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MAGIC IN THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST
AND THE OLD TESTAMENT: A
STUDY OF METAPHYSICS

A Thesis
Presented to
the Faculty of
Asbury Theological Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Theology

by
Robert Andrew Bickert
May 1969

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. INTRODUCTION	1
The Problem	1
Justification of the Study	2
Procedure	3
Limitations of the Study	6
II. PRIMITIVE THOUGHT AND MAGIC	7
General Concepts of Primitive Thought and	
Magic	9
Edward B. Tylor	9
James B. Frazer	11
Lucien Levy-Bruhl	12
Paul Radin	17
Bronislaw Malinowski	18
Mircea Eliade	20
The Ancient Near Eastern Concept of Primitive	
Thought and Magic	23
Henri Frankfort	23
William Foxwell Albright	28
Summary	31
III. MYTH AND MAGIC	33
The Nature of Mythology	33
Henri Frankfort	34

CHAPTER	PAGE
Brevard S. Childs	35
Arthur Weiser	35
Mircea Eliade	37
Metaphysics and Magic	43
Mythological Texts and Magic	46
Sumerian Mythology	47
Inanna's Descent to the Nether World	49
Akkadian Mythology	54
The Creation Epic	54
Ugaritic Mythology	69
The Baal Epic	70
Egyptian Mythology	79
The Repulsing of the Dragon and the Creation	80
Conclusion	88
Summary	90
IV. MAGIC IN THE OLD TESTAMENT	93
Genesis 20:37-43. The Analogy of the Peeled Rods	94
Exodus 4:2. The Rod Became a Snake	99
Exodus 15:22-25. Wood Made Bitter Water Sweet	106
Exodus 17:8-13. The Rod Used to Defeat the Amalekites	108

CHAPTER	PAGE
Numbers 20:7-11. The Rod Brought Water from the Rock	116
Numbers 22-24. Balaam Asked to Curse Israel	119
I Kings 17:17-24. Elijah Raised the Widow's Son	132
I Kings 18:20-26. The Conflict Between Elijah and the Priests of Baal	135
Summary	145
V. CONCLUSION	149
Summary	149
Conclusion	152
Implications	156
BIBLIOGRAPHY	159
APPENDIX	165

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

I. THE PROBLEM

Statement of the problem. It has been generally believed that the Hebrews practiced magic, and that therefore magical passages are found in the literature of the Old Testament. Students of Hebrew religion¹ have believed that in spite of God's ban on magic,² the Bible contains a substantial magical element essentially similar to the pagan beliefs of other ancient Near Eastern peoples. Those who hold this view believe that there is no real difference between magical conceptions in the Old Testament and those in surrounding pagan cultures, between magical practices of the biblical man of God and those of the pagan magician. The only difference supposedly is that biblical literature replaces the gods, demons, and spirits with the Lord.³

¹W. Robertson Smith, The Religion of the Semites, first edition, 1889 (New York: The Meridian Library, 1959); Adolphe Lods, Israel (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, Ltd., 1932); W. O. E. Oesterley and T. H. Robinson, Hebrew Religion (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1944); William Irwin, The Old Testament (New York: Henry Schuman, 1952); T. Vriezen, An Outline of Old Testament Theology, trans. S. Nevijen (Oxford: Blackwell, 1958); C. Ernest Wright, The Old Testament Against Its Environment (SCM Press, 1962).

²Exodus 22:18; Leviticus 19:31, 20:27; Deuteronomy 18:9ff; I Samuel 28:9.

³Yehezkel Kaufmann, The Religion of Israel, trans. Moshe Greenberg (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1960), p. 80.

The objective of the study. The primary aim of this research is to determine the character of the realm of metaphysics as it was conceived in the minds of two groups of people, namely the Hebrews and their neighbors. An examination of magic will be the means of perceiving the ancient Near Eastern concept of the metaphysical realm. The Hebrew concept of the metaphysical realm will then be compared with the ancient Near Eastern concept of the metaphysical realm. A comparison of these two concepts should enable one to determine if the Hebrews really did practice magic.

II. JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

There are various similarities between the ancient Near Eastern magical practices and practices found among the Hebrews as indicated by the Old Testament. This research is an attempt to see if there are any differences between the Hebrews' concept of the principles behind their practices and the concept of the principles as understood by various heathen neighbors. Ancient Near Eastern religion was based on magical principles. Thus this study attempts to develop a working knowledge of the pagan religious philosophy which surrounded ancient Israel. Finally, one of the basic justifications for this study is the attempt to establish the character of the metaphysics involved in magical practices in both pagan cultures and the Hebrews' faith so that they may be compared to determine if there is a basic difference between the two concepts.

III. PROCEDURE

The method of investigation into the Semitic concept of the metaphysical realm will be to examine magical practices as they are found in ancient Near Eastern mythology and the Old Testament. Magic is the art of producing the desired effect or result through the use of various techniques, such as incantations, that presumably assure human control of supernatural agencies or the forces of nature.⁴ Thus the purpose of this research will be to determine how magic was conceived to have affected the supernatural agency, then in turn to perceive the nature of this agency or metaphysical realm as it was conceived by the magician. The idea is this: If the magician believed that he could affect something by his magical techniques, it is assumed that he had a concept of the nature of the "thing" that he was trying to effect. Thus, what was the character of this "thing" that he believed he could affect and thus cause his desires to be fulfilled?

First it will be necessary to grasp how anthropologists understood the relationship between primitive thought and magic, so that one can understand the thought principles that have appeared to give magic its basis.

The next step will be to examine the nature of mythology, since magical practices will be studied in certain ancient Near

⁴Random House Dictionary of the English Language (New York: Random House, 1967), p. 862.

Eastern myths. The myths have been chosen as source material for magical practices in the ancient Near East because they are considered by authorities as vehicles that convey the primitive man's view of reality. Thus an inductive study will be made of magical passages in the following mythological literature: "Inanna's Descent to the Nether World" (Sumerian); "The Creation Epic" (Akkadian); "The Baal Epic" (Ugaritic); "The Repulsing of the Dragon and the Creation" (Egyptian). The metaphysical realm as it was deduced through a study of magic in these texts will be defined and characterized.

The final step will be to examine inductively and analytically the magical passages in the Old Testament in order to determine the Hebraic concept of the metaphysical realm. The Hebraic concept will then be compared with the pagan concept.

The source material for the myths will be taken from Ancient Near Eastern Texts edited by James B. Pritchard.⁵ The biblical references are taken from the Revised Standard Version of the Bible and the Biblia Hebraica, the Hebrew text edited by Rudolf Kittel. When Hebrew words are used, the Hebrew script will be given and then transliterated into English according to the symbol equivalents in table I.

⁵James B. Pritchard, Ancient Near Eastern Texts (second edition. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1955). Hereafter this work will be referred to as ANET.

TABLE I

TRANSLITERATION SYMBOLS FOR THE HEBREW AND ARAMAIC

Consonants

א/א	ט/ט	פ/פ
ב/ב	י/י	צ/צ
ג/ג	כ/כ	ק/ק
ד/ד	ל/ל	ר/ר
ה/ה	מ/מ	ש/ש
ו/ו	נ/נ	שׁ/שׁ
ז/ז	ס/ס	ת/ת
ח/ח	ע/ע	

Vowels

mā/מָ	mā/מָ	mā/מָ	māh/מָה
mō/מֹ	ma/מֶ	mō/מֹ	mā/מֶ
mū/מֻ	mō/מֹ	mē/מֶ	mēh/מֶה
mē/מֵ	mo/מֹ	m ^e /מֶ	meh/מֶה
mē/מֵ	mu/מֹ		
mī/מִ	mē/מֶ		
	me/מֶ		
	mi/מִ		

IV. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study of magic is limited to selected ancient Near Eastern myths and selected passages in the Old Testament. Therefore, general studies of magic will be referred to only as they relate to the development of selected anthropologists' understanding of primitive mentality. Only significant men will be presented as a brief history is sketched, giving the development of the various concepts of the relationship between primitive thought and magical practices. A brief statement of each man's definition of magic will also be given.

Magical practices cover a broad area of activities. However, for the projected purpose of this study, research will be confined to magic per se and will not deal with other related magical practices such as divination, astrology, dreams, hepatoscopy, or lots. These do not bear directly upon the metaphysical realm. The study will be confined to the selected myths listed above, with only limited reference to incantation texts and other magical materials.

Only those magical passages in the Old Testament will be examined that contain significant metaphysical implications. Other magical passages will be listed in the appendix.

CHAPTER II

PRIMITIVE THOUGHT AND MAGIC

Primitive thought has been one of the subjects of investigation for the anthropologist. Thus in this chapter, major anthropologists of the nineteenth and twentieth century who have contributed to our understanding of primitive thought and its relationship to magic will be presented. The concern of this chapter is to grasp how these anthropologists understood the relationship between principles of primitive thought and magic. The objective then will be to explain these thought principles that appear to give magic its basis. The concepts of magic have not all been the same. A progression of thought can be seen between the time of Edward Tylor (1865) and E. Evans-Pritchard (1965).

One of the primary interests of anthropologists in this period was to discover the origin of religion. Existing primitive cultures became the subject of investigation in anticipation of solving this problem. The question was, which came first, magic or religion? This subject, although widely discussed in the early twentieth century,¹ is not to be

¹There are two articles which illuminate the battle that raged at the turn of the century over the relationship between magic and religion and the confusion as to what magic really was.

The first is by Jan De Vries entitled "Magic and Religion" in History of Religions, I: 214-21, 1962. He notes

answered here. Religion is here treated only as it relates to the understanding of magic.

the distinction between magic and religion. Magic is defined as coercing a higher power, and religion is conceived as man's cult to a higher power. The question is, which came first? Yet he notes that both are often seen together working like twins. Thus he traces the concepts of anthropologists. He deals with Frazer who sees magic as being the earliest. Religion according to Frazer is a step-up from magic. Religion developed gradually into an awareness of the working of conscious and personal powers. Man gradually saw that magic did not always give the desired results; thus if he were to continue his security in his control concept, Frazer assumed that primitive man concluded there must be a being mightier than he, who could bring about what he wished. Religion therefore developed out of this consciousness. De Vries points out that Frazer did not clarify how religion developed from magic.

The second article is by P. Jevons entitled "The Definition of Magic," in Sociological Review, I: 105-17, April, 1908. He discusses Frazer's understanding of magic in relation to religion and science in the light of two other viewpoints, that of R. H. Codrington and Hubert and Mauss. Codrington's understanding of magic is presented in his book The Melanesians: Studies in their Anthropology and Folk-lore (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1891). He saw in these South Sea islanders a concept which they called mana. Mana was seen as an impersonal force that manifested itself in natural objects, living things, names, and even men. "No man, however, has this power of his own; all that he does is done by the aid of personal beings, ghosts or spirits; he cannot be said, as a spirit can, to be mana himself . . . he can be said to have mana" (p. 191). In contrast to Frazer, who believed religion developed when man realized that his magic did not work, Codrington saw mana as the common source from which both magic and religion spring, for the Melanesian word mana applies both to magic and to religious rites.

Jevons points out that according to Frazer's own understanding, the principle of sympathy was conceived by the primitives as a natural law. Therefore, a true concept of magic among the primitives was actually non-existent, so long as these principles were believed legitimate and regarded as a system of natural law (a statement of rules which determined the sequence of events throughout the world), there was no magic in them. Thus Frazer's theory returns one to a period when magic did not exist in primitive thinking. However, Codrington, Hubert and Mauss see this power as unusual and abnormal and beyond man's normal ability to do things.

This chapter will be divided into two sections:
General concepts of primitive thought and magic, and ancient
Near Eastern concepts of primitive thought and magic.

I. GENERAL CONCEPTS OF PRIMITIVE THOUGHT AND MAGIC

This section will survey the thought of significant anthropologists who have contributed to an understanding of the relationship between primitive thought and magic. Some of these men, such as Tylor, Frazer, and Levy-Bruhl have sought to give a universal view of primitive culture. Others like Codrington and Malinowski have made special studies in specific areas of the world such as Melanesia or the Trobriand Islands. Therefore the concepts that were developed by these men give more of a general view of primitive thought and magic. It is the purpose of this section to summarize these major concepts of primitive thought and magic as they were developed by outstanding anthropologists of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Edward B. Tylor. The two-volume work by Edward B. Tylor, Primitive Culture, published in 1865, was the first major work on the cultural development of primitive life. His thought was based upon an evolutionary principle; he saw culture moving from the lowest to the highest form of society through a gradual process of development. This evolutionary principle affected his view of magic as well. Tylor believed

that the principle of magic was found among "the lowest known stages of civilization and the lower races."² Magical concepts gradually changed as society moved upward but were not eliminated from higher society. However, as man learned to test his magical concepts through experience, magical principles tended to break down into a mere survival status.

Tylor believed that primitive cultures based their magical practices upon a principle which he expressed as "the association of ideas."

Man as yet in a low intellectual condition, having come to associate in thought those things which he found by experience to be connected in fact, proceeded erroneously to invert this action, and to conclude that association in thought must involve similar connexion in reality. He thus attempted to discover, to foretell, and to cause events by means of processes which we can now see to have only an ideal significance.³

This concept of magic as Tylor understood it was based upon illogical thinking. Primitive man could not distinguish between his associations in thought and the facts of reality. The primitive person believed what could be connected in thought concepts could also be connected in reality. Tylor's concept of "evolution" and the "association of ideas" influenced later anthropologists' thinking about primitive culture and magic.

²Edward B. Tylor, Primitive Culture, 2 vols. (first edition, 1865; New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1920), p. 112.

³Ibid., p. 116.

James B. Frazer. Tylor's "association of ideas" became the basis of Frazer's analysis of the logic upon which magic operates. Frazer made an extensive compilation of primitive practices from around the world and published them in The Golden Bough. This work was first published in 1890 and was ultimately expanded into twelve volumes by 1930. Frazer believed that primitive man based his magic upon a system of natural law. It had two parts:

Like produces like or that an effect resembles its cause; and second, that things which have once been in contact with each other continue to act on each other at a distance after the physical contact has been severed.⁴

Frazer termed this principle "sympathetic magic since both assume that things act on each other at a distance through secret sympathy, the impulse being transmitted from one to the other by means of what we may conceive as a kind of invisible ether."⁵ According to this principle, Frazer concluded that magicians believed they could cause an effect by imitation. Also, whatever they did to a material object would affect equally the person with whom the object had been in contact.

The same principles that functioned in their magic, they believed, also regulated the operations of inanimate

⁴James G. Frazer, The Magic Art (third edition, 1911; New York: Macmillan and Company, 1963), I, p. 52.

⁵Ibid., p. 54.

nature. Frazer assumed the primitive magicians did not analyze their mental processes nor reflect upon the abstract principles in their actions. Thus Frazer found basic agreement with Tylor in that he also believed that magic was based upon illogical thought.

By the turn of the nineteenth century, anthropologists had awakened an interest in primitive thought and its relationship to magical practices and the development of religion. Frazer believed religion developed when man realized that his magic did not work. However, Codrington saw mana as the common source from which both magic and religion sprang. Codrington, Hubert and Mauss' conceived of a metaphysical aspect in magic. They saw magic as a power unusual and abnormal and beyond man's normal ability to do things.

Lucien Levy-Bruhl. Levy-Bruhl's analysis of the primitive mentality was published in two books: How the Primitive Thinks, in 1910, and Primitive Mentality, 1922. They were translated respectively into English in 1926 and 1923.⁶ Levy-Bruhl's objective was to draw attention to the differences between primitive thought and that of contemporary man. He realized that the mentality of any individual was

⁶The writer is indebted here to E. E. Evans-Pritchard for his evaluation of Levy-Bruhl in his book, The Theories of Primitive Religion (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965).

derived from the collective representations of his society. These representations vary from culture to culture because each society has its own customs and institutions and thus its own distinctive mentality.⁷

Levy-Bruhl pointed out that Western culture is oriented to a logical mentality based upon Aristotelian principles,⁸ whereas primitive thought has an altogether different character.

The attitude of the mind of the primitive is very different from Western thinking. The nature of the milieu in which he lives presents itself to him in quite a different way than it would to modern man. Objects and beings are all involved in a network of mystical participations and exclusions. It is these which immediately impose themselves on his attention and which alone retain it. If a phenomenon interests him, if he is not content to perceive it, so to speak, passively and without reaction, he will think at once, as by a sort of mental reflex, of an occult and invisible power of which the phenomenon is a manifestation.⁹

The primitive does not seek an objective answer because his cultural institutions (which are prelogically and

⁷Ibid., p. 78-79.

⁸Aristotelianism is defined as the emphasis upon deduction and upon investigation of concrete and particular things and situations in The Random House Dictionary of the English Language, Unabridged Edition (New York: Random House, 1967), p. 81.

Aristotle embraced the syllogism, i.e., a logical scheme or analysis of a formal argument consisting of the major premises, so that if these are true then the conclusion must be true: e.g., every virtue is laudable; kindness is a virtue, therefore kindness is laudable. This is also deductive reasoning.

⁹Lucien Levy-Bruhl, La Mentalite Primitive (fourteenth edition, 1947), pp. 17-18, as quoted in Evans-Pritchard, The Theories of Primitive Religion, pp. 80-81.

mystically oriented) prevent him from doing so. These patterns of thought in their totality make up a collective mentality which Levy-Bruhl called collective representations. Thus in Western society, collective representations tend to be critical and scientific, while those of primitive society tend to be mystical.¹⁰

Levy-Bruhl defined these collective representations as mystical because of the primitive's belief in forces, in influences, and in actions imperceptible to the senses.¹¹ Among primitive peoples, the collective representations are pre-eminently concerned with these imperceptible forces. When the primitive man's sensations become conscious perceptions, they are colored by the mystical ideas they evoke.

They are immediately conceptualized in a mystical category of thought. The concept dominates the sensation, and imposes its image on it. One might say that primitive man sees an object as we see it, but he perceives it differently for as soon as he gives conscious attention to it, the mystical idea of the object comes between him and the object, and transforms its purely objective properties.¹²

Thus Levy-Bruhl concluded:

The reality in which primitives move is itself mystical. Not a being, not an object, not a natural phenomenon in their collective representations is what it appears to us. Almost all that we see in it escapes them or they are indifferent to it. On the other hand, they see in it many things which we do not even suspect.¹³

¹⁰Ibid., p. 83.

¹²Loc cit.

¹¹Loc cit.

¹³Ibid., p. 84.

Further, the collective representations work actually to control the mystical, for not only is that which is conceived mystical, but the mystical representations of the group evoke the mystical perceptions. Thus the primitive mind is caught in circular reasoning.¹⁴

These representations are also thought to have a quality of their own, namely the quality of being mystical. The primitive believes that things are connected so that what affects one is believed to affect others by mystical action. For example, what affects one's shadow affects him. Therefore it would be fatal to cross an open place at noon because one would lose his shadow. Some primitives believe that their names have a mystical quality; therefore they will not reveal them lest they be learned by an enemy who would then have the owner of the name in his control.¹⁵

Levy-Bruhl's concept of prelogical thought did not mean that primitives are incapable of coherent thought, but merely that their beliefs are incompatible with critical and scientific thought. He did not mean that primitive mentality was unintelligible thought, but only that it is unintelligible to modern man schooled in Aristotelian logic. They were reasonable but not according to modern standards of evaluation.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 85.

They were logical, but their thought started from a different set of premises than modern man's does. Prelogical, applied to primitive mentality, means simply that it does not go out of its way to avoid contradiction.¹⁶ It does not always have the same logical requirements. It is rational but unscientific and uncritical.¹⁷

Levy-Bruhl believed the primitive reasoned incorrectly because his reasoning was determined by the "mystical representations"¹⁸ of his society. Levy-Bruhl did not try to

¹⁶Dr. Dennis Kinlaw, in a 1968 class on ancient Near Eastern Literature, pointed out that Aristotelian logic states that a thing can not both "be" and "not be" at the same time. But this was not true for ancient man. Western culture sees a difference between "a" and "b," and "a" cannot be both "a" and "b" at the same time. An example taken from Egyptian literature explains the idea from which the pyramid originated. "The Creation by Atum," ANET, pp. 3-4, n.7, tells that "Atum-Re began his creation upon a primeval hillock arising out of the abysmal waters, Nun. Any important cult-center was regarded by the Egyptians as potentially a place of creation and therefore had its own hill of creation, symbolized in its holy of holies." To the Egyptians, this was the place where life began. So when they built a place to bury the Pharaoh, they decided to build a place that was just like the primeval hillock. In time, the Egyptians lost sight of the replica and began to think that this place was the original place of creation. Although there were many pyramids, their thought was not disturbed because to them each one possessed the original place of creation.

¹⁷Evans-Pritchard, The Theories of Primitive Religion, pp. 81-82.

¹⁸The term "mystical representations" probably best explains Levy-Bruhl's understanding of the basis for magic. However, he did not explain why the primitive believes in forces, influences, and actions that are imperceptible to the senses. This question hits at the heart of this research and will be dealt with in another chapter. Levy-Bruhl attributed to the primitive's society the fact that the primitive

explain primitive magic and religion as Tylor and Frazer had done, by a theory purporting to show their origin, nor did he distinguish between them. Rather, he sought to analyze primitive society and reveal "how" the structure of the thought process worked.¹⁹ His emphasis upon the mystical participation as it was seen in relationship to culturally oriented representations was an original and valuable part of Levy-Bruhl's thesis.²⁰

Paul Radin. Radin did not believe that religion grew out of magic, but that magical practices preceded religion, which in turn took over these magical practices and reshaped them into a system with symbological reinterpretations.²¹ He also saw a clear relationship between economic determinants and the role of magic which varies according to cultural dependence. Radin stressed that magic must be understood

possessed these mystical representations. However, it seems that Levy-Bruhl is overlooking the fact that society is composed of individuals. This concept had to start somewhere with someone. It would seem presumptuous to think that the whole society (composed of individuals) would arrive at these mystical imperceptible forces all at once.

¹⁹Evans-Pritchard, The Theories of Primitive Religion, p. 86.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Paul Radin, Primitive Religion, Its Nature and Origin (first edition, 1937, New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1957), p. 61.

from the viewpoint of the practitioner and the relationship between him and the object in mind.²²

Radin believed that a focus upon "magic" that had not been developed in situ with the culture gave magic a stereotype. Radin believed that magical concepts varied from one culture to the next, that magic could only be understood as it was studied in the context of each culture and how that culture conceived the principles involved in magic.

Bronislaw Malinowski. The Golden Bough made such a deep impression upon Malinowski that he gave up chemistry to become a student of anthropology. Malinowski did most of his research in the South Pacific, especially among the Trobriand Islands, and came to believe that the power of magic was inherent in man, who could release it through ritual.²³

Thus, not only is magic an essentially human possession, but it is literally and actually enshrined in man and can be handed on only from man to man, according to very strict rules of magical filiation, initiation, and instruction. It is thus never conceived as a force of nature, residing

²²Evans-Pritchard in Theories of Primitive Religion, p. 111, goes so far as to say ". . . to try to understand magic as an idea in itself, what is the essence of it, as it were, is a hopeless task. It becomes more intelligible when it is viewed not only in relation to empirical activities but also in relation to other beliefs, as part of a system of thought"

²³Bronislaw Malinowski, Magic, Science and Religion and other Essays (Boston: Beacon Press, 1948), p. 57.

in things, acting independently of man, to be found out and learned by him, by any of those proceedings by which he gains his ordinary knowledge of nature.²⁴

Malinowski did not accept the mana concept of magic which had been advocated by Codrington and others. He reasoned:

For if the virtue of magic is exclusively localized in man, can be wielded by him only under very special conditions and in a traditionally prescribed manner, it certainly is not a force such as the one described by Codrington: "This mana is not fixed in anything and can be conveyed in almost anything." Mana also "acts in all ways for good and evil . . . shows itself in physical force or in any kind of power and excellence which a man possesses."²⁵

He believed that it was impossible, too, for modern man to grasp fully the metaphysical concepts expressed in such words as mana because of the limited data available regarding primary concepts expressed in such words.²⁶ In order to "understand the native mentality, it is necessary to study and describe the types of behavior first and to explain their vocabulary by their customs and their life."²⁷

One thing is certain: magic is not born of an abstract conception of universal power, subsequently applied to concrete cases. It has undoubtedly arisen independently in a number of actual situations. Each type of magic, born of its own situation and of the emotional tension thereof, is due to the spontaneous flow of ideas and the

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 58.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 59.

spontaneous reaction of man. It is the uniformity of the mental process in each case which has led to certain universal features of magic and to the general conceptions which we find at the basis of man's magical thought and behavior.²⁸

Malinowski believed that magic developed out of man's desire and experience, which in turn developed into ritual as a means to the desired end. "It is always the affirmation of man's power to cause certain definite effects by a definite spell and rite."²⁹

Thus magic functioned as a service to man in that it helped him to ritualize his optimism and to enhance his faith in the victory of hope over fear.³⁰ As far as Malinowski was concerned, the metaphysical concept of magic, if there ever had been one, could not now be established from a study of primitive culture. Magic as it now functions is an expression of man's inner needs.

Mircea Eliade. Eliade is a prominent contemporary anthropologist who has not agreed with the concept of mana as it was presented by Codrington and others, who had supposed that the force in mana was something impersonal, diffused throughout the Cosmos.³¹ Eliade did not accept this theory because he believed that the primitive man could not

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Ibid., p. 70

³¹Mircea Eliade, Myths, Dreams and Mysteries, trans. Philip Mairet. (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1957), p. 127.

distinguish between a personal and an impersonal concept.³²
 To the primitive, a thing either existed or it did not exist.³³
 He preferred an ontological explanation for the concept of
 power. He says,

anything filled with mana exists on the ontological
 plane and is therefore efficacious, fecund, fertile.
 One cannot ascribe "impersonality" to mana, for
 that attribute is without meaning within the archaic
 spiritual horizon.³⁴

Thus Eliade wanted to express the concept of power in terms of
 "a realm existence."

