

Andrews University

Digital Commons @ Andrews University

Dissertations

Graduate Research

2001

The Fatherhood of God: an Exegetical Study From the Hebrew Scriptures

David Russell Tasker
Andrews University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/dissertations>



Part of the [Biblical Studies Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Tasker, David Russell, "The Fatherhood of God: an Exegetical Study From the Hebrew Scriptures" (2001). *Dissertations*. 152.

<https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/dissertations/152>

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate Research at Digital Commons @ Andrews University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Andrews University. For more information, please contact repository@andrews.edu.



Seek Knowledge. Affirm Faith. Change the World.

Thank you for your interest in the

**Andrews University Digital Library
of Dissertations and Theses.**

*Please honor the copyright of this document by
not duplicating or distributing additional copies
in any form without the author's express written
permission. Thanks for your cooperation.*

INFORMATION TO USERS

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps.

ProQuest Information and Learning
300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346 USA
800-521-0600

UMI[®]

Andrews University
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

THE FATHERHOOD OF GOD: AN EXEGETICAL STUDY
FROM THE HEBREW SCRIPTURES

A Dissertation
Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

by

David Russell Tasker

November 2001

UMI Number: 3058319

Copyright 2002 by
Tasker, David Russell

All rights reserved.

UMI[®]

UMI Microform 3058319

Copyright 2002 by ProQuest Information and Learning Company.
All rights reserved. This microform edition is protected against
unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code.

ProQuest Information and Learning Company
300 North Zeeb Road
P.O. Box 1346
Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346

©Copyright by David Russell Tasker 2002
All Rights Reserved

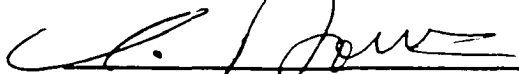
THE FATHERHOOD OF GOD: AN EXEGETICAL STUDY
FROM THE HEBREW SCRIPTURES

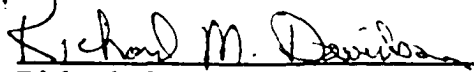
A dissertation
presented in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
Doctor of Philosophy

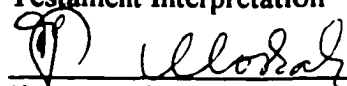
by

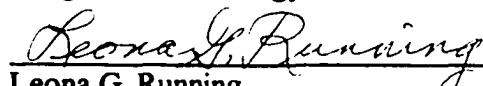
David Russell Tasker

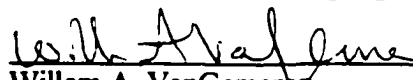
APPROVAL BY THE COMMITTEE:

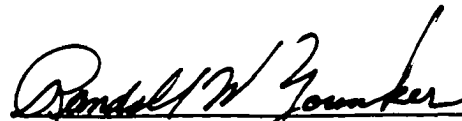

Faculty Adviser,
Jacques B. Doukhan
Professor of Hebrew and Old Testament
Exegesis

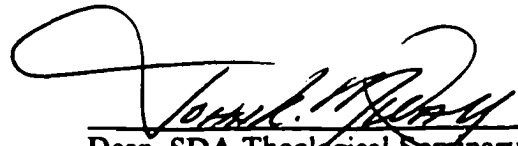

Richard M. Davidson
J. N. Andrews Professor of Old
Testament Interpretation

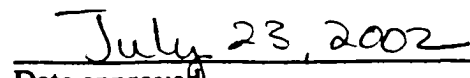

Jiff Moskala
Associate Professor of Old Testament
Exegesis and Theology


Leona G. Running
Professor of Biblical Languages, Emerita


Willem A. VanGemeren
Professor of Old Testament and Semitic
Studies
Trinity Evangelical Divinity School


Director, Ph.D./Th.D. Program
Randall W. Younker


Dean, SDA Theological Seminary
John K. McVay


Date approved

ABSTRACT

THE FATHERHOOD OF GOD: AN EXEGETICAL STUDY
FROM THE HEBREW SCRIPTURES

by

David Russell Tasker

Adviser: Jacques B. Doukhan

ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Dissertation

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Title: THE FATHERHOOD OF GOD: AN EXEGETICAL STUDY FROM THE
HEBREW SCRIPTURES

Name of researcher: David Russell Tasker

Name and degree of faculty adviser: Jacques B. Doukhan, D.H.L., Th.D.

Date completed: November 2001

The purpose of this dissertation is to develop a theology of the fatherhood of God from the Hebrew Scriptures. Although many studies have explored the topic from the perspective of other disciplines, the actual theology of God's fatherhood, as revealed in the Hebrew Scriptures, has been neglected until now. This has resulted in the dichotomization between the concept of God as presented in the so-called Old and New Testaments.

Because of the tendency to explain God through the lenses of Greek and Roman mythology, chapter 1 surveys ANE thought, showing that the fatherhood of God concept goes back a lot further, and is more pervasive, than the more modern mythologies seem to

indicate. However, although similar terms and concepts are found (e.g., creative, salvific, kind, compassionate, merciful, etc.), the relationship they enjoyed with humans was not nearly as personal, intimate, or widespread as the relationship God enjoys with His “children.”

The eighteen occurrences of God’s fatherhood explicitly mentioned in Scripture are exegeted in chapter 2. These texts are grouped together in the “Song of Moses” (Deut 32), the “Vision of Nathan” (2 Sam 7; 1 Chr 17; 22; 28; and 29), in the Psalms and Wisdom Literature (Pss 68; 89; 103; and Prov 3), and in the prophets (Isa 63; 64; Jer 3; 31; Mal 1; and 2). The theological themes within them are discussed in chapter 3, arriving at a picture of God that is passionately involved with His individual children.

One of the main contributions of this dissertation is that it explores God’s fatherhood from a theocentric perspective, rather than an anthropocentric one. However, the implications of this view of God impact human experience, since the attributes of God’s fatherhood found in the Hebrew Scriptures provide researchers and practitioners in family dynamics a positive, multidimensional, role model for human fatherhood.

*Dedicated to
the loving memory of my father,
Frederick John Tasker,
who tried to do his best
with what he had*

*And to my mother,
Irene May Ekdahl,
whose simple abiding faith kept her
through the Great Depression,
a world war, seven children,
and two difficult husbands*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS	viii
LIST OF TABLES	viii
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	ix
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	xiii
INTRODUCTION	1
Background of the Problem	1
Statement of the Problem	10
Purpose of the Research	11
Delimitations	12
Methodology	13
Chapter	
I. THE FATHERHOOD OF THE GODS IN ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN LITERATURE	16
Sumer-Akkad	17
Sumerian Cosmogony	17
Sumerian Father Gods	20
An	20
Enlil	21
Enki	27
Nanna	32
Utu	33
God-Human Relationship	34
Conclusion	37
Akkadian Developments	41
Enuma Elish	42
Other Literature	45
Conclusion	46
Egypt	47

The Development of Father Deities	47
Heliopolis	48
Memphis	60
Thebes	64
Conclusion	69
Ugarit	75
Ugarit and Its Pantheon	75
Father El	76
As Creator	76
As Father-god	78
As Bull	84
As King	86
Characteristics of El	88
Kindness, Compassion, and Mercy	88
Laughter and Grief	89
Drunkenness	90
Apparent Ineptitude	91
Baal and El	92
Baal's House	94
Conclusion	94
Conclusion	98
II. GOD AS FATHER IN THE OLD TESTAMENT	105
The Song of Moses	106
Text—Deut 32:6	106
Linguistic Analysis	107
Literary Context	112
Historical Setting	116
Conclusion	118
The Vision of Nathan	119
2 Samuel 7	121
Text (vss. 12-14)	121
Linguistic Analysis	122
Literary Context	123
1 Chronicles	125
Wider Literary Context	125
1 Chr 17:13	127
Text (vss.11-13)	127
Linguistic analysis	128
Literary context	129
1 Chr 22:10	131
Text (vss. 9-10)	131

Linguistic analysis	131
Literary context	132
1 Chr 28:6	135
Text (vss. 6-7)	135
Linguistic analysis	135
Literary context	140
1 Chr 29:10	141
Text (vss.10-12)	141
Linguistic analysis	141
Literary context	143
Historical Setting	146
Conclusion	148
Hymnic and Wisdom Literature	152
Text (vss. 5-7 [4-6])	153
Linguistic Analysis	154
Literary Context	155
Historical Setting	160
Conclusion	163
Ps 89:27[26]	163
Text (vss. 27-29[26-28])	163
Linguistic Analysis	164
Literary Context	167
Historical Setting	171
Conclusion	172
Ps 103:11-14	174
Text (vss. 11-14)	174
Linguistic Analysis	174
Literary Context	176
Historical Setting	182
Conclusion	183
Prov 3:11-12	185
Text (vss. 3:11-12)	185
Linguistic Analysis	186
Literary Context	187
Historical Setting	194
Conclusion	196
The Prophets	197
Isa 63:16; 64:7[8]	197
Text (63:16; 64:7[8])	197
Linguistic Analysis	197
Literary Context	198
Historical Setting	204
Conclusion	205

Jer 3:4-5, 19-20; 31:7-9	206
Text (Jer 3:4-5)	206
Linguistic analysis	207
Text (Jer 3:19-20)	208
Linguistic analysis	209
Text (Jer 31:7-9)	209
Linguistic analysis	210
Literary Context of the Book	211
Context of chap. 3	213
Context of chap. 31	215
Historical Setting	218
Conclusion	218
Mal 1:6; 2:10	220
Text (1:6)	220
Text (2:10-11)	220
Linguistic Analysis	221
Literary Context	223
Historical Setting	228
Conclusion	230
Conclusion	230
III. A BIBLICAL THEOLOGY OF FATHERHOOD	237
What the Fatherhood of God Teaches About God	238
In Creation	239
Distinct from Creation	240
Relationship with Humanity	240
Universal Fatherhood	242
Credentials for Divine Fatherhood	244
In Covenant	245
Historic Deeds	247
Descriptors of the father-God	249
The Rock	249
The eagle	252
Divine qualities	254
The People's Response	257
Discipline	257
Nature of the Father-God's discipline	258
Mode of discipline	259
Educative role of discipline	260
Punishment without rejection	261
Intimacy and Care	263

At the <i>Eschaton</i>	266
What the Fatherhood of God	
Teaches about Humanity	269
Humans as “Sons”	270
Election-Covenant	270
“Sonship” a Spiritual relationship	273
Endemic Human Ingratitude	275
Humans as Fathers: What the Fatherhood of God	277
Teaches about Human Fatherhood	277
Life and Hope	278
A Safe Place	279
Space for Growth	279
Identity	280
Discipline	281
“Covenant Faithfulness”	281
Intimacy and Care	282
Conclusion	283
 CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS	 285
Summary	285
Father-gods in the ANE	285
Sumer-Akkad	285
Egypt	287
Ugarit	288
Father-God in the Old Testament	290
The Song of Moses	291
The Vision of Nathan	292
Hymnic and Wisdom Literature	294
The Prophets	298
Conclusions	302
Implications	304
Recommendations for Further Study	306
 SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY	 307

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

1. The early Sumerian Pantheon	19
2. Babylonian Pantheon	44
3. Ancient Egypt	48
4. The Ennead of Heliopolis	57
5. Partial Ugaritic Pantheon	77

