and the enormous shields that tower over the individual, functioning as a temporary bulwark in the form of a movable wall.

¹⁴David Noel Freedman and Michael Patrick O’Connor, “**מִגֵּן**,” *TDOT*, 8.77; as an example, they cite *ANEP*, figs. 372-73, which was too large to be included in the study.

¹⁵cf., *HALOT*; for an interpretation of **סִחְרָה** as signifying an abstract supernatural protection, see Macintosh, “Psalm XCI,” 56-62.

¹⁶Eg., Frank-Lothar Hossfeld and Erich Zenger., *Psalms 2: A commentary on Psalms 51-100* (trans. Linda M. Maloney; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005) 430; John Goldingay, *Psalms 90-150* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008) 38; cf. also *HALOT*.



Figure 5.5. Drawing of a relief from the central palace, Nimrud, Tiglath-pileser III (745-727 B.C.E.). After Keel, *Symbolism*, illus. 304.

Significance of shields in Psalm 91

Having given some consideration as to what the terms **צִנָּה** and **סִחָרָה** designate, attention can now turn the question of their meaning and significance within Psalm 91. The question is not unlike the one I posed regarding the image of covering one's head in battle in Ps 140:8. Should the image of the **צִנָּה** and **סִחָרָה** be imagined in any way concretely, and if so, in what manner? Othmar Keel raises this question in his brief treatment of shield imagery

in *Symbolism*.¹⁷ He begins by describing what he views as the likely concrete source for what he thinks is a central shield metaphor in the Psalter: the image of a shield bearer protecting a warrior. However, he does not argue this point with a strong sense of certitude. He goes on to suggest that the image of the shield had possibly lost its original force as a metaphor and evolved into a basic concept of protection in general. Arne Wiig, however, takes up Keel's argument that the shield image specifically invokes the idea of Yhwh serving as one's shield-bearer, and he defends it with conviction whenever it comes up, including Psalm 35, but especially in Psalm 18.¹⁸ Initially, Keel and Wiig's similar view that shield metaphors in the Psalter evokes the image of Yhwh as one's shield-bearer in battle seemed to be plausible, but ultimately the argument does not hold up under scrutiny.

Keel's assertion, "In war, the suppliant's intimacy with Yahweh found its most moving expression in the entreaty that Yahweh serve as the suppliant's shield bearer," seems quite probable.¹⁹ The primary text he cites is Ps 35:2, a key text in that no other passage so vividly depicts an image in which Yhwh wields defensive weapons on behalf of another. Keel connects this literary image with an iconographic depiction of an Assyrian general being protected by two different shield-bearers holding two different types of shielding

¹⁷Keel, *Symbolism*, 221-225.

¹⁸Arne Wiig, *Promise, Protection, Prosperity: Aspects of the "Shield" as a Religious Relational Metaphor in an Ancient Near Eastern Perspective: An Iconographical and Textual Analysis* (ed. Tord Olsson; Lund Studies in the History of Religions 9; Lund: Novapress, 1999)

¹⁹Keel, *Symbolism*, 222.

apparatuses (**fig. 5.5** above). In so doing, Keel clarifies his interpretation of the image as one of Yhwh serving in a subordinate position as another's shield bearer. He buttresses his argument by citing Ps 91:4. Keel's suggestion that the **סִוְרָה** in Ps 91:4 could be a movable protective wall such as in **fig. 5.5** is a view with which I largely agree. However, Keel goes further. Interpreting the image as one which expresses a great deal a familiarity and trust between God and the suppliant, he writes, "To summon Yahweh as shield-bearer presupposes that intimacy which permits one to ask a friend to perform a lowly service without any way of offending him."²⁰ It is an intimacy, Keel explains, that developed out of expressions of trust between god and king. As evidence, he cites an Assyrian prophecy addressed to Esarhaddon from Ishtar of Arbela. In the oracle Ishtar says, "Esarhaddon! I will give you long days and everlasting years in the Inner City. O Esarhaddon, I will be your good shield in Arbela."²¹

After offering several more examples of how uses of various shields from ancient Near Eastern contexts might guide one toward concrete interpretations, Keel oddly seems to distance himself from the concrete interpretation he had just espoused. He calls use of **צִנָּה** in Pss 5:12; 35:2 and 91:4 "fomulalike" expressions based upon the large standing Assyrian shield. He continues by saying that other mentions of shield such as in Ps 3:4 (**מָגֵן**) belong to

²⁰Ibid.

²¹K4310 IV lines 14-19; the translation is by Simo Parpola *Assyrian Prophecies* (State Archives of Assyria 9; Helsinki, Finland: Helsinki University Press, 1997) 8.

a number of cases in which a shield is merely “an ideogram of protection and security.”²²

Now, there is nothing that should necessarily prohibit Keel from interpreting shield imagery in ways ranging from concrete to abstract, as context leads him; nevertheless, I cannot help but detect some equivocation especially in his treatment of Ps 35:2 and 91:4.

Wiig agrees with Keel’s initial inclination to interpret Ps 35:2 as depicting Yhwh as a shield-bearer, but he goes on to press very strongly for interpreting most shield metaphors in the Bible as evoking the concept of the shield-bearer, using Psalm 18 as his primary text in the Book of Psalms. While I had noted some equivocation in Keel’s treatment, Wiig is absolutely firm in his position. In reference to Ps. 35:2 he asserts, “YHWH is described here in a way that without a doubt refers to a ‘shield bearer.’”²³ With his book being a reworking of his doctoral dissertation, Wiig perhaps does as much as one could with the available evidence to make the strongest case possible in defending the idea that Yhwh is depicted as a shield bearer. I will not be able to take up each of his arguments point by point, but I can demonstrate with a careful reading of several psalms in question that his position is untenable. After a critique of his interpretation of the iconographic evidence and some key external textual evidence, I will offer my own view of shield imagery that looks at the shield metaphor in Psalm 91 as well as in Psalm 5.

²²Ibid., 224.

²³Wiig, *Promise, Protection, Prosperity*, 158.

Since Wiig uses Psalm 18 (= 2 Samuel 22) as the primary text upon which he builds his argument, it is best to begin there, along with his other key text: Genesis 15. A word for shield appears three times in the psalm (at 18:2, 31, 36). It is important to note that each time it is מִגֵּן not צִנִּיָּה, and to point out that Wiig's argument that צִנִּיָּה, as a metaphor of protection, evokes the image Yhwh serving as a shield bearer in Ps 35:3 (and Keel's in Ps 91:4) is dependent on his interpretation of מִגֵּן in Psalm 18 and elsewhere.²⁴ Consequently, because it is questionable whether the lexeme מִגֵּן in two of the three instances in Psalm 18 does in fact designate a shield, Wiig's argument is considerably weakened.

Although many modern versions still retain the translation "shield" for מִגֵּן in Psalm 18, there is substantial evidence that this is incorrect. Mainly, the passages in question are ones in which the subject of מִגֵּן is either divine or royal. These include passages Wiig cites as evidence of a shield metaphor, which can be expressed by the phrase "Yhwh is a shield." Although some scholars had raised questions concerning מִגֵּן for well over a century, a little less than fifty years ago, the research of Marvin Kessler and Mitchell Dahood, who independently reevaluated the occurrences of the lexeme מִגֵּן, gained acceptance.²⁵ While all along, the Masoretes had pointed verb מִגֵּן in the *Piel*, perhaps indicating that they viewed it as a denominative from מִגֵּן (as it is described in BDB), Kessler and Dahood considered

²⁴Eg., Gen 15:1.

²⁵Martin Kessler, "'Shield' of Abraham," *VT* 14 (1964) 494-497; Mitchell Dahood, *Psalms I: 1-50*, 16-18, idem., "Hebrew-Ugaritic Lexicography IV," *Biblica* 47 (1966) 414.

evidence from Phoenician, Aramaic, Akkadian, all of which have attestations to a verb מִגַּן meaning “to give.” There is no verbal attestation of מִגַּן in Ugaritic, but several personal names possibly reflect the verbal form. In essence, their proposals argue that several occurrences of the homograph מִגַּן are not always related to the root גִּנַּן “to enclose, surround, protect,” from which the noun for shield מִגָּן is derived, but to another root מִגַּן meaning “to give, to bestow.”²⁶ Their proposals have earned some acceptance. The evidence is compelling enough that the *Dictionary of Classical Hebrew* presupposes a noun מִגָּן (following Dahood’s proposal) meaning “benefactor, suzerain, general,” glosses the lexeme מִגַּן in Gn 15:1 as “benefactor,” in Ps 18:31 (= 2 Sam 22:31) as “suzerain,” and in Ps 84:12 as “soveriegn”; although the possibility is left open that these and the occurrence of מִגַּן in Ps 18:3 might denote “shield.”²⁷

The most comprehensive evaluation of the evidence surrounding מִגַּן was assembled by Michael O’Connor, who proposed a technical use of the verb. He argues that when the verb מִגַּן is used of a deity or someone of high rank, typically in its participial form, it can denote a royal or divine title, or it signifies a technical form of benefaction specific to members of the highest rank, both of which he renders in translation as “d/Donor.”²⁸ Believing that the external evidence surrounding מִגַּן was negligible, he saw a firmer basis

²⁶Cf. also O’Connor’s (“Yahweh the Donor,” *AO* 6 [1988] 47-51) summary of theirs and others’ research.

²⁷David J. A. Clines, *The Dictionary of classical Hebrew* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993-).

²⁸“Yahweh the Donor,” 52; cf. also his earlier article with David Noel Freedman (“מִגָּן”).

for the verb מָגַן “to give, bestow” on the grounds of internal evidence from Genesis 15 and 2 Samuel 22 (= Psalm 18). O’Connor’s understanding of Gen 15:1 is in agreement with Kessler, who translates the verse “Fear not, Abraham, I am about to give (מָגַן) you your very great reward,” although O’Connor’s proposal would render it, “Fear Not, Abraham, I am your donor.”²⁹ In the context of the covenant ceremony of Genesis 14-15, with the many words for giving and taking, both preceding and following the verse in question, the contention that Yhwh is *one who gives*, essentially functioning as the suzerain, fits in much more naturally than a seemingly out of place title of “shield.”

Genesis 15

Wiig, disagreeing with the above analysis writes, “I consider it superfluous to reinterpret the word *mgn* to mean anything other than “shield” as Dahood has done.”³⁰ He specifically ties his interpretation of Gen 15:1 to the passage from the Assyrian prophetic text I quoted above in which Ishtar of Arbela speaks to Esarhaddon.³¹ “Esarhaddon! I will give

²⁹O’Connor’s position, by proposing a technical use of the term, occupies a middle ground between Kessler (“‘Shield’ of Abraham,” 496) and Dahood (*Psalms I*, 16-17.), the latter seeing מָגַן as a title which he variously translates as “king” and later as “benefactor” or “suzerain.”

³⁰Wiig, *Promise, Protection, Prosperity*, 128.; for more more competing views, see M. Köckert, “Shield of Abraham,” *DDD* 1459-1462.

³¹K4130, which, not by coincidence, is the same text identified earlier by Keel. Out of all the textual material, Wiig (*Promise, Protection, Prosperity*, 173-92) can cite only K4130 as an Assyrian text in which a shield is employed as a metaphor of divine protection. He cites a number of Egyptian texts (see pp. 162-72) which employ shield imagery, but they would not support his thesis which is dependent upon seeing Genesis 15 in light of K4130. Likewise, the supposition of a shield bearer metaphor is dependent upon Assyrian art.

you long days and everlasting years in the Inner City. O Esarhaddon, I will be your good shield in Arbela.”³² In essence, he argues that both passages are interested in insuring dynastic succession, and that the shield reference, as a indicator of protection in battle, is appropriate to both. He writes, “In this Assyrian text, as in Gen 15:1, we can detect an association to divine protection in the idea of the god as a personal shield, based upon the purely concrete protection of the shield in a situation of emergency or battle.”³³

Wiig’s case is built upon perceived similarities between the Assyrian text and Genesis 15. The Akkadian word for shield *arītu* does not appear as a loanword or cognate in Gen 15:1 or elsewhere in the Masoretic text. Furthermore, it is the only applicable reference to shield Wiig is able to provide from all the available Assyrian textual materials. In this light, it becomes apparent that a reference to a deity being a shield is rare and isolated, whether its to Yhwh or Ishtar. Furthermore, Wiig’s contention that the text expresses the idea that Ishtar *is* a shield is not altogether certain. Compare Pfeiffer’s translation: “Esarhaddon in the city of Ashur, protracted days, everlasting years shall I grant you. Esarhaddon, in Arbela my mercy is your shield.”³⁴ His reading of the text indicates that “mercy” and not Ishtar is the subject of shield. The rarity of the expression and the uncertainty of its exact meaning should caution

³²K4310 IV lines 14-19.