Eliade accepted Rudolf Otto's concept of this realm of
 existence. Otto accepted the fact that God existed and that
 He manifested Himself. He said, "the sacred always manifests
 itself as a power of quite another order than that of the
 forces of nature."³⁵ Eliade saw that man was limited by his
 language in trying to express how he received this mani-
 festation. He believed that man expressed this manifestation
 in terms borrowed from the realms of nature. This is ana-
 logical terminology.

Eliade chose the term hierophany as a vehicle to try
 and explain the manifestation of the sacred which has re-
 vealed itself as a force or as a power. The term means that

³²Ibid., p. 128.

³³Ibid., p. 129.

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵Ibid., p. 124.

"something sacred is shown to us, manifests itself."³⁶

This power is sensed on many different levels from a concept of a tree or stone manifesting a mysterious power, to the Supreme Power --- God. The power, the sacred element, is considered the same, and only the degree in which it is expressed is different.³⁷

Eliade concluded:

Among the primitive . . . the sacred is manifested in a multitude of forms and variants, but all these hierophanies are charged with power. Power means reality and, at the same time, lastingness and efficiency.³⁸

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Ibid., pp. 124-25.

³⁸Ibid., p. 130. The Bible clearly states that God does reveal Himself. Paul said, "For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. Ever since the creation of the world his invisible nature, namely, his eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made" (Rom. 1:19-20). Eliade may be right in describing how God reveals Himself to the pagan. If it is true that the pagan perceives God's manifestation as a power, this might be an explanation for the metaphysical concept in magic.

Could it be that the unregenerate man has perceived the manifestation of God's power, but because of his perverted nature, he fails to relate the power to God? The power then is conceived as something that exists, but it is neither personal nor impersonal. The Bible says, "For although they knew God they did not honor Him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking and their senseless minds were darkened" (Rom. 1:21). Thus man developed the concept of magic by which he thought he could effect and control this realm of power through his self-conceived magical techniques. It is significant to note that the pagan gods of the ancient Near East were not conceived as having innate power. It was external to them. This fact will be illustrated in the section dealing with ancient Near Eastern texts.

Eliade believed then that the primitive conceived of a realm of existence that was neither personal nor impersonal. This realm Eliade accepted as sacred which manifests itself to man by degrees in an ascending scale.

II. THE ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN CONCEPT OF PRIMITIVE THOUGHT AND MAGIC

That concept of magic must be understood in the context of its culture is a vital point to be remembered in examining magical passages in the Old Testament, (see chapter four). Hebrew culture must be understood against the environment of its milieu. Therefore attention is now focused upon ancient Near Eastern concepts of primitive thought and magic. The concept of magic as it has been understood and defined in other cultures cannot necessarily serve as a working definition for the ancient near eastern concept of magic.

The rationale of ancient Near Eastern thought will be presented in this section through the thought of two of the foremost authorities of Near Eastern culture, Henri Frankfort and William Foxwell Albright.

Henri Frankfort. Frankfort wrote the first chapter in the classic book, The Intellectual Adventures of Ancient Man.³⁹ Here Frankfort attempted to understand the view which

³⁹Henri Frankfort, et. al., The Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1946). Hereafter this work will be referred to as IAAM.

the ancient peoples of Egypt and Mesopotamia took of the world in which they lived. The writer feels that the concepts of this chapter must be mastered before one can proceed with any degree of comprehension into the study of these ancient peoples. Frankfort has tried to show in the first chapter of The Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man that there is a great gulf between modern man's mode of looking at his world, and the habits of thought in which ancient Near Eastern people looked at their world. Thus Frankfort attempted to penetrate into this alien world of thought and to analyze its peculiar logic, its imaginative, and its emotional character.

Frankfort began by drawing attention to the fact that ancient thought revolved around the basic concerns of man, just as it does today - man's nature, problems, values, and destiny.⁴⁰ The ancients' myths deal with those problems. This area is most open to speculative thought even today. Frankfort said these concerns have always led man "to seek a metaphysical hypothesis."⁴¹ However, there is a basic difference of view point between the modern and ancient man. Western man is heavily influenced by scientific thinking based upon Aristotelian logic. He is basically an objective thinker. On the other hand, the ancient man thought speculatively. He was basically a subjective thinker.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 4.

⁴¹Ibid.

Frankfort believed that this difference is the first principle to be understood. He saw speculative thought as an "intuitive, almost visionary, mode of apprehension. Thus speculative thought transcends experience, but only because it attempts to explain, to unify, to order experience."⁴² Frankfort used this term as a means to explain the ancient's attempt "to underpin the chaos of experience so that it may reveal the features of a structure--order, coherence, and meaning."⁴³ Thus he said speculative thought "may be 'once removed' from the problems of experience but it is connected with them in that it tries to explain them."⁴⁴ The logic behind the myths is influenced by emotions, peculiarly wrapped in imagination. The primitive's mode of thinking had unlimited possibilities for development.

The second aspect is that, for the ancient man, the realm of nature which was all about him and the realm of man were not distinguished. Modern man recognizes that man is part of the natural world about him just as the ancient did. However, the phenomena of modern man's world is impersonal. Modern man thinks in terms of being apart from the world. Thus man lives on an "I-it" relationship to the phenomena of the world. Modern man thinks in terms of "subject-object relationship."⁴⁵

⁴²Ibid., p. 3.

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴Ibid.

⁴⁵Frankfort, IAAM, p. 4.

To the ancient however, man was a part of nature. He "saw man always as part of society and society as imbedded in nature and dependent upon cosmic forces."⁴⁶ Because man was a part of nature, he did not use a different mode of cognition to apprehend it. His relationship to the phenomena of the world was on an "I-Thou" basis. The ancient thought in terms of a "subject-subject" relationship, because all of nature was conceived as being "personal." Therefore to the ancient's way of thinking, nature could not be controlled or dealt with objectively as modern science deals with the world. An impersonal "it" can be brought under predictable control. However, the ancient's world was to be understood and to be interacted with in reciprocal, personal relationships. There was something unpredictable, uncontrollable, unparalleled in a personal world that was to be dealt with on an "I-Thou" basis, because it was believed to have a will of its own. Frankfort explained the difference in these words:

Now the knowledge which "I" had of "Thou" hovers between the active judgment and the passive "undergoing of an impression"; between the intellectual and the emotional, the articulate and the inarticulate. "Thou" may be problematic, yet "Thou" is somewhat transparent. "Thou" is a live presence, whose qualities and potentialities can be made somewhat articulate--not as a result of active inquiry but because "Thou," as a presence, reveals itself.⁴⁷

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 5.

Frankfort also made a distinction between a personal world and an animistic world concept.

This does not mean (as is so often thought) that primitive man, in order to explain natural phenomena, imparts human characteristics to an inanimate world. Primitive man simply does not know an inanimate world.⁴⁸

Thus the primitive does not fill an empty world or a material world with spirits; his whole world is redundant with life, it is dynamistic, always personal. This life has individuality and it reveals its qualities and its will.

The prerequisite then to understanding ancient thought is to note this fundamental distinction between present-day man imbued with objective scientific logic, and ancient man imbued with subjective, non-Aristotelian logic. The primitive's concept of the world affected substantially his view of "causation" and the "reality of appearances." Further, the ancient was not able to make a clear distinction between the "apparent" and the "real," between the "symbol" and the "thing symbolized."⁴⁹ The ancient's lack of distinction at this point touches our immediate concern with magic. In the primitive's mind, the symbol and the thing symbolized could coalesce so that the one could easily stand for the other; therefore there was no sharp distinction between dreams and

⁴⁸Ibid.

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 10ff.

ordinary vision or between the living and the dead. The primitives also believed that "a part could stand for the whole."⁵⁰ This basic concept is behind much of the ancient world's practice of magic. The imaginary is acknowledged as existing in reality. Thus, if one has a part of a man, he can influence the whole; what one does to a part is actually done to the whole. A lock of hair, a piece of a man's clothing or fingernail, his name, or even a shadow could be used to bring that man under baleful influences. That part was conceived as having the potential of the whole.

William Foxwell Albright. Albright has been one of the towering figures in contemporary biblical scholarship. His book, History, Archaeology, and Christian Humanism, has a chapter entitled, "The Human Mind in Action: Magic, Science and Religion."⁵¹ Here he laid a foundation principle for the understanding of primitive thought in relation to magic, science and religion. There are three stages of human "rational" thought: proto-logical, empirical logical and formal logical. For the first stage he has used Levy-Bruhl's concept of pre-logical thought which was discussed above. He noted that

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 12.

⁵¹William Foxwell Albright, History, Archaeology, and Christian-Humanism (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1964), pp. 62-82.

Levy-Bruhl saw in primitive mentality the basis for many magical beliefs and practices which were due to a failure to understand such logical principles as the principle of identity and the principle of contradiction. However, in 1939, Levy-Bruhl retracted his views on prelogical thinking because he recognized that in most respects primitives reason quite as logically as ordinary Westerners.⁵²

Albright realized the truth and failure in Levy-Bruhl's prelogical concept. Thus he added what he called an empirical-logical stage based on experience. He saw that Levy-Bruhl had been wrong at one level which he called the lower level of primitive thought, for here the primitive was guided in his daily life by experience. He could check his logic empirically through trial and error. However, in his higher level, where he was unable to check his acts by their effects, he was unable to make any marked progress. Albright pointed out that proto-logical thinking is still a part of modern thinking and is even making a recovery in areas such as modern painting, sculpture, literature, and music. He concluded, "Therefore we must distinguish between proto-logical [he prefers the term protological to prelogical] thinking, where experience is nearly useless, and empirico-logical thinking--the logic born of experience."⁵³

⁵²Ibid., p. 66.

⁵³Ibid., p. 67.

Albright placed empirical logic in antiquity: "it is as old as animals."⁵⁴ Nearly all ancient crafts were dominated by it, and by the fourth millennium B. C. the ancient Near Eastern man had come up with thousands of empirically derived advances in technology.⁵⁵ By the second millenium B. C. there was tremendous progress in empirical logic, of which the greatest triumph was Israelite monotheism.⁵⁶

Albright placed formal logical thinking rather late and states that there was no formal logic in the Old Testament. "There is no trace of anything like philosophical thinking either in the Ancient Orient or in Greece before Thales or Ionian Miletus in the early sixth century B. C." He cited the development of Aristotelian logic as the watershed in rational thinking.⁵⁷

Albright saw the use of analogy as an essential part of proto-logical magic and religion. In sympathetic magic, analogy plays a key role. For example, if rain is needed, water is sprinkled; if fertility of crops is desired, a fertility rite is performed; if one wishes to harm someone, he pronounces incantations, sticks pins into a clay or wax figurine of the person in mind. Magic is thus defined by Albright: "the effort of man to control his environment

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 70.

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 71.

⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 172.

and his destiny by proto-logical patterns of analogical thinking."⁵⁸

III. SUMMARY

The major developments in the concept of the relationship between primitive thought and magic have now been traced through the writings of significant anthropologists of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

These men developed what might be called a general view of the relationship between primitive thought and magic. Tylor believed that the primitives based magical principles upon a false association of ideas. Frazer believed that magic worked on the principle of sympathy. Levy-Bruhl believed that magical beliefs and practices were due to the primitive's failure to recognize the principles of identity and contradiction. Malinowski believed that the power of magic was inherent in man who believed that he could release this power through ritual. Eliade believed that the primitive's concept of power (that lay behind the principle of magic) was conceived as a realm of existence. However, Evans-Pritchard believed that to understand magic as an "idea in itself" was a hopeless task.

⁵⁸Albright, History, Archaeology and Christian Humanism, p. 63.

Thus the concept of magic as it has been studied in various cultures of the world has been explained on the basis of insight at various levels of understanding. It is generally agreed that magic was largely based upon faulty reasoning. However, Eliade believed that the primitives perceived a "manifestation of power" from numerous things in the world. It is possible that this manifestation of power could be the basis for the concept of power in magic.

The principle has been emphasized that a clear understanding of primitive thought patterns must be seen in the context of a culture. An understanding of these thought patterns is essential before any degree of comprehension can be gained of the primitive concept of what magic really was. Thus with this principle in mind, the ancient Near Eastern concept of primitive thought and magic has been examined. Albright believed that magic was largely based upon a system of false analogies. Frankfort pictured the ancients as believing that everything in life had a certain potency which gave magic its principle of operation.

The previous survey has shown how significant anthropologists have understood the thinking of primitive people and how their thought processes have related to their concept of magical principles. The next chapter will discuss the relationship between the myth and magic. The nature of the myth will be defined. Then magical practices will be studied in four ancient Near Eastern myths.

CHAPTER III

MYTH AND MAGIC

This chapter will cover the nature of myth, the primordial realm, and magic in the ancient Near Eastern texts. The nature of myth will be limited to the understanding of representative men in the field of Near Eastern studies. The myth will then be broken down and explained in terms of how the ancient mind conceived the primordial realm. Out of primitive man's concept of this primordial realm the principle of magic evolved. This principle of magic in the context of the ancient Near Eastern mythologies will be studied in the last section of this chapter. Selected Sumerian, Akkadian, Ugaritic, and Egyptian texts will be studied in an attempt to understand how the ancient Near Eastern man conceived the metaphysical realm from which magic was believed to derive its power and then define and characterize this realm.

I. THE NATURE OF MYTHOLOGY

The purpose of this section is to define a myth and then show its relationship to magic. There are various definitions of myth proposed by numerous scholars, such as G. G. Heyne, Rudolf Bultmann, and Cyrus Gordon. For the purpose of this research, only four representative men will be dealt with. All aspects of mythology will not be presented, but rather the

central purpose will be emphasized. The concern of this section is to determine how the ancient Near Easterner conceived his world.

Henri Frankfort. Frankfort gave a classic definition of myth in his first chapter of the book, The Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man. "Myth is a form of poetry that transcends poetry, in that it proclaims the truth . . . a form of reason that transcends reason in that it wants to bring about the truth that it proclaims."¹

The significant thing about Frankfort's treatment of mythology is his emphasis on the purpose of myth. He believed that myth was not simply a literary creation or a literary vehicle but an activity that produced a result. It is important to note that he said the myth's purpose was its desire to bring about the truth it proclaimed. Thus myth was not something that proclaimed a view of reality, but something that was instrumental in producing that reality. Myth then not only proclaimed a truth, a view of reality, but was a means of reproducing a reality. It wanted to bring about the truth that it proclaimed. Myth was a form of action, a form of ritual behavior. The action, however, was not the fulfillment of its desires; the fulfillment was in what the action produced.

¹Henri Frankfort, IAAM, p. 8.

Myth then was a projection of the ancient's concept of reality. Thus the magical practices expressed in mythology also must be considered as something that primitive man conceived as dealing with reality. The primitive believed that he could cause the reality that was expressed in the myth through magic.

Brevard S. Childs. Childs' major thesis was that myth is a basic means of understanding archaic man's concept of reality. He said, "the myth is an expression of man's understanding of reality."² His purpose for examining mythology is to see the function of myth in the total function of a culture. Childs gave what he called a phenomenological definition of myth.

Myth is a form by which the existing structure of reality is understood and maintained. It concerns itself with showing how an action of a deity, conceived of as occurring in the primeval age, determines a phase of contemporary world order. Existing world order is maintained through the actualization of the myth in the cult.³

Childs considered the myth as the key to understanding the primitive's concept of reality.

Arthur Weiser. Weiser has given a significant statement about the nature of myth. He believed that myth was

²Brevard S. Childs, Myth and Reality in the Old Testament (Naperville: Alec R. Allenson, Inc., 1960), p. 17.

³Ibid., p. 29.

originally connected with ritual. In his point of view, ritual was as important as the story. Myth without ritual was simply a story and nothing more. He said myth "is the shaping of a mighty event into a kind of celebration (of that event) in words."⁴ The myth was verbalized but was more than a story. The primitive believed that something happened when the myth was told, so the repetition was more than a recital. Weiser said that the myth "represents a typical event repeating itself again and again as a unique happening, very often in primeval times."⁵

It is significant to notice the meaning of two words in this context, "typical" and "unique." Weiser meant by these words that the "event" was unique, but at the same time it was "typical"; it happened once for all, yet it repeated itself. He stated that this event very often occurred in primeval times. Weiser's emphasis was upon the mythical view of time which reproduces or recreates the event that is told in the myth.

The classical example of the mythical view of time is the "Creation Epic,"⁶ repeated ritually each year to initiate

⁴Arthur Weiser, The Old Testament: Its Formation and Development (New York: Association Press, 1966), p. 57.

⁵Ibid.

⁶J. B. Pritchard (ed.), Ancient Near Eastern Texts, (second edition, 1955; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), p. 60ff.

the creation of the world. The primitive believed that he actually recreated the world when the myth was ritually repeated. That is, he believed that the same original world had to be started over again, not one like the original. The significant thing is that man believed that he produced this "creation" by the proper presentation of the myth, i.e., the proper dramatization. This meant that the ritual magically produced the desired effect. The use of the ritual thus indicates that magic was conceived as a way to manipulate the realm of existence. By the power of magic, the ancient Near Eastern man believed that he actually established and maintained the world in which he lived.

Mircea Eliade. Eliade based his definition of the myth upon his understanding of myths still in use among present-day primitive societies. He believed that he could project his grasp of these myths upon the mythologies of history by taking this approach, and thus have a better control over the function of archaic myths. Eliade's definition of myth is this:

Myth narrates a sacred history; it relates an event that took place in primordial time, the fabled time of the "beginnings." In other words, myth tells how, through the deeds of Supernatural Beings, a reality came into existence, be it the whole of reality, the Cosmos, or only a fragment of reality--an island, a species of plant, a particular kind of human behavior, an institution.

⁷Mircea Eliade, Myth and Reality, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1961), pp. 68-69.

It is important to understand that myth was regarded by the primitives as a sacred story, i.e., true history because it always deals with realities. The primitive regarded the cosmogonic⁸ myth as being "true" because the existence of the world was there to prove it; the myth dealing with the origin of death was equally true because man's mortality proved it, and so on.⁹ Eliade pointed out that even now in societies where myth is still alive, the natives carefully distinguish myths (true stories) from fables or tales, which they call false stories.

It is essential to understand the significance of the above definition of myth because it reveals the function of the myth. The primitive believed that because the myth related the exploits of supernatural beings and the manifestation of their powers, it became the exemplary model for all significant human rites and activities such as diet, marriage, work, education, art, wisdom.¹⁰ Thus the myth was always related to creation because it told how something came into existence, or how a pattern of behavior, an institution, a manner of working was established. Therefore the myth constituted paradigms for all significant human acts.¹¹

⁸Cosmogony is a theory or story of the genesis and development of the universe, of the solar system, or of the earth-moon system according to The Random House Dictionary of the English Language (New York: Random House, 1967), p. 329.

⁹Eliade, Myth and Reality, p. 6.

¹⁰Ibid., pp. 6-8.

¹¹Ibid., p. 18.

Because the primitive believed that the myth was true, everything that it related concerned him directly. The primitive believed that he and his world were what they were because of events that took place mentioned in the myths. Thus the myth sets forth an order of life that must be followed. For example, "the myth of the origin of death narrates what happened in illo tempore, and, in telling the incident, explains why man is mortal."¹² Thus the primitive believed that he must not only know the whole myth but that he must re-enact a large part of it periodically.¹³

An understanding of the primitive's view of time is very important in order to understand why he believed that he had to re-enact the myths. Eliade gave this explanation for the primitive's view of time.

By its very nature sacred time is reversible in the sense that, properly speaking, it is a primordial mythical time made present. Every religious festival, any liturgical time, represents the reactualization of a sacred event that took place in a mythical past, "in the beginning."¹⁴

Thus time was considered cyclical, lasting only from one-year to the next; then it had to be started all over again. On the other hand, the Western view of time is linear; it is continuous, i.e., time builds upon time. Thus the Westerner does not believe that time can be repeated.

¹²Ibid., p. 11.

¹³Ibid., p. 13.

¹⁴Mircea Eliade, The Sacred and the Profane, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1961), pp. 68-69.

In contrast to the Western view of time, Eliade said of the primitive's concept of time:

what happened ab origine can be repeated by the power of rites.¹⁵ For him, then, the essential thing is to know the myths. It is essential not only because the myths provide him with an explanation of the World and his own mode of being in the World, but above all because, by recollecting the myths, by re-enacting them, he is able to repeat what the Gods, the Heroes, of the Ancestors did ab origine. To know the myths is to learn the secret of the origin of things.¹⁶

Eliade mentioned an essential factor that relates to the concept of magic in his discussion of the function of myth. He wrote that the cosmogonic myths were paradigmatic models for all creation. These cosmogonic myths acted as models for the formation of incantations.¹⁷ Incantations were formed to deal with all aspects of life. The various incantations contained an account of the creation of something as well as a method for dealing with it.

¹⁵"A rite cannot be performed unless its 'origin' is known, that is, the myth that tells how it was performed for the first time." Eliade, Myth and Reality, p. 18.

¹⁶Ibid., pp. 13-14.

¹⁷An incantation can broadly be defined as a carefully composed formula containing an account of something and a prescription for effecting something. The entire content is to be repeated and the prescriptions followed. These two acts compose the ritual of the incantation. Mendelsohn defines "incantation" as "ceremonial chants used by magicians to exorcise malevolent spirits and to heal the sick. The technique of the magicians engaged in this work consisted of two distinct parts: (a) the chanting of these incantations - i.e., the pronouncement of the 'words of power'; and

An example of a cosmological incantation is "The Worm and the Toothache." This incantation as it is in the present text dates from the Neo-Babylonian times (626-539 B.C.). But the colophon indicates that the copy had been made from an ancient text.¹⁸ The incantation is as follows:

After Anu had created heaven,
Heaven had created the earth,

The earth had created the rivers
The rivers had created the canals,

The canals had created the marsh,
(And) the marsh had created the worm--
The worm went, weeping, before Shamash,
His tears flowing before Ea:

"What wilt thou give for my food?
What wilt thou give me for my sucking?"

"I shall give thee the ripe fig,
(And) the apricot."

"Of what use are they to me, the ripe fig
And the apricot?"

Lift me up and among the teeth
And the gums cause me to dwell!
The blood of the tooth I will suck,
And of the gum I will gnaw
Its roots!?

Fix the pin and seize its foot.
Because thou hast said this, O worm,
May Ea smite thee with the might
Of his hand!¹⁹

(b) the performance of prescribed acts, i.e., the use of certain substances charged with supernatural potency." Isaac Mendelsohn, "Incantations," Interpreter's Bible Dictionary, G. A. Buttrick (ed.) (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), II, 691. Hereafter this work will be referred to as IBD.

¹⁸ ANET, p. 100.

¹⁹ Ibid., pp. 100-1. Alexander Heidel includes a text of "The Worm and the Toothache" that has instructions for the ritual appended. "Its ritual: Second-grade beer . . . and oil thou shalt mix together; The incantation thou shalt recite

The ritual of reciting the incantation was the key which magically reproduced or recreated what was told in the myth. This is true because the story narrated by the myth constitutes a

'Knowledge' . . . the knowledge is accompanied by a magico-religious power. For knowing the origin of an object, an animal, a plant and so on is equivalent to acquiring a magical power over them by which they can be controlled, multiplied, or reproduced at will.²⁰

Thus in the toothache incantation, the first nineteen lines are cosmogonic in that they give a synopsis of how the world and the worm came into existence, as well as revealing the cause of the toothache. The last four lines tell how to deal with the toothache. Ea was the Babylonian Lord of magic. Thus the synopsis of a myth of creation formed a paradigm or a model for this incantation dealing with the worm and the toothache. The creation myth gave a place for the account of the worm to tie in to the sacred history. Knowledge of this worm allowed the magician to actually recreate the worm and Ea, who would then deal with the worm.

three times thereon (and) shalt put (the mixture) on his tooth." Alexander Heidel, The Babylonian Genesis, Copyright 1942 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), p. 73.

²⁰Eliade, Myth and Reality, pp. 14-15; Heidel gives a creation story that had been used as a magic formula for the purpose of keeping away the evil influence of demons during and after the restoration of a temple. This was done by proclaiming the might and power of the gods. Heidel, Babylonian Genesis, p. 65.

Thus the ritualized repetition of the incantation effected "something" which in turn caused the content of the incantation to be actualized.

II. METAPHYSICS AND MAGIC

The primitive conceived of a realm of existence beyond the realm of the gods. The ancient man saw two realms: a divine realm and a realm beyond the divine. This is a concept that can be deduced from a study of mythology.

Yehezkel Kaufmann believed that there is one idea which is the distinguishing mark of all pagan thought. This thought was projected into the pagan myths, and so can be found by a study of mythology. That idea is "that there exists a realm of being prior to the gods and above them, upon which the gods depend, and whose decrees they must obey."²¹ This "realm of being" is a primordial realm.²² Deity belongs to and is derived from this realm, but it is as independent and primary as the gods themselves. Because the primordial realm is

²¹Kaufmann, The Religion of Israel, p. 21.