LIST OF TABLES

1. Comparison of Intertextual Verbal Links	137
2. Comparison of Verbal Links Between the Chronicles Texts	144

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AB	Anchor Bible Commentary
ANE	Ancient Near East/ern
<i>ANET</i>	<i>Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament</i> , Pritchard, ed.
<i>BASOR</i>	<i>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research</i>
<i>BDB</i>	<i>A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> , Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, eds.
BE	Babylonian Expedition of the University of Pennsylvania, Series A: Cuneiform Texts
BHS	Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia, 4 th ed., 1990
<i>Bib</i>	<i>Biblica</i>
BM	British Museum
<i>BR</i>	<i>Bible Review</i>
<i>BT</i>	<i>Bible Translator</i>
<i>BW</i>	<i>Biblical World</i>
BZAW	Beiheft zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
CAT	The Cuneiform Alphabetic Texts from Ugarit, Dietrich, Loretz, and Sanmartin, eds.
CBC	Cambridge Bible Commentary
<i>CBQ</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>

CH	Code of Hammurabi
<i>CJT</i>	<i>Canadian Journal of Theology</i>
CTA	Corpus des tablettes en cunéiformes alphabétiques découvertes à Ras Shamra-Ugarit de 1929 à 1939, Herdner, ed.
<i>CTM</i>	<i>Currents in Theology and Mission</i>
<i>CTR</i>	<i>Criswell Theological Review</i>
<i>ÉetT</i>	<i>Église et Théologie</i>
<i>ETL</i>	<i>Ephemerides Theologica Lovanienses</i>
ETSS	Evangelical Theological Society Studies
<i>Exp Tim</i>	<i>Expository Times</i>
HAV	Hugo Radau, "Miscellaneous Texts from the Temple Library at Nippur," in <i>Hilprecht Anniversary Volume</i>
<i>HTR</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
<i>HUCA</i>	<i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i>
ICC	International Critical Commentary
<i>ISBE</i>	<i>International Standard Bible Encyclopedia</i> , Bromiley, ed.
ITC	International Theological Commentary
<i>JAAR</i>	<i>Journal of the American Academy of Religion</i>
<i>JANES</i>	<i>Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society</i>
<i>JAOS</i>	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JETS</i>	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
<i>JNES</i>	<i>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</i>

JPS	Jewish Publication Society, Torah Commentary
<i>JSOT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
JSOTSS	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament, Supplement Series
<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
KTU	Die keilalphabetischen Texte aus Ugarit, Dietrich, Loretz, and Sanmartin, eds.
Ni.	Tablets excavated at Nippur in the collections of the Istanbul Archaeological Museum
NCBC	New Century Bible Commentary
NICOT	New International Commentary on the Old Testament
OTL	Old Testament Library
<i>RA</i>	<i>Revue d'Assyriologie et d'Archéologie Orientale</i>
Raw	The Cuneiform Inscriptions of Western Asia, Henry Rawlinson, 5 vols., 1861-1884
<i>RHR</i>	<i>Revue de l'Histoire des Religions</i>
<i>RR</i>	<i>Reformed Review</i>
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature
<i>SR</i>	<i>Studies in Religion Sciences Religieuses</i>
<i>SvEA</i>	<i>Svensk Exegetisk Årsbok</i>
<i>TB</i>	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>
TDOT	Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament, Botterweck and Ringgrin, eds.
TOTC	Tyndale Old Testament Commentary
<i>TZ</i>	<i>Theologische Zeitschrift</i>

<i>UBL</i>	<i>Ugaritisch-biblische Literatur</i>
<i>UF</i>	<i>Ugarit-Forschungen</i>
Ut.	Utterance, Pyramid Text
<i>VT</i>	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
<i>WTJ</i>	<i>Westminster Theological Journal</i>
<i>ZAW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
Zimmern	Sumerische Kultlieder aus altbabylonischer Zeit, Heinrich Zimmern, Leipzig, 1912-1913

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This dissertation has enjoyed the support of a number of people whom I would like to publicly thank. My major professor, Dr. Jacques Doukhan, has provided me with a passion for the exegesis of the Hebrew Scriptures for which I shall always be grateful. The other members of my committee, Drs. Richard Davidson and Jiří Moskala, have reinforced that passion, and I count myself fortunate to have these men as my mentors. I was especially privileged to benefit from the scholarship of Dr. Leona Running, my fourth reader, and Dr. Willem VanGemen, my external examiner, who made himself available at a time least convenient to himself.

Dorothy Show, secretary for the Old Testament Department in the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, was always there to encourage flagging spirits and to facilitate meetings with my committee members during their most hectic schedules. Mabel Bowen, secretary responsible for the Ph.D./Th.D. students, was also a major source of encouragement during the entire process. A big “Thanks” too to Bonnie Proctor, dissertation secretary, for her meticulous care in the final stages.

To Dr. Gerhard Pfandl, who initiated the process, and to the officers of the South Pacific Division of Seventh-day Adventists, who graciously provided the sponsorship, I would like to record my enduring gratitude. Your confidence in me was a calculated risk, but I believe many people will be enriched by the investment.

I am especially thankful to my family. My lovely wife, Carol, as well as maintaining her role as wife and mother, also pursued doctoral studies, defending her dissertation a month after I defended mine. Our elder son, Nathan, with his new bride, Janel, together with Steve, our younger son, have not only survived their parents' submersion into academia, but have been more than supportive and positive during the completion of their own undergraduate studies.

Among the many others who gave us moral support, I would like to single out the South Pacific Club, who provided much-needed sanity breaks; Bob Bates, who gave helpful suggestions for the Egyptian section; the library staff at James White Library for their unstinting assistance; fellow doctoral students for their camaraderie; and the Pioneer Memorial Church family and pastoral staff for their spiritual nurture.

While thanking all the people mentioned above, in the final analysis, I must accept full responsibility for the contents of this dissertation. I trust that it will be a useful tool in grappling with the nature of the Father God.

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Problem

The fatherhood of God is not an easily understood concept. Common perceptions of the metaphor¹ seem to focus on the childhood memories of a dysfunctional father—perhaps because of a prevailing anthropocentric approach to God's fatherhood—attempting to understand it from the perspective of human experience. This negative view of God's fatherhood has been systematized in part by Sigmund Freud, who, inspired by Egyptian and Greek mythology, developed a paradigm that holds fatherhood responsible for a range of guilt neuroses experienced by people throughout the life span.² It is not

¹The epithet "Father" has a "strictly metaphorical meaning" among the Israelites. See Marjo Christina Annette Korpel, *A Rift in the Clouds: Ugaritic and Hebrew Descriptions of the Divine*, UBL 8, Munster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1990), 237. The question may be raised of whether or not this is an anthropomorphism. David A. Pailin admits that anthropomorphism is a complex issue, which on one level may be considered to be the general character of all thought and expression. David A. Pailin, *The Anthropological Character of Theology: Conditioning Theological Understanding* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 34. Although God's face, eyes, mouth, ears, arm, hand, and feet are mentioned in Scripture, "anything approaching a head-to-toe description of the divine physique would be unimaginable in the context of the Hebrew Bible." Stephen D. Moore, "Gigantic God: Yahweh's Body," *JSOT* 70 (1996): 97. David Clines warns of the antithetical dangers of simplistic OT anthropomorphism on the one hand, and NT exposition that "evaporates" all things into "spirit," "light," and "love," on the other. David Clines, "Yahweh and the God of Christian Theology," *Theology* 83 (Sept. 1980): 330, n. 6.

²Sigmund Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, trans. Katherine Jones, International Psycho-Analytical Library 33 (London: Hogarth, 1951), 187-189. His hypothesis that all moral authority springs from the father impugns God with the responsibility for human dysfunction. Annemarie Ohler observes that "The broad aftereffect of the Freudian Hypothesis about the 'Oedipus Complex' has contributed in no small measure to the darkening of the image of the father." The son can only succeed if he "kills" his father, a "law of nature" that suggests that a son cannot

surprising then that the concept of the Fatherhood of God has been called the Achilles' heel¹ of the Judeo-Christian religion.

A second challenge to the fatherhood of God arises from the feminist movement which builds upon and expands the work of Freud. The most prominent of these is Mary Daly, who, in her magnum opus *Beyond God the Father*, takes Freud's theories to their logical conclusions and blames fatherhood for the self-alienation that produces rape, genocide, and war.²

The various attempts to define the fatherhood of God provoke the question—can the fatherhood of God be credibly defined in terms of psychology, sociology, anthropology, or some other secular discipline, without solid exegetical input from the Hebrew Scriptures themselves? Unfortunately, since the Renaissance, “there has long been a certain traditional resistance among many western Europeans to any close links between Semitic and Indo-European material,”³ resulting in Greek philosophical ideas

succeed without first disposing of his father in some way. In answer to this, Ohler suggests that Freud should have visited America, where fathers (as described by Alexis de Tocqueville, a young aristocratic Frenchman in 1830) actively encourage sons to strike out on their own, in contrast to the continental practice of fathers tightly reining in their sons until after their own retirement. Annemarie Ohler. *The Bible Looks at Fathers*, trans. Omar Kaste (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1999), xix.

¹Robert Hamerton-Kelly. *God the Father: Theology and Patriarchy in the Teaching of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 5-7.

²Mary Daly. *Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation* (Boston: Beacon, 1973), 114-122. She could have made a much stronger case if she had not appealed to Greek mythology, for in so doing she legitimizes Augustine's use of Plato to arrive at the conclusion of the woman only being complete in the man.

³Stephanie Dalley. “Gilgamesh in the Arabian Nights.” in *Gilgamesh: A Reader*, ed. John Maier (Wauconda, IL: Bolchazy-Carducci, 1997), 216. When Dalley refers to “Indo-European material” she means the classics from the Greco-Roman period.

being read back into biblical understandings of fatherhood. Is it reasonable, therefore, to allow this ancient source of wisdom (i.e., Hebrew Scripture) to speak for itself on its own terms?

The need for this is highlighted by the observation that God as Father touches the “quick of Christian Doctrine,”¹ and that “the Christian religion like every other religion stands or falls by its conception of God, and to that conception of God the idea of the Fatherhood of God is integral.”² In other words, this is not just another idea peripheral to the central core of biblical teaching, and needs to be recognized as such.

Origen, writing near the commencement of the Christian era, recognizes that the fatherhood of God lies at the heart of the Christian faith, yet he does not make it a topic of systematic analysis, and often uses the metaphor merely as a synonym for God.³ He does, however, link middle Platonist and biblical ideas in his attempts to define God and the world,⁴ and in so doing is the first theologian to attempt an analysis of God as Father. He basically draws a contrast between God as portrayed in the Hebrew Scriptures and by Greek philosophy, and the Christian Father-God—before whom humans stand in love rather than fear.⁵ However, it is not until Athanasius in the fourth century that the

¹Johannes Baptist Metz and Edward Schillebeeckx, in the preface to their book, *God as Father?* trans. John Maxwell, Concilium: Religion in the Eighties, vol. 143, no. 3 (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1981), vii.

²William Boothby Selbie, *The Fatherhood of God* (New York: Scribners, 1936), 11.