³³Wiig, *Promise, Protection, Prosperity*, 128.

³⁴Robert H. Pfeiffer, “Akkadian Oracles and Prophecies,” *ANET* (449-52) 450.

one not to make too much of the reference. Conversely, in his attempt to persuade others of the importance of the shield metaphor, Wiig ignores other passages in the Assyrian prophecies that provide a much clearer conceptual parallel to the biblical material and especially to Psalm 91. The strongest parallel is *avian*: a mother bird's protection to her young. Elsewhere in the Assyrian prophecies, the idea of divine protection from birth is conceptualized by the protective bird.

Psalm 18

Wiig's discussion of Psalm 18 is where he forms his central arguments. He proposes the existence of a very specific metaphor for Yhwh which he formulates as "YHWH is a shield bearer," a metaphor that he distinguishes from a separate but still related metaphor "YHWH is a shield."³⁵ The former being a metaphor of action, narrower in scope and relating to a specific situations of need in which Yhwh's martial activities are characterized, the latter being a broader concept of Yhwh's protection in general. Wiig actually lays out three possibilities for interpreting the shield metaphors in Psalm 18. With the first two possibilities, the shield metaphor is mediated by either synecdoche or metonymy, and as a result is not a "pure" metaphor. He understands synecdoche as when "a more comprehensive part stands for something specific," or its reverse; with metonymy "something is named by a

³⁵Wiig, *Promise, Protection, Prosperity*, 128.

name that clearly associates with it.”³⁶ In contrast, a “pure” metaphor is “based on a reader’s associations and connotations,” which are derived from the reader’s particular experience and understanding of the world.³⁷ His argument espousing the existence of a metaphor “Yhwh is a shield bearer” is largely dependent there being a being a metaphor “Yhwh is a shield,” and any argument that assumes “Yhwh is a shield” exists as a metaphor is brought into doubt by the dubious meaning of מגן.

Let us examine more closely the three instances of מגן in Psalm 18. The reading of מגן as “shield” in Ps 18:3 and 18:31 is questionable, and in fact should be taken as instances of the technical use of מגן “to give.” The image of Yhwh as shield in Ps 18:3 is incongruous with the other divine epithets in vv. 3-4 that depict him as something enormous and that, whether man-made or naturally occurring, provides protection: rock (סֶלֶעַ), mountain stronghold (מְצוּדָה), rock (צוּר), high point/refuge (מִשְׁגֵּב).³⁸ Likewise, reading מגן in v. 31 “He is Donor for all who trust in him” is supported by v. 33b. in which וִיתֵן is read participially (יִתֵּן/נָתַן of יוֹתֵן) “The Giver, his way is perfect.”³⁹

The only instance of מגן that is undoubtedly a shield is in v. 36. According to Wiig, the shield in Psalm 18:36 can mean (1) metaphorically Yhwh is the shield, (2)

³⁶Ibid., 141.

³⁷Ibid., 142.

³⁸O’Connor, “Yahweh the Donor,” 54.

³⁹Ibid., 55.; cf. Dahood, *Psalms I*, 103, 114.

synecdochically Yhwh uses the shield, and (3) metonymically Yhwh's protection is symbolized by the shield. Wiig favors a synecdochic interpretation reading Yhwh as a shield-bearer; however, he believes all three perspectives are not mutually exclusive but complementary. His interpretation, however, is extremely overambitious, presupposes that מִגָּן in Ps 18:3, 31 and Gen 15:1 means shield, and generally misses the whole point. The reference to shield in Ps 18:36 is couched within a context where Yhwh is the giver or benefactor of the weapons needed to thwart attack. The bow in v. 35 is complemented by the shield in v. 36. When one reads vv. 35-36 together, the idea that Yhwh is training one for battle becomes clear. The one who trains in v. 35 can neither become the shield itself nor the user of the shield (i.e., a shield bearer) in v. 36. Divine training given to a king is a well known motif in Egyptian iconography. In a relief from Karnak (**fig. 5.6**), Thutmose III is receiving training from the gods for war.

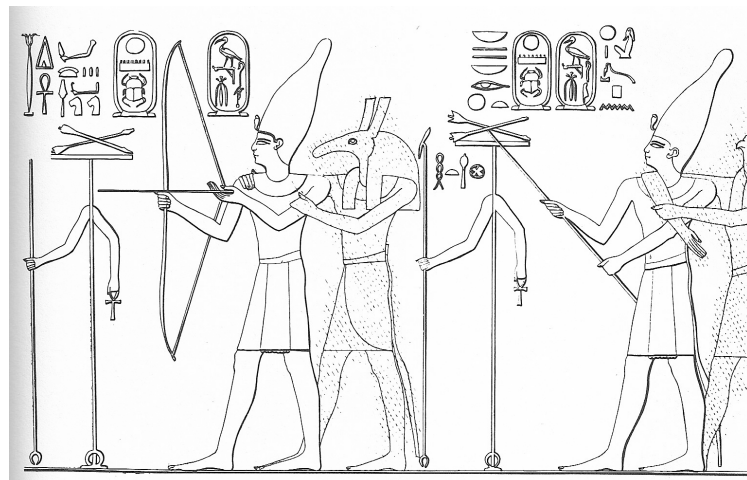


Figure 5.6. Relief, Karnak, Thutmose III (1502-1448 B.C.E.). After Keel, *Symbolism*,

illus. 356.

Psalm 35

The strongest case in support of the idea that Yhwh serving as one's shield-bearer is evoked with a shield metaphor can be made with Psalm 35. A better impression of the function of the shield v. 2 is gained when read in context with the surrounding verses (Ps 35:1-3):

רִיבָה יְהוָה אֶת־יָרִיבִי
 לָחֶם אֶת־לֶחְמִי:
 חֶזֶק מִגֶּן וְצִנָּה
 וְקוֹמָה בְּעִזָּרְתִּי:
 וְהָרַק חֲנִית וּסֶגֶר
 לְקִרְאֵת רִדְפִי
 אָמַר לְנַפְשִׁי
 יִשְׁעֲתֶךָ אֱנִי:

Contend, O LORD, with those who contend with me;
 fight against those who fight against me!
 Take hold of shield and buckler,
 and rise up to help me!
 Draw the spear and javelin
 against my pursuers;
 say to my soul,
 "I am your salvation." (NRSV)

Filled with action and danger, the rhetoric of these lines is quite moving. The poet's highly emotional plea, "Contend, O Lord, with those who contend with me, fight with those who fight against me," gives one the sense of intense battle. The imagery of hand-to-hand combat in military warfare is further expressed with the wielding of weapons. With varying degrees of certainty, these weapons are identifiable as those used by ancient warriors. One can with confidence identify the small light shield (מִגֶּן) and the larger body shield (צִנָּה). Likewise,

the *חֲנִית* is well-known as a spear, but it is not entirely clear if the *סֶגֶר* is a battle ax, or perhaps the handle or socket of a lance.⁴⁰ It is remarkable that the poet describes Yhwh using these weapons with such vividness. However, problems arise when interpreters try to be too precise by pinpointing a specific type of soldier to which the passage refers, or going even so far as to specify the nature of the role that a soldier has within the battle.

Any argument that the passage describes a specific type of warrior—in this case a shield bearer—based upon our knowledge of the military tactics of a particular army within a limited timeframe is tenuous at best; yet, this is precisely Wiig’s approach. Keel was wise enough to avoid stating his case too clearly. In contrast, Wiig insists that the Assyrian techniques behind the imagery of Ps 35:2 were known in Israel. Specifically, he cites a technique used from 800 BCE to c. 610 BCE in which (1) men were organized into units of at least ten, and (2) these units were divided into at least five two-man teams consisting of an archer and a shield bearer. The latter also carried either a lance or a sword. Without providing specifics other than a few variations with respect to the use of different types of shields, he allows for other possible weapon combinations between the teams. His point is to highlight the role of the shield-bearer, whose reliability and trustworthiness is absolutely essential for successful combat.⁴¹

⁴⁰See *HALOT*.

⁴¹Wiig, *Promise, Protection, Prosperity*, 143.

While there is nothing objectionable in studying Assyrian battle techniques, and in fact it is generally a good idea to use such information when researching the practice of warfare in the Bible, the main problem with Wiig's argument is that he goes far beyond what might be reasonable inferences from comparative historical data with respect to Psalms 18 and 35. One cannot with confidence connect the description of fighting or terms used for weapons in Psalm 35 with specific Assyrian battle techniques. More importantly, Wiig's interpretation ultimately loses sight of the poet's rhetoric on several counts. Were the poet wishing specifically to identify any one of the variations of shield-bearers Wiig identifies, the poet would have needed to be more precise. Instead, Yhwh is implored to carry four weapons total: two different types of shields and two different types of offensive weapons. One might argue that this is merely poetic license or that it is merely the nature of biblical Hebrew poetry verse that a poet naturally would double his terms in parallelistic fashion. Perhaps the idea behind the enumeration of more weapons than an actual soldier would carry suggests supernatural ability of Yhwh, which is how Wiig explains it. Ultimately, the effect of the multiplying of weapons is such that it should discourage one from interpreting the imagery too concretely.⁴²

⁴²See Freedman and O'Connor ("מִנִּי," *TDOT* 8.82) who make this very point.

Psalm 91

To round out the discussion, we must return to Psalm 91 and address the question of how to interpret the final line in v. 4:

צָנָה וְסִחָרָה אֱמֶתוֹ
his faithfulness is a shield and bulwark

My inclination is to treat the metaphor as an abstract symbol of protection. The push to see Yhwh concretely as a shield or as a shield bearer is flawed, as the evidence above has already shown. In addition, there are several considerations that place my position on even firmer ground.

I have already argued that in the context of Psalm 18, “shield” is not a likely or appropriate title for Yhwh. A more careful examination of the metaphorical use of shields further supports my contention that it is an unsuitable appellation for Yhwh. When a shield, denoted by any of the Hebrew terms for shields, is metaphorically used in connection with Yhwh in the Old Testament, it never refers directly to him. For example, his *faithfulness* is a shield in Ps 91:4; *favor* covers the righteous like a shield in Ps 5:13; the shield is *help* in Deut 33:29 and symbolizes *salvation* in Ps 18:36. Hence, when one excludes the questionable attestations of מִגָּן, there are no instances in which Yhwh is himself referred to as a shield. Rather, shield metaphors are only used to articulate aspects of his activities or character, not unlike Ishtar of Arbella whose “mercy” is a shield in Pfeiffer’s translation.

There is a subtle but qualitative difference between how Yhwh's person or image and how his actions or attributes are expressed metaphorically. Shield metaphors appear to only be suitable for expressing abstract notions of divine activity understood as defensive measures. The iconographic record attests to this as well. A distinction must be made between representations of humans and deities. Both humans and gods are depicted in ancient Near Eastern art as warriors, but I have not come across an image which depicts a deity wielding a shield in defense of another (divine or human). Gods with shields wield them for their own personal protection in battle, not in the protection of others.⁴³

Representations of humans are different. In both Egyptian and Assyrian art, men are depicted using shields, but only in Assyrian monumental art are there depictions of human beings serving as shield protectors for other human beings. The iconographic record suggests that the concept of the shield bearer is one that appears to be germane to humans only. Shielding metaphors did not seem to conjure concrete images of divine protection; otherwise they might have appeared in ancient Near Eastern art forms depicting deities.

Contrast the lack of any representational art depicting divine subjects protecting with shields with the many images of gods protecting with their wings or as warriors on the offensive. As I have explained previously in chapter 4, avian themes signifying protection are widespread throughout the ancient Near East, and it is the most significant motif of

⁴³Cf. my arguments regarding the shield and Reshef in chapter 4.

protection in Syro-Palestinian art. The image of a protective bird is the more dominant and concrete image of protection in Psalm 91:

בְּאַבְרָתוֹ יִסְדֹּךָ לָךְ 4a
וְתַחַת־כְּנָפָיו תִּחְסֶה 4b

For he will cover you with his pinions
under his wings you will find refuge

The passage is remarkable in that nowhere else in the Psalter are there two full lines devoted to the image. The most significant passage outside of the Psalms is Deut 32:10b-11:

יִסְבְּכֵנָהּ יְבוֹנֵנָהּ 10b1
יִצְרֵנָהּ כְּאִשׁוֹן עֵינֹו 10b2
כְּנֶשֶׁר יַעִיר קֶנֶו 11a1
עַל־גּוֹזְלֵיו יִרְחֹף 11a2
יִפְרֹשׁ כְּנָפָיו יִקְחֵהוּ 11b1
יִשְׂאֵהוּ עַל־אַבְרָתוֹ 11b2

He (Yhwh) encircled them, and cared for them.
He guarded them as the apple of his eye.
Like a vulture,⁴⁴ he watches over his nest
hovers over his young.
He spreads his wings and takes them up
and carries them on his pinions.