²²Primordial means giving origin to something derived or developed. The Hebrew word for realm is hawāyā which can best be translated into English as a "category of being." However, Greenberg has used the word "realm" which conveys a notion of a discrete spatial (or temporal) domain. Greenberg said that "no more is intended than a conceptual 'realm,' a category of being." Kaufmann, op. cit., p. 23.

independent of the gods, it is not subject to them and therefore it limits them.²³

The primordial realm is conceived of variously as darkness, water, spirit, earth, sky, but it is always conceived as the womb in which the seeds of all being are contained.²⁴
In the pagan view then,

the gods are not the source of all that is, nor do they transcend the universe. They are, rather, part of a realm precedent to and independent of them. They are rooted in this realm, are bound by its nature, are subservient to its laws There are heads of pantheons, there are creators, and maintainers of the cosmos; but transcending them is the primordial realm, with its pre-existent, autonomous forces.²⁵

Kaufmann stated that both mythology and magic spring from this pagan concept of the primordial realm, the realm of the metaphysical.²⁶ He defined myth as

the tale of the life of the gods. In myth gods appear not only as actors, but as acted upon. At the heart of myth is the tension between the gods and other forces that shape their destinies. Myth describes the unfolding destiny of the gods, giving expression to the idea that besides the will of the gods there are other, independent forces that wholly or in part determine their destinies.²⁷

A study of the myths reveals that the primitives believed their gods were limited.

²³Ibid., pp. 21-22.

²⁴Ibid., pp. 21-23.

²⁵Ibid., p. 21.

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Ibid.

The limitation of divine powers finds its source in the theogonies²⁸ that are part of every mythology. The gods emerge out of the primordial substance, having been generated by its boundless fertility. It is not the gods and their will that exist at first, but the primordial realm with its inherent forces. . . . The god is thus a personal embodiment of one of the seminal forces of the primordial realm. His nature and destiny are determined by the nature of this force.²⁹

A mythological study reveals how the primitive conceived various aspects of causality and existence. Man conceived that a primordial realm existed because he projected it into his myths.

Thus a metaphysical examination of mythology has revealed that the primitive conceived this primordial realm to contain infinite forces other than and transcending the gods which limited their influence and dominion. Thus the primitive projected this concept into his myths by depicting the gods "as calling upon metadivine³⁰ forces to surmount their own predestined limitations."³¹

The primitive pagan believed that he was subject to and in need of both the divine and the metadivine realms.

²⁸Theogony is a genealogical account of the gods.

²⁹Kaufmann, op. cit., p. 22.

³⁰The term "metadivine" means transcending the gods. It refers to transcendent, primordial forces which, while conceived of as numinous, are impersonal and universally pervasive. Thus Kaufmann understood the forces of the "metadivine realm" (e.g., magic) to be universally pervasive and effective. Ibid., p. 23.

³¹Ibid.

He prays to the gods to enlist their aid, but, conscious that the gods themselves are specific embodiments of a more generalized power, and learning from his myths that they call upon forces outside themselves, the pagan employs magic also hoping thereby to activate the forces of the metadivine.³²

Kaufmann concluded his understanding of pagan thought:

It is owing to this radical dichotomy [the divine and metadivine realm] that paganism could never content itself with being merely "religious"; it could not be satisfied with service to the will of the gods only. Because of the mythological nature of its gods, because of their subjection to a primordial realm, paganism was necessarily and essentially magical as well. The sphere of the gods, the "religious" sphere, was always qualified by the sphere of powers beyond the gods. It is the mythological character of paganism's gods that provides the framework for its synthesis of magical and religious elements.³³

Thus the concept of magic has its basis in the pagan concept of a "realm of being" that exists outside the "realm of the gods."

III. MYTHOLOGICAL TEXTS AND MAGIC

This section will examine magical portions in four mythological texts of the ancient Near East. These myths are: "Inanna's Descent to the Nether World," "The Creation Epic," "The Baal Epic," and "The Repulsing of the Dragon and the Creation." They will be studied in the following order: Sumerian, Akkadian, Ugaritic, and Egyptian. Thus cultures

³²Ibid., pp. 23-24.

³³Ibid., p. 24.

from a geographic area surrounding ancient Israel will be covered. It is believed by this writer that these four myths comprise a representative sample of what the ancient Near Eastern peoples generally believed. A brief history of each text and a synopsis of the story will be given.

The use of magic in the myths reflects how the ancient Near Easterner conceived the nature of the metaphysical realm. Thus the purpose of this study will be to analyze magical practices and concepts in the myths in order to perceive the character of the metaphysical realm as the Near Easterner conceived it. The character of this realm of existence will then be developed at the end of this section.

Sumerian Mythology. The Sumerians were a non-Semitic, non-Indo-European people who flourished in southern Babylonia from the beginning of the fourth to the end of the third millennium B. C. During this period, they represented the dominant cultural group of the entire Near East. It is believed that they developed and probably invented the cuneiform system of writing which was adopted by nearly all the peoples of the Near East. The religious and spiritual concepts developed by them also had significant influence. The Sumerians further produced a vast and highly developed literature of epics and myths, hymns and lamentations, proverbs and "words" of wisdom. These compositions are inscribed in cuneiform script on clay tablets dating from approximately

1850 B. C.³⁴ and rank high with the great literary creations of man. However, Kramer stated that of the quarter of a million tablets now in hand, only three thousand tablets, or one percent, are inscribed with Sumerian literary compositions,³⁵ which were created and developed in the latter half of the third millennium B. C.³⁶

Sumerian was neither a Semitic nor an Indo-European language. It belongs to the so-called agglutinative type of languages exemplified by Turkish, Hungarian, and Finnish. None of these however, have a close affiliation with Sumerian, therefore Sumerian is unrelated to any known language, living or dead.³⁷ The Sumerians, who had been the dominant cultural group between 3500-2000 B. C., ceased to exist as a political entity by the end of the third millennium B. C. and thus Sumerian became a dead language, and Akkadian, the language of the conquering Semites, gradually became the living spoken tongue of the land.³⁸ However, Sumerian continued to be used as the literary and religious language of the Semitic conquerors for many centuries. Much of the Sumerian literature

³⁴Samuel Noah Kramer, Sumerian Mythology (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1961), p. 7.

³⁵Ibid., pp. 10-11.

³⁶Ibid., p. 19.

³⁷Ibid., p. 21.

³⁸Ibid., pp. 28-29.

was taken over almost in toto by the Assyrians and Babylonians.³⁹ Kramer concludes that Sumerian mythological tales and concepts, due to their content and age, must have penetrated and permeated those of the entire Near East. Further, he believed the Sumerian myths and legends are, therefore, a prime and basic essential for a proper approach to a scientific study of Near Eastern mythologies.⁴⁰

Inanna's Descent to the Nether World. This myth is significant because it is a prototype of the Semitic myth "Ishtar's Descent to the Nether World," which is found in Akkadian texts. Thus it provides an ancient and highly instructive example of literary borrowing and transformation. This text is reconstructed from thirteen tablets and fragments, all of which were excavated in Nippur. All were inscribed in the first half of the second millennium B. C., although the date of their first composition is unknown.⁴¹

The substance of the myth is as follows: Inanna, queen of heaven, determined to visit the nether world where her sister and bitter enemy, Ereshkigal, was queen. Inanna appropriately prepared by gathering together all the divine decrees and adorning herself with her queenly robes and jewels. Then she instructed her messenger Ninshubur how to

³⁹Ibid., p. 8.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 29.

⁴¹ANET, p. 52.

save her if she failed to return in three days. As she passed through each of the seven gates of the nether world, her garments and jewels were removed piece by piece in spite of her protests. Finally she stood naked before her dreaded sister. The seven dreaded judges fastened the look of death upon her and she was turned into a corpse and hung from a stake. Her messenger, Ninshubar, finally secured Enki's help in sending two creatures to sprinkle the corpse with the "food" and "water" of life. Inanna returned to life and left the nether world.

Magical implications. Magical power is implied in what Inanna took in preparation for her descent into the nether world.

She arrayed herself in the seven ordinances.⁴²
 She gathered the ordinances, placed them in her
 hand,
 All the ordinances she set up at (her) waiting
 foot,

⁴²Ordinances seem to be concrete and tangible objects. Notice that in the myth, "Inanna and Enke: The Transfer of the Arts of Civilization [Lordship, godship, truth, goodness, power, etc.] from Eridue to Erech" that they are transported by boat, Kramer, Sumerian Mythology, pp. 64-68, and Kramer's notes in ANET, p. 53, n. 10. Also see "Enuma Elish," I, lines 154, ANET, p. 62 ". . . I have given thee full power." "The literal translation of this idiomatic phrase is "Into thy hand(s) I have charged (filled)." E. A. Speiser, Ibid., n. 44. The act of placing power in the hands of Kingu suggests that "power" was conceived as a substance. Thus the ordinances conceived as substance may imply an inherent power like that believed to be in the Tablets of Destiny in "Enuma Elish," I, 56ff, ANET, p. 63.

The sugurra, the crown of the plain, she put upon
 her head
 The wig⁴³ of her forehead she took,
 The measuring rod (and) line of lapis lazuli⁴⁴ she
 gripped in her hand,
 Small lapis lazuli stones she tied about her neck,
 Sparkling⁴⁵ . . . stones she fastened to her breast,
 A gold ring she put about her hand,
 A breastplate which . . . she tightened about her
 breast,
 With the pala-garment of ladyship, she covered her
 body,
 Kohl⁴⁶ [ointment] which . . . she daubed on her eyes,
 Inanna walked towards the nether world.⁴⁷

These various substances imply a potency inherent within themselves. The context lends itself to this implication also. It is observed that Inanna, even though she was a goddess, (Should not the divine beings have all the power they would need within themselves?) took these substances in preparation for this dangerous undertaking. Also, she could not be admitted into the inner chamber with these things but

⁴³Locks of hair could imply potency. See H. Frankfort, IAAM, p. 12.

⁴⁴Landsberger suggests that "lapis lazuli" is possibly used here for the color blue. ANET, p. 53, n. 11. Certain colors were believed to have potency, e.g., red (ANET, p. 66, n. 68 in second edition of 1955).

⁴⁵"Twin" may be preferable to "sparkling." Landsberger, loc. cit.

⁴⁶Kramer, Sumerian Mythology, p. 88, has suggested "ointment," which seems to imply a power to attract. See Journal of Cuneiform Studies, V: 1-17, 1951.

⁴⁷Lines 14-26, ANET, p. 53.

she had to be stripped of them.⁴⁸ When Inanna was deprived of them, she stood naked, perhaps representing a deprived or powerless state because her power resided in the things which had been taken off. Further, Inanna could not withstand the look of death cast upon her by the seven judges. Thus she was turned into a corpse. Their look tortured her spirit, for she had no protection against them.

Ninshubur, in carrying out the command of Inanna, finally made two creatures and gave them the "food" of life and the "water" of life and instructed them to sprinkle Inanna's corpse sixty times. After they had completed the ritual, Inanna returned to life.

To the kurgarru he gave the food of life,
 To the kalaturru he gave the water of life,
 Father Enke says to the kalaturru and Kurgarru:
 ". . . [nineteen lines badly damaged]
 Upon the corpse hung from a stake direct the
 pulhu (and) the melammu,
 Sixty times the food of life, sixty times the water
 of life, sprinkle upon it.
 Surely Inanna will arise."⁴⁹

The food and the water was sprinkled sixty times each. This action implies a type of ritual which brought Inanna back

⁴⁸"There are . . . magical objects that the gods employ for their needs, and that are considered the source of their power. Ishtar (the Akkadian counterpart to Inanna) has a girdle with powers of fertility; in fact, all her clothes seem to be magically charged; hence she must be stripped of them before entering the domain of the underworld." Kaufmann, The Religion of Israel, p. 32.

⁴⁹Lines 219-260, ANET, p. 56.

to life. Thus these substances had power to give life. The ritualistic action⁵⁰ in the specified number⁵¹ implies an activation of this magical power. Note that the power of life was not in the goddess Inanna nor in Enke, but in the substance which was external to the gods. Observe that Inanna's faith in the magical substances failed to support her intended purpose.

When Inanna arrived at the lapis lazuli place of
the nether world,
At the door of the nether world she acted evilly,⁵²
(more literally, "set up that which is evil").⁵³

However, Neti, the gate keeper acting at the command of Ereshkigal, had the power to strip Inanna of her charms.

One may conclude that these passages imply there was an inherent power in these substances. Thus this inherent power was believed to protect the gods and to convey to them the power upon which they were dependent for life and action. These passages then reveal that certain substances were conceived as having a power which was external to the gods.

⁵⁰"The ritual was believed by the pagan cult to be automatically efficient and intrinsically significant." Y. Kaufmann, Religion of Israel, p. 53. The ancients dramatized their myths because they acknowledged in them a special virtue which could be activated by recital. Frankfort, IAAM, p. 7.

⁵¹The number was thought to possess an active force; thus it was necessary in magical incantations to repeat the operative formula for a given number of times in order that it might produce the desired effect. Franz Cumont, Astrology and Religion Among the Greeks and Romans (New York: G. P. Putman's and Sons, 1912), pp. 30, 111.

⁵²Lines 73-4, ANET, p. 54. ⁵³ANET, p. 54, n. 26.

Akkadian Mythology. It has been pointed out above that when the Akkadians conquered the Sumerians, they borrowed and adopted the Sumerian system of writing. They also took over the Sumerian literature in total and then modified it.⁵⁴ The greater part of Akkadian mythology is simply a new redaction of Sumerian traditions.⁵⁵ A case in point is "Enuma Elish," the Babylonian account of creation. Many of the gods appear to have Sumerian names.⁵⁶

The following study in Akkadian mythology will center largely upon the "Enuma Elish" because magical practices are clearly evident in several of the significant passages of the text.

The Creation Epic. The significance of this myth is seen in the struggle between cosmic order and chaos. However, it also endeavors to elucidate a number of basically unrelated theogonical, cosmological, political and social problems.⁵⁷ This was a fateful drama that was renewed at the turn of each

⁵⁴Kramer, Sumerian Mythology, pp. vii, 28-29.

⁵⁵Sabatino Moscati, Ancient Semitic Civilizations, (London: Elek Books, 1957), p. 66.

⁵⁶Alexander Heidel, The Babylonian Genesis (second edition, 1951, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1967), p. 12.

⁵⁷E. A. Speiser, Religions of the Ancient Near East Isaac Mendelsohn (ed.), (New York: The Liberal Arts Press, 1955), p. 17.

new year in ancient Mesopotamia. This epic is thus considered to have been the most significant expression of the religious literature of Mesopotamia and was recited on the fourth day of the New Year's festival with due solemnity.⁵⁸

The date of composition is uncertain. None of the extant texts antedates the first millennium B. C. The internal evidence based on context and linguistic criteria places the text in the early part of the second millennium B. C. in the Old Babylonian period.⁵⁹

The content of the epic is as follows: In the primeval⁶⁰ period, before the heaven and earth existed, all that existed was mother Tiamat (salt-water) and her consort, father Apsu (sweet-water). From these sprang generations of gods. Apsu decided to kill the young gods because their noise disturbed his sleep. Upon learning of this plan, Ea, god of wisdom-magic-water, devised a plan whereby he destroyed Apsu his father. Therefore Tiamat planned to avenge Apsu's death. She prepared by creating demons to whom she gave weapons of war. She put her second husband, Kingu in supreme command. Marduk met and destroyed Tiamat and formed the heaven and earth out

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 60.

⁵⁹Ibid.

⁶⁰Of or belonging to the first age or ages, especially the world.

of two halves of her body.⁶¹ Then he formed the luminaries and man out of Kingu's blood. The gods, in recognition of and appreciation to Marduk, built a temple for him and gave him fifty names which enumerated his attributes.

Magical implications. The first magic used in this myth was by Ea. After he learned that Apsu planned to destroy the gods, he devised a plan whereby he could kill Apsu.

Surpassing in wisdom, accomplished, resourceful, Ea,⁶² the all-wise, saw through their scheme. A master design against it he devised and set up⁶³ Made artful⁶⁴ his spell⁶⁵ against it, surpassing and holy

⁶¹The god has a potent mana, inherited from the primordial stuff through which he acts. But this power is regarded as inhering in the substance of the god, not in his will or spirit. Therefore the god was conceived as being potent even after his death - i.e., after he has ceased being a willing being and has become mere lifeless substance. This is why Marduk could create out of the dead corpse of Tiamat. Kaufmann, The Religion of Israel, p. 32.

⁶²The wisdom of the deity does not consist in self-awareness, i.e., in knowledge of his will, but rather in a knowledge of the world and its mysterious properties. This wisdom is acquired from the primordial seed from which he was born or by some magical means. Ibid., p. 34.

⁶³Heidel translated this, "He made and established against it a magical circle for all." Heidel, The Babylonian Genesis, p. 20. "The use of the circle inside which the magician encloses himself before starting his rites is so old that one of the names of the 'man of Enki,' later the Akkadian priest of Ea, was Sahiru, 'he who encircles,'" Rene Alleau, History of Occult Sciences (London: Leisure Arts, 1966), p. 23.

⁶⁴Heidel translates this "skillfully composed his overpowering." Ibid.

⁶⁵Incantation means the same thing as spell.

He recited⁶⁶ it and made it subsist in the deep,
As he poured sleep upon him. Sound asleep he lay.

Having fettered Apsu, he slew him.⁶⁷

Ea was the fifth god born according to the theogony and the first god to use magic. His use of magic is attributed to his wisdom, the implication being that he knew of a means that could be used against Apsu. The fact that Apsu is not pictured as using magic and is easily overcome also implies that he did not know of the magical power or did not know how to use it.

A vital principle is also seen here in relation to the fate of the gods who were at the mercy of Apsu's plan. Death seemed unavoidable. When they heard of the plan, they "lapsed into silence and remained speechless." However, Ea made recourse of magical power in an attempt to foil the will of Apsu, the father of the gods, and thus save their lives.

It is important to note the procedure which Ea used in his magic. "He skillfully composed his overpowering holy incantation," which implies that proper form in the use of the spell is important, if not vital, to the success of the desired result. Ritual thus seems to be an essential link between the performer and the power of magic. It is generally

⁶⁶Ritual is essential to activating magical power.

⁶⁷I, 59-69, ANET, p. 61.

accepted that ritual is the activating agent of magical power.⁶⁸

Further, note that the "spell subsisted in the deep" (i.e., upon Apsu, the sweet water). The word "subsist" means to remain alive, continue to exist. The spell or incantation is vital to the concept of magic. Thorkild Jacobsen comments:

The means which Ea employs to subdue Apsu is a spell, that is, a word of power, an authoritative command. For the Mesopotamians viewed authority as a power which caused a command to be obeyed, caused it to realize itself, to come true. And the nature of this situation is hinted at when it is called the configuration of the universe; it is the design which now obtains. Ea commanded that things should be as they are and so they became thus.

Apsu, the sweet waters, sank in to the sleep of death which now holds the sweet waters immobile under ground. Directly above them was established the abode of Ea--Earth resting upon Apsu.⁶⁹

This passage contains the basic principles of magic. First, Ea made the magical circle, the configuration of the universe which he skillfully composed into an incantation. Then he recited (ritually) the incantation which activated the power inherent in the spoken command, and caused it to

⁶⁸"Magic may be said to be present whenever power over the unseen is believed to be inherent in the ritual," L. W. King, "Babylonian Magic," Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, J. Hasting (ed.). (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1911), VIII, 253. Hereafter this work will be referred to as ERE.

⁶⁹Thorkild Jacobsen, "Mesopotamia," IAAM, p. 174.

exist and produce the desired and designed contents of the spell.⁷⁰

After Ea established his dwelling upon Apsu's body, he brought forth Marduk.

Ea and Damkian, his wife, dwelled (there) (in his established chamber) in splendor.
In the chamber of fates, the abode of destinies,
A god was engendered, most able and wisest of gods.
In the heart of Apsu was Marduk created,
In the heart of holy Apsu was Marduk created.⁷¹

Marduk was engendered in the chamber of fates, the abode of destinies, which implies that his qualities were determined by fate, an external element to Ea and Damkian. Thus the parent gods were not the source of Marduk's superior wisdom and ability, but Fate, a transcendent element.

Now Tiamat decided to avenge the death of Apsu so she prepared for battle by placing her second consort, Kingu, in command of her forces.

Tiamat elevated Kingu and made him chief among the gods through a spell, and then she gave him the Tablets of Fate. These gave Kingu supreme authority.

These to his hand she entrusted as she seated him in the council:

⁷⁰Kaufmann pointed out that to the ancient Near Eastern mind, "A typical notion is the subjection of deity to powers inherent in matter or to abstract necessity (expressed in terms of numbers, periods, etc.)" The Religion of Israel, p. 23.

⁷¹I, 78-82, ANET, p. 62.

"I have cast for thee the spell, exalting thee in
the Assembly of the gods.
To counsel all the gods I have given thee full
power.
Verily, thou art supreme, my only consort art thou!⁷²
Thy utterance shall prevail over all the Anunnake!"⁷²

The "casting" of the spell implies a ritual which activates
power and automatically makes the content of the spell effective.

Thus through the spell Kingu is given "full power."

Kingu is further vested with authority.
She gave him the Tablets of Fate, fastened on his
breast:
As for thee, thy command shall be unchangeable,
Thy word shall endure!
As soon as Kingu was elevated, possessed of the
rank of Anu⁷³
For the gods her sons, they decreed the fate:
"Your word shall make the fire subside,
Shall humble the Power-Weapon, so potent in (its)
sweep!"⁷⁴

The possession of the Tablets of Fate gave him authority be-
cause there was power inherent in the Tablets.⁷⁵ Thus Kingu's
word would have power, i.e., it would be unchangeable and
would endure. However it is important to note that this
power came from an external source, from the Tablets which
were fastened on. Therefore the power and authority did not
reside within Kingu.

⁷²I, 150-156, ANET, p. 62.

⁷³Anu begat in his image Ea, the all wise Anu was also
the most potent, forcible, mighty. Later it will be seen that
Marduk's word is Anu, i.e. his word has the Power of Anu's word.

⁷⁴II, 156-161, ANET, p. 63.

⁷⁵Kaufmann, Religion of Israel, p. 32.

Tiamat, now ready to avenge Apsu, brought evil against the gods.

When Tiamat had thus lent import to her handiwork,
She prepared for battle against the gods, her off-
spring.

To avenge Apsu, Tiamat wrought evil.⁷⁶

The important thing to notice here is that Tiamat used magical techniques which "lent import to her handiwork," to bring "evil" against the gods, her offspring. The fact that Tiamat used magical techniques seems to indicate that the availability of the power effected by magic was not considered dependent upon what it was to be used for. Also, the moral character of the one using magic does not seem to affect the availability of this power. Further, this power appears to be impersonal in nature. Its availability seems to depend upon activation and control by the rites. It is also noted that even though Apsu, the primordial father, did not, evidently, use magic, Tiamat did. The implication is that she already knew how to use magical power or that she learned how to use it.

Now the gods sought a way to defend themselves against Tiamat's evil plan. It is significant that Ea, who knew how to subdue Apsu, now was at a loss to offer Anshar advice about Tiamat.⁷⁷ After Anu, the most potent, and begetter of Ea had

⁷⁶II, 1-3, ANET, p. 63.

⁷⁷"But, unlike Apsu, Tiamat could not be overcome by any amount of mere authority or any degree of mere magic power; she had to be conquered through the application of physical force." Heidel, Babylonian Genesis, p. 6.

failed against Tiamat, Anshar appealed to Marduk: "Calm Tiamat with the holy Spell."⁷⁸ At this point a striking similarity appears between the investment of Kingu's authority and Marduk's request for authority.

Creator of the gods, destiny of the great gods
 If I indeed, as your avenger,
 Am to vanquish Tiamat and save your lives,
 Set up the Assembly, proclaim supreme my destiny!
 When jointly in Ubshukinna you have sat down
 rejoicing,
 Let my word, instead of yours, determine the fates.
 Unalterable shall be what I may bring into being;
 Neither recalled nor changed shall be the command
 of my lips.⁷⁹

Thus the fate decreed by the gods for both Kingu and Marduk were the same. Both were given supremacy so that their word would be unchangeable. Tiamat cast the spell which gave Kingu full power. On the other hand the assembly of gods (III, 130 ff.) fixed the decrees. "Thy decree is unrivaled, thy command is Anu."⁸⁰ Therefore the word of both of these opponents stood invested with supreme power. The importance of the role of magic as well as a degree of unpredictability and uncertainty can be seen in the ensuing conflict.

⁷⁸Ibid., II, 117, p. 64.

⁷⁹Ibid., II, 122-129.

⁸⁰Ibid., IV, 3, p. 66. "When Marduk is given absolute authority and all things and forces in the universe automatically conform themselves to his will, so that whatever he orders immediately comes to pass, then this command has become identical in essence with Anu and the gods, exclaim 'Thy word is Anu!'" Jacobsen, IAAM, p. 139.

Here insight is gained into the ancient Near Eastern concept of rule and its relationship to the role of magic. The gods proceeded to test Marduk's power and ability to rule as supreme.⁸¹ They put him to a test to see if he knew the use of magic. The fact that the gods tested Marduk implies that the gods already knew the power of magic as Marduk's request implies: "Let my word, instead of yours, determine the fates." Their word was presently determining the fate. But in order to determine if Marduk's word could replace their control, Marduk must demonstrate his ability.

Having placed in their midst a piece of cloth,
 They addressed themselves to Marduk, their first-
 born,
 "Lord, truly thy decree is first among gods.
 Say but to wreck or create; it shall be.
 Open thy mouth: the cloth will vanish!
 Speak again, and the cloth shall be whole!"
 At the word of his mouth the cloth vanished.
 He spoke again, and the cloth was restored.
 When the gods, his fathers, saw the fruit of his
 word,
 Joyfully they did homage: "Marduk is king!"⁸²

⁸¹Without this magical knowhow, no god could rule supreme. Mendelsohn, IBD, III, 223.