³Peter Widdicombe, *The Fatherhood of God from Origen to Athanasius*, Oxford Theological Monographs, ed. J. Day et al. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 7.

⁴*Ibid.*, 9.

⁵*Ibid.*, 253.

fatherhood of God becomes an issue of sustained discussion, more for the purpose of debate on the trinity and as a polemic against Arius and the Alexandrian school than an investigation of the Fatherhood of God per se¹—a position filled out by his successors, notably the Cappadocian fathers and Augustine.²

In other words, from the time of Origen on, discussion of the fatherhood of God served mainly to explain the metaphysics of the Godhead. And under gnostic influence, and with the tools of Graeco-oriental theology, the early church fathers saw to it that a great gulf was fixed between God and the universe³—an understanding that was maintained by the Protestant Reformers centuries later. For example, Luther portrayed God as a “consuming fire,”⁴ inflicting punishment in a “fatherly spirit,”⁵ and as an “iron wall, against which we cannot bump without destroying ourselves.”⁶ Similarly, Calvin declared that no “ruined” man “will ever perceive God to be a Father,”⁷ and that humans

¹Ibid., 1, 136, 159-160.

²Ibid., 255.

³Selbie, *Fatherhood of God*, 66.

⁴Martin Luther, “Lectures on Isaiah, Chapters 1-39,” trans. Herbert J. A. Bouman, in *Luther's Works*, vol. 16, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan (Saint Louis: Concordia, 1969), 55.

⁵Ibid., 54.

⁶Martin Luther, “Selected Psalms I,” trans. L. W. Spitz Jr., in *Luther's Works*, vol. 12, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan (Saint Louis: Concordia, 1955), 312. Luther describes the impossibility of humans approaching God “naked,” i.e., unclothed without Christ. Martin Luther, “First Lectures on the Psalms II, Psalms 76-126,” in *Luther's Works*, vol. 11, ed. Hilton C. Oswald, trans. Herbert J. A. Bouman (Saint Louis: Concordia, 1976), 208-209.

⁷John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. John Allen, vol. 1 (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Christian Education, 1936), 51.

may only call God “Father” because He is Christ’s father.¹ Calvin’s systematized theological structure was founded on the contrast between God’s sovereignty and human remoteness,² and the ideas of atonement and God’s fatherhood were seen as forensically incompatible.³

In an attempt to distance themselves from the “old light” of Calvinism that cast God in the figure of an autocrat,⁴ Clarke, Peabody, and Rauschenbusch helped formulate a “social gospel” in the latter part of the nineteenth century in which God is the Father of mankind, and all men are brothers. These new “liberal” ideas about God were the culmination of an evolving universal belief that had been developing for centuries,⁵ and were hotly debated between the Reverend Dr. Rob S. Candlish,⁶ who argued for the

¹John Calvin, *Tracts and Treatises on the Doctrine and Worship of the Church*, vol. 2, trans. Henry Beveridge (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1958), 40.

²Selbie, *Fatherhood of God*, 75.

³*Ibid.*, 72.

⁴Janet Forsythe Fishburn, *The Fatherhood of God and the Victorian Family: The Social Gospel in America* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982), 136-139. This was based on the parable of the prodigal son (to the exclusion of all other parables) to focus on God’s patience, pity, and willingness to forgive; *ibid.*, 140.

⁵Washington Gladden, *How Much Is Left of the Old Doctrines? A Book for the People* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1899), 23. Gladden spoke of the universal hunger for a God whom people can know and love; *ibid.* Particularly pertinent in this regard is Walter Lippmann’s observation that the God of medieval Christianity is like a great feudal lord, duty-bound to treat his vassals well; the God of the Enlightenment is a constitutional monarch who reigns but does not govern; and the God of Modernism is the sum total of the laws of nature, or some kind of deified constitutionalism. Walter Lippmann, *Preface to Morals* (New York: Macmillan, 1929), 54-55; quoted in Harriet Crabtree, *The Christian Life: Traditional Metaphors and Contemporary Theologies*, Harvard Dissertations in Religion 29, ed. Margaret R. Miles and Bernadette J. Broonen (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 6.

⁶Reverend Dr. Rob S. Candlish, *The Fatherhood of God: Being the First Course of the Cunningham Lectures* (Edinburgh: Adam and Charles Black, 1867). See, for example, p. 117.

universality of God's fatherhood, and Professor Thomas J. Crawford,¹ who argued that only in Christ can a person call God "Father." Charles H. H. Wright² supported Crawford by arguing that the final death of the wicked at the *eschaton* is proof that God's fatherhood does not apply to all, and that a child of God is required to be "blameless and harmless" before it is possible to be called the child of God.³ This is a revival of Origen's idea that only a person who is free from sin has the right to call God "Father."⁴

Coming into the twentieth century, the fatherhood of God motif attracts little attention until feminist theology makes its debut.⁵ As Catherina Halkes observes, "it is hardly possible to call to mind a single feminist theologian, whatever her phase of development may be, who does not find the image of the Father-God a challenge and a direct confrontation."⁶

¹Professor Thomas J. Crawford, *The Fatherhood of God: Considered in Its General and Special Aspects and Particularly in Relation to the Atonement, with a Review of Recent Speculations on the Subject, and a Reply to the Strictures of Dr. Candlish* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons, 1868). See, for example, p. 275.

²Charles H. H. Wright, *The Fatherhood of God and Its Relation to the Person and Work of Christ, and the Operations of the Holy Spirit* (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1867). See especially chap. 6, pp. 79-97.

³*Ibid.*, 193-194.

⁴Widdicombe, *Fatherhood of God from Origen to Athanasius*, 109. That person assumes a new ontological condition that makes him/her constitutionally incapable of sinning; *ibid.*, 103.

⁵Liberation theology used it in its attempt to avoid "speculative philosophical language" about God the Father, portraying him rather as "the merciful Father who is revealed to the simple" as "our solicitous, infinitely able Parent." Ronaldo Muñoz, "God the Father," trans. Robert R. Barr, in *Mysterium Liberationis: Fundamental Concepts of Liberation Theology*, ed. Ignacio Allacuria and Jon Sobrino (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1993), 406, 413.

⁶Catherina Halkes, "The Themes of Protest in Feminist Theology against God the Father," trans. David Smith, in *God as Father?* 103. The antipathy against God arose from a perceived hierarchical and patriarchal authoritarian structure based on the Lord-God, father of all, who

Added to this are certain elements of Christian culture, sanctified by the ages, that define the very being of women, that are invariably linked to the fatherhood of God.

Arlene Swidler, for example, recounts a common theological misconception that "the order of creation alone is sufficient to declare women less godlike and thus inferior."¹

Added to this is the traditional male dominance of the church, which Annemarie Ohler describes by observing that nowhere do elements of patriarchalism live on more strongly than in the church.² Women are said to relate to God only secondarily, through their husbands.³

The resultant depth of feeling has become so strong among the feminists, that some see little point in deriving original meaning from God's fatherhood anymore, preferring to deal with the situation as it has developed. Dorothee Sölle states: "I am not concerned here with the way this symbolic representation originated in history, nor with its original meaning. I want to look at how it operated in history, and what happened once it

directed the "Holy Father," ecclesiastical head of pastoral rulers and spiritual "fathers," then on down to the prince, "father of his country" (i.e., ruler over the fatherland), finally to the father over a family, head over his wife, and owner of his children, i.e., "Authority and right come from above; obedience, dependence and reliance operate below." Jürgen Moltmann, "The Motherly Father: Is Trinitarian Patripassianism Replacing Theological Patriarchalism?" trans. G. W. S. Knowles, in *God as Father?* 52.

¹Arlene Swidler, "The Image of a Woman in a Father-Oriented Religion," in *God as Father?* 76.

²Ohler, *Bible Looks at Fathers*, xxiii.

³Rosemary Radford Ruether, "The Female Nature of God: A Problem in Contemporary Religious Life," in *God as Father?* 61. She refers to a statement by Augustine in which he says that although man with woman is in the image of God, and the man alone is also in the image of God, the woman alone is not; see Augustine *The Trinity*, vol. 12, 10; quoted in Edmund Hill, *The Trinity: Introduction, Translation and Notes*, The Works of Saint Augustine, Part I, vol. 5, ed. John E. Rotelle (Brooklyn: New City Press, 1991), 328.

was established.”¹ In sympathy with this pain, Hamerton-Kelly suggests that because the symbol of God as Father is so historically conditioned, it may be necessary to think of a new symbol, “one which expresses the joyous liberty of the faith-relationship with a loving sustainer more adequately than Freud’s fate-laden ‘Father’” and one that is more sympathetic to the needs of women in this post-patriarchal era.”²

However, the original meaning cannot be so easily avoided. Sölle, for example, admits that symbols for God that are taken from family life can be liberating,

not because they cushion the inimical and oppressive features of patriarchalism, but because they integrate us with nature and the human family. Then calling God ‘father’ is no longer a matter of sociological exploitation, of fixing people in predetermined social roles and endorsing a false dependency; it will no longer be used to turn childlikeness into infantilism. It will rather enable us to have confidence in that life which transcends our own lifetime.³

One final challenge to the concept of God’s fatherhood is the popular misconception that “the idea of God as Father is essentially a New Testament concept.”⁴ In modern times, this opinion can be traced to the influential Wilhelm Bousset,⁵ who laid the foundations on which his student Rudolf Bultmann built,⁶ in turn influencing a

¹Dorothee Sölle. “Paternalistic Religion as Experienced by Women.” trans. T. L. Westow. in *God as Father?* 69.

²Hamerton-Kelly. *God the Father in the Bible*. 96.

³Sölle. *Paternalistic Religion as Experienced by Women*. 74.

⁴See, for example, Thomas McGovern. “John Paul II on the Millennium and God as Father.” *Homiletic and Pastoral Review* 99, no. 7 (April 1999): 9.

⁵Wilhelm D. Bousset. *Jesu Predigt in ihrem Gegensatz zum Judentum: Ein religionsgeschichtlicher Vergleich* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht. 1892).

⁶See especially Rudolf Bultmann. *Primitive Christianity in Its Contemporary Setting*. trans. R. H. Fuller (New York: Meridian. 1956).

generation of New Testament scholars, including Joachim Jeremias,¹ the scholar most responsible for the current popular view.² The present-day understanding generally seems to be that the fatherhood of God is shown to have a far deeper significance in the NT,³ and is “thin and underdeveloped” in the OT.⁴ Underlying this misconception is the presupposition that contrasts the view of God in the NT as a benevolent Father with the ruling master of the OT, using the writings of Paul in Rom 8:15, who compares the “spirit of servitude and fear” with the “spirit of adoption” as sons.⁵

Therefore it is refreshing to be reminded that in the struggle of determining the origins of Christ’s use of the term “Father” for God, positions have been overstated in an attempt to prove a point, thereby significantly muddying the waters of the origins of the concept: “The facts are clear and indisputable. The Fatherhood of God is a characteristically Jewish doctrine, found in equal abundance in the Old Testament and in Rabbinic literature.”⁶

¹See especially, Joachim Jeremias, *The Prayers of Jesus* (Naperville: Allenson, 1967).

²W. E. Nunnally, “The Fatherhood of God at Qumran” (Ph.D diss., Hebrew Union College, 1992), 235.