With vocabulary similar to Ps 91:4, Boaz praises Ruth's choice to remain with Naomi instead of returning to her homeland, which he describes as a decision in which Ruth sought refuge (חֹסֶה) under the wings (כְּנָף) of Yhwh (Ruth 2:12). Although I have limited my extrabiblical comparative material to art, I must reference once more the Assyrian text in

⁴⁴A נֶשֶׁר is a large bird; whether it is an eagle or a vulture is a matter of debate; the question is left open in *HALOT* (cf. *DCH*); Keel (*Jahwes Entgegnung an Ijob*, 69) and Schroer ("Im Schatten deiner Flügel," 299-305) contend based upon ancient Near Eastern iconographic motifs indicate vulture.

which the Lady of Arbella addresses Esarhaddon, but this time to a different oracle. Though the tablets are damaged, they attest to the importance of avian protective imagery in Assyria. In the oracle, Ishtar exclaims, “[I will *annihilate*] whatever enemies you [have]. *As for* [you, *stay*] in your palace; I will [reconcile] Assyria with you. I will protect [you] by day and by dawn and [consolidate] your crown. Like a winged bird ov[er its *young*] I will twitter over you and go in circles around you.”⁴⁵ In another oracle she says, “I am your father and mother. I raised you between my wings; I will see your success. Have no fear, Esarhaddon! I will place you between my arm and my forearm.”⁴⁶ There are far more lines in these passages that depict the deity pteromorphically in comparison to the single line that contains a shield metaphor. One might also notice the mention of time “by day and by dawn,” which might have its parallel in Psalm 91 naming the times of day dangerous forces are at work (Ps 91:5-6).

Finally, a close reading of Psalm 35 suggests that there might be some unease with such vivid depictions of Yhwh serving as a foot soldier.⁴⁷ Previously, in chapter 4, I discussed how there might have been an aversion to overtly anthropomorphic depictions of Yhwh in some psalms such as Psalm 140, where only the one image of Yhwh covering his protege’s head in battle appears, while in vv. 10-12 the psalmist shows restraint with the use

⁴⁵K 12033 II lines 1-10; translation by Simo Parpola, *Assyrian Prophecies*, 15.

⁴⁶K 12033 IV lines 26-29; *Ibid.*, 18.

⁴⁷Cf. Freedman and O’Connor, “יָרַף,” *TDOT*, 8.82.

of a number of passive verbs to depict Yhwh's part in dispatching the enemies . Following the action in Ps 35:2-3, the passive is also used in vv. 4-6. Furthermore, Yhwh, who at first seemed to be doing the fighting, is replaced in v. 6 with the "messenger of the Lord." A similar phenomena can be observed in Psalm 91. Yhwh is depicted as a actively protecting the suppliant in vv. 3-4, but later on in v. 11 his "messengers" are delegated the responsibility of doing the protecting.

Literary Analysis

The significance of the avian imagery in Psalm 91 will become clear as the wing and shield metaphors are further explored within the literary context of the poem as a whole. Following the pattern established in the previous two chapters, I will present syntactic analysis of Psalm 91 following Michael O'Connor's methodology which he introduced in *HVS*. Any issue not specifically addressed in my excursus on *HVS* in chapter 3 will be discussed in the footnotes. The concluding section of the chapter will attempt to integrate the findings from the lexical, iconographic, and poetic analysis into a final reading of the poem.

A Syntactic Analysis

A variety of reasons make the structure of Psalm 91 somewhat more difficult to discern than that of Psalm 5 and of 140. One is that an examination of the combined effects of the distribution of line types and troping allow for more than one way of dividing the

poem. This fact does not negate the arguments I made earlier in which I contended that the evaluation of trope and line distribution offers a layer of objectivity to the process of determining the overall structure of a poem. It only means that an analysis of the poetry following the syntactic approach does not result in a single clear answer to the question of structure in the case of Psalm 91. A hypothesis does not have to yield a single clear answer upon analysis in order to be valid. A good working hypothesis can sometimes point to a range of possibilities as likely to be correct. A number of scholars have proposed a strophic structure for Psalm 91; some can function within the constraints of *HVS* while others cannot.⁴⁸ I mention these other proposals in order to point out that what I am putting forward is not wildly different from what has been previously proposed; however, I have not found any other proposal that matches my own completely. With that said, I wish to avoid detailing each proposed structure and instead highlight the possibilities within the limits of a syntactic approach and mentioning other proposals only when necessary.

Batch Structure of Psalm 91:

One stave of 29 lines + a freestanding batch of 7 lines = 36 lines total

Stave 1 (29 lines)

Batch a: 1a-4b (9 lines)

Batch b: 5a-8b (9 lines)

Batch c: 9a-10b (4 lines)

⁴⁸Pierre Auffret (*Voyez de vos yeux: Étude structurelle de vingt psaumes, dont le psaume 119*. [VTSup 48; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1993] 280-282), after charting nine other scholar's proposals prior to his, provides the following strophic structure: (1a-2c/ 3ab/ 4a-c/ 5a-8c/ 9ab/ 10ab/ 11a-12b/ 13ab// 14a-15a/ 15b/ 15c-16b); Samuel Terrien's (*The Psalms*, 649) strophic analysis is as follows: (1-3/ 4-6/ 7-9/ 10-12/ 13-15ab/ 15c-16).

Batch d: 11a-13b (6 lines)

Freestanding batch: 14a-16b (7 lines)

The structure of the poem appears to consist of a single stave of twenty nine lines and and a freestanding batch of seven lines for a total of thirty six lines. One could possibly view the entire poem as a single stave, but the poem does not read as such.⁴⁹ Seeing the final verses of the psalm (vv. 14-16) in some way separately from vv. 1-13 is well accepted.⁵⁰ By detaching vv. 14-16 from vv. 1-13, I am not necessarily suggesting that it is a different composition or a later textual addition. Rather, I am simply treating these lines as a separate batch distinct from the main stave consisting of vv. 1-13. In terms of verse structure, a batch break beginning at 14a is signaled by a shift from a frequent line type in (13a and 13b) to a less regular line type (14a and 14b). Neither vv. 13 or 14 are troped; however, there is the repetition of the particle כִּי in lines 14a and 14b, which is an element of figuration that further attaches these two lines to one another. Most importantly, the fact that God speaks in

⁴⁹Another consideration based purely on a syntactic analysis is that a thirty six line stave would go beyond the gross structural constraints of *HVS*, being five lines longer than any stave in the *HVS* corpus. O'Connor (*HVS*, 527) reports that his findings show the typical range of a stave was between 23 and 31 lines but more often between 26 and 29 lines. Upon further research (e.g., further studying the limits of gross structural syntactic constraints by expanding the corpus of poetic texts), one could perhaps find evidence that would support raising the upper limit of lines in stave; however, keeping within the limits set in *HVS*, it would be best to treat vv. 14-16 as a separate batch.

⁵⁰Marvin E. Tate, *Psalms 51-100*, 451; other examples include Auffret (*Voyez de vos yeux*, 282), whose strophic analysis separates vv. 14-16 from the rest, and Kraus (*Psalms 60-150*, 220) and Hossfeld and Zenger (*Psalms 2*, 428), who see a tripartite division: vv. 1-2, 3-13, 14-16.

the first-person only in vv. 14-16 leads one to treat these lines separately from the rest of the psalm or, in terms of *HVS*, a batch that stands apart from the single stave.

With the final batch (vv. 14-16) set apart, what remains is to further develop the possibilities for understanding the structure of the stave comprised of vv. 1-13. With regard to vv. 1-2, one can view it either as a single batch (four lines) or as part of a larger batch (nine lines) comprising vv. 1-4. Either option is possible according to *HVS*; however, since there are no structural indications that suggest there *should* be a batch break at the end of v. 2, the best course is to treat vv. 1-4 as a batch of nine lines. A break at the end of v. 4 is suggested by the fact that 4b is a non-trope line, whereas the lines immediately preceding and following are troped and bound together (3a-4a2 and 6a-6b respectively). Further confirmation of a break is provided by the disjunctive nature of line 4b, which is a verbless clause surrounded by verbal clauses of very common line types.

A similar situation presents itself in vv. 5a-8b. While there is little doubt that a break occurs at the end of v. 8, a break between vv. 6 and 7 is less certain. A batch break at the end of line 6b is possible because lines 5a-6b are bound together by matching and gapping, while lines 7a1 and 7a2 are separately joined together by matching and gapping as well. In other words, a division is *possible* at v. 6b because it would not divide lines that otherwise have been bound together by troping. Nothing else, however, is suggestive of a batch break. All of the lines from 5a through 8b are very common line types, and the fact that the type of troping

is consistent throughout the 5a-8b (gapping and matching) suggests continuity as a unit. The evidence favors the view that vv. 5a-8b comprise a single batch of nine lines.

Verse 9 contains a pair lines troped with gapping. What makes these lines highly marked however, and extremely disjunctive as a consequence, is that gapping is opposite the typical direction.⁵¹ The three previous occurrences of gapping in the psalm flow in the usual direction, from right to left.

Ps 91:3a כִּי הוּא יַצִּילְךָ מִפֶּחַ יָקוֹשׁ
3b מִדֶּבֶר הָרוֹת

For he will deliver you from the snare of the fowler,
from the thorn of destruction.

The verb יַצִּילְךָ in line 3a is gapped from line 3b. Verb governs elliptically the prepositional phrase in 3b. Regular or rightward gapping also occurs in Psalm 91: 5a-6b over a quatrain of lines.

Ps 91:5a לֹא־תִירָא מִפֶּחַד לַיְלָה
5b מִחֵץ יְעוֹף יוֹמָם
6a מִדֶּבֶר בָּאֵפֶל יְהֵלֵךְ
6b מִקָּטָב יִשׁוּד צָהָרִים

You will not fear the terror of the night,
the arrow that flies by day,
the pestilence that walks in darkness,
the plague that devastates at midday.

⁵¹On leftward gapping, see O'Connor, *HVS*, 404.

The verb **לֹא־תִירָא** in 5a is gapped in 5b, 6a, and 6b. The ellipsis of the verb which governs all four prepositional phrases is clear. In addition, 5b, 6a, and 6b are troped with matching as well (i.e., they constitute an instance of grammatical parallelism). Finally, Ps 91:7a is doubly troped with matching and gapping (**יִפֹּל**):

יִפֹּל מִצִּדְּךָ אֱלֹהִי Ps 91:7a1
וְרִבְבָּהּ מִיְמִינֶךָ 7a2

Though a thousand fall at your side,
and a myriad at your right hand,

These three examples follow the usual pattern: the first line in a series of lines exhibiting gapping usually contains the gapped element missing the the subsequent lines. The gapping in v. 9 moves from left to right; the second line of the series contains the element gapped from the first line.

כִּי־אַתָּה יְהוָה מְחֻסִּי Ps 91:9a
עֲלִיּוֹן שְׁמֹת מְעוֹנֶךָ 9b

Because you took the Lord as your refuge,
the Most High, your dwelling,

One could read the line as “For you, O Lord, are my refuge”; however, verse 9a makes sense when one understands that **שְׁמֹת** is gapped from 9b, as the ellipsis is reflected in my translation.⁵²

⁵²Cf. similar translations in the NAB, NRSV, and NIV.

The peculiar leftward use of the trope of gapping draws attention to v. 9. Nevertheless, in terms of batch structure for the last portion of the stave, there is no clear signal of a batch break until the end until v. 13. One could, to give the possibilities, conceivably view vv 9a-13b as (1) a batch of 10 lines, (2) two batches of 2 and 8 lines (9a-9b, 10a-13b) or (3) two batches of 4 and 6 lines (9a-10b, 11a-13b). Out of the three options, the third option makes the most sense in combination with how I read the כִּי at the beginning of v. 9. Reading the כִּי causally, “Because you made...” binds vv. 9 and 10 together as a single sentence. This excludes the second option as a possibility. One could view vv. 9a-13b as a single longer batch as opposed to two smaller batches. After all, I opted for two longer batches in both 1a-4b and 5a-8b instead of dividing them into two smaller batches. In this case, however, since there is a break in troping patterns (e.g., 9a-10b are troped together and 11a-12b are troped together), along with the use of the particle כִּי at v. 11a (which also began the previous batch at v. 9a), as well as a shift in focus from Yhwh’s protection to the protection provided by his messengers, a batch break is all but certain.