⁸²IV, 18-26, ANET, p. 66. This passage suggests a concept of the Spoken word that is not in keeping with the tenor of ancient Near Eastern thought. It appears from this passage that Marduk has this power within himself to create and to annihilate, like the creative power of God in Genesis, chapter I. Heidel points out that this is the only passage in Babylonian creation stories that manifests such a power. Babylonian Genesis, p. 126. The context of this epic tends to negate this concept. First, none of the gods created by word only but rather they brought things into existence out of something that already existed. Second, neither Tiamat nor

Thus Marduk's knowledge of magical knowhow determined his ability to control and rule supreme.

In the battle between Marduk and Tiamat, both used magic. Marduk is considered first.

Toward the place of raging Tiamat he set his face.
Between his lips he held a talisman⁸³ of red paste.⁸⁴
A plant to put out poison was grasped in his hand.⁸⁵

The substance "red" was used as a charm⁸⁶ or talisman against the goddess Tiamat, who here seems to be equated with evil.

Tiamat, on the other hand, relied upon magic.

She recited a charm, keeps casting her spell.
While the gods of battle sharpen their weapons
Then joined issue Tiamat and Marduk, wisest of gods.⁸⁷

Marduk sought to destroy each other simply by speaking the word. Magic played its part in Marduk's victory. It is accepted that the word was believed to have substance and thus a strong word like the curse possessed potency. However, creation by the word is seen only in Genesis chapter 1.

⁸³Heidel, Babylonian Genesis, Line 61, p. 39. The Greek root telein means "to complete, initiate," which perhaps implies that this red paste initiated a force used to avert the oncoming evil and the power that Tiamat was wielding through her magic.

⁸⁴E. A. Speiser: "red was the magical color for warding off evil influences," 1955 edition of ANET, p. 68, n. 48.

⁸⁵IV, 61-62, ANET, 1955 ed., p. 66.

⁸⁶Mendelsohn suggests that "it would seem that the very vitality of the gods depended on a talisman which the chief deity carried on his body." He further cites "The Myth of the Zu Bird," ANET, p. 111-113: "When the bird-god Zu stole the Tablets of Destinies from Enlil, all the norms of life were suspended and the gods themselves wasted away until the Tablets were recovered and returned to Enlil." IBD, III p. 223. Further, the use of charms was observed by Inanna in "Descent to the Nether World." Cf. also Kaufmann, The Religion of Israel, p. 32.

⁸⁷IV, 91-93, ANET, p. 67.

The charm appears to have been for Tiamat's protection; the spell appears to have been an attempt to activate a force and wield it against Marduk. The present tense suggests continued and repeated action, thus a sense of desperation was felt; one also detects a lack of confidence in the initial act. It seems that Tiamat is trying to use something to assist her in the ensuing conflict. She appears to be afraid of her certain fate⁸⁸ if left to her own power. Further, it is significant to note that both Marduk and Tiamat were attempting to use the same external force. However, Marduk won over Tiamat in spite of her recourse to magic. The concluding phrase of the above text perhaps gives the reason for his victory. Marduk being the "wisest of the gods," knew how to avail himself of more power or how to control more power than Tiamat.⁸⁹ Further, a principle is observed here. Both Marduk

⁸⁸Franz Cumont, Astrology and Religion Among the Greeks and Romans, pp. 157-161. Cumont points out that the fear of fate and the internal desire for life drove men to try to outsmart or to escape decree through magical powers. Paul Radin, Primitive Religion, Its Nature and Origins, pp. 22-23, suggests that magic was used to meet the basic needs of man, viz food and protection from death, which is the ultimate fear which faces every man. See also S. G. F. Brandon, History, Time and Deity (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1965), p. 12.

⁸⁹E. Adamson Hoebel, The Law of Primitive Man: A Study in Comparative Legal Dynamics (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), pp. 266-267. "When the formula is correctly followed, the magical effect is evoked without any element of choice on the part of the supernatural, providing some other magician does not upset the working of the formula by injecting counter-magic into it." Further, Hoebel recognizes a moral duality in magic because its power is used for both "Black" and "White" magic, bad magic and good.

and Tiamat used charms to protect themselves. In addition, Tiamat cast a spell against the foe. Thus magic is often used to protect the user and at the same time it is used against "something."

At the close of the battle, Marduk took the Tablets of Fate from Kingu. Thus even though Tiamat gave them to Kingu to insure his supreme authority, and even though their inherent power was perhaps used as a charm to protect him, Marduk still could take them. This aspect of the myth is similar to the actions of the gatekeeper, Neti, stripping Inanna of her magical charms. The one with the greatest degree of magical power won.

In conclusion, several aspects of magic can be noted. First, the power force seems to lie outside of the gods. Knowledge of it and wisdom in its use appears to be essential to its control. Ea, the god of wisdom, knew how to deal with Apsu, but he was at a loss to offer Anshar advice in dealing with Tiamat; Tiamat cast her spell for Kingu, gave him the Tablets of Fate, and made repeated use of her charms and spell, yet Marduk won and took the Tablets of Fate from Kingu. Therefore a certain degree of unpredictability and uncertainty existed for the one depending upon this external power for protection. The use of the present tense is significant when Tiamat used magic against Marduk: "She recites a charm, keeps casting her spell." Tiamat's action suggests both hope and

uncertainty. Thus, an insight into the ancient Near Eastern mind is gained; she repeated her actions in desperation. Tiamat's desperation implies that she has recourse to no other means of help. Hence, magic is used over and over. One can sense her fear of the ultimate fate, death, if her magic should fail. But Marduk won, and Tiamat was killed; her ultimate fear, death, claimed her. The gods were not conceived of as being in absolute control of future events. Rather, they appear to have been conceived as subject to a force⁹⁰ beyond themselves against which even the power of magic cannot protect them.

Next, this force seems to be impersonal. Note that both Tiamat and Marduk used magic in their fight against each other. The fact that both Tiamat and Marduk used magic seems to indicate that each believed he could bring "power" under his control and wield it against the other. If each could have access to, and control of, this external force, magical power would seem to have been without a separate will of its own. On the other hand, had this force been conceived of as a spirit, it would have given evidence of volitional nature.

⁹⁰The "Gilgamesh Epic," ANET, pp. 73-99, portrays Gilgamesh bound to the decrees of Fate which had given death as man's lot. Gilgamesh sought in vain a way of escape. Also in the Epic, "Gilgamesh and the Land of the Living," ANET, p. 49, Fate is described as "the tallest who has not judgment . . . who knows no distinctions," lines 158ff.

It is generally accepted that a spirit has volition. An impersonal nature is further implied since the moral character of the one initiating magic did not seem to affect the availability of "power"; e.g., Ea slew Apsu, Tiamat planned evil, Marduk killed Tiamat and Kingu.

Further, this force seems to have been activated or manipulated through ritual. Ea recited his spell and made it subsist in the deep; Tiamat cast her spell for Kingu and repeatedly recited her charm, then cast her spell against Marduk. Marduk is not pictured as using a ritual, but it may be implied from Anshar's request that he "subdue Tiamat with his holy spell." It is assumed that the "holy spell" would generally involve ritual. Since ritual was an essential part of the incantation, as suggested above in passages dealing with Ea and Tiamat, it is believed that the ritual was to behave as an activating agent upon the realm of power conceived as existing in the universe. Thus this force appears to have been passive in nature, rather than acting by its own volition.

It has been observed the ancients believed that certain substances possessed potency or power. The Tablets of Fate acted as a charm and gave power to the one wearing them. Tiamat used the charms for protection; Marduk held in his lips the red paste which warded off evil. Thus, this metaphysical power was also conceived as residing in certain things.

Ugaritic Mythology. A Syrian peasant, while plowing his field on a March day in 1928, accidentally uncovered a grave marker and thus ultimately uncovered one of the most significant archaeological finds in the ancient Near East. The tablets found subsequently opened a whole new chapter in the history of the Near East with the recovery of a hitherto unknown alphabetic cuneiform now known as Ugaritic, named for the ancient city of Ugarit (now Ras Shamra) on the Syrian Coast.⁹¹ These texts date from the Tel El-Amarna period (1500-1400 B. C.). They have been valuable for biblical studies as well as for semitic origins, for they provide inscriptions contemporary with Old Testament history and insights into biblical vocabulary and idioms.⁹² These texts are found in both prose and poetry. The poetry includes extended mythological treatments involving the gods and legends dealing with the affairs of both mortals and gods. The prose texts include letters, administrative and business documents, prescriptions for horses, and several significant religious texts. The mythological texts are dated in the latter fifteenth and early fourteenth centuries but it is generally felt that much of the mythology is of a somewhat earlier date.⁹³

⁹¹Charles F. Pfeiffer, Ras Shamra and the Bible (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1962), p. 9.

⁹²Ibid., p. 15.

⁹³Wayne Barr, "A Comparison and Contrast of the Canaanite World View and the Old Testament World View" (Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, University of Chicago, Chicago, 1963-4). Hereafter this work will be referred to as CCCWV.

There are three major epics: "The Legend of King Keret," "The Tale of Aqhat," and "Baal Epic." The first two deal with men and thus are more legendary than true myth. The "Baal Epic" deals with the gods and therefore is more significant for the purpose of this study.⁹⁴

The Baal Epic. This epic is composed of many fragments of tablets found and composed over a period of years beginning in 1929.⁹⁵ It is now contained tentatively in seven tablets. The outlines of the story can be followed, but the details and exact sequence are obscure. The content of the story is as follows: Yamm the Sea god lacked a house and therefore could not function properly. So El, the father of the gods, sent his messenger to Egypt to make provision for a house. A house was soon made, symbolizing a new high status which upset the gods in the pantheon, who then challenged Yamm's position but without immediate success. Finally, Baal, the Canaanite god of fertility and storms, called for Yamm's destruction. Yamm was angered and thus sent emissaries to El and demanded that Baal and his sympathizers surrender. El reassured Yamm that Baal would pay tribute to their master, that his forces were strong enough to overpower Baal if need be.

Subsequently, a furious battle broke out between Baal and Yamm. Baal's sister Anat was unable to subdue this sea

⁹⁴See ANET, pp. 129-155.

⁹⁵H. L. Ginsberg, "Ugaritic Myths, Epics, and Legends," ANET, p. 129.

god. However, the master craftsman Kothar⁹⁶ delivered to Baal two magical clubs with which he promised victory. Baal severely beat Yamm and won supremacy. Thus a great banquet was given in honor of Baal's victory.

Baal was now supreme, but like Yamm had been, he was yet without a house. El promised a house which the master craftsman would make - but there were many delays. Until Baal had a house, the gods would not show him proper respect. The gods put pressure on El and thus he reluctantly told Baal to build his house. In seven days it was completed. Kothar wanted to place a window in the house but Baal objected because he feared Yamm might be able to use it against him. Now Baal proceeded to claim his domain, after which he put Yamm to death.

The rest of the epic deals with the conflict between Baal and Mot, the god of death who lived in the nether world. Baal was lured down into the nether world and there killed by Mot. The land perished in Baal's absence due to the heat and lack of rain. Anat sought and killed Mot. El learned through a dream that Baal was alive and sent the sun to bring him back on her return from the nether world.

⁹⁶Also spelled Kathir and Khasis by Charles Pfeiffer, p. 52ff., and by just the radicals KTr-w-Kss by Wayne Barr, pp. 47-48, due to uncertainty among scholars as to the correct form.

The forces in nature⁹⁷ were conceived as the activity of the gods, and thus the Canaanites believed there was a perpetual struggle waged between the gods as they saw the seasons change. Therefore the contents of the myth were experienced yearly, and consequently the cult ritually recited the myth to effect the return of Baal and the death of Mot. A parallel is seen with "Enuma Elish" and its relationship to the Year Festival in Babylon.⁹⁸

Magical implications. The use of magic is clearly seen in Baal's struggle with Yamm. Yamm was understood to be one of the stronger gods in the pantheon because he had his own house. He demanded Baal's surrender but Baal rebelled and tried to attack him. However, he was restrained by two other goddesses, Anat and Asherah. The climax of the struggle came when Baal vanquished Yamm with the two magical⁹⁹ clubs which the divine craftsman Kathir-and-Khasis made for him. As a result Baal succeeded to Yamm's place of power.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷See Arvid S. Kapelrud, The Ras Shamra Discoveries (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1963), p. 32, and Barr, CCCWV, p. 99ff. and 133ff.

⁹⁸Ibid., p. 41.

⁹⁹Pfeiffer, Barr, Kapelrud and Cyrus H. Gordon, Ugaritic Literature (Roma: Pontificium Institutum Biblicum, 1949), p. 12, all state that these were magical clubs.

¹⁰⁰Kapelrud states, "The conflict and the victory had as their end the securing of the young god's place in the pantheon. The myth of the conflict with the dragon is a regular element in the mythology of the ancient Near East. The

Kothar brings down two clubs
 And gives them names.
 "Thou, thy name is Yagrush ('Chaser').
 Yagrush, chase Yamm!
 Chase Yamm from his throne,
 [Na]har from his seat of dominion.
 Do thou swoop in the hand of Baal,
 Like an eagle between his fingers;
 Strike the back of Prince Yamm,
 Between the arms of [J]udge Nahar."
 The club swoops in the hand of Baal,
 Like an eagle between his [f]ingers;
 It strikes the back of Prince Yamm,
 Between the arms of Judge Nahar.
 Yamm is firm, he is not bowed;
 His joints bend not,
 Nor breaks his frame.--
 Kothar brings down two clubs
 And gives them names.
 "Thou, thy name is Ayamur ('Driver'?).
 Ayamur, drive Yamm!
 Drive Yamm from his throne,
 Nahar from his seat of dominion.
 Do thou swoop in the hand of Baal,
 Like an eagle between his fingers;
 Strike the pate of Prince Yamm,
 Between the eyes of Judge Nahar.
 Yamm shall collapse
 And fall to the ground."
 The club swoops in the hand of Baal,
 [Like] an eagle between his fingers;
 It strikes the pate of Prince [Yamm],
 Between the eyes of Judge Nahar.
 Yamm collapses,
 He falls to the ground;
 His joints bend,
 His frame breaks.¹⁰¹

fight with the monster must be won and the powers of chaos repulsed. Like all real myths, this had its place in the cult, in which it played an important part. The struggle between the two powerful contestants was a dramatic climax in the cultic enactment." The Ras Shamra Discoveries, p. 42.

¹⁰¹III ABC, Lines 12-27, ANET, p. 131.

Kothar, who seemed to be under the control of the gods,¹⁰² made two clubs. He then named them, seeming to indicate both their existence and their character. Therefore, they appear to take on a "Thou" nature¹⁰³ which had the characteristic of chasing - "Thou, thy name is Yagrush ('Chaser')." The fact that Kothar named them indicates his control over them. These clubs, however, are addressed as if they have a will of their own. The imperative voice is used indicating command. He commanded them to act according to his instructions, viz., chase, swoop, strike.¹⁰⁴ Note that Baal was powerless to destroy Yamm, for he needed the aid of the clubs which actually put Yamm down. It is significant to notice that the power was not in Baal but in the clubs which acted under the control or command of Kothar.

Note that the first set of clubs did not have sufficient power to overcome Yamm's resistance. Another set of clubs had

¹⁰²Barr, CCCWV, p. 44. "The craftsman of the gods whose working for a god seems to indicate that god's power to command him."

¹⁰³Frankfort, IAAM, p. 14.

¹⁰⁴The question is raised, where did the clubs get their power to do this? The fact that they are named "Chaser" would seem to indicate that they have the power to "Chase," but Kothar's naming them suggests that he is in command of the power. Yet if Barr is right, Kothar was under the control of the gods.

to be fashioned and given a stronger command. They were not to chase but to drive Yamm. These overcame Yamm and he fell to the ground. A degree of failure is seen here, due to a lack of adequate knowledge or control on Kothar's part. The first set of clubs lacked sufficient power to subdue Yamm. Thus, it is evident that magical power had a degree of uncertainty about it, so the same method was repeated with a stronger command. The use of magic seems to have been closely related to emotions of hope and fear in the god's inner life.

Apparently the clubs had volition and character, as indicated by their names. They acted in obedience to Kothar's command and according to their character. The source of their power, however, is uncertain. The clubs were commanded by Kothar, which may imply that they could act on their own, or, it may imply that the power is unable to act unless it is commanded from outside. Regardless of how the clubs got their power, it is clear that they were seen as possessing some type of force which was greater than that which Baal possessed. The fact that they appear to have operated independently of Baal even though they were in his hand would seem to imply that a realm of power was thought to exist beyond the gods.¹⁰⁵ Thus they resorted to this realm of power for help and were dependent upon it.

¹⁰⁵Barr states that there are some places which have overtones and inklings of an unnamed, impersonal force that

This power seems to have resided in a "substance" of undefined nature which appears to have had its own will. However this "substance" did not appear to command its own power but was commanded by another.

There are two other implicit magical concepts in this myth which do not bear directly upon the theme of this thesis. They are mentioned to illuminate the magical nature of Canaanite religion. One is the magical implication of Anat's destruction of Mot and the other is the relationship which this act has to the fertility cult.

After Mot destroyed Baal, Anat, sister of Baal and the warlike goddess of vegetation,¹⁰⁶ searched until she found and destroyed Mot.

She seizes the Godly Mott --
With sword she doth cleave him.

rules the gods. It is the same force to which man addresses himself in his magical rites. However he disqualifies these on the basis of analogy. He says Barr's position seems to be a rather weak solution to the problems involved in magic. For a position against the analogy of dreams, see Frankfort, IAAM, p. 11ff.

¹⁰⁶Kapelrud, The Ras Shamra Discoveries, p. 32. Barr says ". . . It is unlikely that he [the fertility cult devotee] meant by the employment of such a figure to argue for a super-divine power that the gods recognized and appealed to. Further indication of this is the complete absence of any reference by name or title to such a power." Barr, CCCWV, pp. 98ff. However, in Egypt this power did have a name. The Egyptians called it hk and personified and deified the idea by the time of the Old Kingdom (2650-2200 B. C.). S. A. B. Mercer, The Religion of Ancient Egypt, (London: Luza and Company, 1949), pp. 378-79.

With fan she doth winnow him --
 With fire she doth burn him
 With hand-mill she grinds him --
 In the field she doth sow him.
 Birds eat his remnants,
 Consuming his portions,
 Flitting from remnant to remnant.¹⁰⁷

Anat's actions portrayed here seem to represent a ritual in the Canaanite fertility cult which effected the return of Baal and thus life itself.¹⁰⁸ Man then through his fertility ritual believed that he activated magical power and thus played an indispensable role in the restoration of life in nature. The sexual activity which characterized the cultic ritual was conceived as reproducing a corresponding activity in nature and thus effecting life itself.¹⁰⁹ However, man did not see his magic as performing this return singlehandedly, but rather he believed that his ritual, when properly performed, assisted the gods.¹¹⁰ I.e., as part of the same

¹⁰⁷49: II: 30-37, ANET, p. 140.

¹⁰⁸Barr, CCCWV, p. 53 comments that this is a significant passage for it evidently represents the harvest ritual of the last sheaf, used to guarantee the restoration or return of the fertility deity at the proper time. This ritual seems to have effected Baal's return to life, for immediately after this El - reports a dream in which "the heavens rain oil, the wadies run with honey." (49: III: 10-13, ANET, p. 140).

¹⁰⁹Ibid., p. 69. "Relations with these sacred women were more than symbolic. These relations were sympathetic magic which, in the minds of the believers participated in the very nature of things and forces producing general fertility and which induced a like activity and resulting production among these greater forces and principles."

¹¹⁰See Barr, the following pages: 74, 110 ff.

sphere as the activity of the gods he assisted them in the hope that he might "tip the scales" toward fertility and life and thus help the gods¹¹¹ to win over the forces of Chaos. Life and death are here personified in the struggle between Baal and Mot.

Thus the Canaanite believed that he played a crucial role through the power of his magic in the whole fertility process.¹¹² He also had a great deal of confidence in his own ability to control the forces which produced fertility and gave life through certain practices and ritual.¹¹³

¹¹¹Ibid., p. 110.

¹¹²Ibid., p. 111.

¹¹³Ibid., p. 74. Barr concludes that the "fact that he believed his cultic activity was effectual in any degree in accomplishing desired results in nature and life is the significant fact here. This means that it (the cult) still participated in the nature of magic," p. 112. Further, he points out that in Baal's victory over Mot, Baal did not win automatically but by struggle. Man assisted that struggle by his ritual. The very existence of the cult is evidence that Baal's rule was considered in some great part dependent upon the devotees and their cultic activity, p. 113. If Baal's return did not depend upon the cult, then there was no reason for the cult to exist and it lacked motivation and point, p. 114. This writer's personal observation here is that if Baal needed the help of ritual in which man assisted him through magic, it would seem clear then that Baal did not have the power within himself to effect victory. Thus another power was needed regardless of whether it was conceived of as a power force above the gods, which Barr seems to discredit. The fact that outside help was needed points to his dependence upon an external power which was conceived as being activated by ritual.

Egyptian Mythology. Egyptian mythology was different in nature from the other Near Eastern mythologies. Frankfort states, "We can find neither myth nor epic nor drama as an art form."¹¹⁴ These characteristics predominate in other ancient literatures. The gods were humanized as much as possible in the myths; their characterizations and actions were expressed in human terms and their manifestations as natural powers were deemphasized.¹¹⁵

Egyptian literature. The anti-epical nature of Egyptian literature is demonstrated in the absence of a coherent account of creation.¹¹⁶ The epic grandeur is missing that is so characteristic in the other Near Eastern myths in which the struggle aspect is prominent such as Marduk vs. Tiamat and Baal vs. Mot. The struggle motif is a necessary part of a true myth.¹¹⁷ Egypt did have a similar account of creation in which the sun overcame darkness. But this account was treated differently. The chaos of darkness was understood as passive in nature and victory was taken for granted. It was never treated as an experience.¹¹⁸ It is generally

¹¹⁴H. Frankfort, Ancient Egyptian Religion, Copyright 1948 (New York: Harper and Row, 1961), p. 126.

¹¹⁵Ibid., p. 127.

¹¹⁶Ibid., p. 131.

¹¹⁷Ibid., p. 134.

¹¹⁸Ibid., p. 132.

agreed that this static view of creation was due to the Egyptians' concept of an unchangeable, complete universe. The thought that "risks were entailed" and an "issue was at stake" was never allowed to arise in the Egyptians' concept of the creation¹¹⁹ and maintenance of the universe.

The following myth is selected because it contains a representative concept of Egyptian magic. The term myth is used in the limited sense as discussed above.

The Repulsing of the Dragon and the Creation. This text is preserved in the Papyrus Bremner-Rhind which may have come from Thebes. The present manuscript is dated about 310 B. C. but the text preserves a language that is estimated to be two thousand years older than that date. There is no doubt that the basic material derives from a relatively early period.¹²⁰

This text employed myth for recitation in a ritualistic context. The Egyptians believed that the ship of the sun-god Re made a journey through the skies above by day and the skies below by night. Every night this ship faced the peril of destruction from the demon Apophis who resided in the underworld. An important part of the ritual of Egyptian temples was the repulsing of this demon who was imagined as

¹¹⁹Ibid.

¹²⁰ANET, p. 6.

a dragon. To repulse the dragon successfully was to repulse the peril which might face the nation. It is of particular significance to note that a statement about creation preceded the spells which repulsed Apophis.¹²¹

A Synopsis of the Myth. It begins with the general heading, "The Book of Knowing the Creations of Re and of Overthrowing Apophis. The Words to be Spoken." Then follows an account of the origin of Khepri, the morning sun-god also known as Re, and the things which came forth from his mouth, i.e., what was brought into existence by his word. Khepri first conceived the elements he wished to bring into existence and then spoke them into being. "Then I spewed with my own mouth: I spat out what was Shu, (the air-god) and I sputtered out what was Tefnut (the goddess of moisture)." Khepri brought these things together out of Nun, the primordial waters, which existed even before he came into being. Re lost an eye which Shu and Tefnut brought

¹²¹"For man of the archaic societies, what happened ab origine can be repeated by the power of rites. For him, then, the essential thing is to know the myths. It is essential not only because the myths provide him with an explanation of the World and his own mode of being in the World, but above all because, by recollecting the myths, by re-enacting them, he is able to repeat what the God, the Heroes, or the Ancestors did ab origine. To know the myths is to learn the secret of the origin of things. In other words, one learns not only how things came into existence but also where to find them and how to make them reappear when they disappear." Mircea Eliade, Myth and Reality, Willard R. Trask (trans.) (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1963), pp. 13-14.

to him. After replacing it he wept over his united members. The tears produced mankind. Then Shu and Tefnut brought forth Geb (earth) and Nut (sky), and they in turn brought forth Osiris, Horus Khenti-en-irti, Seth, Isis, and Nephthys from their body.

These gods were considered rich in magic when they spoke, and they were ordered to annihilate Re's enemies by effective charms of their speech. Thus Re used those whom he had created to overthrow Apophis, that "Evil Enemy." The rest of the myth is composed of a) an incantation that Re gave against Apophis, and b) instructions for the ritual connected with it, followed by c) the response of the cult. This response contains the assurance of victory for Re and continued life and health for him and the Pharaoh.¹²²

Magical implications. The concept of magic appears to be more pronounced in Egyptian literature than in the texts which have been examined thus far.¹²³ This text contains a concept of magic that has not been seen before in the other Near Eastern myths. This concept is the use of "word" magic.

¹²²ANET, pp. 6-7.

¹²³". . . their devotion to religious magic, gained for them among the nations with whom they came in contact the reputation of being at once the most religious and the most superstitious of men." Wallis Budge, Egyptian Magic (New York: University Books, 1899); p. viii.