³G. W. Bromiley, “God,” *ISBE*, 3rd ed., vol. 2, 1982, 501; Evert J. Blekkink, *The Fatherhood of God: Considered from Six Inter-Related Standpoints* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1942), 32.

⁴J. D. W. Watts, “God the Father,” *ISBE*, vol. 2, 510. See also, Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah: The English Text, with Introduction, Exposition and Notes*, vol. 3, Chapters 40 through 66, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), 488.

⁵Cf. G. Ernest Wright, “The Terminology of Old Testament Religion and Its Significance,” *JNES* 1 (Jan.-Oct. 1942): 404.

⁶Frederick John Foakes-Jackson and Kirsopp Lake, *The Beginnings of Christianity: Part I. The Acts of the Apostles*, vol. 1 (London: MacMillan, 1942), 401.

More recently, Marianne Meye Thompson has stated that the chief feature of the portraits of God as Father in the Old and New Testaments is marked more by continuity than by discontinuity,¹ a view consistent with the findings of Nunnally in his review of unpublished prayers, psalms, wisdom literature, and legal testaments from Qumran, which he compares with the midrashic and liturgical texts of early Judaism.²

Statement of the Problem

Very little exegesis of the explicit "God is a Father" texts found in the Old Testament has been undertaken by biblical scholars to date. Although theologians have written about God the Father for centuries, it has been largely Christological, rather than on the Father-God motif, so that there has been little apparent progress in understanding the concept, and by default it has assumed increasingly negative connotations.

In an age when metanarratives³ are being exchanged for pluralistic paradigms⁴

¹Marianne Meye Thompson. *The Promise of the Father: Jesus and God in the New Testament* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2000), 19.

²Nunnally. *Fatherhood of God at Qumran*, 238-239. In this seminal work, Nunnally examines both published and unpublished Qumranic material, and shows quite conclusively that the Judaism of that era enjoyed a personal relationship with the Father-God.

³The term was coined by Jean-François Lyotard; see Theodore A. Turnau III, "Speaking in a Broken Tongue: Postmodernism, Principled Pluralism, and the Rehabilitation of Public Moral Discourse," *WTJ* 56 (1994): 347. Richard Rorty defines a metanarrative as a story that describes or predicts the activities of the noumenal self, or the Absolute Spirit, and that purports to justify loyalty to a contemporary community; see his essay "Postmodernist Bourgeois Liberalism" in *Postmodernism: A Reader*, ed. Thomas Docherty (New York: Columbia University, 1993), 325. Docherty suggests some metanarratives are Marx's proposal for universal emancipation, Freudian psychoanalytic therapy/redemption, and constant progress contained in evolutionary Darwinism (see his introduction in *Postmodernism*, 11).

⁴The postmodern phenomenon of reductionism undermines any notion of unitary and coherent truth. Each group of people or information is separated from and made independent of

the concept of the fatherhood of God may seem anachronistic. However, a fresh look is needed to reclaim some of the original depth enjoyed by the ancients that may have been sidetracked by subsequent disciplines, and to give a broader base for exegetes and biblical scholars in coming to terms with this important topic. This in turn may very well enrich present human experience.

Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this dissertation is to develop a theology of the fatherhood of God from the Hebrew Scriptures. Although the fatherhood of God concept may have been dealt with by sociologists, psychologists, and anthropologists, very little has been written about it from an exegetical, Hebrew scriptural perspective. The current study plans to do just that, and in so doing may cover some of the same ground as previous studies, but with the fresh approach of a biblical canonical perspective. This will enable fresh insight into passages previously neglected or taken for granted, and provide a theological explanation for some of the key texts perhaps misapplied by other disciplines.

In addition, it is intended that a survey of the concept of the fatherhood of the gods in ANE literature will assist this research by providing a context for the biblical understanding. The familiarization of prevailing attitudes among the countries of the ANE provides a basis of comparison with the situation in Israel. Was the Hebrew concept of God's fatherhood any different from that of the gods of the surrounding nations? Is the

other groups, so that there are no longer any absolutes that transcend culture: see Turnau, 345-377.

Hebrew concept a simple borrowing of surrounding concepts, or is it perhaps even a polemic against them?

It is therefore the purpose of this research to explore the idea of the fatherhood of God focusing on the intent of the Hebrew writers. This involves the exegesis of each of the specific and explicit biblical verses that uses the motif of father in reference to God. It is anticipated that insights concerning God's fatherhood could not only enrich the way God's fatherhood is viewed, but that it would inform the discussion of fatherhood in general, and that the fatherhood of God may become a model for human fatherhood.

Delimitations

To prevent this study from becoming too expansive, there needs to be a number of clearly defined limits. By its very broad nature, and because of its many ramifications, there is also the need to avoid entering into debate over politically charged issues such as patriarchy and the ordination of women. Nor will I engage in sociological, psychological, anthropological, or philosophical discussion of the topic.

I have avoided discussion of biblical authorship and possible layers of the text, and focus instead on the way the canonical Hebrew Scriptures deal with the topic of God's fatherhood.¹ The biblical verses studied in this dissertation have been chosen on the basis

¹This is a similar approach to what William W. Hallo calls "the contextual approach." William W. Hallo, "Biblical History in Its Near Eastern Setting: The Contextual Approach," in *Scripture in Context: Essays on the Comparative Method*, ed. Carl D. Williams, William W. Hallo, and John B. White, Pittsburgh Theological Monograph Series, Scripture in Context, vol. 34, ed. Dikran Y. Hadadian (Pittsburgh, Pickwick: 1980), 1-26. See also Meir Weiss, *The Bible From Within: The Method of Total Interpretation* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1984), 1-27.

that they are the only ones that deal specifically with God's fatherhood¹ (i.e., God is spoken of as אב).² The discussion of the New Testament contribution to the topic is beyond the scope of this work.

The use of a canonical approach in laying a theological foundation for understanding the nature of God's fatherhood is new. So long as principles of sound exegesis are followed, and the delimitations outlined above are observed, I believe the journey will be a rewarding one.

Methodology

An introductory study of extrabiblical literature is first conducted to ascertain the nature of fatherhood in the ancient world. Then selected passages from the Hebrew Scriptures are examined exegetically to determine the biblical perspective of God³ as a Father. They have been divided into four contextual categories: the "Song of Moses," the vision of Nathan, Hymnic and Wisdom literature, and the prophets.

¹Hamerton-Kelly, 20. suggests there are 11 such occurrences: Deut 32:5; 2 Sam 7:14; 1 Chr 17:13; 22:10; 28:6; Ps 89:26; Jer 3:4-5; 31:9; Isa 63:16; 64:8; Mal 1:6; and Wonyong Jung, *The Divine Father Concept in the Old Testament* (Seoul, Korea: Institute for Theological Research, Korean Sahmyook University, 1997), 3. suggests there are at least 15: Deut 32:6; 2 Sam 7:14; 1 Chr 17:13; 22:10; 28:6; Pss 68:5; 89:26; Isa 63:16 (bis); 64:8; Jer 3:4, 19; 31:9, 20; Mal 1:6; and 2:10. I have added 1 Chr 29:10; Ps 103:13; and Prov 3:12.

²The word "father" does not need to be present to ensure the presence of the Father-God image. Other terms such as God's "begetting" of Israel or portrayal of Israel as the firstborn son of God also suggest God's fatherhood. "However, passages in which the actual term "father" does appear often tend to serve as most helpful avenues into the depiction of God as Father in the Old Testament." Thompson, *The Promise of the Father*, 39.

³The generic name for the Deity of the Hebrew Scriptures is capitalized to distinguish Him from other gods of the ANE.

The first section of chapter 2 deals with the theme of God's fatherhood in the context of the Exodus for no other reason than this is where it first appears in Scripture:¹ in Moses' dialogue with Pharaoh (Ex 4:22-23)² then in the Song of Moses (Deut 32:1-43). Reference is made to verses beyond these delimitations only as they develop the theme of the Fatherhood of God.

Next, God's fatherhood is seen in the context of the covenant He made with David (2 Sam 7:14) and confirmed with Solomon (1 Chr 17:13; 22:10; 28:6; and 29:10). Then the motif is examined as it is found in the hymnic-wisdom literature: Pss 68 6[5]; 89:27[26]; 103:13; and Prov 3:12.

Finally the theme of God's fatherhood as portrayed in the prophets is studied. Four prophetic pericopes are examined, each of which contains verses that specifically speak of God being father, and which coincidentally all have an eschatological orientation. The specific verses involved are Isa 63:16 and 64:8, which are contained in "The prayer of a remembrancer" (63:7-64:12); Jer 3:4 and 19 within the larger "plea for repentance" (3:1-4:4); Jer 31:9 and 20, within Israel's homecoming (7-9) and Rachel's lament (15-22); and Mal 1:6 and 2:10, "questions for priests and people (1:2- 2:16).

¹Wright, *Terminology of Old Testament Religion*, 407: contra (for example). Ohler, *The Bible Looks at Fathers*, 170, who thinks that Jeremiah is the first in the Bible to speak about God as Father, and it is only "rare and late voices" that speak of God as father in the OT: *ibid.*, 205.

²Although this is an allusion to God's fatherhood, it has been excluded (as have all other allusions) from the study because it does not use the word *ba'* (father) to describe God.

The exegetical focus¹ of the study reveals a number of key words, metaphors, concepts, and principles that are examined in turn. Exegesis of the passages includes an analysis of the literary patterns, examination of the textual variants, word studies, intertextuality, syntax, and a brief look at the theology of each unit. After analyzing the text, the concepts, structures, terminology, and principles are synthesized into a biblical theology of fatherhood. Chapter 3 discusses the theology of God's fatherhood and what it teaches both about God and fatherhood itself. Based on the analysis of each contextual unit under study, there will be a discussion as to whether there has been any development of thought, or a continuing consistency. The study is concluded by a summary of the main findings, implications are drawn, and recommendations made for further study.

¹After Walter C. Kaiser. *Toward an Exegetical Theology: Biblical Exegesis for Preaching and Teaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981).

CHAPTER I

THE FATHERHOOD OF THE GODS IN ANCIENT
NEAR EASTERN LITERATURE

The Israelite understanding of God as father did not develop in a sociological or theological vacuum. The surrounding ANE regions of Mesopotamia, Egypt, and Canaan each had a variety of father-figures among their pantheons, and we may assume that as Israel associated with her neighbors, there was a measure of ideological interaction. It would be advantageous therefore to survey the religious texts of Israel's neighbors and gauge the extent of their influence when they called their gods "father," in order to appreciate the biblical contribution in its context.

This introductory study of how the ANE nations viewed their gods as father investigates only the theological landscapes of three great nations/regions—Mesopotamia, Egypt, and Canaan. Recent finds at Ugarit (present-day Ras Shamra) and Sumer give us unprecedented glimpses into the religio-cultural kaleidoscope of Canaan and Mesopotamia during Bible times. Although, strictly speaking, Ugarit is not part of Canaan, because of its close proximity and wealth of material, together with the paucity of data from Canaan itself, I have chosen to sample Ugaritic material to give some indication of Canaanite thought.