Divine Protection in Psalm 91

Psalm 91 has drawn much more scholarly attention than Psalm 5 and 140. The varying interpretations, however, fall within three broad categories: (1) a wisdom psalm, (2) a psalm dealing with sickness/disease, (3) a royal psalm. As is typical with form-critical studies, the setting plays a lead role in the psalm’s interpretation. Some of the interpretations

include Gunkel, who argues that the psalm's main characteristics qualify it as a wisdom psalm.⁵³ Mays expresses a similar view, saying the psalm is the "work of a teacher who seeks to nurture the trust of the faithful."⁵⁴ Mowinckel detects a liturgical setting in which a priest recites the psalm to an individual who has come to the Temple for help.⁵⁵ Kraus believes it was written for individuals who have come to the Temple most likely in order to deal with an illness.⁵⁶ Eaton argues that its form and setting is, along with Psalm 121, a royal liturgy used during the annual day of atonement as part of the yearly fall festival.⁵⁷ Johnson argues that it is a pre-battle liturgy for the king's victory.⁵⁸ Finally, Delekat places the words of the psalm in the mouth of the priest who speaks to those who are seeking divine protection in the form of Temple asylum.⁵⁹

These are just a few of the form-critical interpretations that have been proposed. Over against these cultic/Temple settings, there are later applications of the psalm which place its

⁵³Gunkel, *The Psalms: a Form-Critical Introduction*, 296.

⁵⁴Mays, *Psalms*, 296.

⁵⁵Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, 2.50-2.51.

⁵⁶Kraus (*Psalms 60-150*, 221) cites Seybold (*Das Gebet*, 164), who argues that many psalms deal with illness.

⁵⁷Eaton, *Kingship and the Psalms*, 130; similarly, Schmidt (Hans Schmidt, *Das Gebet der Angeklagten*, 171-173) argues that it was an entrance liturgy along the lines of Pss 15 and 24, similar to Psalm 121, but addressed to pilgrims coming to the Temple.

⁵⁸Johnson, *Cultic Prophet*, 188.

⁵⁹Delekat, *Asylie*, 235-39.

use outside the sphere of the official cultus, used perhaps in a home or other location in which one can encounter dangers. For example, there is a long held tradition, going back to ancient rabbinic commentaries (Bab. Talmud, *Sheboth* 15b), that the psalm was recited before going to bed in order to ward off demonic enemies.⁶⁰ Mays reports that portions of Psalm 91 have been worn as amulets, and that the belief in guardian angels is derived in part from it as well.⁶¹ The difficulties presented by the demonic dimensions of this psalm cannot be resolved in this study, nor can the tangle of form-critical interpretations be unknotted. However, my research supports the general notion that the text is liturgical and likely used in a cultic setting, but beyond that one cannot be much more specific.

As I indicated in the previous section (Syntactic Analysis), the clear shift in voice from the suppliant⁶² to Yhwh in vv. 14-16 that led some scholars to suggest a liturgical setting in which these verses represent a separate divine oracle, is supported by my analysis of the text. A similar conclusion can be drawn with regard to vv. 1-2, if one interprets these verses as being spoken in the first person. A syntactic analysis neither confirms nor denies

⁶⁰Meir Malul, "Terror of the Night," *DDD*, 1605; cf. Tate (*Psalms 51-100*, 451), who notes a number of modern interpretations along these lines.

⁶¹Cf. Mays, *Psalms*, 197.

⁶²I have been using the term "suppliant" because it is not clear if and when the voice speaking in the poem belongs to the psalmist or another.

the possibility. However, my understanding of the poem, reflected in my translation, is that there is one consistent voice from vv. 1-13.⁶³

In the previous section, I also discussed the possibility that the first two batches (a and b) might each be divided into two shorter ones (4/5/4/5 instead of 9/9). Had I divided batch a and batch b into two smaller batches, I would have proposed that the breaks at v. 2b and v. 6b would be minor, because the syntactic structure did not strongly suggest breaks there. Interference causing such a view can be attributed to the four lines beginning batch a and batch b. It turns out that the function these two groups of four lines have within the poem is significant. Each group shares some important similarities. In terms of structure, the most important is that each group of four lines must be read together as a single sentence: 1a-2b is a single sentence, and 5a-6b is single sentence. The trope of syntactic dependency binds 1a-2b together, while 5a-6b is united by the trope of gapping, which also creates a type of dependency in that lines 5b-6b are dependent upon the preposition in 5a in order to make sense. This structural configuration of batch a and batch b carries with it implications in terms of thematic emphasis. In batch a, four terms are enlisted which describe Yhwh with protective language. Four nouns are used: hiding place/protection (סִתְרָה), shadow (צֵל),

⁶³I argue against those who view vv. 1-2 as voiced in the first person and in the second person in vv. 3-14, eg. Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms* 2, 427-428, or that the psalm is a series of antiphons, eg., Tate (*Psalms* 51-100, 450) who argues that there are several voices: first voice in vv. 1-2; second voice in vv. 3-4; first voice in vv. 5-8, first voice 9a; second voice in 9b; th second voice in vv. 10-13, and finally Yhwh speaks in vv. 14-16.

refuge (מִחְסֶה), stronghold (מְצוּדָה). These contrast with the four expressions that signify danger to the suppliant: terror (פַּחַד), arrow (חֵץ), pestilence (דֶּבֶר), plague (קָטָב). The syntactic structure, prominent placement at the beginning of the batches, and the parallels between them indicate that these lines establish the thematic key to the poem. The poem is constructed so that attention is drawn to these lines, and that in the mind of the reader/hearer, they figure the most prominently in establishing the primary contrast between Yhwh and the forces of danger.

Of course, there is much more to the poem than these two sets of lines (1a-2b and 5a-6b); nevertheless, they shape how one ought to read the rest of the poem. Although batches a and b, in terms of emphasis, maintain the contrast between Yhwh's protection in batch a and the dangerous forces in batch b, there are other thematic elements. In batch a, it is the presence of avian imagery. The metaphor of Yhwh's protection as that of a bird is significant in that it provides a vivid image that conceptualizes the form of his protection. As my comparative research shows, the poet is drawing upon well-known iconographic motifs. Its congruence to these avian motifs from ancient Near Eastern art is clear, and the poet's extensive use of it is significant. If one interprets the "thorn of destruction" in v. 3b as related to the fowler's weaponry, as I have tentatively done, then the second half of batch a focuses almost exclusively on hunting and avian imagery. The seemingly sudden shift to war imagery with the "shield" and "bulwark" in line 4b has led some scholars to delete or

relocate the line to another place in the poem.⁶⁴ Such a move is not needed. There are a number of parallelistic structures throughout this poem that do not stick to a single schema. For example, the repetition of the homograph **דָּבַר** in vv. 3b and 6a, though one cannot be sure which lexeme is used in each verse, suggests a connection between the danger posed by the fowler's trap in batch a and the dangerous forces in batch b. These forces are supernatural, but at the same time they are certainly couched in the language of warfare.⁶⁵ The difficulty with the interpreting the nature of the dangers is that similar imagery and vocabulary can be used to describe both sorts of threats. With regard to the terms that clearly come from the domain of warfare, the reference to shield and bulwark in v. 4b corresponds to the warfare imagery: arrows (**חֵץ**) and armies (**אֶלֶף** and **רֶבֶבָה**) in batch b.⁶⁶ The main contrast is that weapons are offensive in batch b, the shield and bulwark in batch a is defensive.

As one begins to differentiate between the primary themes and secondary ones, the argument that shield imagery is a highly important metaphor of Yhwh himself appears weak. According to the text, the metaphor is narrowly used of Yhwh's faithfulness, and perhaps a further implication is that shield and bulwark might foreshadow the aid of his messengers

⁶⁴Cf. Barke (*BHS*) who transposes this line to the end of v. 7.

⁶⁵For evidence that the dangerous forces in batch b are supernatural, see: Malul, "Terror of the Night," *DDD* 1605; Gregorio del Olmo Lete, "Deber," *DDD* 438-439; Nicolas Wyatt, "Qeteb," *DDD* 1269-1272.

⁶⁶Another image of warfare is tent (**אֹהֶל**) in v. 10 as a reference to an army encampment.

who appear later in the poem.⁶⁷ Further evidence that pteromorphic images of Yhwh pervade the first batch is the appearance of the word “shadow” (צֶלַל), which occurs within four of the other five verses in which wings are used to illustrate divine protection (Ps. 17:8; 36:8; 57:2, 63:8); similarly, “hiding place” (סִתְרָה) and “shelter” (חֹסֶה), both of which occur in Ps 61:5 are consonant with avian metaphors.⁶⁸ It is important to note that Wiig somewhat abandons his shield bearer thesis in his interpretation of this psalm. Instead, he argues on philological grounds similar to that which I have presented that a סִחָרָה is either a “weapon” or “defensive wall,” and proposes the concept that it is a “phalanx [of shields].”⁶⁹ Regardless of this observation, one thing is clear: the shield imagery plays a lesser role in the poem compared to the avian imagery.

In contrast to the shielding metaphors, which are mediated by an attribute such as “faithfulness” in v. 4b and cannot be narrowly conceived as an metaphor of Yhwh, the various appellations attributed to him in the psalm are clearly metaphors worthy of a divine title. The divine epithets in v. 2 are expressive of this:

מִחְסִי וּמְצֻדָּתִי אֱלֹהִי אֲבִטָּח-בּוֹ Ps 91:2a/b

“My refuge, my stronghold, my God in whom I trust”

⁶⁷See LeMon (“Yahweh’s Winged Form,” 207) who offers a similar speculation.

⁶⁸LeMon (Ibid., 212) first pointed out that these terms likely foreshadow the wing imagery in Ps. 91:4.

⁶⁹Wiig, *Promise, Protection, Prosperity*, 56, 214-56, 215.

Two of these titles are reminiscent of a longer string of divine epithets in Ps 18:2-3 (= 2 Sam 22:2-3) in which Yhwh is called **מְצֻדָּתִי** “my stronghold.” Likewise, he is called “stronghold” in Ps 31:4 and Ps 144:2. The designation **מַחְסִי** “my refuge” occurs in Ps 142:5; however in Ps 18:3 (= 2 Sam 22:3) **חֹסֶה** occurs in a verbal (imperfective) form: **אֶחָסֶה־בּוֹ** “in whom I take refuge,” and similarly with the perfective form in Ps 144:2: **וְבוֹ חָסִיתִי**. In Psalm 91 **מַחְסִי** is especially important because it occurs twice and because it occurs in two critical places in the poem. The first occurrence in v. 2, located in the first group of lines I have already identified as those guiding the interpretation of the poem. The second occurrence in v. 9a falls within a third quatrain of lines that are perhaps the most uniquely marked in terms of structure. Earlier, I emphasized the rarity of leftward gapping. However, several more features of these lines bear the the same characteristics as the key quatrains in vv. 1a-2b and 5a-6b. Again, there four lines are bound together as a group. If one understands the **כִּי** particle as governing the four lines, then they are syntactically dependent, making this the third set of four lines bound together by syntactic dependency or another trope and thus forming a single sentence. The elements that directly connect it to Yhwh’s protection in 1a-2b are the repetition of **מַחְסִי** as well as the repetition of **עֲלִיּוֹן**. The connection is marked structurally as well, with two instances of binomination: **שָׁדַי/עֲלִיּוֹן** in v.1 and **עֲלִיּוֹן/יְהוָה** in v. 9. These elements add to the rhetorical force of lines. At the very beginning of the poem, the suppliant—identified as someone who is protected in the shelter

of עֲלִיּוֹן—is summoned to confess to Yhwh, “You are my refuge.” Now, because he has made עֲלִיּוֹן his refuge, he can enjoy the benefits of Yhwh’s protection.

The final batch of the stave (batch d) responds to the dangers of batch b. Yhwh dispatches his messengers, who are charged with the responsibility of protecting the suppliant. Divine protection in this passage is conceptualized differently than in other psalms where Yhwh is depicted anthropomorphically as a warrior. Instead, in Psalm 91, intermediary beings are providing the protection in the context of warfare. The poet provides such a powerful and comforting image of Yhwh’s messengers holding their charges in the palms of their hands, protecting their steps as they go about. The suppliant is protected from the lion and the serpent, which serve as the symbols of the dangers one encounters. Contrast this image with Psalm 17, where the psalmist implores Yhwh himself to confront the enemies whom he likens to lions (Ps 17:12). The iconographic images discussed in the previous chapter (**figs. 4.5-4.10**), provide the conceptual framework from which to understand Ps 91:13. In addition, one motif attested in Syro-Palestinian art that has not been mentioned provides another congruent image to the trampling of a lion in the psalm. Two Iron Age I seals (**figs. 5.7a-b**) depict two deities standing on the backs of animals. The winged deity the left standing on a lion is identified by Keel and Uehlinger as a Baal-Seth and the one on the right standing on the horned animal (probably a gazelle) as Reshef.⁷⁰

⁷⁰Keel and Uehlinger, *GGG*, 116.