When (these gods) rich in magic spoke, it was the (very) spirit of magic, for they were ordered to annihilate my enemies by the effective charms of their speech, and I sent out these who came into being from my body TO OVERTHROW THAT EVIL ENEMY.¹²⁴

It is significant that magic was given a name. This is the word Heka which Egyptologists translate as magic.¹²⁵ Barr discredited the concept of a super force among the Canaanites basically because it did not have a name.¹²⁶ Nothing was conceived as existing without a name.¹²⁷ Note in this text: "I have made him nonexistent: his name is not." This means that the "name" and the "thing itself" could not be separated in the Egyptian mind and that Egyptians did not differentiate between reality and appearance, i.e., the symbol that stood for it, a picture, a word or a name.¹²⁸ Thus the concept of magic and the word were the same.

Now the question is: where did Heka originate and what was its character? To find the answer, one must examine

¹²⁴ ANET, pp. 6-7.

¹²⁵ S. A. B. Mercer, The Religion of Egypt, p. 378. Also the abstract concept of truth was deified and given the name Maat, pp. 244-45.

¹²⁶ Barr, CCCWV, p. 99.

¹²⁷ "Nothing was thought to exist until it was named --inversely, a man could be killed by the annihilation of his name. If the magical name of a god was known, the god could be controlled." Mercer, op. cit., p. 382.

¹²⁸ Frankfort, IAAM, pp. 11-12.

the way in which magic was used in Egyptian literature.

"The ancient Egyptians believed that Re created this divine potency; this means that they called Heka, 'as an arm to defend them (men) against evil fortunes.'"¹²⁹

The passage quoted above seems to imply that the voice of the speech of the gods possessed a vital force of a personality¹³⁰ which was magic. This passage also seems to imply that the gods' ability to speak magic was an attribute.¹³¹ Thus the word spoken was thought of as possessing an inherent spirit. When the word was spoken against someone or something it had the power to annihilate. When Re brought the gods into existence he said, "they were ordered to annihilate my enemies by the effective charms of their speech." It is significant to notice that Re was dependent upon the power of magic to overcome his enemy. He did not have the power within himself. It was external to him. Apparently this word was conceived as having substance of its own.

I have commanded that a curse be cast upon him;
I have consumed his bones; I have annihilated
his soul in the course of every day; . . . (thus)
His soul, his corpse, his state of glory, his
shadow, and his magic are not.¹³²

¹²⁹Mercer, *op. cit.*, p. 378, citing "Instructions for King Merkert," Journal of Egyptian Archaeology, 1: 20ff, 1914.

¹³⁰ANET, p. 7, note 15.

¹³¹Mercer, *op. cit.*, p. 378.

¹³²ANET, p. 7.

The concept of sympathetic magic is very clearly seen in the instructions for the incantation.

THIS SPELL IS TO BE RECITED OVER APOPHIS DRAWN ON A NEW SHEET OF PAPYRUS IN GREEN COLOR AND PUT INSIDE A BOX ON WHICH HIS NAME IS SET, HE BEING TIED AND BOUND AND PUT ON THE FIRE EVERY DAY, WIPED OUT WITH THY LEFT FOOT AND SPAT UPON FOUR TIMES IN THE COURSE OF EVERY DAY. THOU SHALT SAY AS THOU PUTTEST HIM ON THE FIRE: "Re is triumphant over thee, O APOPHIS!" FOUR TIMES and "Horus is triumphant over his enemy!" FOUR TIMES, and "Pharaoh - life, prosperity, health! -- is triumphant over his enemies!" -- FOUR TIMES.¹³³

It is seen that the spell had the power to destroy Apophis and the enemies of the Pharaoh who was symbolized as Re.¹³⁴ The spell was repeated ritually, "Re is triumphant over thee, O Apophis!" four times; "Horus is triumphant over his enemy!" also repeated four times. It is seen then that the words composing the spell, spoken ritually, were conceived as having power to destroy Apophis and the enemies of Pharaoh. Thus, magic was believed to be a force inherent in words, spoken ritually.

¹³³Ibid.

¹³⁴The Pharaoh reigned as the son of Re in his various manifestations: Atum Re, the creator god; as the Phoenix with Nun; as Horus (the posthumous son of Osiris); he reigned in the realm of the dead as Osiris; in the incarnation of Ptah, who installed the gods in their temples and put Pharaohs on their thrones. Thus the Pharaoh was the imbodiment of these various gods. Cf. W. F. Albright, History, Archaeology, and Christian Humanism, p. 68ff.

The instructions for the ritual give a significant insight into the power of the ritually spoken word. Observe that Apophis was to be drawn on a new sheet of papyrus, then put in a box on which his name was set. Then as he was put on the fire, the spell or incantation was recited. "Re is triumphant over thee, O Apophis!" The power in the word, ritually spoken, was believed to actually bring to life,¹³⁵ bring into being the original Re, the creator of the world, who was victorious over his enemies in the creation, including Apophis.¹³⁶ The picture of Apophis drawn on the papyrus was put in the fire, Apophis was destroyed. This was no symbolic act; it was the actual event that took place originally in primordial times. Thus the ritual retelling of the creation account was believed to cause the original creation event to be repeated. Time was viewed as cyclical: There was a beginning but the ritual renewed all things, so

¹³⁵Mercer, The Religion of Egypt, p. 382, states: "The ancient Egyptians also believed that it was possible to give life to inscribed and carved words and pictures by means of magic formulae. Thus an inscribed or carved picture of an animal or man could be made to work for or against one's fellow man. Thus, also, pictures of gods could become living gods; meat, fowl, loaves, fruit, wine, clothing, etc., drawn or named on the walls of tombs and graves could come to life and appear as real things for the use of the deceased; and on the pronounciation of the proper formula, the dead himself came forth to enjoy the gifts."

¹³⁶See "Another Version of the Creation by Atum," ANET, p. 4 and also note 9.

that the original time was brought into the present moment.¹³⁷
 The ritual seems to have been the activating agent which effected the potent word and thus produced the desired result.

It is safe to conclude that the Egyptians conceived of an existing force, called Heka, which appeared to reside in the ritually spoken word. It was believed that Re created this power for man's use. Further, magic appears to have been an attribute of the gods, whom Re brought into existence. However, in the last analysis, Re was imagined as being dependent upon the power of the other gods' magic and upon the daily ritual which activated that power. It seems clear that the Egyptians thought of this realm of power to be external to their chief god Re and capable of being manipulated through ritualistic ceremonies. The Egyptians believed that they could control the gods if they knew the gods' magical names, the implication being that man's ability was even greater than the gods' because he knew how to control this realm of power. The power that man manipulated appears to be the same realm of power that the gods used.

¹³⁷Mircea Eliade, The Sacred and the Profane, Willard R. Trask (trans.), (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1959), pp. 14-15. See also Myth and Reality, p. 16, citing E. Nordenskiöld, "La conception de l'ame chez les Indiens Cuna de L 'Isthme de Panama," Journal des Americanistes, N. S., 24: 5-30, 1932, in note 20; also see Eliade, Myth and Reality, pp. 17-18.

Conclusion. The objective of this section has been to define and characterize the metaphysical realm through the study of magic as it was used in the mythological texts of the ancient Near East. There is an important distinction to be understood in defining magic. The word "magic" by itself connotes "techniques" through which a desired effect or result is produced. On the other hand, the power behind the magical technique that enables the desired result to be produced does not seem to have been conceived as being totally in the technique itself. Rather this power seems to have been thought of metaphysically, i.e., as existing in such a way that it could be controlled and used through the technique. Thus the technique effects the power which in turn produces the desired result.

Magic then was practiced with the intent to control "something" for one's own benefit. This "something" as it was conceived and projected in these texts seems to be best defined as "power" which existed in the universe. This power appears to have these characteristics:

1. The realm of power resided outside of the gods. The gods were conceived as lacking necessary power within themselves to overcome their foes and thus they appealed to an external realm of power. If the gods were not imagined as needing additional power, then why did they use magical practices in their exploits? Death seems to have been the

ultimate fear of the gods. Again the gods used magic to try to escape or defeat death. Thus this external magical power was controlled by magic and wielded against fate. However, even magic could not render absolute protection against fate.

2. This power was conceived as being impersonal. A separate will was not distinct even though a volitional nature may be hinted at in the Ugaritic and Egyptian literature studied above. This power was available regardless of the moral nature of its intended use, a fact which tended to support its impersonal nature. It was believed that this power could be brought under one's control and forced to act in accordance with one's own will, if one only had knowledge of the right procedure. Both gods and men could manipulate this power for their own ends. In fact, opposing gods, e.g., Marduk and Tiamat both used magic, further substantiating its impersonal aspect.

3. This existing realm of power was passive in nature, as indicated by the existing relationship between the realm of power and ritual. Ritual appears to play a vital role in effecting the desired results, and it worked as an activating agent upon the power force.

4. This power was conceived as residing in substances. It is important to remember that abstract concepts were believed to have substance and were therefore potent, as was observed in the case of the word.

The relationship between the role of magic and the metaphysical realm seems to take the following order:

1. Fate appears to rule supreme.
2. There was a realm of power existing beyond both gods and man.
3. The gods appealed to this power to negate what had been decreed and to serve as their personal protector.
4. Man learned from the myths that the gods used magic. Man in turn used magic, hoping to control this power for his own end.
5. Incantations were composed of three parts, usually (a) a short account of history, (b) mention of what was desired, (c) and the command.
6. Ritual brought into actuality the content of the incantation.

IV. SUMMARY

In conclusion, it can be said that the myth is a basic means of understanding archaic man's concept of reality. The myth was a projection of the primitive's concept of reality. Thus the magical practices expressed in mythology reveals that man believed magic dealt with something that existed, that was real. The primitive believed that he could actually cause the reality expressed in his myths. This reality was produced magically through the ritual.

The primitive concept of time played a significant role in the function of the myth. To the primitive's way of thinking, original time began all over again with the ritual reciting of the myth. The ritual recitation magically activated power and produced the desired effect expressed in the content of the myth. Thus the cosmos, nature, and man were reborn, so to speak, through the magical power of the ritual presentation of the myth.

Myth, then, was not just a story about the primitive's concept of reality, but a vehicle for producing the reality the myth told about.

The concept of magic has its basis in the primitive's concept of "reality," or to use a philosophical term, "metaphysics." The primitives thought a "realm of being" existed outside the "realm of the gods." This realm transcended the realm of the gods. Thus the primitives conceived that their gods were limited by, and dependent upon, this metaphysical or metadivine realm, as Kaufmann called it.

An inductive study of the magical passages in four mythological texts of the ancient Near East ("Inanna's Descent to the Nether World," Sumerian; "The Creation Epic," Akkadian; "The Baal Epic," Ugaritic; "The Repulsing of the Dragon and the Creation," Egyptian) has indicated how the ancient Near Easterner imagined the nature or character of this metaphysical realm. This realm is defined as "power."

The nature of this power was characterized as: (a) residing outside the gods; (b) impersonal; (c) passive; (d) residing in substances.

The next chapter will examine magical passages in the Old Testament. The purpose of this study will be to understand how the Hebrews conceived the metaphysical realm as it has been projected in the magical passages of Scripture.

CHAPTER IV

MAGIC IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

This chapter will be devoted to an inductive and analytical study of magical passages in the Old Testament. Magical passages in the Old Testament have been selected for the purpose of comparing the Hebraic concept of the metaphysical realm with the ancient Near Eastern concept as it was perceived through the study of magic in section three of chapter three. The Hebraic concept of the metaphysical realm will then be developed at the end of this chapter.

Not all magical passages in the Old Testament will be included in this chapter. A list of magical passages that have been examined but not included in this thesis are found in the appendix. Only magical passages which yield a degree of insight into the metaphysical concept will be included in this chapter.¹

The objective of this research is to understand the Hebraic view of the metaphysical realm. This can most clearly be seen in a study of magic. Therefore a study of passages dealing with divination will not be included in this investigation.

¹These passages are: Genesis 30:37-43; Exodus 4:2; Exodus 15:22-25; Exodus 17:8-13; Numbers 20:7-11; Numbers 22-24; I Kings 17:17-24; I Kings 18:20-46.

Genesis 30:37-43. The analogy of the peeled rods.

This passage has overtones of sympathetic magic. The striped stems produced striped goats, and the dark brown goats produced dark brown sheep. The context of the story is this. Jacob had asked that his wages be all of the speckled and spotted among the goats, and the black among the sheep (v. 33).² However, Laban removed the speckled and spotted goats and the black sheep so that there would be none to produce these colorations (v. 35).³ Reacting to this act, Jacob used a method practiced in the ancient Near East for producing varied color among animals.⁴

Then Jacob took fresh rods of poplar and almond and plane, and peeled white streaks in them, exposing the white of the rods. He set the rods

²The Septuagint reads: "I will pass through your flock today and remove from there all the flock, dark among the sheep (כֶּשֶׁב, kešeb) and all the spotted and speckled among the he-goats (שְׂעִיר, sā'îr,). . . ." Alan Brook and Norman McLean (eds.), The Old Testament in Greek (Cambridge: University Press, 1906), p. 82. The Hebrew text is redundant. It repeats, "speckled and spotted and all the sheep" (שֶׁה, šeh). E. A. Speiser, "Genesis" in The Anchor Bible W. F. Albright (ed.), (New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc. 1964), I, p. 337.

³The Hebrew word is חֹמ (ḥûm) meaning dark brown or black. Sheep were normally white, while goats were dark brown or black all over. Ibid., p. 336.

⁴S. R. Driver, The Book of Genesis (fifteenth edition of 1904; London: Methuen and Company, 1948), p. 279. "The physiological principle involved is well established, and, as Bochart showed (Hieroz. II, c. 49: I. p. 619ff., ed. Rosenm), was known to the ancients, and was applied, for instance, for the purpose of obtaining particular colors in horses and dogs (Oppian, Kynegetica, I. 327ff., 353-56). According to an authority quoted by Delitzsch, cattle-breeders now, in order to secure white lambs, surround the drinking-troughs with white objects."

which he had peeled in front of the flocks in the runnels, that is the watering troughs, where the flocks came to drink. And since they bred when they came to drink, the flocks bred in front of the rods and so the flocks brought forth striped, speckled, and spotted. And Jacob separated the lambs, and set the faces of the flocks toward the striped and all the black in the flock of Laban; and he put his own droves apart, and did not put them with Laban's flock.⁵

Magical implications. It is important to notice that the flocks⁶ (goats) (יָנִים, שֹׁנִים) bred in front of the peeled rods so that the goats saw the peeled rods. The text reads "Whenever the stronger of the flock were breeding, Jacob laid the rods in the runnels before the eyes of the flock, that they might breed among the rods" (v. 41). It is not to be implied that they ate these fresh shoots. E. A. Speiser believed that sheep are implied by the word כִּשְׁיִים from the root כִּשׁ meaning lamb. The sheep were turned to face the

⁵Genesis 30:37-40.

⁶Flocks here means goats. The Hebrew word is a collective noun meaning usually a flock of sheep and goats together. William Gesenius, A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles Briggs (eds.) (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), p. 838. Hereafter this work will be cited as BDB. "But just as the singular *šē* is either 'sheep' or 'goat' so may its collective counterpart *šō'n* stand not only for sheep and goats, but also sheep or goats. [Sheep are clearly indicated in Gen. 31:19 and I Sam. 25:2.] The present context shows conclusively that only goats are involved, since the same markings are restricted to goats according to 32, 35." Speiser, op. cit., p. 237.

The context makes it clear that the sheep are not involved in the breeding which took place among the rods, because only the dark sheep were to belong to Jacob. The rods caused the flocks to bring forth striped, speckled and spotted offspring, (v. 39).

fully dark (םה) goats when they bred (v. 40). Thus they gave birth to dark colored lambs.⁷ The fact that Jacob turned the flock⁸ toward the black in the flock of Laban is significant, indicating that it was necessary for the sheep to see the dark color in order to conceive the dark lambs.

Thus it is implied that the white strips in the dark colored rods caused like coloration in the kids. Likewise the dark goats caused dark coloration in the lambs. Jacob used the principle of analogy, i.e., like produces like, in his breeding. This is clearly the principle of sympathetic magic.

⁷The subsequent difficulties have been largely translational, arising from the flexibility of the term $\text{\textcircled{S}}$, which is generally "flock," but which can stand also for either sheep or goats, as the case may be. . . . To obtain appropriately pigmented kids, Jacob resorted to the visual stimulus of rods with chevron markings whittled onto them. The sheep, on the other hand, needed only to face the goats, which came naturally by the dark color required. These were the goats of Laban (40), who had thought it safe to leave them with Jacob, while he was removing the parti-colored specimens out of Jacob's reach; he had not figured on cross-breeding between the two kinds on so occult a basis. Speiser, *op. cit.*, p. 239.

⁸Regardless of how one translates $\text{\textcircled{S}}$, whether flock, sheep or goats, the fact remains that Jacob did not have any dark sheep. The rods used in verse 39 did not produce dark animals but rather striped, speckled, and spotted ones. This coloration applies to the goats that Laban agreed to give Jacob in verse 32. Therefore, the first half of verse 40 apparently explains how Jacob got his dark sheep. The division mentioned in verse 40 does not necessarily mean that Jacob divided his sheep from Laban's. Up to this point, the text has not indicated that Jacob had any dark sheep to divide.

Also the term $\text{\textcircled{S}}$ does not necessarily mean that these were lambs that were divided. The word $\text{\textcircled{S}}$ can be

However, it is significant to notice how Jacob looked at the results of this practice. In chapter 31, verse 10, he tells why he used this method and why he believed it caused the coloration in the flocks.

In the mating season of the flock I lifted up my eyes, and saw in a dream that the he-goats which leaped upon the flock were striped, spotted, and mottled. Then the angel of God said to me in the dream, 'Jacob,' and I said, 'Here I am!' And he said, 'Lift up your eyes and see, all the goats that leap upon the flock are striped, spotted, and mottled; for I have seen all that Laban is doing to you. I am the God of Bethel. . . .!'⁹

This statement clearly indicates that the God of Bethel revealed to Jacob the true cause of this coloration. The male breeding goats were, in appearance, dark, but in the dream denoted as actually striped, spotted, and mottled. The fact that the Lord indicated in the dream that there were

translated sheep just as well as lamb, depending upon the implications of the context. In verses 32 and 33, כְּשֵׂבִים could well be translated sheep (the King James Version and the Berkeley Version do translate כְּשֵׂבִים as sheep) because of its relationship to עֵז (‘ēz) from the root עִז (‘izzîm) meaning she-goat. The context indicates that עֵז can be used as a collective noun indicating matured goats (Gen. 31:38; I Sam. 25:2). Verse 35 implies that it is speaking of matured animals. Maturity is also implied in the following passages in which כְּשֵׂבִים is used: Lev. 1:10; 22:19; Num. 7:17; Deut. 14:4.

It is more logical to assume, therefore, that the division of the כְּשֵׂבִים means that Jacob divided the sheep from the goats. Remember, Laban left Jacob only white sheep (v. 35). Therefore, he now separated the white sheep and set the faces of the flock (of sheep) towards the striped and fully dark colored among the goats אֶל-עֵקֶר וְכָל-חֹם כִּצְאוֹן לִבָּן (v. 40.) (wayyitēn pē nē haṣṣō'n 'el 'āgōd wēkal-hum bēṣō'n lāban). Then Jacob put his own colored flocks apart from Laban's as stated in the last half of verse 40.

⁹Genesis 31:10-13.

striped, spotted and mottled goats implies selectivity of breeding stock. According to chapter 30:35, Laban had removed both the male and female goats of mixed coloration so that the goats left to Jacob were totally dark. Yet some of these were identified by God in the dream as possessing inherent mixed coloration (genes that would produce striped, spotted and mottled kids).¹⁰

Thus in the last analysis, Jacob realized that God was working in the breeding process to cause this coloration. However, it is also significant to understand that Jacob still used objects commonly associated with magic in the surrounding culture. He acted according to customs of his culture. Yet he recognized a transcendent element which he acknowledged to be an effecting agent. Even though the rods had magical overtones, his understanding of the source of power that had caused the colors was different than that understanding common to pagan culture. Jacob recognized a living personal being. This one was deeply concerned about his welfare and future. Jacob understood this person to be the same whom Jacob had met at Bethel (Gen. 28:13). This being was the Lord, who had of His own accord given valuable information to Jacob. When Jacob acted upon this instruction he dramatically increased his flocks (cf. vs. 31:16).

¹⁰Genesis 31:31.

Exodus 4:2. The rod became a snake. Moses objected to God's request that he bring the Israelites out of Egypt. Moses felt that the people would not believe that the Lord had appeared to him. The Lord asked Moses what was in his hand. He told Moses to cast his rod upon the ground, and it became a serpent. When Moses picked it up by its tail, it became a rod again. Moses was instructed to repeat this miracle before the Israelites so that they would believe that God had appeared to him.

Then Moses answered, "But behold, they will not believe me or listen to my voice, for they will say, 'The LORD did not appear to you.'" The LORD said, "Cast it on the ground." So he cast it on the ground, and it became a serpent; and Moses fled from it. But the LORD said to Moses, "Put out your hand, and take it by the tail"-- so he put out his hand and caught it, and it became a rod in his hand--"That they may believe that the LORD, the God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has appeared to you."¹¹

Magical implications.¹² The question should be raised: Why did God choose the rod to be a sign to the Israelites and later to Pharaoh? There is a similarity between this account

¹¹Exodus 4:1-5.

¹²"The subject of the magic rod offers some interesting points, but only in three cases can the references be regarded as coming strictly under the head of magic. One of these is in Exod. iv:2ff., where Moses' rod is turned into a serpent and back again into a rod. Another instance is when Moses, by holding up his rod ensures success in battle to the Israelites (Exod. xvii:8ff.); and, once more, when Moses, with his magic rod, is able to draw water from a rock (Num. xx:8ff.). These are clear instances showing that the powers of the magic rod were believed in." Oesterley and Robinson, Hebrew Religion, p. 77.

and a common magical practice of the Egyptian snake charmer. The Egyptian magicians charmed snakes by applying pressure to the muscles at the nape of the neck which would render the snake immobile and straight. The snake resembled a rod. This feat was performed in Egypt as recently as 1954.¹³ Thus the snake-rod display would be a point of contact with the customs of the culture. Perhaps the people, as well as Pharaoh, would recognize that Moses possessed special ability to cause the rod to become a snake. This act was one with which they were familiar.

J. Coert Rylaarsdam suggested that Moses had learned some of the occult knowledge of the Egyptians.

It is not impossible that we have here the garbled account of an Egyptian snake charmer's trick. By mesmerism he makes straight and rigid like a staff the body of a serpent; then he breaks the spell by grasping its tail. Serpent magic was common in Egypt. . . .¹⁴

Even if the association with the magicians' snake trick was not the point of contact, the ancient Near Easterner would still recognize the power that was related to the rod. The concept of power residing in certain

¹³Kenneth A. Kitchen, "Egyptian Magic," The New Bible Dictionary, J. D. Douglas (ed.) (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1967), pp. 769-70. Hereafter this work will be cited as NBD.

¹⁴J. Coert Rylaarsdam, "The Book of Exodus," The Interpreter's Bible, G. A. Buttrick, (ed.) (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1952) I, pp. 877-78. Henceforth this reference will be cited as IB.

substances was a common belief. This power could be activated and controlled if one knew the right procedure, for example, the Tablets of Fate in "Enuma Elish" and the magical clubs in "The Baal Epic."

It is important to examine the text. The first thing to note is that the Lord, (יְהוָה, yahwéh) (v. 1) asked Moses what was in his hand (מַזֶּה בְּיָדְךָ, mazzeh b^eyadek) (v. 2). Moses replied, a rod (מַטֵּה, maṭṭeh). Then Moses was commanded to cast it upon the ground (הַשְׁלִיכֵהוּ אֶרְצָה, hašelîkēhû "a r ṣāh v. 3). The hiph'il imperative of שָׁלַךְ (šālak) is used to indicate command. When Moses obeyed and cast the rod upon the ground, it became a snake, נָחָשׁ, (nāhaš), and he fled from it (v. 3).

It is significant to notice that the rod was a common staff with which Moses had tended his sheep. The text indicates that what was in Moses' hand first was a rod which later became a snake, not a snake that became a rod, as suggested by Rylaarsdam above. The power that changed the rod into a snake did not reside in Moses, but rather in a transcendent being, the Lord, who was able to command Moses to cast his rod upon the ground. In obedience to the command, the rod was changed into a snake. The text implies that the cause of this miracle was the power resident in a transcendent being with ability to command. The fact that Moses fled from the snake implies that he had not experienced

this transformation of the rod before. Thus, one can conclude that the power to change the rod to a snake was not inherent in the rod or in Moses, but it came from outside both of them.