In contrast to the dearth of information from Canaan, the extant inscriptions/texts from ancient Egypt provide a wealth of source material. Texts from these traditions are examined, beginning in the third millennium B.C.E. when religious traditions were initially systematized, going through to the end of the second millennium and beyond where necessary, to determine what significance the ancients themselves placed on the father-god appellation.

Sumer-Akkad

Sumerian Cosmogony

Because the Sumerians¹ were the first in recorded history to develop ethical, religious, social, political, and philosophical ideas,² this study of the fatherhood of the gods must commence with them. It is in the sacred stories of the Sumerians that we obtain the first glimpses of ANE cosmogony: the account of the origin of their universe, an introduction to their gods, and the genesis of humanity.³ From this milieu we are able to determine something of Sumerian thought regarding the fatherhood of their deities.

¹Sumer covers the southern half of modern Iraq, from the region of Baghdad to the Persian Gulf. It later became known as Sumer and Akkad, later still as Babylonia, and may have originally been inhabited by colonists who had been an oppressed economic or religious minority, not unlike the first Europeans to settle in America. It may have been their freedom of worship that led to their religious creativity and expression, and later their political organization. See Samuel Noah Kramer, *The Sacred Marriage Rite: Aspects of Faith, Myth, and Ritual in Ancient Sumer* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1969), 3; idem, *From the Poetry of Sumer: Creation, Glorification, Adoration* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), 51-52.

²Samuel Noah Kramer, *History Begins at Sumer: Thirty-nine Firsts in Man's Recorded History* (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 1981), xix.

³Samuel Noah Kramer, *Sumerian Mythology: A Study of Spiritual and Literary Achievement in the Third Millennium B.C.* (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 1972), 30.

Despite their doctrines becoming the “basic creed and dogma of much of the ancient Near East,” nowhere are they systematized.¹ No texts uncovered to date deal specifically with the creation of the universe, possibly because their philosophers had not developed a scientific approach for definition and generalization, so Sumerian cosmogony must be “ferreted out” from myths, epic tales, and hymns.² First there was Nammu, the primeval sea-goddess described as “the mother who gave birth to heaven and earth.” Nothing is said of “her” origin or birth, and perhaps the Sumerians conceived of primeval ocean as having existed eternally. She then births the cosmic mountain, consisting of the entwined gods An and Ki, a united heaven and earth. The god An and goddess Ki produce the air-god, Enlil, who subsequently separates heaven and earth, and while his father An carries off heaven, Enlil carries off his mother Ki, also known as Ninhursag (queen of the cosmic mountain), Ninmah (great queen), or Nintu (queen who gives birth). The union of Enlil and his mother (earth) sets the stage for the organization of the universe—the creation of man, animals, and plants, and the establishment of civilization.³

Here we see the first glimpses of the fatherhood of the gods. We note that the Sumerians considered their first deity as “mother,” and that the gods she produced engendered the other gods of the pantheon. It may be assumed that the pantheon of Sumer was a reflection of the universe in which the Sumerians found themselves, i.e., the

¹Samuel Noah Kramer, *The Sumerians: Their History, Culture, and Character* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), 145.

²Kramer, *History Begins at Sumer*, 75-76.

³Ibid., 82, 83; idem. *Sumerian Mythology*, 39-41.

ground they lived on and the elements that surrounded them—the forces of nature which they personified and identified.¹ As they observed the powers of the elements, they anthropomorphized the raging storm and the tossing sea, the morning mist and the steaming sun, and some of these they identified as father-figures among them. To see the elemental structure of their cosmic understanding, the basic pantheon is shown in fig. 1.

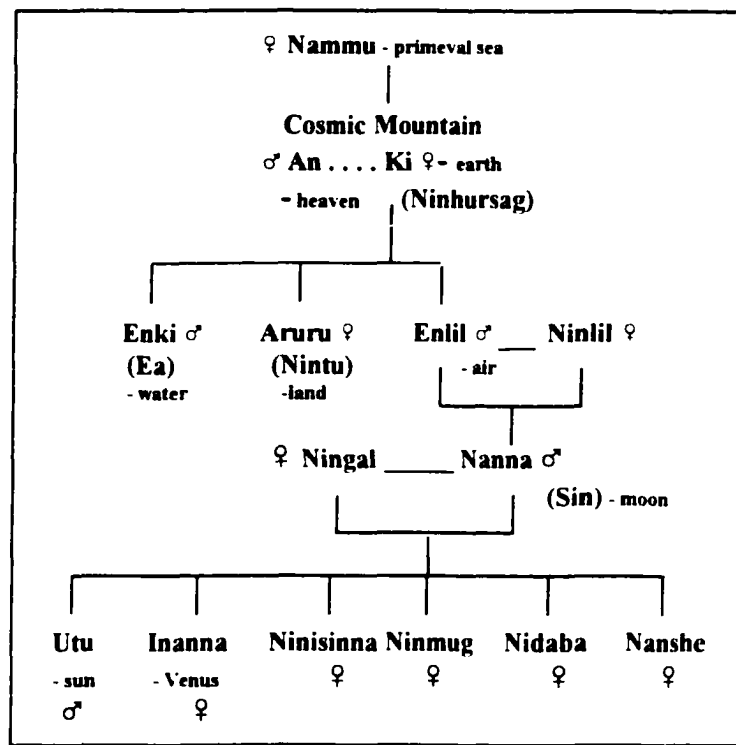


Fig. 1. The early Sumerian pantheon.

¹Wilfred G. Lambert, "Ancient Mesopotamian Gods: Superstition, Philosophy, Theology," *RHR* 207 (Apr.-June 1990): 120.

Sumerian Father Gods

An

Apparently An, or Anu, was originally regarded as the supreme ruler. In the Old Babylonian Version of the Atrahasis Epic (early 2nd millennium B.C.E.), describing pre-human times, “Anu their father was king,”¹ but it appears that Enlil the air-god replaced him,² possibly after the separation of heaven and earth. Before An and Ki were separated, the Sumerians thought that the fecundity of the earth was due in the first instance to the procreative powers of An:

The holy Earth, the pure Earth,
 beautified herself for holy Heaven,
 Heaven, the noble god,
 inserted his sex into the wide Earth,
 Let flow the semen of his heroes,
 Trees and Reed, into her womb,
 The Earthly Orb, the trusty cow,
 was impregnated with the good semen of Heaven.³

The fertility of the earth seen here through the eyes of their pastoral economy is indicative of the “well-nigh obsessive veneration of prosperity and well-being” that pervades all Sumerian literature.⁴ The fathering aspect of the god is seen purely as the prime cause for fertility and prosperity.

But there is more to Sumerian spirituality than just a disguised materialism. In a

¹Stephanie Dalley, *Myths from Mesopotamia: Creation, the Flood, Gilgamesh and Others* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 9.

²Kramer, *History Begins at Sumer*, 88.

³*Disputation Between Tree and Reed*, 5-10; Kramer, *Poetry of Sumer*, 30.

⁴Kramer, *Sacred Marriage Rite*, 50.

hymn written for Ishme-Dagan (a Sumerian king deified during his reign, and who ruled around 2000 B.C.E.), the mother goddess Bau is extolled for caring for the king, and then the king is addressed: “Thy paternal father (*a-a ugu-zu*), Anu the far-famed god, hath clothed thee with the robe of a *sage*.”¹

Here An (Anu) is recognized as the source of wisdom, which he has passed on to the king, possibly giving the monarch cause to claim to be the son of the god. Therefore it could be assumed that father An was not just seen as another cultic fertility symbol, but also as the progenitor and mentor of ancient sages.

Enlil

Enlil was “by far the most important deity” of the Sumerian pantheon, and he was known from the earliest records as “the father of the gods,” “king of heaven and earth,” and “king of all lands.”² He was credited with separating heaven from earth, freeing up the processes of creation that had become somewhat static in the unbroken embrace of earth and sky. In the myth “Creation of the Pickax,” we learn more of this:

The lord whose decisions are unalterable,
Enlil, who brings up the seed of the land from the earth,
Took care to move away heaven from earth,
Took care to move away earth from heaven.³

The significance of his role as progenitor, together with the importance of the

¹Ni 7184. in Stephen Langdon. *Sumerian Liturgical Texts*. Publications of the Babylonian Section. vol. 10. no. 2 (Philadelphia: University Museum. University of Pennsylvania. 1917). 180.

²Kramer, *History Begins at Sumer*, 88.

³Kramer, *Sumerian Mythology*, 40.

peace of the land and the productivity of its crops and herds, is combined in the bull motif. No other pastoral symbol is as striking or as powerful, from the time of Sumer on, as that of the bull. Notice how the bull metaphor is linked to the father motif in the following liturgy to Enlil, dated around 2000 B.C.E.

Exalted one,
 bull that overwhelms, thy name is on the lands,
 Lord of the lands,
 bull that overwhelms, thy name is on the lands,
 Lord of the faithful word,
 bull that overwhelms, thy name is on the lands,
 Enlil, father of the land (*a-a ka-na-ág¹-gá*),
 bull that overwhelms, thy name is on the lands,
 Shepherd of the dark-haired people,
 bull that overwhelms, thy name is on the lands,
 Thou of self-created vision,
 bull that overwhelms, thy name is on the lands,¹

As much as the procreative powers of a bull are concentrated on his cows in their season, so does Enlil focus his powers on the land and its people as “father of the land. bull that overwhelms.”

The creative process continues unabated, with Enlil credited for most of what happens in the creation process:

Without Enlil, the great mountain,
 No cities would be built, no settlements founded,
 No stalls would be built, no sheepfolds established,
 No king would be raised, no high priest born,
 No *mah*-priest, no high priestess would be chosen by sheep omen,
 Workers would have neither controller nor supervisor . . . ,
 The rivers—their flood waters would not bring overflow,
 The fish of the sea would lay no eggs in the canebrake,

¹Zimmern KL II.1-6; in Stephen Langdon, *Sumerian Liturgies and Psalms*. Publications of the Babylonian Section, vol. 10, no. 4 (Philadelphia: University Museum, University of Pennsylvania, 1919), 292.

The birds of heaven would not build nests on the wide earth,
 In heaven the drifting clouds would not yield their moisture,
 Plants and herbs, the glory of the plain, would fail to grow,
 In field and meadow the rich grain would fail to flower,
 The trees planted in the mountain-forest would not yield their fruit. . . .¹

It is significant that Enlil is now being referred to as “the great mountain,” an allusion to the cosmic mountain that arose from the sea, and from which Enlil was thought to have originated. This is another indication that he has indeed superseded the primacy of his father, and now rules as the supreme deity.

Enlil was regarded as a beneficent deity responsible for planning and maintaining the most productive functions of the cosmos: he made the day dawn, brought forth vegetation, and established prosperity for humans by producing prototypes of the pickax and plow. This portrayal is contrary to the “well-versed opinion” that Enlil was violent and destructive. That opinion, according to Kramer, was produced from an accident of archaeology in which, early on, a large cache of tablets was found describing Enlil’s commission by the council of the gods to destroy humanity. In the ensuing years, however, many myths and hymns have been found which picture Enlil as a “friendly, fatherly deity who watches over the safety and well-being of all humans, particularly the inhabitants of Sumer.”²

Like most gods, Enlil was stationed in his own city or cult center, based at the temple dedicated to his name. Enlil’s city was Nippur, and its success and prosperity were directly attributed to “Father Enlil”:

¹“Hymn to Enlil.” in Kramer, *History Begins at Sumer*, 92.