Figure 5.7. Scarabs; Tel Far'ah (a) and Lachish (b); Iron Age I. After Keel and Uehlinger, *GGG*, illus. 138a-b

One cannot be certain whether these dangers in Psalm 91 are to be thought of in purely mythological categories, as supernatural enemies causing illness or death, or as human enemy combatants in war. Nevertheless, it is a safe conclusion that in the textual and visual sources considered in this study, the serpent and the lion are symbols in the most general terms of the chaotic forces that cause death and destruction in the lives of those for whom the psalm was composed.

Psalm 91 provides concepts of divine protection that can be divided into two categories alternating by batch (a/b/a/b). In batches a and c, protection is conceived as stationary, as if one is in a single location. The descriptions of Yhwh as a stronghold and a refuge in Psalm 91 are consistent with the dominant theme in Psalm 5, in which the temple, understood as the residence of the deity, is a place of refuge and a stronghold against enemy

forces.⁷¹ In both cases, protection is on a superhuman scale, whether it be a towering structure or a dominating king who towers over his enemies. In contrast, the second category is protection as if one were away from the stronghold, in which case, Yhwh's messengers guide and protect the steps of those whom he loves and who likewise lovingly cling to him (v. 14). The latter category, dominant in batches b and d, corresponds with Yhwh's protection in battle as described in Psalm 140, with the main difference being the protective activity of Yhwh's messengers.

It is not hard to detect a cultic setting in the psalm. My analysis of the poem confirms that vv. 14-16 stand apart from the rest of the psalm, as has been well recognized. Furthermore, I have not included them in my analysis of the overall structure of the psalm because they do not connect with the rest of the psalm in a number of ways. The structure (i.e., the line and trope patterns) feels different, as well as the themes. Overall, the verses do not appear to be as syntactically complex or tightly constructed together with vv. 1-13. I am not arguing that vv. 14-16 are a separate composition; rather, they stand apart as perhaps a response oracle to what occurs in vv. 1-13. In regard to the form critical studies which have tried to establish a *Sitz im Leben* for this psalm, this study does not resolve the competing proposals. The opening four lines of the psalm (vv. 1-2) calling for the suppliant to pray, the confirmation that the suppliant indeed has made a proper affirmation in his prayer (v. 9), and

⁷¹Hosfeld and Zenger (*Psalms* 2, 428) also note the "strong evidence of the double perspective of protection in the sanctuary and on the road."

the divine response (vv. 14-16) all suggest that it is liturgical, but one cannot be much more specific regarding the setting. My reading does, however, support an interpretation of the poem in which royal themes supply the conceptual framework of divine protection.

CONCLUSION

The motivating force behind this project was the basic premise that biblical-iconographical research would benefit from a study that combined the analysis of ancient Near Eastern iconography with the syntactic analysis of whole poems in the Bible. It sprang from an observation that Keel's *Symbolism* compared a single iconographic theme at a time with only one or two poetic lines of a psalm. My plan was to investigate how concepts derived from the study of ancient Near Eastern iconography would relate to an entire psalm, each with its many complexities and subtleties. My contention has been that such research would be an important advancement over previous studies, which did not pay sufficient attention to the poetics of biblical Hebrew verse or the context of an entire poem. An operative term I identified with regard to this concern was *fragmentation*. Keel criticized previous treatments of ancient Near Eastern art in which the material was presented in fragmented way such that studying the content of the images was hindered. His organizational approach to the iconographic material under the rubric of constellations responded to the issue of fragmentation and established firmer methodological grounds upon which to conduct research. This study has responded to the issue of fragmentation on the

textual side of the equation and has sought to offer a firmer basis upon which to investigate the meaning of literary images in biblical poems in light of the iconography of the ancient Near East.

The scholars who followed Keel with their own iconographical research into the psalms, while generally adhering to his approach to the iconography, were likewise critical of his handling of the biblical text. For example, both Klingbeil and LeMon recognized that his treatment of the biblical text was itself fragmented.¹ Both scholars advocated for closer attention to be paid to the biblical context. LeMon's strategy of resolving the issue was to address a narrow topic (Yhwh's wings) and to be thorough with his treatment of each psalm in which the image appears (six total). My own approach to addressing the issue of fragmentation was very similar to LeMon's in that I treated each psalm as a whole poem. Yet, it was different in at least two ways. First, recognizing that the Standard Description of biblical Hebrew poetry was outdated, I made use of modern approaches to dealing with the poetics of each psalm. Specifically, I utilized O'Connor's syntactic approach in *HVS* with an awareness of other contemporary methods to biblical Hebrew poetry, especially the work of Adele Berlin. Second, I deliberately wanted to create the conditions in which the poems themselves precipitated the interpretation. In other words, rather than produce a study that would unduly impose a thematic structure, I deliberately wanted to allow enough space so

¹Cf., "Recent Iconographic Studies of the Psalms" in chapter 2.

that each poem could speak for itself, to fashion an approach that would minimize as much as possible the problem of fragmentation of the biblical text. Consequently, I placed less emphasis on attempting to find a unifying concept of divine protection. While some might find this unsatisfying, such an emphasis would have resulted in a study detracting even more from seeing the significance of each individual psalm.

Nevertheless, this study was as much about researching a particular subject as it was about the methods and techniques used to do so. I endeavored to research the topic of divine protection, which had already been discussed in form-critical studies and in thematic studies of the Psalter, and to look at it anew. Due to the poem-centered approach I took to the material, however, each poem provided a somewhat unique understanding of divine protection. One can consult the chapters for the detailed findings, for the complexities of each poem are such that they cannot be easily summarized. There are, however, some important general observations that have their place here.

Although my approach to the question of divine protection did not result in a single dominant concept, one general characteristic became clear as I researched the subject. Without exception, the conceptual framework supplying the imagery of divine protection had its origins in royal ideology, which worked either one of two ways. The first is evident in Psalm 5: Yhwh was depicted as king, and his protection was likened to what a king would be obliged to provide for his people. The second is evident in Psalms 140 and 91: literary

images of divine protection related to iconographic motifs in which divine protection was afforded to the king. The image of covering one's head in the day of battle was congruent with several iconographic motifs in which protection was offered to the king or high ranking warriors serving him. Pteromorphic images of protective deities in the comparative sources were almost always protecting the king.

Even though the chapters on Psalms 5, 91, and 140 were organized roughly in the same pattern, the individual investigation of each psalm took on its own contours. That is, each psalm demanded its own peculiar approach. This was driven largely by divergent combinations of differing images, metaphors, and motifs in which divine protection was conceptualized in each psalm. The outcome of the research did not produce a result such that one central metaphor—neither *God is King*, nor *Warrior*, or *Refuge*—could singly encompass or even unify the concept of divine protection in the Psalter.

In Psalm 5, the metaphor of Yhwh as king was clearly dominant. Protection in this psalm is primarily associated with the palace/temple as the king's house and thus the ultimate place of safety. Reading the poem as a single composition provided a more contextual picture of how protection was conceptualized in comparison to a purely thematic approach. Protection associated with God as king would have been treated separately from protection associated with a temple, as the shield as a metaphor of protection would have been treated yet separately elsewhere. In contrast, my holistic approach brought these elements together.

The image of the king smiting his enemies, found on the exterior walls of temples in Egyptian iconography, offered a congruent image to Psalm 5, in which the protection provided by the king and the idea of a temple as a place of protection were combined into a single concept.

In Psalm 140, the image of Yhwh covering one's head in battle was central to the poem. As a literary image unparalleled in the rest of the Old Testament, researching the iconographic depictions of cover was an invaluable tool in making sense of it. Furthermore, the full significance of the head became evident only when it was understood within the context of the whole poem, which so starkly contrasted the protection of the psalmist's head with the harm that came upon his enemies' heads, a contrast that was graphically depicted in the visual sources.

In contrast to Psalms 5 and 140, which were limited to one or two main metaphors, Psalm 91 contained many. In this regard, my focus was on the shield metaphor *vis-à-vis* the avian metaphors of the divine, but not in isolation from the rest of the poem. Interpretation required an examination of the metaphors in the context of the entire poem and in light of the comparative material in order to determine that the pteromorphic imagery was indeed dominant and that it was an appropriate metaphor of Yhwh, in contrast to the shield metaphor, which was minor in comparison and an image shown to be inappropriate to Yhwh himself.

In keeping with Adele Berlin's call to move on from the purely linguistic research that had dominated much of the research in biblical Hebrew poetry, this study represents an attempt to move toward the literary studies she advocated. My own tactic in moving toward a more literary study of biblical Hebrew poetry was to investigate the metaphorical language of each psalm as it was embedded within the context of the whole poem. While I do not necessarily concur with all of his conclusions, I agree with Terrien's observation that "strophes bring a certain discipline over a multiplicity of metaphors."² My syntactic analysis of each psalm's gross structure has played an integral part in my interpretations. Observing the gross structure of each psalm afforded me the capacity to begin to gauge how the thoughts and ideas, motifs and metaphors, though seemingly sporadic and incongruous at times, were in fact woven together into the fabric of each psalm. A psalm was not written by appending one bicolon to another, a mere assemblage of paralleled lines. The poet's use of metaphor in a psalm is best perceived and interpreted in light of the complex and intricate structure of the poem in which it is embedded.

The poetic analysis coalesced well with the iconographic research. Attention to gross structure allowed me to focus on the use of a motif within a single poetic work, and it gave me a greater capacity for comparing and contrasting what I observed in the art with what I observed in the poems. For example, in Psalm 5, the use of *כִּי* clauses and the concomitant

²Terrien, *The Psalms*, 41.

presence of syntactically dependent lines lead to a new understanding of the batch structure. This led me to interpret the psalm, not as a conflict between the psalmist and his enemies, alternating batch by batch, as it had traditionally been interpreted. Rather, the psalm's gross structure led me to observe a more important contrast between the psalmist and his enemies within each batch over the issue of who is able to approach the deity. In Psalm 140, the two motifs of war and hunt alternated batch by batch in an a/b/a/b pattern. The many structural similarities between batches a and b drew attention to the fact that both motifs are commonly used in tandem, as is evidenced in several iconographic depictions which combine warfare and hunting in strikingly similar compositions. In Psalm 91 a number of complex structural patterns were observed, but one that alternates (a/b/a/b) in the four batches of the stave contrasted two aspects of protection: one was stationary and associated with Yhwh as a stronghold and refuge, and the other was mobile and associated with Yhwh's messengers who were charged with providing protection. Combined, these two juxtaposed images offered a sense of assurance that Yhwh's divine protection is comprehensive.

With respect to the direction of further research, a logical next step would be to deal more directly with metaphor theory, specifically concerning the role metaphor plays in the structuring of whole poems. Formal theories of metaphor (e.g., substitution, interaction, cognitive) are debated among scholars of all literatures, including biblical scholars. Despite its importance, I did not discuss metaphor theory for two reasons. First, given the fact that

other iconographic studies have addressed theories of metaphor and yet have not addressed sufficiently the issue of biblical Hebrew poetics, I determined that a lack of attention to the poetics was a more pressing issue. The second reason has to do with the limitations of this project. Including a discussion metaphor theory would have overloaded this study with yet another major methodological issue. Even as these methodological issues will continue to be sorted out, I hope that this study has demonstrated the usefulness of investigating iconography in biblical research, and that it inspires more to pursue projects that combine the study of Scripture with the art of the ancient Near East.

APPENDIX A

HVS ANALYSIS OF PSALMS 5, 91, AND 140.

HVS ANALYSIS OF PSALM 5

CHART

Column 1: lineation

Column 2: Hebrew text

Column 3: notation of syntactic structure

Column 4: line types

Column 5: identification of tropes

KEY

Abbreviations in col. 3.