The text states that Moses was given the ability to perform this wonder (cf. 4:6-9). "When you go back to Egypt, see that you do before Pharaoh all the miracles which I have put in your power" (4:21). The literal translation is, "I have placed in your hand" (שָׁמַטִּי בְיָדְךָ, *ś amtî b^eyādek*). The act of placing power in Moses' hand suggests that the power came from an external source.¹⁵

¹⁵There is a parallel passage in "Enuma Elish" I, 154, ANET, p. 62. Tiamat said to Kingu, "Into thy hands I have charged" (filled), which is the literal translation; or as it is translated in the text, "I have given thee full power." As was stated above, power seems to be a substance in this context. There is a basic difference between the account of Tiamat giving Kingu full power and the Lord giving Moses power. Note that Tiamat cast a spell for Kingu, I, 150-6, ANET, p. 62. The Lord did not cast a spell. There is a further similarity and contrast between Tiamat's vestment of authority upon Kingu and the Lord's vestment of authority upon Moses. Tiamat gave Kingu the Tablets of Fate which gave him authority. However, the power to give Kingu authority was not inherent in Tiamat, but rather in the Tablets themselves. Thus the one wearing them had power. This is why Marduk could take them from Kingu and place them on himself. The transfer in authority resided in the Tablets, not in the god Tiamat, Kingu, or Marduk. (See Kaufmann, Rèligion of Israel, p. 32.) On the other hand, the thing that invested Moses with authority was the act of obedience. "And you shall take in your hand this rod, with which you shall do the signs," (אֹת, 'ô^t) (Ex. 4:17); "When you go back to Egypt, see that you do before Pharaoh all the miracles [מִוִּפֶת, *môpêt*] which I have put in your power" (Ex. 4:21). "When Pharaoh says to you, 'Prove yourselves by working a miracle' [מִוִּפֶת] then you shall say to Aaron, 'Take your rod and cast it down before Pharaoh, that it may become a serpent'" (7:9). Thus the act

A further indication that this power was not originally resident in Moses is implied by the fact that Moses was subject to this transcendent power. "At a lodging place on the way the Lord met him and sought to kill him" (Ex. 4:24) because he had failed to circumcise his son. He had been disobedient to the agreement of the covenant (Gen. 17:9-11). This passage suggests that the power to perform this feat was conditional upon the obedience of Moses.

In the context between Moses and Pharaoh, several things are evident.

So Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and did as the LORD commanded; Aaron cast down his rod before Pharaoh, and it became a serpent. Then Pharaoh summoned the Wise men¹⁶ and the sorcerers;¹⁷ and they also, the magicians¹⁸ of Egypt, did the

of obedience allowed the transcendent power to work through Moses' hand and perform the miracle which gave authority to Moses' words. For the Lord said to Moses, "See, I make you as God to Pharaoh" (7:1). Thus in the eyes of Pharaoh, Moses spoke with authority of a god, (אֱלֹהִים, 'elohim).

¹⁶ חֲכָמִים (ḥakamîm), from the root חָכַם (ḥākam) meaning to be wise.

¹⁷ מַכְשָׁפִים (mekššepîm); masculine plural Piel participle from the root כָּשַׁף (kašap) which has a parallel in Arabic meaning "to cut off, cut up." Robertson Smith suggests כָּשַׁף probably is herbs, etc., shredded into a magic brew, cited in BDB, p. 506.

¹⁸ חַרְטָּיִם (ḥartîm), means "engraver," "writer" from חֶרֶט (heret) meaning graving-tool, stylus, BDB, p. 354. "חַרְטָּמִים (khartîm) would then mean the scribes, the learned class, a meaning closely connected with [wisemen] חֲכָמִים (khakamin)." T. W. Davies, Magic, Divination and Demonology Among the Hebrews and Their Neighbors (London: J. Clark and Co., 1898), p. 42. BDB suggests that only in a derived sense does wisemen (חַרְטָּמִים) imply one possessed of occult knowledge such as a diviner, astrologer, or magician, p. 355.

same by their secret arts.¹⁹ For every man cast down his rods, and they became serpents. But Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods.²⁰

There is a similarity between the two contestants. Both groups turned their rods into snakes. Thus both substantiated the authority they represented. Moses and Aaron attested their God's authority by this "wonder." The magicians attested Pharaoh's authority as god by their "wonder."²¹ However, there is a distinct contrast between the power demonstrated by Moses and Aaron and the magicians of Egypt. Aaron simply threw down his staff as he was told to do and it became a serpent. But the magicians relied upon

¹⁹בלהטיהם, (b^elahatêhem) from טל, (lât), meaning secrecy, mystery (enchantment). Perhaps the "wise men" and "sorcerers" are called "magicians" (חרט"ם meaning "writer") due to the fact that they often performed their feats through secret formulae. The power was in the particular formula they used. "Magicians worked largely by means of formulae, words, drawings or pictures, and acts. Formulae were believed to be the power to resist or expel the influence of malicious spirits, as well as to charm and to persuade benevolent ones. The magician had at his disposal formulae for the control of gods, nature, and men and of all conditions and phases of life." Mercer, The Religion of Ancient Egypt, p. 382. These formulae were presumedly learned from the great god of learning, writing, and ritual, Thot, the great master of the use of magical names and formulae. He was reputed to be the inventor of magic spells. Ibid., p. 381.. See also Wallis Budge, Egyptian Magic, pp. 128ff.

²⁰Exodus 7:10-12.

²¹". . . They acted merely as deputies performing their respective functions in his name and on his behalf." O. E. James, The Ancient Gods (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1960), p. 109.

their enchantments to produce their snakes.²² Thus the power that caused their wonder was dependent upon ritualistic activation and manipulation.

In conclusion, the Hebrew text seems to indicate clearly that Moses and Aaron recognized a transcendent being as the source of power behind their "wonder." They conceived this power inherent in a transcendent being who had revealed Himself as the "I Am"²³ who was able to command them. They recognized that the power was dependent upon their obedience to the "I Am." The fact that power was believed dependent upon obedience implies that this transcendent being possessed a will and memory which determined the availability of power. The source of power was active in nature.²⁴ It further implies that the power was given only when a proper response was made to moral principles.

²²"The Egyptian magicians . . . of course have this power only by their secret arts, but nevertheless they have it. Here then is granted the reality of supernatural miracle-working among the 'heathen' which can be achieved through 'secret arts,' i.e. 'magic,' and which on occasion can be just the same as the effects produced by the wonderful power of the God of Israel. True, there is a basic difference in the source of the power, but this difference does not reveal itself outwardly and can only be believed and thereafter expressed." Martin Noth, *Exodus*, J. S. Bowden (trans.) Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1962), pp. 71-72.

²³Exodus 3:13ff.

²⁴Cf. Exodus 6:1-8.

The magicians on the other hand recognized that their source of power was not in their god Pharaoh or in themselves. Rather, they conceived that their source of power resided in an external realm which they could activate and manipulate by their secret formulae. The fact that Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods not only substantiates the active nature of the transcendent force working through Aaron's rod, but also its superior power.

Exodus 15:22-25. Wood made bitter water sweet. The first trial to befall the children of Israel after they crossed the Red Sea was the lack of good drinking water.

Then Moses led Israel onward from the Red Sea, and they went into the wilderness of Shur; they went three days in the wilderness and found no water. When they came to Marah, they could not drink the water of Marah because it was bitter; therefore it was named Marah. And the people murmured against Moses, saying, "What shall we drink?" And he cried to the LORD; and the LORD showed him a tree, and he threw it into the water, and the water became sweet.²⁵

Magical implications. The crucial point of this passage is the manner in which the waters were made sweet. A tree $\Upsilon\aleph$, ($\Upsilon^{\hat{e}}\aleph$) was thrown into the water which caused it to become sweet. A possible implication is that the wood had power within itself to change the bitterness into

²⁵Exodus 15:22-25.

sweetness.²⁶ In ancient Near Eastern practice, an incantation would normally have been used to activate the power that would effect this change.²⁷

What did Moses conceive to be the power behind this miracle? The text states that he did not know what to do about the water. Moses did not automatically think of using wood to change the water and he was at a loss to cope with the situation. He cried to the Lord, the source of previous power in Egypt. The Lord showed him a tree which he then threw into the water.

The following verses state that Yahweh was the source of power who worked through the medium of the wood to cause the change in the water.

There the LORD made for them a statute and an ordinance and there he proved them, saying, "If you will diligently hearken to the voice of the LORD your God, and do that which is right in his eyes, and give heed to his commandments and keep all his statutes, I will put none of the diseases upon you which I put upon the Egyptians; for I am the LORD, your healer."²⁸

²⁶Oesterley and Robinson, Hebrew Religion, p. 76; Lods, "Du Role Des Idees Magiques Israelite," Old Testament Essays (London: Charles Griffin and Company, 1927), p. 61; Rylaarsdam, IB, p. 947. Rylaarsdam suggests, "It may be that an originally independent allusion to a magic ritual in which a bitter wood made bitter water sweet, has been recast with this theocentric concern."

²⁷Oesterley and Robinson, ibid., p. 76.

²⁸Exodus 15:25-27.

The text claims that just as the Lord had healed the waters, so He would also heal them. But there was a condition related to this healing. Just as Moses had obeyed the Lord by throwing the tree into the water, likewise Israel had to obey Him in order for the power of healing to work. The healing was conditional upon an ethical relationship to Yahweh. An incantation was not the means used to cause the healing, but rather an act of obedience was the means.

Evidently God used the healing of the water to establish a principle. He would only make His power available to Israel under the conditions of this principle. Therefore He established for them a statute חֻק , (ḥōq) from the root חָקַק , (ḥāqāq) meaning, "to cut," "inscribe," which seems to connote permanence; and an ordinance מִשְׁפָּט , (miš pāt) from the root שָׁפַט , (sapat) "to judge," which seems to connote a standard of judgment. These became the principles which governed the relationship between the people of Israel and the One who had the power to heal them. These principles were, 1) Hear His voice, 2) Do that which is right in His sight, 3) Hear His commandments, 4) Keep His statutes.

The above passages clearly state that Moses recognized that the power which caused the water to become sweet resided in the transcendent Lord and not in the wood itself.

Exodus 17:8-13. The rod used to defeat the Amalekites.

In the following narrative, Moses plays a significant role

in the battle with the Amalekites by holding up the rod.

Then came Amalek and fought with Israel at Rephidim . . . And Moses said to Joshua, "Choose for us men, and go out, fight with Amalek; tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in my hand." So Joshua did as Moses told him, and fought with Amalek; and Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. Whenever Moses held up his hand, Israel prevailed; and whenever he lowered his hands Amalek prevailed. But Moses' hands grew weary; so they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat upon it, and Aaron and Hur held up his hands one on one side, and the other on the other side; so his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. And Joshua mowed down Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword.²⁹

Magical implications. The fact that Moses held³⁰ the rod is significant. The implication is that the rod possessed magical power which was transferred to the men in battle, enabling them to win over their enemy. Therefore it was necessary for Moses to keep the rod raised over the scene of battle.³¹

²⁹Exodus 17:8-13.

³⁰"Moses assumes a specific corporal posture to insure a desired result (cf. I Kgs. 18:42). This is not a sign of prayer in our sense of the term. The hand or arm is the sign of power (Gen. 31:29; Mic. 2:1); and the outstretched hands of Moses communicate the divine power. The motion is not just symbolic but intrinsically effective (inherent) in the same sense as the words of an oath or the acted parables of the prophets were considered to be effective." J. Coert Rylarrsdam, "The Book of Exodus", IB, I, p. 961.

³¹"In the story the lifting up of the hands appears to have a strikingly impersonal magical effect. Yahweh is not mentioned at all in the whole section vv. 8-13, not even as having given Moses the instructions for his action. A

Why did Moses hold up the rod in his hand? It is noticed that the text does not give any words of prayer nor does it say that a prayer was uttered. It does emphasize, however, that the uplifted hands had a crucial effect upon the battle. The use of the rod could imply that the people, as well as Moses, possessed a certain attitude about the rod and the uplifted hands. These had been a medium of miracle working power in the past!

Why did Yahweh choose to use the rod as a medium through which He displayed His power to Israel and the Pharaoh? Was the use of the rod necessary to the miracles performed in Egypt? Regardless how one might answer, Moses and Aaron did use the rod. Therefore one can assume there was a reason for its use. In relation to the ten plagues, perhaps the reason was due to its proximity to the snake charming trick, and thus it would have been a medium familiar to the Pharaoh and the people. There is another possible

mysterious power seems to come from Moses which is focused in the direction of the Israelite force visible from the hill and thus reachable in a straight line by the beam of power. We may compare Joshua stretching out the spear against the city of Ai which he meant to sack in Josh. 8:18. There is no indication that the raising of the hands is to be understood as a gesture of prayer (the customary expression for this in the Old Testament is to 'spread out' the hands)." Noth, Exodus, p. 142. Oesterley and Robinson, Hebrew Religion, p. 77, suggest that "Moses, by holding up his rod, ensures success in battle to the Israelites." They cite this as being due to the use of the magic rod.

association with rods. This is the practice of divination known as rhabdomancy, in which sticks or arrows are thrown into the air. The omens are then deduced from the position of the sticks or arrows after they fall.³²

An examination of past usage of the rod indicates that Moses and Aaron did not employ it consistently in relation to miracles. After the rod became a serpent, in Exodus 7:10, the Lord told Moses to tell Pharaoh, "By this you shall know that I am the Lord: behold, I will strike the water that is in the Nile with the rod that is in my hand. . . ." ³³ The text indicates that the rod was in the hand of the Lord. However, when it came time to strike the Nile, Aaron held the rod. And the Lord said to Moses, "Say to Aaron, 'Take the rod and stretch out your hand over the waters of Egypt. . . .'" ³⁴ Therefore Exodus 7:17 clearly indicates Moses realized that the power to change the water into blood came from the Lord. The power was not inherent in the rod nor in a certain posture.

In the miracles of the frogs and the dust, the rod was used again.

And the Lord said to Moses, "Say to Aaron, 'Stretch out your hand with your rod over the rivers. . . .'" ³⁵

³²J. S. Wright, "Divination," NBD, p. 320.

³³Exodus 7:17.

³⁴Exodus 7:19.

³⁵Exodus 8:5.

Then the Lord said to Moses, "Say to Aaron, 'Stretch out your rod and strike the dust of the earth. . . .'"³⁶

In the next three miracles, the plague of the flies,³⁷ the death of the cattle,³⁸ and the boils,³⁹ the rod is not mentioned. The plague of flies and the death of the cattle are directly attributed to the acts of the Lord: "The Lord did." The Lord did not work through Moses and Aaron. To cause the hail and the locusts, God told Moses to stretch forth his hand, but Moses stretched forth his rod instead.

And the Lord said to Moses, "Stretch forth your hand toward heaven, that there may be hail. . . ." Then Moses stretched forth his rod toward heaven⁴⁰

Then the Lord said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the land of Egypt for the locusts that they may come upon the land of Egypt. . . ." So Moses stretched forth his rod over the land Egypt. . . .⁴¹

In relation to the plague of darkness, in Exodus 10:21, the rod is not mentioned. In the last miracle, the death of the oldest son, in Exodus 12:29, death is attributed to the Lord, but at the crossing of the Red Sea, the rod was used. "Lift up your rod, and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it. . . ." ⁴² But to make the Sea recede, the Lord told Moses to use his hand.

³⁶Exodus 8:16.

³⁷Exodus 8:24.

³⁸Exodus 9:6.

³⁹Exodus 9:10.

⁴⁰Exodus 9:22-23.

⁴¹Exodus 10:12-13.

⁴²Exodus 14:16.

The Lord said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the sea, that the water may come back. . . ."

So Moses stretched forth his hand over the sea. . . .⁴³

The rod was used at Rephidim to bring water from the rock.

And the LORD said to Moses . . . "take in your hand the rod with which you struck the Nile, and go. Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb; and you shall strike the rock, and water shall come out of it that the people may drink."⁴⁴

It is significant that the rod is referred to in this passage as the rod that struck the Nile. The Egyptians considered the Nile divine. They worshipped it through the god Hapi.⁴⁵ Thus the Lord reminded Moses of the power He had mediated through the rod - power that affected the Nile, the great god of the Egyptians. Moses was reminded that the rod had been an instrument through which the Lord had previously worked. Perhaps the Lord intended to use the rod as a visual aid in this incident in order to strengthen Israel's faith. Thus the rod, as it was used at Rephidim,

⁴³Exodus 14:26-27.

⁴⁴Exodus 17:5-7.

⁴⁵Lee Haines, "Genesis and Exodus," The Wesleyan Bible Commentary, Charles W. Carter, (ed.) (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1967), I, p. 194. H. Frankfort points out that the Egyptians believed the Nile had a "Thou" characteristic which was capable of reacting as a person. Every year when it was time for the Nile to flood, the Pharaoh made gifts to it and in addition, he threw it a document which is believed to have been either an order or a contract of the Nile's obligations. This was done to make sure that the Nile would rise as it was supposed to. Frankfort, IAAM, pp. 15-16.

seems to have been associated with the Lord's previous acts of power. One cannot conclude therefore, that it was the rod, or a certain posture, that caused Israel to win.

Perhaps on the basis of this association Moses took the rod and held it up during the battle. The fact that Moses took the rod without being told to do so implies his strong association with it.⁴⁶

What is the significance of the outstretched hands? In three instances, the Lord told Moses to stretch forth his hand without the rod. The outstretched hand indicates a position God used to mediate his power. In Exodus 17:11, Moses held up his hands,⁴⁷ (יָרָם, yārûm), whereas in the previous passages, he stretched out his hands, (נָטָה, naṭah).

⁴⁶The absence of divine direction here is striking and could imply that God was teaching Israel a lesson of dependence. Since God had not given instruction about this battle, Moses' actions can be interpreted as a posture of prayer in which he asked for God's help. C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament, James Martin (trans.) (first published in 1864; Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, n.d.), I, pp. 79-81. Moses could have used the rod as both an aid to his faith and a reminder to God of his past manifestations of power through the rod.

⁴⁷"To understand the meaning of this sign, it must be borne in mind that, although ver. 11 merely speaks of the raising and dropping of the hands (in the singular), yet according to ver. 12, both hands were supported by Aaron and Hur, who stood one on either side, so that Moses did not hold up his hands alternately, but grasped the staff with both his hands, and held it up with the two." Ibid., p. 79.

Therefore a distinct posture associated with previous demonstrations of power is not necessarily implied here, as Rylaarsdam suggests.⁴⁸ As indicated above, Moses recognized that the power was not inherent in the rod, nor was it capable of being activated automatically by assuming a certain position. Rather, it came from a transcendent being whom he recognized as the "I Am" who had appeared to him at Horeb. Noth is overlooking Moses' own conception of his source of power in his statement, "A mysterious power seems to come from Moses."⁴⁹ Noth seems to be reading into the passage when he states that a straight beam of power was focused in the direction of the Israelite army.⁵⁰ Rather, one could conclude more logically that Moses used the rod as an aid to his faith, possibly the faith of Israel, and perhaps as a reminder to God of his previous manifestations of power through it. Moses did not use the rod as a vehicle to convey power to the soldiers in battle. This passage does not state that Moses prayed, or that he sought help from a transcendent source, but verse 14 strongly indicates divine approval as well as divine activity in the event.

⁴⁸Rylaarsdam, "The Book of Exodus," p. 961.

⁴⁹Noth, "Exodus," p. 142.

⁵⁰Noth, "Exodus," p. 142. "To effect this, he would not have lifted it up, but have stretched it out, either over the combatants, or at all events towards them, as in the case of all the other miracles that were performed with the staff." Keil and Delitzsch, op. cit., p. 80.

The previous passages clearly indicate that Moses recognized a transcendent being who had been the source of power behind previous miracles, and Exodus 17:15, 16 indicate he relied on God's power in this battle.

One may conclude that Moses, recognizing Israel's dependence upon this source of power, made an appeal with the rod for divine assistance and received it.

Numbers 20:7-11. The rod brought water from the rock. The children of Israel were without water. Moses and Aaron appealed to the Lord for help. The Lord told Moses to take the rod and tell the rock to bring forth water.

And the LORD said to Moses, "Take the rod, and assemble the congregation, you and Aaron, and tell the rock before their eyes to yield its water. . . ." And Moses lifted up his hand and struck the rock with his rod twice and the water came forth abundantly. . . .⁵¹

Magical implications. The Lord told Moses to speak to the rock. But Moses used the rod to strike the rock. The magical implication is that power inherent in the rod caused the rock to give water.⁵² The Lord was displeased with Moses because of his actions. Verse 12 indicates that Moses acted in unbelief: "Because you did not believe in me, to sanctify me in the eyes of the people of Israel" (Num. 20:12). The

⁵¹Numbers 20:7-11.

⁵²Oesterley and Robinson stated that this passage is clearly magical. Hebrew Religion, p. 77.

context of this passage does imply however that Moses believed he could get water out of the rock. Otherwise why would he and Aaron have assembled the people before the rock and asked them: "Shall we bring forth water for you out of the rock?"(v. 10). Then he even struck the rock. The act of assembling the people and striking the rock implies that Moses believed water was forthcoming.

Therefore the accusation of unbelief in verse 12 must relate to something else other than water. When the Lord told Moses to speak to the rock, he struck it twice instead. The fact that he used the rod seems to imply that he had more faith in the use of the rod than he did in the spoken word. Why else would he have used the rod?

Moses had used the rod at Rephidim to cause the water to come out of the rock. Therefore he had an association with the rod and the water. Moses' use of the rod during Israel's war with the Amalekites implies his strong association with the rod and the previous manifestations of divine power through it. Here Moses seems to have temporarily lost sight of the transcendent source of power behind the rod and to have placed his faith in the power of the rod to act alone based on previous associations.⁵³

⁵³He then struck the rock twice with the rod, "as if it depended upon human exertion, and not upon the power of God alone," or as if the promise of God "would not have been

Thus it may have been Moses' faith in the rod rather than in God that caused the Lord to punish Moses by not allowing him to lead Israel into Canaan.⁵⁴

The fact that this prohibition and its fulfillment are recorded⁵⁵ indicates that a relationship existed between Moses and this source of power which he recognized to be the Lord, the "I AM," the God of his fathers. This prohibition further indicates that their relationship was an ethical one, one in which the Lord determined the ethic.

Therefore this narrative seems to imply that Moses overlooked the ethical element in his relationship with the sources of power. He seems to have believed that the rod by

fulfilled without all the smiting on his part." (Knobel) Keil and Delitzsch, Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament, III, p. 131.

⁵⁴It is easy for one to lose sight of the transcendent element when the miraculous becomes common. In this event the use of the material object easily becomes magical. It is significant that the rod was not used again. Adam Clarke offers four plausible explanations for the Lord's prohibitions. Two are given here. "1. God had commanded him (v. 8) to take the rod in his hand, and go and SPEAK to the rock, and it should give forth water. It seems Moses did not think speaking would be sufficient, therefore he smote the rock without any command so to do. 2. He did not acknowledge God in the miracle which was about to be wrought, but took the honour to himself and Aaron . . . Thus it plainly appears that they did not properly believe in God, and did not honour him in the sight of the people. . . ." Adam Clarke, The Holy Bible Containing the Old and New Testaments with a Commentary and Critical Notes (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury, n. d.) I., p. 681.

⁵⁵Deuteronomy 32:48ff; 34:4.

itself would cause the rock to give water, regardless of his instructions. Therefore his faith in the material object seems to have obscured the transcendent element at least temporarily. There is no mention of the rod being used again.

Numbers 22-24. Balaam asked to curse Israel. This is a significant narrative dealing with the power of the spoken word. The story is as follows:

Balak, the King of Moab, feared Israel because of what the Israelites had done to the Amorites. He sent messengers to Northern Syria⁵⁶ to ask Balaam to come and curse Israel so that he might be able to defeat and drive Israel away. The Lord came to Balaam and forbade him to go. Balak sent another embassy offering great honor. Balaam came this time by God's permission. God instructed him that he could speak only what He told him to speak. Then God sent an angel to warn Balaam again that he must speak the message of God.

Balak met Balaam and offered sacrifice. Then he took Balaam to a hill where he could see Israel. Balaam offered

⁵⁶Balaam's home was in the Euphrates Valley at Pethor, evidently ancient Pitru in the vicinity of Carchemish. The "land of Amaw" designates this same region, NE of Syria, as attested by its use in the Egyptian story of Sinuhe. R. F. Johnson, "Balaam," IBD, I, p. 342. "This area was noted for its diviners." Harper Study Bible. Harold Lindsell (ed.). (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1964), p. 229.

sacrifices on two different hills. After each sacrifice, he went to the Lord. Each time the Lord put a word in his mouth. Balak was displeased to find these discourses blessings rather than curses.

A sacrifice was again offered on a third hill. By this time, Balaam saw that it pleased the Lord to bless Israel, so he did not look for omens as before. Instead, the Spirit of God came upon him. Then Balaam made a remarkable confession.

The oracle of Balaam the son of Beor,
 the oracle of the man whose eye is opened,
 the oracle of him who hears the words of God,
 who sees the vision of the Almighty,
 falling down, but having his eyes uncovered. . . .⁵⁷

Then he gave another discourse which greatly angered Balak. Balak told Balaam to leave. But Balaam gave one more discourse. This one was strongly prophetic. After this, both Balak and Balaam parted.

Magical implications. The significance of this narrative is seen in three areas. They are: a) the identity of Balaam, b) what he was called to do, c) and the conflict between God's will and Balaam's desire. Since the objective of this study is to understand the metaphysical aspect of the narrative, only brief treatment will be given to the concept of the curse.

⁵⁷Numbers 24:2b-4a.

Was Balaam a prophet who worshipped the God of Israel or was he a pagan magician? The text identifies him only as the son of Beor at Pethor (Num. 22:5). His true profession can only be implied, at best, from the text. Two things immediately stand out. First, he must have been a man of renown for the King of Moab to seek him out at this distance. Pethor was about four hundred miles from Moab.⁵⁸ Second, he recognized the existence of a metaphysical source of instruction; he consulted the Lord יהוה (Yahweh), (Num. 22:8, 19; 23:3, 15). But in chapter 24, verse 1, an insight is gained into the medium through which he communicated with this metaphysical source.⁵⁹

When Balaam saw that it pleased the LORD to bless Israel, he did not go as at other times to look for omens.^{60, 61}

⁵⁸John Marsh, "The Book of Numbers," IB, II, p. 249.