²Kramer, *History Begins at Sumer*, 89.

Nippur—the shrine where dwells the father, the “great mountain,”
 The dais of plenty, the Ekur which rises . . . ,
 The high mountain, the pure place . . . ,
 Its prince, the “great mountain,” Father Enlil,
 Has established his seat on the dais of Ekur, lofty shrine;
 The temple—its divine laws like heaven cannot be overturned
 Its pure rites, like the earth, cannot be shattered,¹

Each temple had its own name. Enlil’s was called the Ekur (“house”), and its divine laws were considered immutable. The same hymn continues to enumerate the blessings due to father Enlil being in residence in his temple:

Its feasts flow with fat and milk, are rich with abundance,
 Its storehouses bring happiness and rejoicing . . . ,
 Enlil’s house, it is a mountain of plenty.²

Because of its significance in maintaining the flow of divine blessing, the temple became a focus for pilgrimages by the gods and humans alike. The reason for the pilgrimage was to plead for peace and prosperity, and the plea was sometimes offered through an intermediary. In the following example the mother goddess (Inanna) was invoked to travel to Nippur to seek Enlil’s blessing on its inhabitants: “To my father (*a-a-mu*), my benefactor, verily I will go; My foot I will lift.”³

It is interesting to note here that Inanna calls her grandfather “father,” suggesting more than just a simple progenitor-seed relationship. She also recognizes his position as leader of the pantheon, as evidenced in another inscription: “Father Enlil has filled me with

¹“Hymn to Enlil.” in Kramer. *History Begins at Sumer*. 91.

²Ibid.

³Ni 15204.30-31. in Langdon. *Sumerian Liturgies and Psalms*. 267.

consternation in my city, Has filled me with consternation in my city Erech.”¹

Inanna blames her “father” for causing her much grief and despair, which may show that then, as now, the father-child relationship was not always a happy one. However, there is more to this than an apparent abusive relationship. Inanna addresses Enlil as father because she has a concern that must be heard at the highest court available to her. She asks “Where is my house?” and her recurrent lament indicates she is not able to get satisfaction from anyone else than from “father” Enlil.

Similarly, although they are brothers, Enki calls Enlil “father” in discussing the introduction of cattle and grain to the earth through the cattle-goddess Lahar and her sister Ashnan, the grain-goddess. Enki defers to his brother, using “father” as a title of authority.² Part of this may be the role of dispenser of wisdom.

We see another example of Enlil’s mediatory fatherhood in the “wisdom” composition, “The Dispute Between Summer (Emesh) and Winter (Enten).” In it we are told that Enlil created two semidivine brothers to bring forth trees and grain in order to establish prosperity on the earth. Each argues about the effectiveness of the other’s work, and the dispute comes before their father:

Father Enlil, you have given me charge of the canals,
I brought the water of abundance,
Farm I made touch farm, heaped high the granaries,
I made grain increase in the furrows,

¹BM 96679.10-11, in Kramer, *Poetry of Sumer*, 92.

²S. N. Kramer notes similarly in a different myth, but one also relating to Enki. “The word ‘father’ here is used as an honorific title and does not denote actual paternity.” See *ANET*, 38, n. 20.

Like Ashnan, the kindly maid, I made it come forth sturdily.¹

Enlil adjudicates and brings resolution to the brothers, and the declaration is made: “the exalted word of Enlil, with meaning profound, whose verdict is unalterable, who dares transgress it!”² The happy resolution concludes with a party at which Emesh presents his brother Enten with conciliatory gifts of gold, silver, and lapis lazuli.³ Father Enlil proves himself to be a wise and able conciliator.

The advocacy aspect of the father god was also applied to the reigning monarch. If peace and prosperity were to be realized, the monarch had to be endowed with divine power and wisdom to ensure the continuing creativity of the gods. Kings boasted that it was Enlil who gave them sovereignty, who prospered their reign and subdued their enemies.⁴ A temple hymn states concerning an unnamed leader: “. . . , the leader (appointed) by father Enlil, the foremost, the lion, whom the Great Mountain has engendered.”⁵ The fact that the king was engendered as well as chosen by the god was double reason to honor his sovereignty. However, it also pointed to the perception of Enlil’s being the divine lawgiver, illustrated in a hymn to Shulgi:⁶

¹“The Dispute Between Summer and Winter.” in Kramer. *The Sumerians*, 219.

²Ibid.

³Kramer. *Sumerian Mythology*, 51

⁴Kramer, *History Begins at Sumer*, 89.

⁵Temple Hymn No. 5—temple of Ninurta at Nibru. in Åke W. Sjöberg and E. Bergmann. *The Collection of the Sumerian Temple Hymns. Texts from Cuneiform Sources*, vol. 3 (New York: J. J. Augustin, 1969), 21.

⁶2094-2047 B.C.E., an early Sumerian King who consolidated the empire and had himself deified during his reign: see Kramer, *The Sumerians*, 68-69. The king who followed him was

Father Enlil, lord whose command cannot be turned back,
 Father of the gods who established the *me*,
 You have lifted your face upon my city, you have decreed the fate of Ur,
 Bless the just king whom I have called to my holy heart,
 The king, the shepherd Shulgi, the faithful shepherd full of grace,
 Let him subjugate the promised land for me.¹

Therefore Enlil is seen in his role of father progenitor, the one providing plenty and prosperity. Beyond this he is portrayed as the advocate-conciliator, the one who sanctions kings chosen by other gods (in this case Nanna) and the one who establishes social justice as the divine lawgiver.

Enki

Enki, third god in rank in the pantheon, was god of the Apsû, the great subterranean lake that fed all the river and water sources,² and was sometimes depicted as “Him who rides the great storm, who attacks with lightening (?)”³ Commissioned by Enlil (who had only drawn sketchy plans) Enki was to care for the details of organizing the earth.⁴ The literature graphically describes how the “sparkling waters” of the Tigris were in actuality the seminal fluid flowing from Enki as his “bridal gift” to the land of Nippur

Ishme-Dagan, whom we have met previously.

¹Kramer, *Poetry of Sumer*, 61. A *me* was a divine law to regulate the civic functions of the earth, and they were specifically applied to cities. For a list of them, see Kramer, *History Begins at Sumer*, 96-97. The figure of the divine shepherd is a common one in Sumerian literature, and refers to the political leadership of the god; e.g., Enlil is described as “the shepherd upon whom you gaze (favorably)” and “Enlil, the worthy shepherd, ever on the move.” *Ibid.*, 92.

²Lambert, *Ancient Mesopotamian Gods*, 122.

³Kramer, *The Sumerians*, 180.

⁴Kramer, *History Begins at Sumer*, 93.

and its people, in obedience to Enlil's commission:

After he had cast his eye from that spot,
 After father Enki had lifted it over the Euphrates,
 He stood up proudly like a rampant bull,
 He lifts the penis, ejaculates,
 Filled the Tigris with sparkling water.
 The wild cow mooing for its young in the pastures,
 the scorpion (-infested) stall,
 [The Tigr]is is surre[ndered] to him, as (to) a rampant bull.
 He lifted the penis, brought the bridal gift,
 Brought joy to the Tigris,
 like a big wild bull [rejoiced (?)] in its giving birth.
 The water he brought is sparkling water, its "wine" tastes sweet,
 The grain he brought, its checkered grain, the people eat it,
 He fi[lled] the Ekur, the house of Enlil, with possessions,
 With Enki, Enlil rejoices, Nippur [is delighted].¹

The fertility emphasis surrounding Enki is a strong one. In another creation fable, Enki impregnates Nintu ("the mother of the land"), causing the dikes to be filled. She gives birth to a daughter after nine days—Ninmu, whom Enki impregnates also at the river bank, and she bears Ninkurra, who in turn bears Uttu. Enki fills the dikes again, and cucumbers, apples, and grapes are produced, which Enki gives to Uttu, then he impregnates her. Ninhursag then produces eight plants which Enki orders his messenger Isimud to cut down in order to eat them. Ninhursag is angry and curses Enki, and he nearly dies, but through the intermediary action of a fox, Ninhursag agrees to reverse the curse, which she does by giving birth to eight plant gods/goddesses that heal Enki in the parts of his body where he is afflicted.² The rather complicated story line perhaps reflects

¹"Enki and the World Order," in Kramer, *The Sumerians*, 179. This is one of the longest and best preserved of the extant Sumerian narrative poems. *Ibid.*, 171.

²*ANET*, 39-41.

the Sumerian attempt to show the presence of the curse among the beauties of nature, engendered by a potent father-figure.

Continuing with the poem, “Enki and the World Order,” which concludes with a hymn to Enki, his fertile powers are extolled:

When Father Enki comes out into the seeded Land,
it brings forth fecund seed,
When Nudimmud comes out to the fecund ewe,
it gives birth to the lamb,¹

Each ensuing phrase repeats this theme, with the “seeded” cow, “fecund goat,” “and the “cultivated field.”

As well as establishing the fertility cycles of the earth, Enki established his temple (house) at Eridu, one of the oldest and most venerated cities of Sumer. In the story of “Enki and Eridu,” we are told that Enki builds his house just after “the water of creation,” and after clothing the land with plant and herb:

Enki, the lord who decrees the fates,
Built his house of silver and lapis lazuli,
Its silver and lapis lazuli, *like sparkling light*,
The father *fashioned fittingly* in the abyss.²

As with Enlil, Enki was seen for more than his procreative powers, and his importance in the establishment of social order seems to be equally significant in Sumerian thinking. The Sumerians have Enki working closely with Enlil, highlighting the subtle difference in their roles. In another myth, Enki, water god as well as god of wisdom, establishes law and

¹“Enki and the World Order.” in Kramer, *The Sumerians*, 174.

²“Enki and Eridu: The Journey of the Water-God to Nippur.” in Kramer, *Sumerian Mythology*, 62. Enki was also known as the “lord of the abyss.” Ibid.

order on the earth, in the first instance as decrees for Sumer. In this process Enki calls Enlil “father,” deferring to his brother and showing the primacy of the latter:

The king, begotten, *adorns himself with a lasting jewel*,
 The lord, begotten, sets crown on head,
 Thy lord is an honored lord; with An, the king,
 he sits in the shrine of heaven,
 Thy king is the great mountain, the father Enlil,
 Like . . . the father of all the lands.¹

Here we are introduced to more of the relationship between the two brothers, with Enki suggesting that Enlil has superseded An’s authority, and replaced him as king in the shrine of heaven, becoming father of all the lands. The hymn continues:

Enki, the king of the Abzu, overpowering (?) in his majesty,
 speaks up with authority:
 My father, the king of the universe,
 Brought me into existence in the universe,
 My ancestor, the king of all lands,
 Gathered together all the *me*’s, placed all the *me*’s in my hand.
 From the Ekur, the house of Enlil,
 I brought craftsmanship to my Abzu of Eridu.
 I am the fecund seed, engendered by the great wild ox,
 I am the firstborn son of An,
 I am the “great storm” who goes forth out of the “great below,”
 I am the Lord of the land,
 I am the *gugal* of the chieftains, I am the father of all the lands.²

Here we see Enki, still using the father motif for Enlil, being the recipient of the *me*’s (the special collection of laws fundamental to civilization) from the hand of Enlil, Enki’s “father,” and “ancestor.” This would suggest a further dimension to Enki’s fatherhood, that of the divine lawgiver. The created realms could not expect to flourish

¹“Enki and Sumer: The Organization of the Earth and Its Cultural Processes.” in Kramer. *Sumerian Mythology*. 59.