S = subject

Pred = predicate

V = verb

O = Object

P = prepositional phrase

A = adverbial phrase

Voc = vocative

Numbers in col. 3

first digit = claus

predications

second digit = constituents

third digit = units

Abbreviations in col. 5

sd = syntactic dependency

match = matching

rep = verb or noun repetition

col = coloration

cd = coordination

bi = binomination

2a	אֶמְרֵי הָאֲזִינָה יְהוָה	OVVoc 233	II #26	
2b	בֵּינָה הִגִּינִי:	VO 122	I #13	
3a	הַקְשִׁיבָה לְקוֹל שׁוֹעֵי מַלְכִּי וְאֵלֹהֵי	VPVoc 235	IV #28	sd 1; col 1-bi 1; match 1
3b	כִּי־אֵלֶיךָ אֶתְפַּלֵּל יְהוָה	PVVoc 233	III #26	sd 1; col 1-bi 1; match 1
4a	בְּקֶרֶת תִּשְׁמַע קוֹלִי	AVO 133	I #17	rep 1
4b	בְּקֶרֶת אֶעֱרֹךְ־לְךָ וְאֶצְפָּה:	AVPV 244	IV # 29	rep 1
	BREAK			
5a	כִּי לֹא אֶל־חֶפְזִן רָשָׁע אָתָּה	SPred 124	III #15	sd 2
5b	לֹא יִגְדֹּךָ רָע:	VS 122	I #13	sd 2
6a	לֹא־יִתְנַצְּבוּ הוֹלָלִים לְנֹד עֵינֶיךָ	VSP 134	II #18	sd 2; col 2-cd
6b	שָׁנְאָתָּ כָּל־פֹּעַלִי אֹנֶן:	VO 123	I #14	col 2-cd; match 2
7a	תִּאָּבֵד דְּבָרֵי כָזָב	VO 123	I # 14	col 2-cd; match 2

7b	אִישׁ־דָּמִים וּמֶרְמָה יִתְעַב יְהוָה:	OVS 135	IV #19	col 2-cd
8a	וְאֲנִי בָּרַב חֲסִדָּךְ אָבוֹא בִּיתְךָ	SPVO 145	IV #21	
8b	אֲשַׁתְּחֶנָּה אֶל־הֵיכַל־קִדְשְׁךָ בִּירְאָתְךָ:	VPP 134	III #27	
	BREAK			
9a	יְהוָה נִחְנִי בְּצִדְקָתְךָ לְמַעַן שׁוֹרְרִי	VocVPP 245	IV #30	
9b	הוֹשֶׁר [הַיֹּשֶׁר] לְפָנַי דֶּרֶכְךָ:	VPO 133	I #17	
10a1	כִּי אֵין בְּפִיהוּ נְכוֹנָה	PredS 122	I #13	sd 3; col 3-cd; match 3
10a2	קִרְבָּם הוּוֹת	PredS 122	I #13	sd 3; col 3-cd; match 3
10b1	קִבְר־פְּתוּחַ גְּרוֹנָם	SPred 123	I #14	sd 3; col 3-cd; match 3
10b2	לְשׁוֹנָם יַחֲלִיקוֹן:	OV 122	I #13	sd 3; col 3-cd
	BREAK			
11a1	הָאֲשִׁימָם אֱלֹהִים	VVoc 222	III #22	sd 4
11a2	יִפְּלוּ מִמַּעַצוֹתֵיהֶם	VP 122	I #13	sd 4; match 4
11b1	בָּרַב פִּשְׁעֵיהֶם הִדִּיחְמוּ	PV 123	I #14	sd 4; match 4
11b2	כִּי־מָרוּ בָּךְ:	VP 122	I #13	sd 4; match 4
12a1	וַיִּשְׁמְחוּ כָל־חֹסֵי בָּךְ	VSP 133	I #17	
12a2	לְעוֹלָם יִרְנְנוּ	VP 122	I #13	match 5
12a3	וְתִסַּךְ עָלֵימוֹ	VP 122	I #13	match 5
12b	וַיַּעֲלֶצּוּ בָּךְ אֲהָבֵי שְׁמֶךָ:	VPS 134	II #18	sd 5; col 5-cd
13a	כִּי־אַתָּה תִּבְרָךְ צַדִּיק יְהוָה	SVOVoc 244	IV #29	sd 5; col 5-cd
13b	כַּצֵּנָה רָצוֹן תַּעֲטֹרְנוּ:	POV 133	II # 26	

HVS ANALYSIS OF PSALM 140

2a	חֲלֹצֵנִי יְהוָה מֵאֲדָם רָע	VVocP 234	III #27	sd 1
2b	מֵאִישׁ חֲמָסִים תִּנְצְרֵנִי	PV 123	I #14	sd 1
3a	אֲשֶׁר חָשְׁבוּ רָעוֹת בְּלִב	VOP 133	I #17	sd 1
3b	כָּל-יוֹם יִגְוְרוּ מִלְחָמוֹת	AVO 133	I #17	sd 1?
4a	שָׁנְנוּ לְשׁוֹנָם כְּמוֹ-נֶחֱשׁ	VOP 133	I #17	sd 1?
4b	חֶמֶת עֲכָשׁוּב תַּחַת שְׁפָתֵימוֹ	SPred 124	III #15	
	סָלָה			
5a1	שָׁמְרֵנִי יְהוָה מִיַּד רָשָׁע	VVocP 234	III #27	sd 2
5a2	מֵאִישׁ חֲמָסִים תִּנְצְרֵנִי	PV 123	I #14	sd 2
5b	אֲשֶׁר חָשְׁבוּ לְדַחוֹת פִּעְמִי	VPO 134	II #18	sd 2
6a1	טָמְנוּ-גַּאִים פֶּחַ לִי	VSOP 144	IV #20	match 1
6a2	חֲבָלִים פָּרְשׁוּ רֶשֶׁת לִיד־מַעְגָּל	SVOP 145	IV #21	match 1
6b	מִקְשִׁים שְׁתוּ-לִי	OVP 133	I #17	
	סָלָה			
7a	אֲמַרְתִּי לַיהוָה אֵלֵי אָתָּה	VPSPred 244	IV #29	
7b	הֶאֱזִינָה יְהוָה קוֹל תַּחֲנוּנִי	VVocO 234	III #27	rep 1
8a	יְהוָה אֲדֹנָי עֲזֵי יְשׁוּעָתִי	VocApp 224	III #24	rep 1
8b	סִכָּתָה לְרֹאשִׁי בַּיּוֹם נָשָׁק	VPP 134	II #18	
9a	אֶל-תִּתֶּן יְהוָה מֵאוּרֵי רָשָׁע	VVocO 234	III #27	rep 1, match 2
9b	זָמְמוּ אֶל-תַּפְּךָ יְרוּמוֹ	OVVoc 233	II #26	match 2
	סָלָה			
10	רֹאשׁ מִסְבֵּי עֵמֶל שְׁפָתֵימוֹ יִכְסְמוּ	FocSV 235	IV #28	
11a	יִמוּטוּ עָלֵיהֶם גִּחְלִים	VPS 133	I #17	

11b	בְּאֵשׁ יִפְלֹם	PV 122	I #13	match 3
11b2	בְּמַחְמֵרוֹת בְּלִיָּקוֹמוֹ	PV 122	I #13	match 3
12a	אִישׁ לָשׁוֹן בְּלִיָּכוֹן בְּאַרְיָן	FocVP 234	III #27	match 4, rep 2
12b	אִישׁ־חָמָס רָע יִצְוֹדְנוּ לְמַדְחַפַּת	FocVP 235	IV #28	match 4, rep 2
13a	יִדְעֵתִי כִי־יַעֲשֶׂה יְהוָה דִּין עָנִי	V[VSO] 245		sd 3; col: needy/ afflicted
13b	מְשֻׁפֵּט אֲבִינִים	[O] 012	III #1	sd 3
14a	אֵךְ צְדִיקִים יוֹדוּ לְשִׁמָּה	SVP 133	I #17	Col: righteous/ upright
14b	יֵשְׁבוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־פְּנֵיהֶם	VSO 133	I #17	

HVS ANALYSIS OF PSALM 91

1a	יֵשֵׁב בְּסֶתֶר עֲלִיּוֹן	SP 123	I #14	sd 1; bi 1 (Elyon)
1b	בְּצֵל שְׁדֵי יִתְלוֹנָן	VP 123	I #14	sd 1; bi 1(Shaddai)
2a	אָמַר לַיהוָה מַחְסֵי וּמַצּוּדָתִי	VPVocVoc 344	IV #34	sd 1
2b	אֱלֹהֵי אֲבֹטָח-בּוֹ	VocVP 233	II #26	sd 1
3a	כִּי הוּא יַצִּילָךְ מִפֶּחַ יָקוֹשׁ	SVP 134	II #18	gap 1
3b	מִדְּבַר חַוּוֹת	P 122	I #13	gap 1
4a1	בְּאַבְרֹתָיִסְךָ לָךְ	PVP 133	I #17	cd: pinion/wing
4a2	וְתַחַת-כַּנְפָּיו תִּחְסֶה	PV 123	I #14	cd: pinion/wing
4b	צָנָה וְסִחְרָה אָמַתּוֹ	PredSubj 123	I #14	
5a	לֹא-תִירָא מִפֶּחַד לְיָלָה	VPA 133	I #17	gap 2
5b	מִחֶמֶן יַעֲוֹף יוֹמָם	PVA 133	I #17	gap 2-match 1
6a	מִדְּבַר בְּאֶפֶל יִהְלֹךְ	PAV 133	I #17	gap 2-match 1
6b	מִקְטָב יִשּׁוּד צְהָרִים	PVA 133	I #17	gap 2-match 1
7a1	יִפֹּל מִצִּדְךָ אֵלֶיךָ	VPS 133	I #17	gap 3-match 2
7a2	וּרְבֵבָה מִימִינֶךָ	SP 133	I #17	gap 3-match 2
7b	אֵלֶיךָ לֹא יָגֵשׁ	PV 122	I #13	
8a	רַק בְּעֵינֶיךָ תִּבְטֹחַ	APV 133	I #17	
8b	וְשָׁלַמְתָּ רַשָּׁעִים תִּרְאֶה	OV 123	I #14	
9a	כִּי-אַתָּה יְהוָה מַחְסֵי	SOO 133	I #17	gap 4 (leftward); bi 2 (Yhwh)
9b	עֲלִיּוֹן שְׁמֹתָ מְעוֹנָךְ	OVO 133	I #17	gap 4; bi 2 (Elyon)
10a	לֹא-תִאָּנֶה אֵלֶיךָ רָעָה	VPS 133	I #17	match 3
10b	וְנִגַּע לֹא-יִקְרַב בְּאַהֲלֶךָ	SVP 133	I #17	match 3

11a	כִּי מְלֹאֲכִיו יִצְוֶה-לָךְ	OVP 133	I #17	sd 2
11b	לְשִׁמְרָךְ בְּכָל-דָּרְכֶיךָ	VP 123	I #14	sd 2
12a	עַל-כַּפִּים יִשְׁאוּנָךְ	PV 122	I #13	sd 3
12b	פֶּן-תִּגְרַף בְּאֵבֶן רִגְלָךְ	VPO 133	I #17	sd 3
13a	עַל-שַׁחַל וּפְתֵן תִּדְרֹךְ	PV 123	I #14	
13b	תִּרְמַס כְּפִיר וְתַנִּין	VO 123	I #14	
14a	כִּי בִי חֹשֶׁק וְאַפְלָטָהוּ	PVV 233	II #26	
14b	אֲשַׁנְבְּהוּ כִּי-יָדַע שְׁמִי	VVO 233	II #26	
15a1	יִקְרָאֵנִי וְאַעֲנֶהוּ	VV 222	III #22	match 4 (15b)
15a2	עֲמוּ-אֲנֹכִי בְצָרָה	PredSubjPred 233	II #26	
15b	אֲחַלְצֶהוּ וְאַכְבִּדְהוּ	VV 222	III #22	match 4 (15a1)
16a	אֶרְךְ יָמִים אֲשַׁבִּיעֶהוּ	OV 123	I #14	
16b	וְאַרְאֶהוּ בִישׁוּעָתִי	VP 122	I #13	

APPENDIX B
PLATES OF ILLUSTRATIONS



Box no. 21 from the Tomb of King Tutankhamun, after Keel, *Symbolism*, Pls. XVI-XVII