⁵⁹"The fact that he made use of so extremely uncertain a method as augury, . . . is to be attributed to the weakness of the influence exerted upon him by the Spirit of God." Keil and Delitzsch, The Pentateuch, III, p. 160, citing Hengstenberg.

⁶⁰ לקראת נחשים (liqrát nēḥāšîm), i.e., "He did not go to encounter (in expectation of) signs of divination." DBD, op. cit., p. 897. The word נחשים (nēḥāšîm) comes from the root נחש (nāḥaš) meaning to practice divination, divine, observe signs. Ibid., p. 638. This root is used in Gen. 30:27 meaning to perceive; in I Kings 20:33 the context suggests that it was used to mean an "indication" or "sign" which may also be true in Gen. 45:5, 15. In I Kings 17:17 and II Kings 21:6 it means the practice of divination; in Lev. 19:26 and Deut. 18:10, Israel is commanded not to practice divination. Thus the root נחש means "perception" through some means (see footnote 62 below).

⁶¹Numbers 24:1.

The phrase "to look for omens" implies that Balaam was dependent upon a pagan means of perceiving the Lord's message. The first time Balaam went to meet the Lord (Num. 23:3) he told Balak, "and whatever he shows me [יָרְעֵנִי, yar'ēni from the root רָאָה (rā'ah) meaning 'to see,'] I will tell you." This indicates that he was looking for some kind of sign that he could interpret. The medium of perception could have been soothsaying or other types of divination.⁶² The elders of Moab brought the wages of divination (Num. 22:7; קְסָמִים qe'sāmîm from קָסַם, qesem, meaning "divination"). In Joshua 13:22 Balaam was called a soothsayer. The Hebrew word translated⁶³ here for soothsayer is הַקָּסֵם (haqqôsēm), the Qal participle of קָסַם (qāsam). This is the same word translated in Numbers 22:7 as divination. It is probably impossible to determine

⁶²Divination is roughly the attempt to discern events that are distant in time or space and that cannot be perceived by normal means. Common forms of divination were: Rhabdomancy; Hepatoscopy; Teraphim; Nebramancy; Astrology; Hydromancy; Lots; Dreams. J. S. Wright, "Divination," NBD, p. 320.

⁶³Both the King James and the Revised Standard Versions translate this as soothsayer. The context does not give any evidence to substantiate this translation. The Hebrew word for soothsayer is אָנָן (ānan). It is used nine times in the Old Testament: Lev. 19:26; Deut. 18:10, 14; Judg. 9:37; II Kings 21:6; Isa. 2:6; 57:3; Jer. 27:9; Mic. 5:11. The context does not give any indication as to the meaning of the word, with the exception of Judg. 9:37: "And one company is coming from the direction of the Diviner's Oak." BDB stated that the original meaning is dubious. H. Ewald and W. T. Gerber suggested "of diviner as interpreting hum of insects, whisper of leaves, etc." BDB, p. 778.

what Balaam's method of perception was, but it is possible to conclude that he used some method of divination as a medium of perception. The Lord revealed His message to Balaam through this medium.⁶⁴

It appears that Balaam was a pagan magician rather than a prophet of God. His understanding and desire for gain are not in keeping with the standard of Old Testament prophets. The fact that Balaam asked the Lord a second time (Num. 22:19) about going to Balak indicates two things: first, he wanted the honor offered to him; second, he was not acquainted with the Lord's nature. His second request implies that he thought perhaps the Lord would let him go and curse Israel this time. The warning of the angel enroute was needed to underscore

⁶⁴This statement seems like a contradiction of Num. 23:3: "Perhaps the Lord will come to meet me;" and Num. 23:15-16, "While I meet the Lord yonder. And the Lord met Balaam. . . ." Not necessarily so, because the Lord could still appear to Balaam through his pagan medium. The fact that the text states twice, "The Lord put a word in Balaam's mouth," indicates that he was under some type of control. Also the fact that, after Balaam stopped looking for the omens, the spirit of God came upon him and his eyes were then opened (23:3-4), implies that Balaam had not been communicating with the Lord on a person-to-person basis as the text would lead one to conclude from a first impression. There was communication between Balaam and the Lord, but it was a muddled sort of thing. Therefore, the Lord could have been using a medium common to pagan divination. For example, the Lord spoke to Balaam through his ass. It is commonly accepted that Satan spoke to Eve through the serpent. One cannot rule out that the communication indicated in chapter 23:3 and 15 was through some means of pagan divination.

God's intention and seems to reinforce the concept that Balaam could not be accepted as one who clearly understood and would obey God's wishes.

Balaam's pagan profession did not prevent the Lord from working through him, however.⁶⁵ In fact, the text clearly states that Balaam's eyes were finally opened and he heard God's word and saw a vision of the Almighty (24:3-4). Later, Balaam's counsel got Israel involved with the Baal of Peor (Num. 25:1-3 and Num. 31:16). This implies that he did not continue to follow the God of Israel. Israel killed him for this act (Num. 31:8). There is a strong indication that Balaam was a pagan who was well acquainted with Baalism, the pagan religion of Canaan.

The next consideration is the nature of the curse that Balaam was asked to pronounce upon Israel. Balak called

⁶⁵"This may furnish us a clue to his character. It, indeed, remains 'instructively composite!' A soothsayer who might have become a prophet of the Lord; a man who loved the wages of unrighteousness, and yet a man who in one supreme moment of his life surrendered himself to God's Holy Spirit; a person cumbered with superstition, covetousness, and even wickedness, and yet capable of performing the highest service in the kingdom of God: such is the character of Balaam, the remarkable Old Testament type and, in a sense, the prototype of Judas Iscariot." William Baur, "Balaam" The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia, James Orr (ed.) Copyright 1915, Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1949), p. 379.

Balaam to curse Israel before he endeavored to fight the nation.⁶⁶ Why?

Come now, curse this people for me,
since they are too mighty for me;
perhaps I shall be able to defeat
them and drive them from the land;
for I know that he whom you bless
is blessed⁶⁷ and he whom you curse
is cursed.⁶⁸

The Hebrew word used in this passage for curse is ָרָר (ʾārār). A curse is the expression of a wish that evil may befall another - a malediction.⁶⁹ The context of this narrative indicates that Balak believed Balaam's spoken word⁷⁰

⁶⁶"Goliath, when David came to engage with him in single combat, cursed him by his gods (I Sam. 17:43). When it was a case of warfare between tribes or nations, it would seem to have been customary to obtain the services of some man possessing, owing to his exceptional power with the deity, peculiar skill and efficacy in cursing." G. B. Gray, "Numbers," The International Critical Commentary, C. A. Briggs, S. R. Driver, and A. Plummer (eds.) (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1906), p. 328.

⁶⁷"It is difficult to distinguish in many cases between blessings and cursings which belong to the realm of magic--in which the words and actions of the one who blesses or curses are entirely in his control and accomplish his purposes at his bidding--and those which are strictly religious in their understanding and use--where the blessings or cursings are conceived to have their origin and effect in the power and purpose of the deity." W. J. Harrelson, "Blessings and Cursings," IBD, I, p. 446.

⁶⁸Numbers 22:6.

⁶⁹Gevirtz, "Curse," IBD, p. 749.

⁷⁰"In Mesopotamia solemn curses were uttered according to a ritual formula by sorcerers; such ritual curses were, of course, most effective, and it was for such a purpose that

would have such an effect as to sufficiently weaken Israel; his word had potency.⁷¹

Regardless of how Balak or Balaam had understood the power of the curse, it is apparent from Balaam's first three discourses (Num. 23:8; 19-20; 24:9) that he was powerless to curse Israel. He became aware that the only thing that could affect Israel was the power of God. He realized that the true source of power in the curse came from God.

Balak, King of Moab, brought the seer Balaam to curse Israel. The curse, like the blessing and the covenant, is a solemn utterance which cannot be retracted or annulled. The spoken word is endowed with a certain reality which enables it to pursue its object inexorably." John L. McKenzie, "Curse," Dictionary of the Bible (Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1965), p. 166. A parallel to this concept can be found among the Egyptians. In the Middle Kingdom period (2134-1786 B. C.) the Egyptians practiced the magical cursing of their actual or potential enemies. The names of such foes were inscribed on pottery bowls, then the bowls were smashed. The smashing of these inscribed bowls was believed to break the power of their enemies. John A. Wilson, "The Execration of Asiatic Princes," ANET, p. 328. However, it has been discovered that there was a distinction between "East" and "West" Semitic concepts of the curse. "Whereas East Semitic (Akkadian) maledictions were formulated in a religio-literary tradition which sought divine approval and execution, importuning a god or gods through imprecation, West Semitic curses were composed in a tradition which relied, primarily, not upon deity but upon the power of the word." Gevirtz, op. cit., p. 750. See also H. C. Brichto, "The Problem of the 'Curse' in the Hebrew Bible," JBL Monograph Series #13 (Philadelphia: Society of Biblical Literature and Exegesis, 1963). This difference between Eastern and Western concepts of the curse may explain why Balaam, a pagan seer, acted as he did (cf. Num. 22:8, 19: 23:1-3; 14-15). Balaam's concept would have been a medium through which the Lord could have easily worked.

⁷¹Marsh, "Numbers," IBC, p. 249.

How can I curse whom God has not cursed?
 How can I denounce whom the LORD has not de-
 nounced?⁷²

Further, he recognized that he did not have power to change the mind of God.

God is not man, that he should lie,
 or a son of man, that he should repent
 Has he said, and will he not do it?
 Or has he spoken, and will he not fulfill it:
 Behold, I received a command to bless:
 He has blessed, and I cannot revoke it.⁷³

The fact that Balaam could not change God's mind is extremely significant because the magician believed that he could control the gods through the power of magic.⁷⁴ Balaam also discovered that he could not affect Israel through his magical practices.

For there is no enchantment against Jacob,
 no divination against Israel.⁷⁵

Not only did he find out that he could not affect Israel, but he also discovered that God would bless the one who blessed Israel and curse the one who cursed her.

Blessed be everyone who blesses you,
 and cursed be everyone who curses you.⁷⁶

What does all this mean? God was telling Balak as well as Balaam (remember that the Lord put these words in his

⁷²Numbers 23:8.

⁷³Numbers 23:19-20.

⁷⁴L. W. King, "Babylonian Magic," ERE, p. 253.

⁷⁵Numbers 23:23.

⁷⁶Numbers 24:9.

mouth) that He was the only one who could affect Israel; He had the power to bring good or evil upon this people. This was a direct revelation of a transcendent being to a pagan people. It is no wonder that these discourses were remembered and recorded in the Scriptures. The import of this revelation would certainly have been overwhelming. Perhaps this revelation accounts for Balaam's change of attitude and procedure (Num. 24:1) and was the influence which caused him to open himself to a fuller revelation of this being (Num. 24:3-4).

Since Israel was a part of the Near Eastern culture, it is probable that the Israelites were familiar with the pagan concept of the curse such as Balak displayed. It is apparent that Israel believed that the curse or blessing could have an effect. But how did the Israelites understand the concept of the power that made the blessing and curse effective?

An examination of the blessings and curses on Mountains Gerizim and Ebal (Deut. 27:11ff) indicates that Israel had a dynamic view of the curse. The first national act upon entering the land of Canaan was to set these two forces in motion: the blessings which would "overtake" the obedient, and the curse which would "overtake" the disobedient (Deut. 28:2, 15). The national life moved between these two poles of influence.⁷⁷ But the agent⁷⁸ that gave power to the content

⁷⁷J. M. Mytyer, "Curse," NBD, p. 283.

⁷⁸"For the Hebrew, just as a word was not a mere sound on the lips but an agent sent forth, so the spoken curse was

of the blessings and curses was conceived as a transcendent being whom they recognized as the Lord, their God (Deut. 28:2). This was the God of their fathers, the "I Am" (Ex. 3:14) who had revealed himself to Moses and who had led them out of Egypt.

The blessing and the curse were cultural practices of the Near East. It is apparent that God utilized this custom and made it a vehicle through which He could convey His power. The potential power of either the blessing or the curse was determined by one's obedience to the commandment of the Lord. The effect of either the blessing or curse was governed by an ethical relationship (Deut. 28:2, 15). The concept of relationship between ethics and the power of the curse was completely lacking in pagan culture, since pagans believed that the power was inherent in the word.

All of this simply means that there was no power to curse Israel except from the Lord. The power resided in a transcendent being who had willed to bless Israel. Therefore Balaam could not bring a curse upon her. The revelation of this fact had a significant impact upon Balaam, who finally opened himself to a fuller revelation of God.

an active agent for hurt. Behind the word stands the soul that created it . . . when the soul is powerful the word is clothed in that power (Ec. viii. 8, I Ch. xxi.4)." See also Matt. 8:8, 16; Mark 11:14, 20, 21. Ibid., p. 327.

One of the most significant aspects of this narrative is the conflict between Balaam's desire to curse Israel and the overpowering control of the Lord.

After Balaam had consulted the Lord the first time (Num. 22:8ff), he replied, "Go to your own land, for the Lord has refused מֵעַן ($m\bar{e}'\bar{e}n$) to let me go with you" (Num. 22:8). The use of מֵעַן ($m\bar{e}'\bar{e}n$) is significant. Old Testament usage implies that a request for permission had been denied. Thus Balaam wanted to go and curse Israel, but he was prohibited by an over-ruling influence.

Even though God granted Balaam permission to go after his second request, Balaam still recognized the prohibition against cursing Israel (22:19-20). The angel's attempt to kill him caused him to realize that he was dealing with a being with inherent power to act on His own and even overpower him and control his speech.

Have I now any power at all to speak anything?
Thy word that God puts in my mouth that I must
speak.⁷⁹

Clearly, Balaam's desire was frustrated by another who was superior to his own power.

Further, the text states twice that the Lord put a word in Balaam's mouth (Num. 23:5, 16). Thus, the content of Balaam's discourse came from another being who had power

⁷⁹Numbers 22:38.

to cause Balaam to utter the desire of the Lord rather than his own desire. This being could not only reveal His will to Balaam, but He could also give him a message. Through this experience, Balaam recognized the personal and volitional character of this being. He finally perceived that it pleased the Lord to bless Israel (Num. 24:1).

It is clear then that Balaam entered into a relationship with a force that was able to influence him significantly. Balaam's desire had to yield to a transcendent influence, the will of the Lord. In the end (Num. 24:3-4) Balaam became fully aware of the nature of this influence; his eyes were opened, he heard the words of God, and he saw a vision of the Almighty.

The Balaam narrative is significant. It portrays a pagan diviner who was believed to have the ability to impair Israel by the power of his curse, as one who came under the influence of even a greater source of power. Balaam perceived that this source of power had personality, volition, and inherent power to act on His own. This source of power seems to have been thought of as an existent being. Balaam recognized that this being was able to prevent him from acting according to his own desires. Finally, Balaam was given a vision of this being, which caused him to fall down. Indeed, Balaam realized that he did not "have any power at all to speak anything" (Num. 22:38) except what God allowed him to speak.

The magician's power had to bow to a supreme transcendent power.

I Kings 17:17-24. Elijah Raised the Widow's Son. The passage reveals a strange procedure used by Elijah in restoring life to the widow's son. After Elijah had lived in the home for many days, the son of the woman became ill and died. She accused Elijah of causing his death (v. 18).

And he said to her, "Give me your son." And he took him from her bosom, and carried him up into the upper chamber, where he lodged, and laid him upon his own bed. And he cried to the Lord, "O LORD my God, hast thou brought calamity even upon the widow with whom I sojourn, by slaying her son?" Then he stretched himself upon the child three times and cried to the LORD, "O LORD my God, let this child's soul come into him again." And the Lord hearkened to the voice of Elijah; and the soul of the child came into him again, and he revived.⁸⁰

Magical implications. Elijah's actions are difficult to explain. Why did he stretch himself upon the child three times? The implication is that he was using the principle of sympathetic magic.⁸¹ By stretching his live and healthy

⁸⁰I Kings 17:19-22.

⁸¹A parallel to Elijah's action is found in II Kings 4:32-35, where Elisha stretched himself seven times upon the dead boy. "The crouching over the lad and the contact of hands, mouth, and eyes suggests a rite of contactual magic whereby the properties of one party were transferred to another. Doubtless this was a popular elaboration of the tradition reflecting popular belief and practice of the time." John Gray, I & II Kings (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1963), p. 447. The same conclusion could be derived from a study of this passage as will be derived from this narrative. "So he went in . . . and prayed to the Lord" (II Kings 4:33).

body upon the child, he transferred these features to the body of the boy.⁸² Like produces like.⁸³

The reason why Elijah stretched himself three times is not clear. The fact itself may imply that Elijah considered this number to be significant.⁸⁴ The text does not indicate that he was instructed to do this. The repeated act of stretching his body upon the boy must have had significance for Elijah. Elijah recognized that this act in itself was not wholly efficacious. First, he recognized that the Lord

⁸²John Gray states that "This is a case of contactual magic, such as is well known in the ancient East in Mesopotamia [see G. Contenau, Everyday Life in Babylon and Assyria (New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc., 1954), p. 294] and in Canaan, where the Ugaritic Legend of Krt mentions the transference of the sickness of the king into a clay image (UH 126, V, 26ff). Generally the conception was that the sickness was thus transferred into the corresponding parts of an animal, e.g., a sheep; here per contra the health of Elijah is conveyed to the corresponding organs of the invalid." Gray, op. cit., p. 342. However, Gray's reference to Contenau does not really apply to Elijah's action. Contenau deals with how to induce a demon to depart out of a sick person. He cites an example in which a pig was placed over the sick person. The demon was then induced to make an exchange. In other cases, a mere reed was actually used instead of the pig. It is important to realize that to the Babylonian, the terms "sin," "sickness," and "possession by evil spirits" were considered as synonyms. All sickness and disease were believed to be due to the attacks of evil spirits. W. L. King, "Babylonian Magic," ERE, pp. 253-54. However, Elijah is not dealing with a sick person. The Hebrew Text uses Hiphiel infinitive of (mut) twice (I Kings 17:18, 20) meaning "to cause to die." He was dealing with a dead boy, not one who was sick. Thus, neither reference cited by Gray applies to Elijah's actions.

⁸³Oesterley and Robinson, Hebrew Religion, p. 77.

⁸⁴"The number three shares with the number seven a special magico-religious power." Norman H. Snaith, "The First and Second Book of Kings," IB., p. 148.

had caused the boy's death (I Kings 17:20). Then he cried to the Lord as he stretched himself upon the boy and asked that the Lord let his soul come into him again (I Kings 17:21). Elijah realized that the Lord, a transcendent source of power, had acted in taking the child's soul and only He could return it.

Clearly, the metaphysical agent was the Lord, the God of Elijah, who had the power to cause death and restore life. The context of this chapter implies that Elijah did have an influence upon the metaphysical source of power. However, this was not due to his action, but because of his obedience to the command of the Lord (I Kings 17:8). He sought the Lord to vindicate his presence with the widow in order that she might believe that he spoke the truth (I Kings 17:24). Thus the Lord answered Elijah's request and returned the soul of the child.

Elijah realized that the power to restore the child's life resided in a transcendent being who had the power to act upon his request. The reason Elijah stretched himself upon the child three times cannot be determined. This may have been a cultural practice used in sympathetic magic.⁸⁵ However, it is certain from the context that Elijah did not consider this action efficacious alone. Perhaps in his

⁸⁵Kaufmann, Religion of Israel, pp. 80-84.

thinking it provided a vehicle through which God could work. There is no indication that he believed this action would force the source of power to act, as is true of the ritual connected with magical incantations. Therefore, the action could not rightly be identified as ritual. Nor does he consider this action to be automatically effective in transferring health to a dead body, as is true in the case of sympathetic magic. It seems presumptuous to believe that Elijah believed that he could give life merely by laying his live body upon the dead one.

The text explicitly states that Elijah recognized that the only thing that could cause life to return was the power that resided in the Lord, his God. "And he said, Yahweh, My God, return now the soul of this child" (literal translation, I Kings 17:21). Elijah saw the source of power as transcendent, personal, volitional, with the power to act. The power was inherent in this being. The availability of this power was determined by Elijah's obedience to the source of power. Therefore the power is governed by a moral relationship.

I Kings 18:20-46. The conflict between Elijah and the Priests of Baal. In this conflict, the priests of Baal relied on magic. Elijah depended upon the Lord. The story is as follows: Elijah had told the King of Israel, Ahab, that there would not be dew nor rain in Israel except by his

word (I Kings 17:1). In the third year, the Lord told Elijah to return to Ahab and He would send rain. After showing himself to Ahab, Elijah asked him to gather all Israel as well as the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and the four hundred and fifty prophets of Asherah at Mount Carmel. Then Elijah put a challenge to Israel; he asked the people to choose the Lord if he was God, or Baal if he was God. Then he proposed that two offerings be made upon an altar. The god that answered by fire would be the true God.

The prophets of Baal prepared their sacrifice and called upon Baal. He did not answer. So they called louder and even cut themselves; still there was no answer. They worked themselves into a frenzy and continued until evening, yet there was no fire.

Then Elijah prepared his sacrifice and even poured water over it. He prayed and the fire came down, consuming the offering, altar, and water. The people thereupon acknowledged the Lord as God. Then Elijah told the people to kill the false prophets of Baal.

Elijah went up on top of the mountain and bowed himself as if in prayer. He sent his servant seven times to look for clouds. The seventh time he saw a cloud the size of a man's hand over the sea. Elijah told Ahab to start home lest he be caught in the rain. Elijah ran ahead of Ahab's chariot on the way toward Jezreel.

Magical implications. The first assumed act of magic was performed by the prophets of Baal, who attempted to cause their god⁸⁶ to respond to their cries. "And they cried aloud, and cut themselves after their custom with swords and lances, until the blood gushed out upon them" (I Kings 18:28).

The act of cutting themselves to release blood has been reported to be an act of sympathetic magic to cause the rains to descend.⁸⁷ The second assumed magical act was performed by Elijah.

And he said, Fill four jars with water, and pour it on the burnt offering, and on the wood. And he said, Do it a second time; and they did it a second time. And he said, Do it a third time; and they did it a third time. And the water ran round about the altar, and filled the trench also with water.⁸⁸

⁸⁶According to Ugaritic mythology, Baal "was the fertility god who rode upon the clouds and was responsible for the rains which brought life to the parched soil of Canaan. A Ras Shamra stele depicts him with a mace in his right hand and a thunderbolt in his left hand. Baal is sometimes designated as 'Zebul (Prince), Lord of the Earth.' He earlier bore the name of Hadad the god whose presence was apparent in the violent storms of autumn and winter." Charles Pfeiffer, Ras Shamra and the Bible, p. 30. Hadad is known as an Aramaic deity, weather or storm-god, perhaps meaning thunderer, BDB, p. 212.

⁸⁷"Blood was the vital essence and the blood-letting was a rite of imitative magic to prompt a liberal release of the vital rain and the life dependent on it." Gray, I and II Kings, p. 355.

⁸⁸I Kings 18:33b-35.

The act of pouring out the water has been assumed to be sympathetic magic to induce the rain.⁸⁹ This assumption appears to be reading in something that the context does not support. Elijah made fire the point of proof; "the God who answers by fire, he is god." (I Kings 18:24).⁹⁰ Since fire

⁸⁹"The pouring of the water was not to make the burning of the sacrifice more difficult, nor was it to preclude any charge of sharp practice. It was the ancient method of procuring rain by sympathetic magic. The operation was repeated thrice to ensure its efficacy." Snaith, "The First and Second Book of Kings," IB, p. 157. However, John Gray states that the pouring of the water over the sacrifice was ostensibly a guarantee against fraud, though it may have been a feature developed by tradition from a rite of imitative magic. Gray, op. cit., p. 357.

⁹⁰Julian Morgenstern underscored that the fact that fire would fall was taken for granted by both Elijah and the prophets of Baal. The issue was, upon which altar would it fall? Julian Morgenstern, Amos Studies (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1941), p. 305. The context seems to support this logic. However, the comments of various commentators seem to assume that the fire ("lightning" Gray, op. cit., p. 358) would come from rain clouds that had gathered to end the three-year drought. In fact, Snaith states that "the test is going to be which god can bring the rain after the long drought." Snaith, op. cit., p. 154. The broader context of the story (I Kings, Chapters 17-18) has rain at the center. The fact, the Lord told Elijah in the third year to go and show himself to Ahab and he would send rain (I Kings 18:1). It is also accepted that the prophets of Baal served the nation through the yearly cultic ritual which was believed to guarantee Baal's restoration and thus bring the rain (cf. Barr, CCCWV, p. 53 and 49:III: 10-13, ANET, p. 140). The appearance of the first seasonal rain storms was believed to be the return of Baal from the clutches of Mot in the Underworld. Therefore it is assumed that the prophets of Baal were trying to bring Baal back to earth. When he returned, he would send lightning. "The long hot drought of a semi-tropical country naturally ends in thunderstorms of a violence not known in more temperate climates." Snaith, op. cit., p. 158. Thus it has been assumed that the

was the test, it is rather absurd to assert that the act of pouring the water was done to bring down the fire.⁹¹ The fact that the fire consumed the offering, wood, stones, dust, and licked up the water in the trench implies that this fire was not lightning, but rather a miraculous fire falling from heaven.⁹²

fire would come out of the clouds. However, the test was to determine which god would answer by fire. In keeping with the true context of the narrative, there still were no clouds in the sky when the fire fell in answer to Elijah's prayer. There was a duration of time between the time when the fire fell and when the rains came (I Kings 18:44). After the fire fell, the prophets of Baal were seized and killed (I Kings 18:40). This activity involved no little amount of time. Next perhaps while the slaughter of prophets was going on, Elijah and Ahab ate a meal together (J. Gray, *op. cit.*, p. 359). Then Elijah went up on top of the mountain and bowed himself to the ground, while his servant went seven different times looking for a sign of clouds (I Kings 18:41-44). After this lapse of time, "the heavens grew black with clouds and winds" (I Kings 18:45). It is extremely significant to this writer that after the fire fell, the people proclaimed the Lord as God and then proceeded to kill the prophets of Baal before the rains came. Therefore if rain had been the real test as Snaith suggests, the people would not have responded in this extreme manner without having the rain first. As far as can be determined from the text, rain clouds were not in sight at the time the people proclaimed Elijah's Lord as the true God. They would hardly have had the courage to kill the national cultic priests if they had not been convinced that the Lord was the true God, especially in Ahab's presence, and with his implied consent. It seems clear that the rain clouds were not involved in producing the fire.