²“Enki and the World Order.” in Kramer. *The Sumerians*. 175.

and continue in prosperity if these laws basic to their survival and abundance were ignored or misapplied. Then the mood of the hymn changes with attention shifting to Enki, who brings craftsmanship to the earth through the fine work of the artisans building his house.

Enki's role as diviner lawgiver is seen in another myth where Inanna plots to get the *me*'s by any means. Also known as Queen of Heaven and tutelary goddess of Erech, Inanna decides to visit Enki, god of wisdom, in his watery abyss, the abzu, because he has all the rules fundamental to civilization, and she wants them for her own city. She succeeds in tricking them out of Enki at a drunken feast, where the god is taken by her beauty and gives them all to her in a moment of self-abandonment. On retaining sobriety, he realizes his folly and sends a posse of his messengers (including sea monsters) to overtake Inanna and her "Boat of Heaven," and to ensure the return of the *me*'s. When they catch up to her, Enki's messenger Isimud tells her,

O my queen, your father has sent me to you,
O Innana, your father has sent me to you,
Your father, exalted is his speech,
Enki, exalted in his utterance,
His great words are not to go unheeded.¹

When told she must return her father's gift, she replies,

My father, why, pray, has he changed his word to me?
Why has he broken his righteous word to me?
Why has he defiled his great words to me?
My father has spoken to me falsely, has spoken to me falsely,
Falsely has he sworn by the name of his power, by the name of the Abzu.²

It is interesting to note that the god in charge of social mores is here being accused

¹Kramer. *History Begins at Sumer*. 99.

²Ibid.. 99.

of dishonesty, and it may be argued that he got what he deserved, but the relevant point here is that Enki, Inanna's uncle, was sought as the keeper of the rules of humankind, and throughout the whole process, she addressed him as "father."

Therefore Enki is seen as the one who provided the Tigris and irrigation to ensure fertility and plenty for vegetation, crop, flock, and herd. He is credited with introducing the fine arts—the craftsmanship of artisans—and he was appreciated as the god of wisdom and for being the divine lawgiver, the one who maintained social order, as well as being the "father of all the lands."

Nanna

We observe the fatherhood of Nanna (the moon, also known as Sin and Ashgirbabbar) specifically in relationship to judgment. In a lament over the destruction of Ur after the Elamites had sacked it, a temple singer mourns, addressing Ningal, goddess of the city. One line of that lament addresses Nanna, reminding him that all activities of the temple and city have ceased:

Your city has been made into ruins:
 how can you exist!
 Your house has been laid bare;
 how has your heart led you on!
 Ur, the shrine, has been given over to the wind;
 how now can you exist!
 Its *gudar*-priest no longer walks in well-being;
 how has your heart led you on!
 Its *en* dwells not in the *gipar*;
 how now can you exist!
 Its . . . who cherishes lustrations makes no lustrations for you,
 Father Nanna,

your *ishib*-priest has not perfected the holy vessels for you.¹

The dismayed tone detected in the questions of this lament are understandable in light of the following liturgy to Enlil, in which Nanna is pointed to as being the one responsible for the destruction that took place. He was the one responsible for judgment on the land.

O father (*a-a*) Nannar, bright horned light of heaven,
mighty of itself (in thy excellence, yea, thou in thy excellence),
Father (*a-a*) Nannar, lord of all the heavens,
Lord Nannar, lord of the rising light,
Great lord, who himself has wrought evil to thy city, mighty of himself,
As for thy city Nippur, he who has wrought evil to thy city,
All thy land . . .²

The mournful tone of this account indicates that Nanna is seen as the cause for calamity and is being held accountable for his actions. He is accused of overstepping the bounds of his jurisdiction by upsetting the divine order of things. Unfortunately we do not have the other side of the story, so we are left to ponder the implied impetuosity of the action, and to wonder with the poet whether it was just his heart that led Nanna on.

Utu

The last of the major Sumerian deities to be called father was Utu the sun-god, son of Nanna. This relationship immediately highlights the ANE principle that the son

¹“Lamentation Over the Destruction of Ur,” in Kramer, *The Sumerians*, 143. The *en* was the high priest (in this case high priestess), and the *gipar* was her living quarters in the temple. There were various classes of priests beneath her, each with specific functions, including the *gudar* and *ishib*. *Ibid.*, 141.

²“The Exalted One Who Walketh,” IV Raw. 53a 8.16-21, in Langdon, *Sumerian Liturgies and Psalms*, 327.

becomes stronger than the father,¹ in just the same way as the sun is stronger than the moon. Utu is not given much space in the literature when it discusses his being a father god, but it is significant nevertheless. Utu was seen as the father of humanity (called by the Sumerian theologians “the black-headed people”) and one sympathetic with their daily routines: “O Utu, shepherd of the land, father of the black-headed people, when thou liest down, the people, too, lie down.”² But in one of the most touching hymns, Utu is described as the father of the wanderer, the widow and the orphan.

Of the wanderer, of the homeless,
 Of the homeless, of the wanderer,
 Utu, you are their mother, you, you are their father,
 Utu—the orphan, Utu—the widow,
 Utu, the orphan gazes up to you as his father,
 Utu, you show favor to the widows like their mother.³

God-Human Relationship

It has been asserted that the image of the divine parent as a metaphor of the relationship between human and deity is found only in Mesopotamian religious literature.⁴ Normally it is that of a master and slave. That this is a moot point is readily seen, but it certainly may be asserted that the Sumerians relished the idea of humans relating to gods on a personal level. Sumerian theologians developed the concept of a personal god (a “righteous shepherd,” “herdsman,” or “companion”), an intercessory deity who would

¹Kramer, *Sumerian Mythology*, 74.

²HAV 4.8-10. in Kramer, *Sumerian Mythology*, 42.

³BM 23631.29-34. in Kramer, *Poetry of Sumer*, 96.

⁴Thorkild Jacobsen, *The Treasures of Darkness: A History of Mesopotamian Religion* (New Haven, MA: Yale University Press, 1976), 158.

intercede for the human supplicant in the assembly of the gods.¹ It is significant to note that the Akkadian term for fatherhood (*abbūtu*) suggests intercession as a typical role of the father.² Although the Akkadians followed the Sumerians a few centuries later, it may be assumed that the etymology may have its roots back in the Sumerian era.

Several reasons have been suggested for ancient Mesopotamians seeing their god as a father/parent: first in the physical sense of engendering, then the aspect of being provider, followed by protector and intercessor, and lastly the claim parents have upon their children for obedience.³ Thorkild Jacobsen observes that within each person dwelt a personal god, which if taking its leave, would result in the person being demon-possessed. It was further deemed that the personal god and personal goddess, incarnate in the father and mother, were responsible for engendering and bearing a child.⁴ In one example we hear of the Sumerian ruler Lugalzagesi, whose personal goddess was Nidaba, speak of himself as the “child born of Nidaba.”⁵ Jacobsen also maintains that “father and son invariably had the same god and goddess,” which passed from the body of the father to the son from generation to generation, hence the term “god of the fathers.”⁶

When it comes to the father-gods being providers, we note a strange twist in

¹Kramer. *The Sumerians*, 126-127. The pantheon functioned as a council with a king at its head. Kramer. *History Begins at Sumer*, 78.

²Jacobsen. *Treasures of Darkness*, 159.

³Ibid., 158.

⁴Ibid., 148.

⁵Lugalzagesi, Vase inscription. *BE I*, no. 87 i 26-27, in *ibid.*, 148.

⁶Ibid., 159.

Sumerian theology. Originally, man was created to ease the load of the gods, and “provide” for them. The Igigi, a class of working gods, complained to Enlil that their workload was excessive, and they demanded relief:

The load is excessive, it is killing us,
Our work is too hard, the trouble too much,
So every single one of us gods
Has agreed to complain to Enlil.¹

The solution to the problem came with the goddess Aruru (Nintu) assisted by Enki,² creating humans by slaughtering a god (Geshtu-e—because he had intelligence), and mixing his flesh and blood with clay. Now the Igigi could sit back and relax, while the new creatures continued the work of digging canals and irrigation ditches.

A ghost came into existence from the god’s flesh,
And she (Nintu) proclaimed it as his living sign.
The ghost existed so as not to forget (the slain god).³

So it was no secret that despite the many positive things done by the gods for humanity, they were still largely motivated by self-interest,⁴ and man was created solely for the purpose of providing the gods’ food, drink, and shelter, and giving them time for leisure—their “divine activities.”⁵ Perhaps it was a way to even the score to now have a personal god, thought of in terms of a father, to provide for the needs of his “child.”

Father-gods were also seen for their protector-intercessor role. The following is a

¹Dalley. *Myths from Mesopotamia*. 13.

²Langdon. *Sumerian Epic*. 23.

³Dalley. *Myths from Mesopotamia*. 15-16.

⁴Kramer. *Poetry of Sumer*. 49.

⁵Samuel Noah Kramer. “Sumerian Theology and Ethics.” *HTR* 49 (1956): 56.

prayer by a penitent who has been smitten with sickness, as well as being wronged by an antagonist, and is now pleading to his personal god for help:

My god, you who are my father who begot me, lift up my face,
Like an innocent cow, in pity . . . the groan,
How long will you neglect me, leave me unprotected?¹

In answer to this prayer, it was stated that the god “turned the man’s (?) suffering into joy,” so we may presume the person’s god stepped in and acted on his or her behalf.

The fourth aspect of the fatherhood of the gods is seen in the obedience of their earthly “children.” In this the father designation becomes poignant with the sociological understanding of the time. In Sumerian ideals, at least in the time of Ishme-Dagan (ruler after Shulgi), “the father is respected,” and “the mother is feared.”²

Conclusion

It is not until Enlil arrives that the real significance of the fatherhood of the gods is seen in Sumerian thought. While it is true that mother Nammu, the primeval ocean, precedes any father-god, and even though An is extolled for his virility and wisdom, it is not until Enlil breaks up the cozy arrangement between his enmeshed parents that there is positive and perpetuating progress in the creation process of earth and its cultures. The union of Enlil and his mother earth sets the stage for the organization of the universe—the

¹Kramer, *The Sumerians*, 127-129.