Plate I



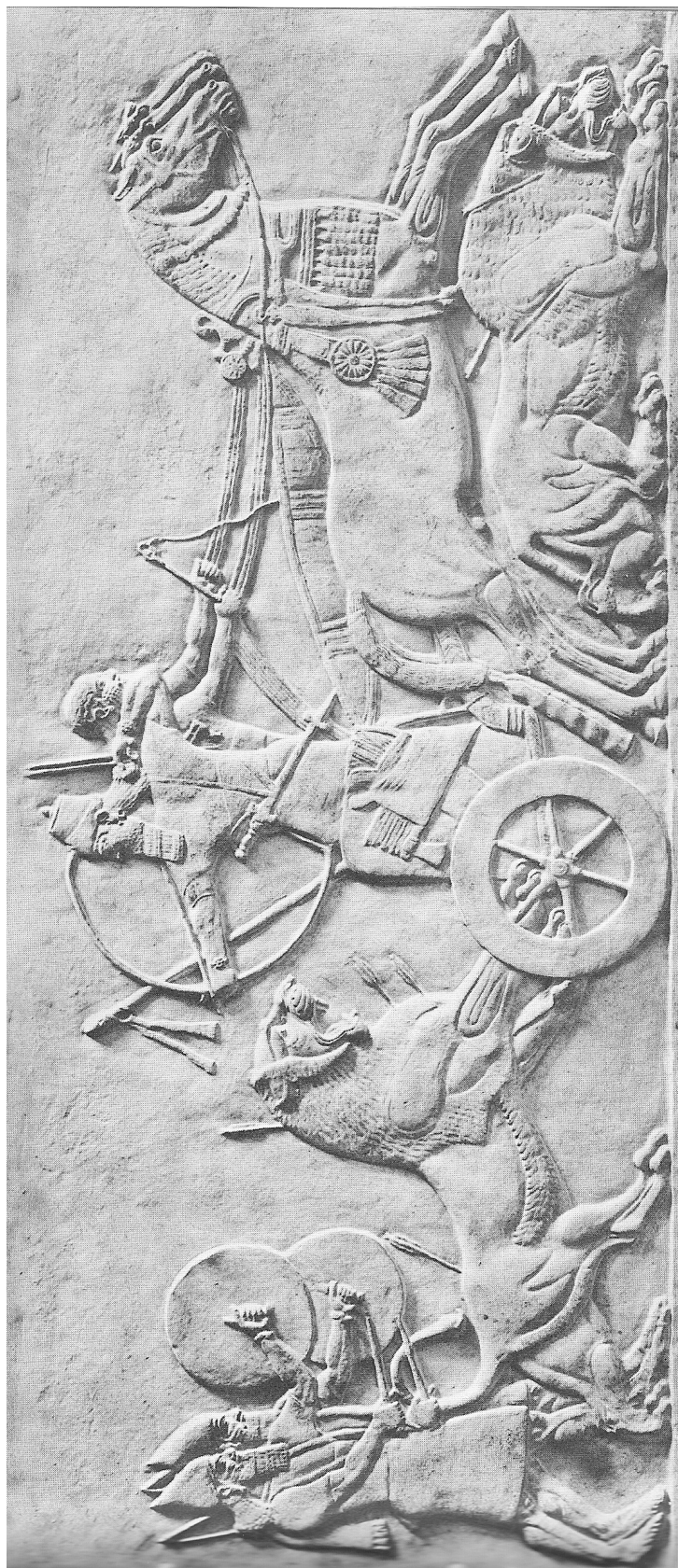
Eannatum leading his shield-bearing soldiers over the dead bodies of defeated enemies, after *ANEP*, fig. 300.

Plate II



Relief, Nimrud, Assurbanipal II (883-859), after Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods*, fig. 8

Plate III



The king hunting lions, Nimrud, Assurnasirpal (883-859), after *ANEP*, fig. 184.

Plate IV



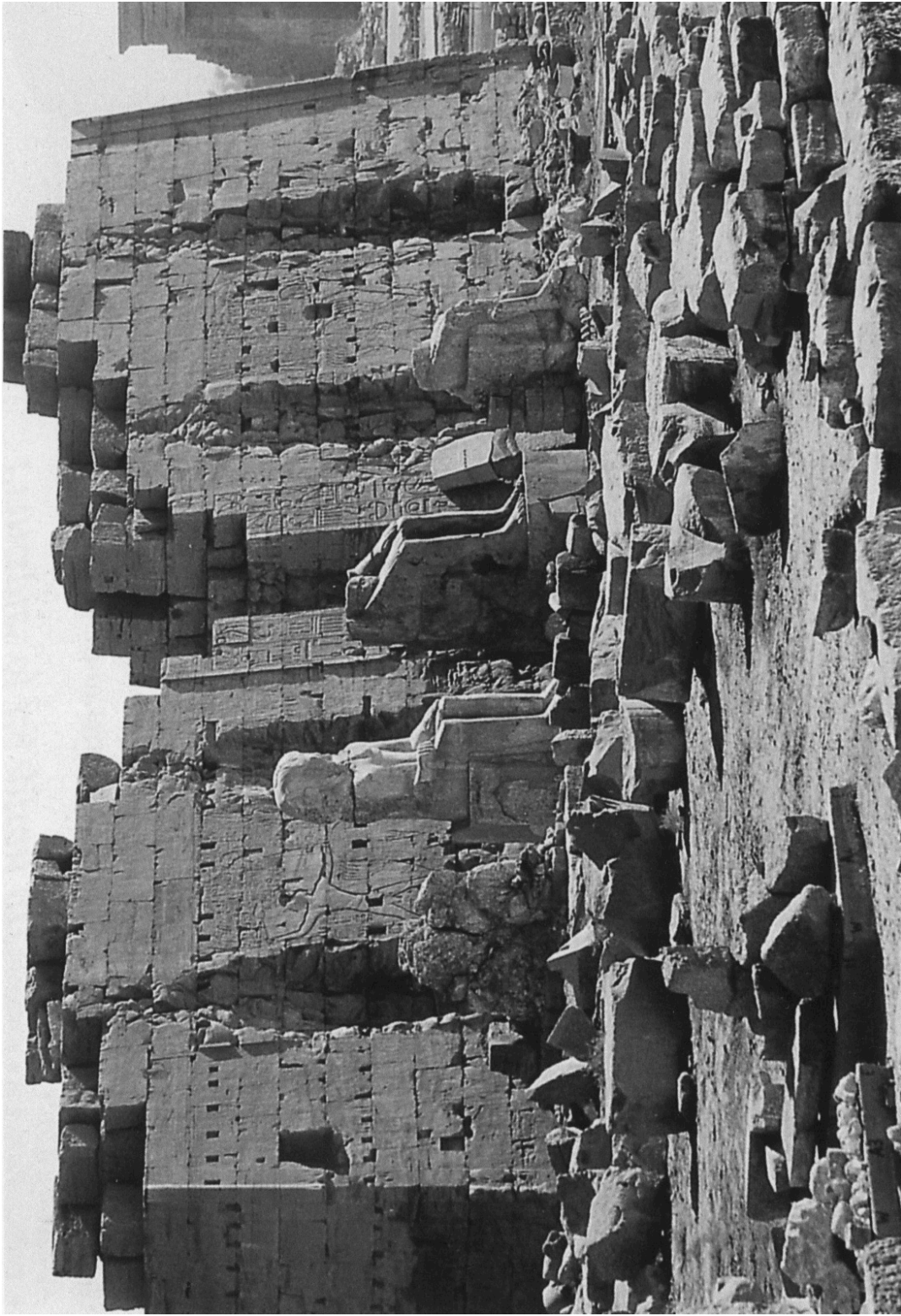
Funerary temple of Rameses III at Medinet Habu, first pylon.

Plate V



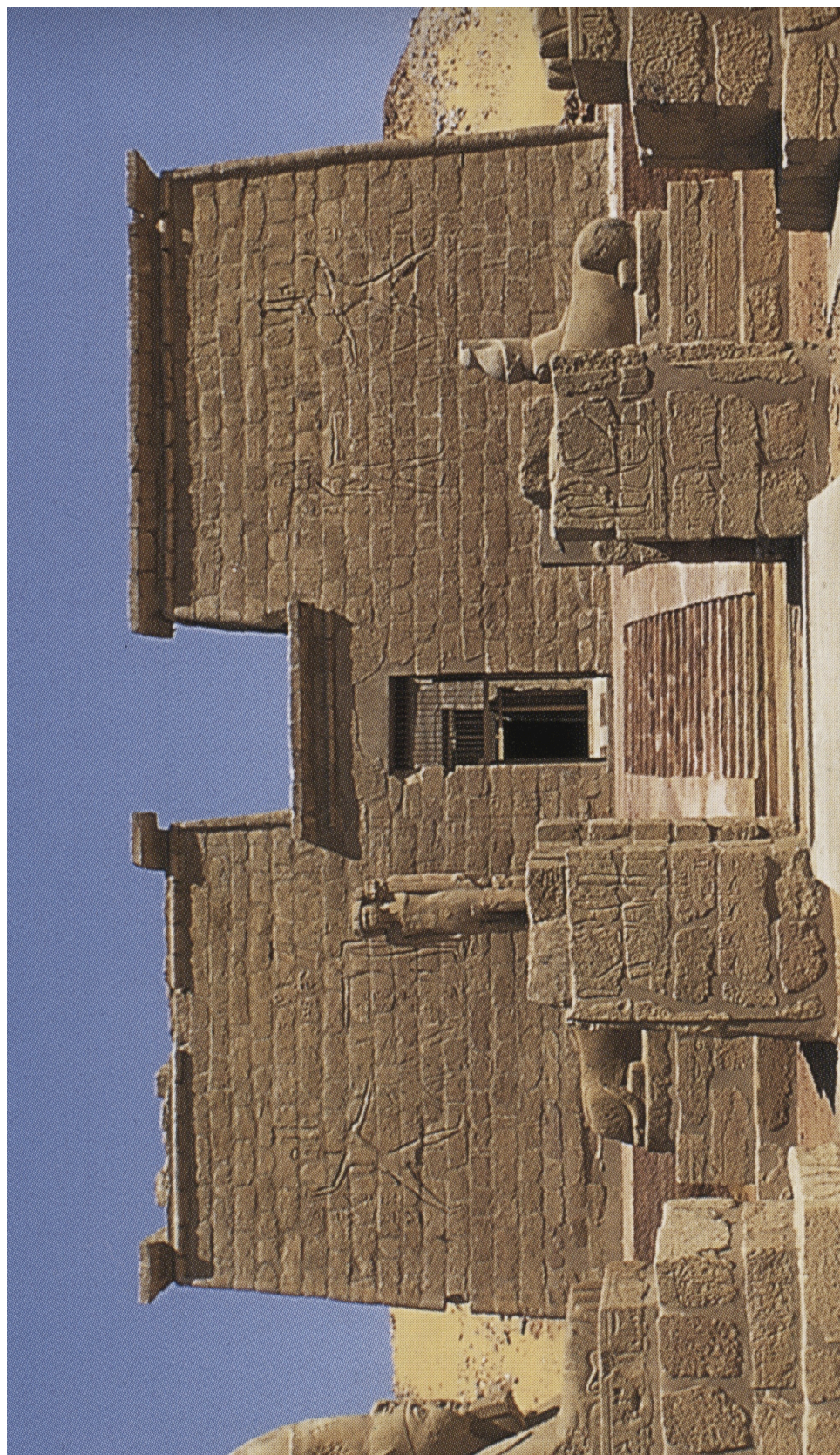
Close-up of the funerary temple of Rameses III at Medinet Habu, first pylon.

Plate VI



Temple of Amun-Ra at Karnak, after Robins, *The Art of Ancient Egypt*, illus. 8.

Plate VII



Temple of Amun and Re-Horakhty, after Wilkinson, *Complete Temples*, p. 200.

Plate VIII



Horus Temple at Edfu, after Robins, *Art of Ancient Egypt*, illus. 5.

Plate IX



Funerary Stela of the high priest of Onnuris, Amenhotep, after Robbins, *Art of Ancient Egypt*, illus. 164.