⁹¹"The real point of the incident is that the lightning, if indeed it was actually lightning, came at that particular time apparently in direct response to Elijah's acted (water pouring) and spoken prayer." Snaith, *op. cit.*, p. 158.

⁹²Keil, The Book of Kings, p. 249. See also I Chr. 21:26, II Chr. 7:1; Lev. 9:24.

The magical implications in the rain passage (I Kings 18:42-45) are Elijah's posture while waiting for the rain;⁹³ and the seven trips⁹⁴ by his servant to look for clouds (I Kings 18:42, 43).

And Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; and he bowed himself down upon the earth, and put his face between his knees. And he said to his servant, "Go up now, look toward the sea." And he went up and looked, and said, "There is nothing." And he said, "Go again seven times." And at the seventh time he said, "Behold, a little cloud like a man's hand is rising out of the sea."⁹⁵

These instances do not appear to be magically oriented when examined in the light of Elijah's concept of the source of rain. These instances will be discussed below.

Metaphysical implications. In an examination of the metaphysical conceptions of the prophets of Baal, one may conclude that they believed that their actions would induce fire.

And they took the bull which was given them, and they prepared it, and called on the name of Baal from morning until noon, saying, "O Baal, answer us!" But there was no voice, and no one

⁹³Elijah "could also bring rain, and in I Kings xviii. 42-5, where no mention is made of Yahweh, a kind of ritual is described whereby Elijah obtained rain." Oesterley & Robinson, Hebrew Religion, p. 75. T. H. Robinson suggests an act of imitative magic in which the prophet simulates a rain-cloud. History of Israel, I, p. 306, cited in J. Gray, op. cit., p. 360.

⁹⁴The seventh look is effective. Snaithe, op. cit., p. 159.

⁹⁵I Kings 18:42-44.

answered. And they limped about the altar which they had made. And at noon Elijah mocked them, saying, "Cry aloud, for he is a god; either he is musing, or he has gone aside, or he is on a journey or perhaps he is asleep and must be awakened." And they cried aloud, and cut themselves after their custom with swords and lances, until the blood gushed out upon them. And as midday passed, they raved on until the time of the offering of the oblation, but there was no voice; no one answered, no one heeded.⁹⁶

The following imply that the prophets conducted some type of ritual: a) they limped about the altar; this implies a ritual (I Kings 18:26).⁹⁷ b) They cut themselves after their custom (v. 28). This point has been discussed above. c) They raved on until the time of the offering (v. 29). The verb "raved" (וַיִּתְנַבְּאוּ, wayyitnabb^{e'u}) denotes the externals of "prophetic" experience, the dervish rites and the ecstatic behavior often indistinguishable from the conduct of a madman.⁹⁸ Regardless of what one understands the act of cutting themselves to mean, it seems clear that their actions were designed to effect the desired result, i.e., the ritual was conceived as something that would cause their god, Baal, to respond with fire. The power to affect Baal was connected with the ritual.⁹⁹ They believed

⁹⁶I Kings 18:26-29.

⁹⁷J. Gray, I and II Kings, p. 353; also Snaith, "The First and Second Book of Kings," IBC, p. 155.

⁹⁸Ibid.

⁹⁹Barr, CCCWV, p. 112ff.

that their actions would automatically cause Baal to respond.¹⁰⁰ Baal could thus be coerced by man, since he had little or no volition.¹⁰¹ Of significance is the fact that none of these activities caused a fire upon the altar.

On the other hand, Elijah understood differently the source from which the fire would descend.

And at the time of the offering of the oblation, Elijah the prophet came near and said, "O LORD, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word. Answer me, O LORD, answer me, that this people may know that thou, O LORD, art God, and that thou hast turned their hearts back." Then the fire of the LORD fell and consumed the burnt offering, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench.¹⁰²

Elijah recognized a transcendent source with power to act on its own, for he drew near and addressed his request to

¹⁰⁰"Magic may also appear in a 'pure' form in rites that have no connection with the will of the gods, but are viewed as automatically effective or even capable of coercing the gods to do the will of the practitioner." Kaufmann, Religion of Israel, p. 40. See also W. R. Halliday, Greek Divination: A Study of Its Methods and Principles (reprint of 1913 edition; Chicago: Argonaut, 1967), p. 24.

¹⁰¹"Note that if the desired result doesn't occur, then something in the ritual must have been done wrong. There may be an element of volition among the gods, but the moment one moves into the metadivine realm, one finds no volition. The mistake must be in the ritual, the way it was done; the cult leads to this." Dennis Kinlaw, "Ancient Near Eastern Literature Class." Tape recording, 1968.

¹⁰²I Kings 18:36-38.

something that was not visibly present, yet he believed it to be there. Then the fire fell. This source of power was conceived of as possessing personal characteristics, the "LORD, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel." The most significant aspect in Elijah's understanding is his concept of the role of obedience. He reminded the LORD that he had done these things at His word (I Kings 18:36). Therefore he expected¹⁰³ God to answer him by sending the fire. Elijah's obedience put God in what might be called a tension. God was now obligated to Elijah because He had told him to go (18:1). Thus obedience was a force (if it can be justly called a force) that caused God to act. The implication is that the "power source" had memory, for Elijah reminded the LORD that he had done what he had been told to do; volition, for Elijah expected the LORD to act as he desired; a sense of moral judgment, for Elijah believed that the LORD would recognize his obedience and respond according to His word. Elijah's request, being morally based, affected God and He caused fire to fall upon the altar.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³The writer believes this is why he was willing to make such a bold venture and place himself in extreme peril. He knew that if God did not answer with fire, his chances of living were small.

¹⁰⁴In the strictest sense, one might concede that Elijah's actions could be classified as a ritual. W. R. Halliday says that "The object . . . of ritual is to enable the agent to express himself effectively and all solemn

In examining Elijah's behavior while on top of Carmel, it is granted that the text does not state that Elijah prayed. However, regardless of whether or not he prayed, the same principle of obedience was related to the rain. It must be remembered that God told Elijah to go show himself to Ahab and He would send the rain (I Kings 18:1). Therefore Elijah knew that God would send the rain in response to his obedience. He recognized that neither his posture nor the seven trips could cause rain; rather, God was the source.

In conclusion, a contrast between the prophets of Baal and Elijah is evident in the way they understood the metaphysical agent and what they believed would affect it. The prophets of Baal saw this agent as Baal, whom they believed was assisted by their ritual behavior. They even believed that he could be forced to act by the power inherent in the ritual.

occasions will normally and naturally create or utilize forms of ritual." Halliday, Greek Divination, p. 26. However, it is not the ritual here that is effective, but the moral basis of the actions. The moral aspect is unseen and apart from the ritual. If the moral element is not right, then the ritual will be ineffective, e.g., Isa. 6. Significantly, Elijah does not attempt to force God to act in any way, but merely makes his request. In contrast, note in the story dealing with the capture of the ark of the covenant by the Philistines (I Sam. ch. 4), the ark was used in an attempt to force God to give victory so that the ark would not fall into the hands of the Philistines. But God would not be forced. The Baal cult was an attempt to force a god to act, a concept in direct contrast to Elijah's concept. "Most religion is an attempt to get God in a corner." Kinlaw, 1968 Ancient Near Eastern Literature Class, recorded lecture.

It is also understood that if the desired effect did not occur, then the ritual had not been conducted properly. Elijah believed this agent to be the Lord, the God of Israel, who is transcendent and has the power to act on His own. He is personal. The prophets of Baal attributed little or no volitional character to Baal; they believed that the ritual could force him to act. Elijah conceived that God has volition. Further, Elijah believed that God could remember and would respond according to his obedience. Thus Elijah sensed that his relationship to God rested upon moral principles. He conceived of a God who responds to man's obedience to His instructions (commandments in a broader context). The instructions were established upon moral principles. This is a radical contrast to the concept of the prophets of Baal and pagan religion in general.

II. SUMMARY

The purpose of this study has been to understand how the Hebrews understood the nature of the metaphysical realm. The nature of this realm can be characterized now in the following description.

1. The metaphysical realm was conceived as being personal. This being was believed to be deeply concerned about man. He revealed himself to man as in the case of Jacob, Moses, Balaam, and Elijah.

Another aspect that indicates that the metaphysical realm was thought to be personal in nature is the Hebrew's perception of the necessity for obedience to the commands of this being. An example is Moses' response to God's instructions for the use of the rod; Moses cast the tree into the bitter water in obedience to the Lord's instructions; Moses was punished for his failure to obey the word of the Lord at Meribah.

The necessity for obedience implies that the Hebrews believed this being had a sense of moral attitudes. Elijah believed the Lord would send rain because he had obeyed His command to go. Thus he believed God would keep His word.

The concept of morality further implies that this being was understood as having a volitional nature. This being could "will" to keep His word and act according to His promises, as in the case of the Lord's promise to heal Israel if the people would keep His statutes and ordinances.

2. This being was understood as possessing inherent power. Jacob conceived that the God of Bethel had caused the increase in the flock. Moses recognized that the "I Am" had caused the miracles in Egypt. Balaam recognized that the Lord had power to bless or to curse Israel.

3. This being was thought of as being active. He revealed the secret of the increase in the flock to Jacob; He revealed himself to Moses in the burning bush and gave Moses

instructions for the use of the rod; He was able to command Moses, Balaam, and Elijah.

4. This being was understood as being transcendent. Moses recognized a transcendent being behind the wonders performed through the rod. Elijah recognized that the Lord was present with him on Mount Carmel, yet he could not see Him.

It has been noted that the Hebrews used what could possibly be understood as magical customs, such as Jacob's method of breeding and Elijah's actions in raising the dead child. However, in each case there was a clear understanding of the Lord's involvement in the action.

It was also observed that it appears that Moses associated power with the object - the rod, and lost sight temporarily of the transcendent source of power in the incident at Meribah. However, even if this did happen to Moses, it was only momentary, for Moses posits a positive testimony to his faith in a transcendent being who has power to act, as his addresses in Deuteronomy indicate.

It is also evident that the Lord used things that were identified with magic in ancient Near Eastern culture as a medium to communicate His power, for example, the rod of Moses and Aaron, and Balaam's divination practices.

It is evident that the Hebrews' concept of an ethical relationship to the Lord, their only source of power, underscored their faith. For example, in the case of Elijah and

the fire, Elijah reminded the Lord that he had acted according to His word. His obedience put God in what might be called a tension, for He was now obligated to keep His word. Elijah believed that the Lord would remember His command and thus He would respond according to his own act of obedience. Thus Elijah sensed that his relationship to the source of power rested upon moral principles. This ethical concept was the crucial focal point in the relationship between the Hebrews and their God.

One may therefore conclude that the passages under examination are not actually magical, because the power behind each act was understood different from the concept of the principles involved in magic. The Hebrews believed that the source of power came from a personal God who had inherent power to act. He was transcendent, yet He was personally interested in man, and One who had the power to act for man.

Thus, the Hebrews' concept of the metaphysical realm gave them an understanding of the source of power that negates the modern theory that there was magic in their practices. It is granted that some of their actions were similar to the magical practices within their cultural milieu, but their concept of the metaphysical realm was entirely different.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND IMPLICATIONS

I. SUMMARY

The primary aim of this research has been to determine the character of the metaphysical realm as it was conceived in the minds of two groups of ancient Near Eastern peoples, namely the Hebrews and their neighbors in order to see if this realm was understood similarly or differently. Primitive man believed that he could affect the metaphysical realm through magic. Thus magical practices have been studied in both groups of people.

A better understanding of the concept of magic has been sought through a brief survey of its development in relationship to primitive modes of thought as studied by significant anthropologists of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The following men have developed what might be called a general view of the relationship between primitive thought and magic. Tylor believed that the primitives based magical principles upon a false association of ideas. Frazer believed that magic worked on the principle of sympathy. Levy-Bruhl believed that magical beliefs and practices were due to the primitive's failure to recognize the principles of

identity and contradiction. Malinowski believed that the power of magic was inherent in man, who believed that he could release this power through the ritual. Eliade believed that the primitive's thought of power as a realm of existence. Evans-Pritchard, however, believed that to understand magic as an "idea in itself" was a hopeless task.

Thus the concept of magic as it has been studied in various cultures of the world has been explained on the basis of insight at various levels of understanding. It is generally agreed that magic was largely based upon faulty reasoning. However, Eliade believed that the primitives did perceive a "manifestation of power" from numerous elements in the world. He was not speaking directly of the concept of magic at this point; however, it is possible that this manifestation of power could be the basis for the concept of power in magic. This is the view of this writer.

A clear understanding of primitive thought patterns can be gained only in the context of a culture and is a prerequisite for comprehension of what the primitive concept of magic really was. Thus the ancient Near Eastern concepts of primitive thought and magic have been examined. Albright believed that magic had its basis in a system of false analogies. Frankfort pictured the ancients as believing that everything in life had a certain potency which he believed gave magic its basis of operation.

Primitive man projected his concepts of both reality and magic into the myth. Thus the magical practices expressed in mythology tell us that man believed magic dealt with something that was real, that existed.

The primitive believed that a "realm of being" existed outside the "realm of the gods." This realm transcended the realm of the gods. Thus the primitives conceived that their gods were limited by, and dependent upon, this metaphysical realm.

An inductive study of the magical passages in the mythological texts of the ancient Near East has indicated how the ancient Near Easterner conceived the nature or character of this metaphysical realm. It is believed that this realm is best defined as "power." Magic was practiced with intent to control this power. The nature of this power was characterized as: (a) residing outside the gods; (b) impersonal; (c) passive; (d) residing in substance.

An inductive and analytical study was also made of significant magical passages in the Old Testament in order to understand the nature of the metaphysical realm as the Hebrews conceived it. The nature of this realm can be characterized as: (a) personal; (b) possessing inherent power; (c) active; (d) transcendent.

The significance of these two concepts of thought will now be compared and the implications examined.

II. CONCLUSION

The main objective of this research has been to determine the character of the metaphysical realm as it was conceived by the ancient Near Easterner and the Hebrews. The origin and much of the cultural heritage of the Hebrews was rooted in the ancient Near East. Therefore it would seem that their concept of the metaphysical realm would be basically the same as that found in their surrounding environment. However, a comparison of these two groups of people reveals a radical contrast at every point.

1. The ancient Near Easterner conceived of this metaphysical realm or source of power as being "impersonal," whereas the Hebrews found it to be "personal," the power residing in the person of their God. The Near Easterner did not see this power as volitional, but as available regardless of the moral nature of its intended use. This power could be brought under one's control and forced to act in accordance with one's own will, if one only had the knowledge of the right procedure. On the other hand, the Hebrews believed that this source of power was volitional; thus it resided in a being. They saw in this being a sense of moral attitude. They realized that power was available from this being only on the condition of obedience. They could not control this source of power, but rather stood in fear of

their God's ability to overpower them and even control them if He so desired (Deut. 5:22-27). Thus the concept of a moral principle and obedience to that principle was the basis upon which the Hebrew related to this metaphysical source of power.

2. The ancient Near Easterners believed that the realm of power resided outside of the gods, whereas the Hebrews believed that power was inherent in their God. The Near Easterners believed that their gods lacked necessary power within themselves to overcome their foes; thus they were projected in the myths as appealing to an external realm of power. Death seems to have been the ultimate fear of the gods. Thus the gods used magic to try to escape or to defeat death. However, fate could not be affected by magic. The Hebrews on the other hand, believed that their God was absolute; He had sufficient power to act as He wished. God was even supreme over death, for when Elijah asked God to restore life to the dead boy, the Lord returned life to the boy (II Kings 17:22).

3. The ancient Near Easterners believed that the existing realm of power was passive in nature, whereas the Hebrews conceived that the power was active. The Near Easterners believed that they had to activate the source of power through ritual. The Hebrews, in contrast, were aware of a God who acted according to His own desire, who was

capable of manifesting Himself to them in such a way that they perceived His power (Ex. 3:2ff; Deut. 5:22-27).

4. The ancient Near Easterners believed that power resided in substances, whereas the Hebrews believed that the source of power was transcendent and inherent in their God. The Near Easterner believed that even abstract concepts had substance and were therefore potent, for example, the ritually spoken word. The Hebrews, on the other hand, recognized a transcendent being who was the source of power. Elijah had not seen the Lord on Mount Carmel, yet he believed that He was the source who would send the fire and rain.

The concept of an ethical relationship between the Hebrews and the source of power (their God) was crucial to the Hebraic understanding of the ability to communicate with and even to cause God to act. This concept was completely lacking in the Near Easterner's relationship to the source of power.

Thus the final and most important point of this study is that the biblical passages examined are not actually magical because of the way in which the power behind the act was conceived. The Hebrews conceived that the source of power resided in a personal being whom they knew as the Lord. Their concept of the metaphysical realm gave them an understanding of the source of power that negates the concept of magic in their practices, even though the practices themselves may

have been magically oriented to the culture of the ancient Near East.

This conclusion is based upon the writer's deduction of how he believes the ancient Near Easterner conceived the metaphysical realm as he tried to affect it in some way through magic.

The study of magic as it was used in the texts has evoked the following definition and understanding of magic: The word magic by itself connotes "techniques" through which a desired effect or result is produced. On the other hand, the power behind the magical technique that enables the desired result to be produced does not seem to have been seen as being totally in the technique itself. Rather this power seems to have been conceived of as metaphysical, i.e., existing in such a way that it could be used and even controlled through the techniques. Thus the technique affects the power which in turn produces the desired result.

The idea that one could manipulate the metaphysical realm of power by self designed techniques reflects the primitive's self image. It seems that he believed that he could do about anything he wanted to through the power of his own skill, even to the point of manipulating a super-human power for his own benefit.

III. IMPLICATIONS

A comparison of the ancient Near Eastern concept of the metaphysical realm with that of the Hebrew's concept has revealed a radical difference in perspective. How can this difference be explained? The Hebraic perspective was uniquely different from that of the peoples who surrounded Israel. Obviously the Hebrews did not acquire this distinct concept from anyone else. The question remains then, where did Israel acquire it?

G. Ernest Wright has proposed an answer to this question in his book, The Old Testament Against Its Environment.¹ It is Wright's thesis that Israel's faith was so unique and sui generis that it could not have been developed from any natural evolutionary process from the surrounding pagan world. This paper has shown him to be correct when he asserts that a study of environment and development has not established a fixed starting point for Israel's unique concept of God.² Therefore he assumes that the only avenue of approach left to explain Israel's uniqueness is through what he calls, her "primary elements."³ These primary elements

¹G. Ernest Wright, The Old Testament Against Its Environment, (London: SCM Press, 1962).

²Ibid., p. 7.

³Ibid., p. 16ff.

are: (1) the power of Israel's God was known because of what He had done, i.e., the Exodus events. (2) Israel was also able to recognize God's dealings with her fathers. Thus Wright believes that Israel's knowledge of God was based or inferred from historical events.

Wright believes that Israel was able to make a distinction in her perception of events and nature that her pagan neighbors were unable to make. He believes that Israel was able to make this distinction in her interpretation of her historic experiences because she knew to do so almost intuitively.⁴ He explains, "They recognized their God in the first instance as authoritative and decisive power."⁵ Thus "the point where that power was apprehended led them to an entirely different faith from that of the polytheist."⁶ The problem of life that Israel faced was not an integration with the forces of nature, but rather an adjustment to the will of God who had chosen the nation. These facts then together constitute the basis of the Israelite mutation⁷ which cannot be comprehended through the metaphor of growth.⁸

⁴Ibid., p. 23.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid.

⁷"Mutation" is a radical revolution, as opposed to evolution, which is not entirely explainable by the empirical data. Ibid., p. 15.

⁸Ibid., p. 28.

Wright concludes, "These distinctive elements are the primary data of the Old Testament, that something in early Israel which predisposed and predetermined the course of Biblical history."⁹ Wright's answer to the explanation for Israel's unique perspective is the nation's interpretation of history. He believes that history is the chief medium of revelation.¹⁰

The "revelation through history" approach is presumptuous. It seems highly improbable that Israel would suddenly develop an entirely different concept of the metaphysical realm due to the historic exodus from Egypt and subsequent events. It also seems improbable that the interpretation of history would suddenly develop such a distinct concept of ethics in the Israelites' relationship to the metaphysical realm. Even more unique is Israel's conception of this realm as being "personal" and self-revealing (Ex. 3:14). The Hebrews themselves have given us the reason for their perspective. The most probable answer is that God revealed Himself in a direct, personal way.

⁹Ibid., p. 29.

¹⁰Ibid., pp. 26, 73ff.

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX

These passages containing magical practices were not considered significant enough to treat in detail in the body of this thesis because the metaphysical implications in them are limited or non-existent. This list is not exhaustive, but rather contains references generally cited by biblical scholars.

Gen. 27:33, 37, The blessing of Isaac¹

Gen. 30:14, Mandrakes²

Gen. 35:4, Charms³

Ex. 23:19, Boiling a kid in its mother's milk⁴

Lev. 22:28, Prohibition against killing both the Mother and offspring on the same day⁵

Num. 5:11, 12, Trial by ordeal⁶

Num. 21:6-9, Golden serpent⁷

Num. 21:18, Digging a well with the scepter and staves⁸

Josh. 6, The use of numbers in taking Jericho⁹

Josh. 8:18, Joshua holds his spear against Ai¹⁰

Josh. 10:12-14, A word causes the sun and moon to stand still¹¹

Judg. 13:25, 14:19; 16ff., Samson's hair¹²

Judg. 17:1, Curse¹³

I Sam. 2:29, Evil eye¹⁴

I Sam. 7:6, Pouring water¹⁵

I Sam. 12:16-18, Samuel brings rain¹⁶

- I Sam. 28:9, Evil eye¹⁷
- II Sam. 16:10, Shimei curses David¹⁸
- I Kings 2:8, Curse of Shimei¹⁹
- II Kings 2:4, 8, Elisha parts the Jordan with his cloak²⁰
- II Kings 2:19, 22, Salt heals the water²¹
- II Kings 4:29, 31, Potency in Elisha's rod²²
- II Kings 4:38-41, Meal removes poison from the pot²³
- II Kings 6:5-7, Wood raises the axe head²⁴
- II Kings 13:21, Elisha's bones revive a dead man²⁵
- II Kings 13:14-19, Power given to arrows²⁶
- Job 3:8, Rousing leviathan²⁷
- Prov. 6:12-14, Evil eye and pointing with finger²⁸
- Isa. 58:9, Pointing of the finger²⁹
- Jer. 19-20, Breaking the flask³⁰

¹J. S. Wright, NBD, p. 769; G. Ernest Wright, The Old Testament Against Its Environment (London: SCM Press, 1962), p. 88.

²Ibid., p. 767; W. T. Davies, Magic, Divination, and Demonology Among the Hebrews and Their Neighbors, p. 34; Lods, Israel, p. 217; C. A. Simpson, "Genesis," IBC, p. 705.

³Unger, M. F. Biblical Demonology (Wheaton: Van Kampen Press, Inc., 1952), p. 113.

⁴Davies, op. cit., p. 37; Lods, op. cit., p. 215.

⁵Lods, Israel, p. 215.

⁶Ibid., p. 214; W. R. Smith, Religion of the Semites (London: A. C. Black, 1907), p. 180; Wright, Old Testament Against Its Environment, p. 88.

- ⁷Davies, op. cit., p. 39; Smith, op. cit., p. 183; Kaufmann, Religion of Israel, p. 83.
- ⁸Lods, Israel, p. 215.
- ⁹Kaufmann, op. cit., p. 81.
- ¹⁰Lods, Israel, p. 212.
- ¹¹Kaufmann, op. cit., p. 81.
- ¹²Wright, HBD, p. 768; Ibid., p. 84.
- ¹³Eichrodt, Theology of the Old Testament, p. 173.
- ¹⁴Lods, Israel, p. 212.
- ¹⁵Wright, HBD, p. 768.
- ¹⁶Oesterley and Robinson, Hebrew Religion, p. 75.
- ¹⁷Lods, Israel, p. 769.
- ¹⁸Wright, HBD, p. 769.
- ¹⁹Eichrodt, op. cit., vol. II, p. 69.
- ²⁰Kaufmann, op. cit., p. 81; Oesterley and Robinson, op. cit., p. 75.
- ²¹Kaufmann, op. cit., p. 81; Lods, "Le Role Des Idees Magiques Dans La Mentalite Israelite," in Old Testament Essays, p. 61.
- ²²Lods, Old Testament Essays, p. 61..
- ²³Oesterley and Robinson, op. cit., p. 76.
- ²⁴Ibid., p. 76; Kaufmann, op. cit., p. 81.
- ²⁵Kaufmann, op. cit., p. 81.
- ²⁶Oesterley and Robinson, op. cit., p. 76; Ibid.
- ²⁷Wright, HBD, p. 768.
- ²⁸Lods, Israel, p. 212.
- ²⁹Ibid.
- ³⁰Lods, Old Testament Essays, p. 60.