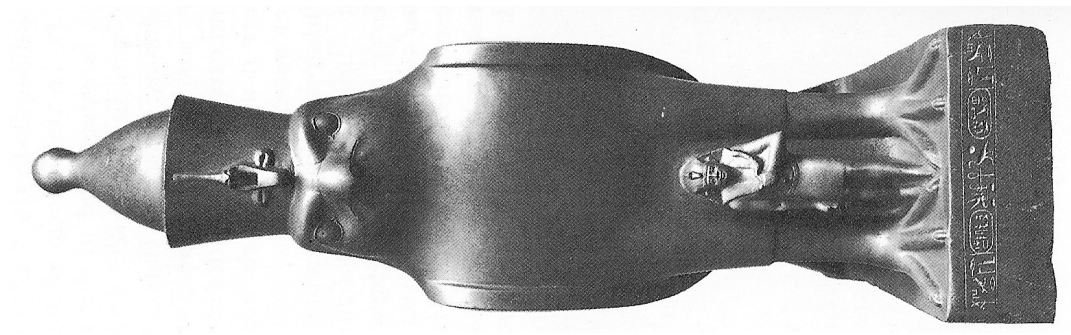
Plate X





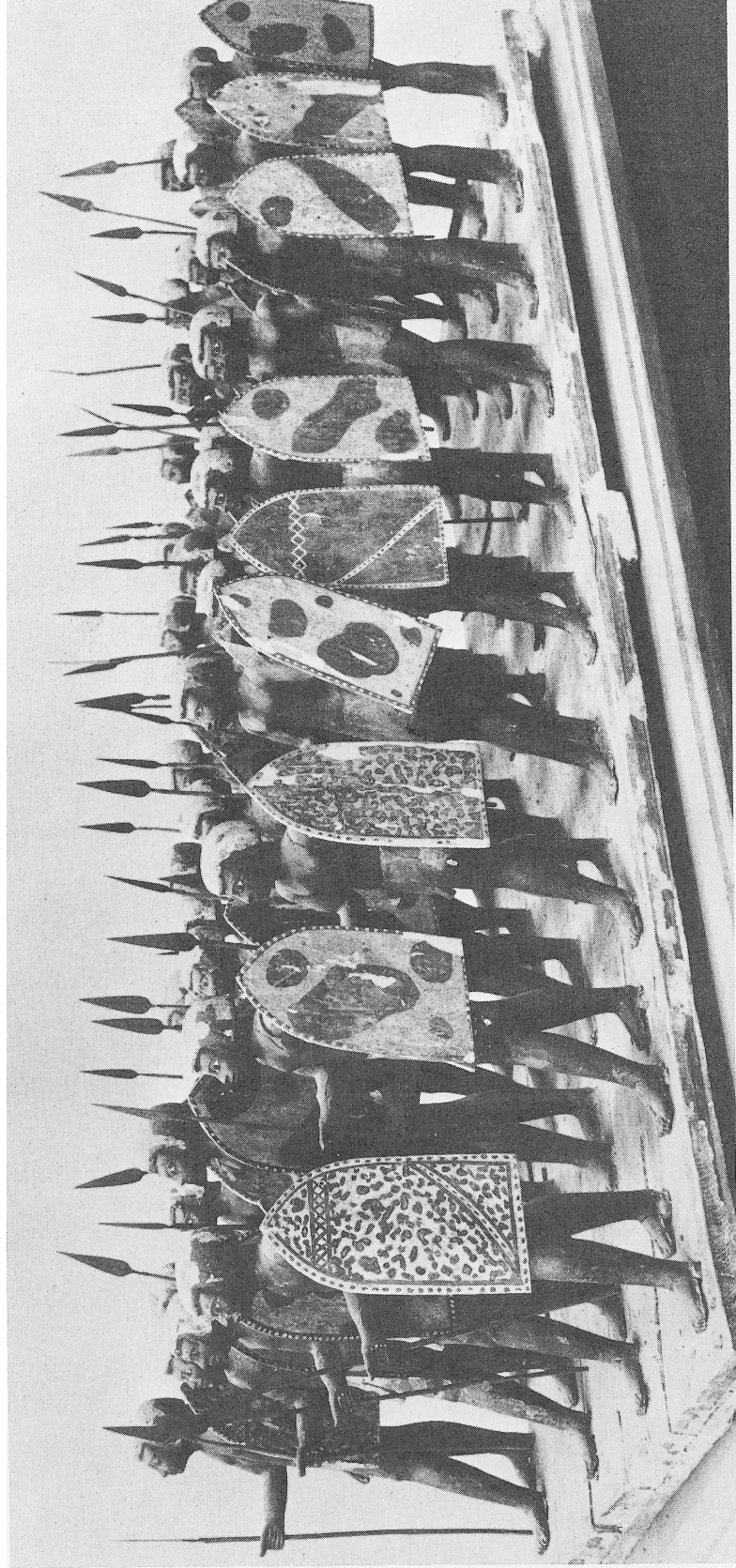
Statue of enthroned Khafre, Giza, Fourth Dynasty, after Wilkinson, *Reading Egyptian Art*, illus. 3, p. 82.

Plate XII



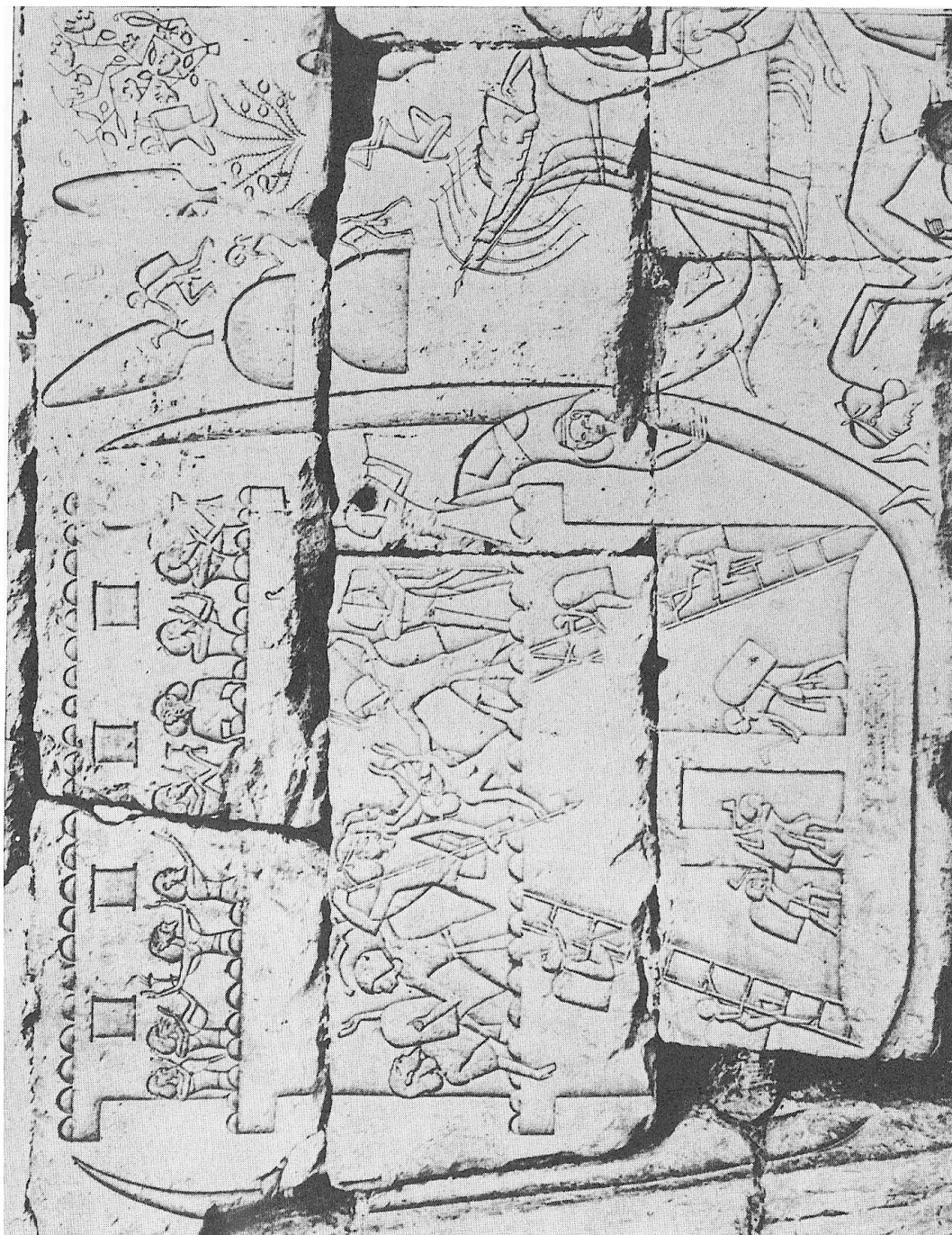
Statue of Nectanebo II, Heliopolis, Thirtieth Dynasty, after Wilkinson, *Reading Egyptian Art*, illus. 4, p. 82.

Plate XIII



Middle Kingdom (2050-1800) model of Egyptian soldiers armed with spear and shield, after *ANEP*, fig. 180.

Plate XIV



Relief depicting an attack on a Syrian town, Medinet Habu, exterior north wall, Rameses III (1195-1164), after *ANEP*, fig. 344.

Plate XV



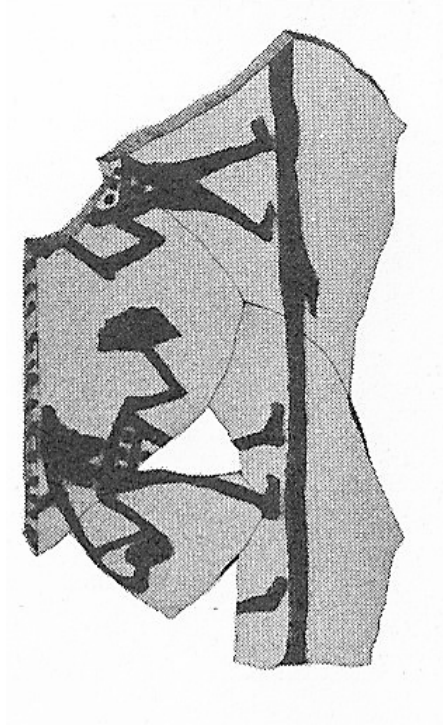
Relief, Abydos, southwest wall of Ramesseum, Rameses III (1195-1164), after, *ANEP*, 59

Plate XVI



No. 1

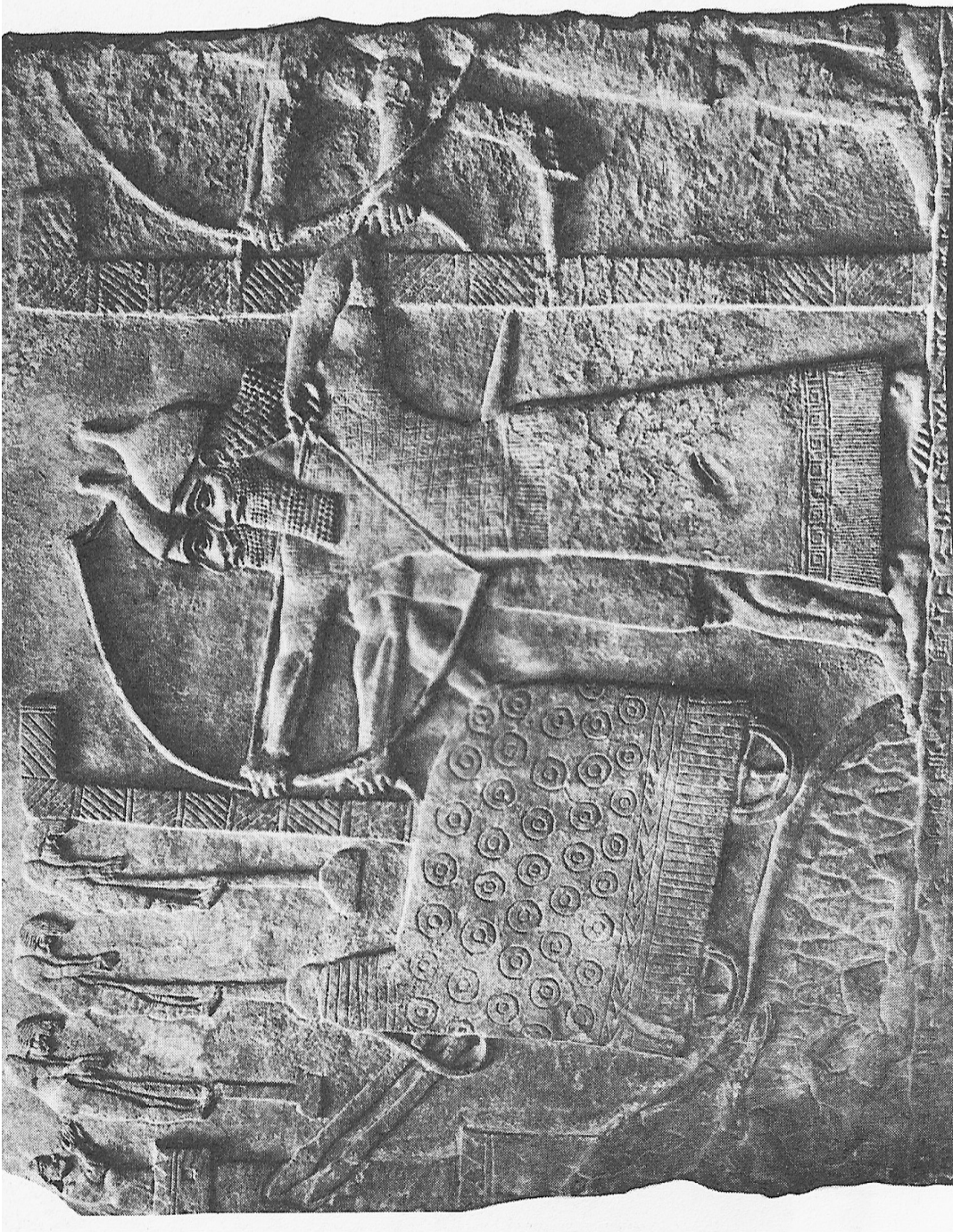
No. 1: Warrior with a smallfigure eight shield from the Late Hittite Period (9th. cent.), Zincirli, after *ANEP*, fig. 36.



No. 2

No. 2: Warriors with a small shield, Megiddo (8th.-7th. cent.), after *ANEP*, fig. 60.

Plate XVII



Relief of a siege with bowmen protected by shield bearers, Nimrud, Tiglath-pileser III (744-727), after *ANEP*, fig. 368.

Plate XVIII

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