²Kramer, *Poetry of Sumer*, 68. This mentality may have developed from the perception of the mother-goddess Inanna (Ninhursag, and known later as Ishtar) as not only the goddess of love, but of war as well. She is credited with the boast “Is there a god who can vie with me?” when on her way to challenge Enlil on one occasion. The implication was clear, and she commanded the healthy respect of all—human and divine. *Ibid.*, 97.

creation of plants, animals, and man, and the establishment of civilization.¹ This helps to explain why Enlil is considered “by far the most important deity” of the Sumerian pantheon.²

This importance is also noted in his father-god characteristics:

1. As the “bull that overwhelms,”³ the powerful bull metaphor is linked to the father motif highlighting his fertility.
2. As the god responsible for planning and maintaining the most productive functions of the cosmos, his father role ensures prosperity.
3. Father Enlil, established on the dais of his lofty shrine, upholds divine laws that “like heaven cannot be overturned” nor “shattered.”⁴
4. As “father of the gods,” he adjudicates at the highest court available to gods.
5. As father of kings, he gives them sovereignty to prosper their reign and subdue their enemies.⁵

In other words, when we hear of Enlil being described as a father, it is in terms of a “friendly, fatherly deity who watches over the safety and well-being of all humans, particularly the inhabitants of Sumer.”⁶

¹Kramer, *History Begins at Sumer*, 82, 83; idem, *Sumerian Mythology*, 39-41.

²Kramer, *History Begins at Sumer*, 88.

³Zimmern KL II.1-6, in Langdon, *Sumerian Liturgies and Psalms*, 292.

⁴“Hymn to Enlil,” in Kramer, *History Begins at Sumer*, 91.

⁵*Ibid.*, 89.

⁶*Ibid.*

Enki's fatherhood is seen in a similar light, but not to the same extent. We certainly see his progenitive role giving fecundity to land, ewe, cow, goat, and field.¹ However his greater significance as father seems to be in his role as divine lawgiver. Being the recipient of the *me*'s from the hand of Enlil,² he upholds and maintains the created realms, promoting social structure, law, and order, enabling urban and rural realms to flourish and continue in prosperity. He also becomes the patron of artisans, whose work in a way continues the creative processes of the gods.

Two other deities who help us understand how the Sumerians see the fatherhood of their gods are Nanna the moon and Utu the sun. Nanna is called father in relation to the judgments he brings upon the city of Ur. Because this action is seen as so out of character, the temple poet questions the god's sanity with the statements, "How has your heart led you on!" and "How now can you exist!" alternating through the poem.³ Utu's fatherhood is seen in a more positive light—he is appreciated as the father of humanity, particularly for the wanderer, the homeless, and the orphan.⁴

Apart from the main pantheon were the lesser deities, regarded as personal gods for the people of Sumer. Their personal god was an intercessory deity who would intercede for the human supplicant in the assembly of the gods.⁵ This father-human

¹"Enki and the World Order." in Kramer. *The Sumerians*, 174.

²*Ibid.*, 175.

³"Lamentation Over the Destruction of Ur." in Kramer. *The Sumerians*, 143.

⁴BM 23631.29-34. in Kramer, *Poetry of Sumer*, 96.

⁵Kramer. *The Sumerians*, 126-127.

relationship was defined in terms of physical engendering, in being provider, by being protector and intercessor, and lastly by the claim parents have upon their children for obedience.¹

The relationship was perpetuated through the generations by god and goddess, which passed from the body of the father to the son from generation to generation, hence the term “god of the fathers.”² This seemed a more comfortable arrangement for the Sumerians in light of their view of parents generally—“the father is respected,” and “the mother is feared.”³

Therefore, the Sumerians initially saw the fatherhood of their gods procreatively and secondarily as the source of wisdom. An, the first of the father gods, was the one who displayed these characteristics. This was extended to include being the source of prosperity, the seat of divine law, in reconciliation and in sovereignty, as seen in Enlil. His brother Enki introduced nothing new to the concept, but merely maintained his grandfather An’s characteristics, and maintained the *me*’s initially collected and handed to him by his brother Enlil. He did however introduce craftsmanship into the world. Two other characteristics come later with Nanna, seen for his passing judgment on the city of Ur, and Utu who was seen as the father of the disadvantaged and socially disenfranchised. The introduction of personal gods adds nothing to this list of characteristics; instead they reinforce the intercessory nature of the relationship.

¹Jacobsen. *Treasures of Darkness*. 158.

²*Ibid.*, 159.

³Kramer. *Poetry of Sumer*, 68.

Akkadian Developments

The budding empire of Babylon germinated in the same geographic region as Sumer, and although they spoke a different language, the Babylonians borrowed copiously from Sumerian theology and culture, adapting them to suit their own purposes.¹ Therefore in their three main extant literary works—the *Gilgamesh Epic*,² the *Atrahasis Epic*,³ and the *Enuma Eliš*,⁴ we see evidences of Sumerian influence in the similar pantheons referred to—but note the ascendancy of the Babylonian god and goddess Marduk and Ishtar. In the evolving versions of the *Gilgamesh Epic* especially, we can see

¹Within a few decades, Akkad, a previously insignificant town (somewhere near the city of Babylon), became the fear and envy of nations as far-flung as the highlands of Anatolia to the north, the Mediterranean to the west, and the Indus Valley to the east. Although the economic and military activity of its dynasty lasted only from ca. 2310-2160 B.C.E., its cultural and linguistic influence dominated the whole of Mesopotamia and much of the Near East for two and a half millennia. The kings of Akkad represented the ideal monarchy, and their statues appeared in the sanctuaries of the great urban centers. Joan Goodnick Westenholz, *Legends of the Kings of Akkade: The Texts* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1997), 1.

²First composed about 2100 B.C.E., the latest and best-known version (its final form) can be dated to the end of the Middle Babylonian period, about 1000 B.C.E. It was written on twelve tablets in Akkadian, the main Semitic language of Assyria and Babylonia. Because it was written over 1500 years, and because some of its earlier versions are also extant, it has been possible to document its evolution over that time. Jeffrey H. Tigay, *The Evolution of the Gilgamesh Epic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982).

³The main edition utilized (because it is the most complete) was copied out during the reign of Ammi-saduqa, great-great-grandson of Hammurabi (c. 1600 B.C.E.), although most extant copies date to c. 700-650 B.C.E. W. G. Lambert and A. R. Millard, *Atra-ḫasīs: The Babylonian Story of the Flood* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1969), 5.

⁴Sometimes referred to as the “Babylonian Epic of Creation.” It is also referred to as “*When on High*,” the English translation, and opening words of the epic. It is seven tablets long, and was composed around 1200 B.C.E. apparently for the purpose of legitimizing Marduk’s ascendancy over the earlier established pantheon. S. Langdon, *The Babylonian Epic of Creation: Restored from the Recently Recovered Tablets of Aššur, Transcription, Translation and Commentary* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1923); Alexander Heidel, *The Babylonian Genesis: The Story of Creation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1942).

the emerging Babylonian psyche. Unfortunately, neither the *Gilgamesh Epic* nor the *Atrahasis Epic* contains any significant reference to the fatherhood of gods. Therefore we shall deal only with the *Enuma Eliš*, following which we shall investigate lesser-known works.

Enuma Eliš

The basic story line of *Enuma Eliš* (*Enuma Elish*) commences with the theogony of an increasing number of noisy gods who start to disturb the original parents, Apsu and Tiamat. The last description given to the engendering of a god is that of Marduk by his parents, Ea and Damkina. As the noise levels continue to rise, Apsu shares with Tiamat his plan to destroy the gods, at which the motherly Tiamat objects with bitter tears. Ea hears of the plan, warns the other gods, then sets out with magic to kill Apsu and his accomplice Mummu. When Tiamat hears of her husband's death, she becomes beserk with rage, and gives birth to an army of eleven monsters in order to take vengeance for the dead gods. Marduk is asked by the assembly of gods to come to the rescue, which he agrees to do, after being assured of the gods' allegiance. He defeats Tiamat, dismembering her body, forming the earth and heavens with its two halves. From the blood of her dead accomplice, Kingu, Marduk creates humankind, then enjoys festivities with the gods that include his exaltation as new head of the pantheon, a new temple, and fifty new names.

There are two main clusters of reference to a god's being father in this epic, the first referring to Anšar as the father of Anu, and the second referring to the gods as

Marduk's fathers. As an example of the first, when Anu approaches Tiamat in the first attempt to conquer her, "he could not withstand her, and he turned back. He fled as one in terror unto his father (*a-bi*), his begetter (*a-li-di-šu*), Anšar."¹

When the gods in council discuss their next move to avert the threat of Tiamat, it is "lord Anšar, father of the gods (*a-bi ilāni*), [seated] in majesty,"² who presides, while the gods decide what to do. When Marduk is suggested as one who could defeat Tiamat, the concerned Anšar questions Marduk's ability. Marduk replies:

My father (*abi*), creator (*ba-mu-ú*), rejoice and be glad.
The neck of Tiamat straightway shalt thou tread upon.
My father, creator, rejoice and be glad.
The hinder parts of Tiamat straightway shalt thou tread upon.³

In order to appreciate the relationships in this drama, and to see how they have been revised from Sumerian theology, refer to fig. 2. As can be observed, Anšar is actually Marduk's grandfather, so here the term "father" becomes one of deferment.

The other cluster of references to father-gods describes a general relationship between the other gods; for example, when Anšar sends a messenger to assemble all the gods, he instructs him:

Bring the gods my fathers (*ilāni abē-ja*) unto me.
And let them bring the gods—all of them.
Let them converse, at a banquet may they sit down.
May they eat bread and prepare wine.

¹II.82-83, in Langdon, *Babylonian Epic of Creation*, 103; ANET, 63.

²II.92, in Langdon, *Babylonian Epic of Creation*, 103. From now on, as well as giving the tablet reference, I shall also give the reference from Langdon, *Babylonian Epic of Creation*, unless otherwise indicated.

³II.112-115, in *ibid.*, 107.

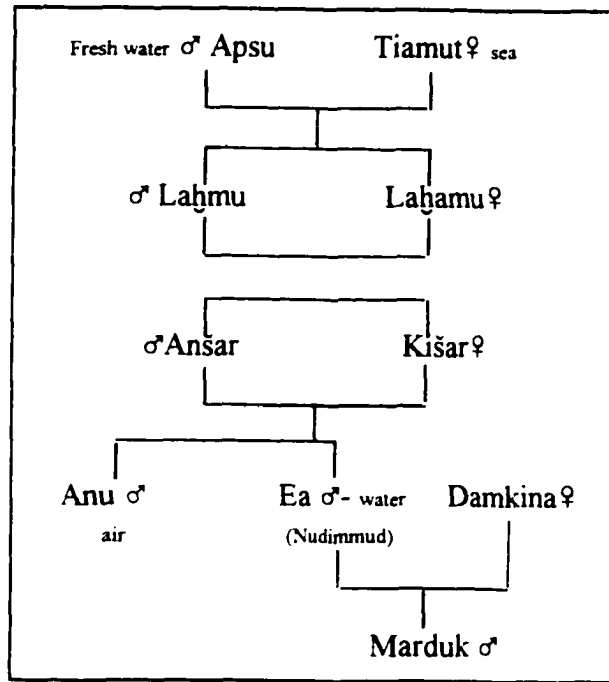


Fig. 2. Babylonian pantheon.

For Marduk their avenger let them decree fate.¹

When he is later summoned before the full assembly of the gods (“before his fathers [*ilāni ab-bi-e-šu*] for consultation he took his place”),² he is assured of their allegiance, to the extent that they say “we have given thee kingship of universal power over the totality of all things.”³ They were obviously pleased with his leadership, for “as the gods his fathers (*ilāni ab-bi-e-šu*) saw the issue of his mouth, they were glad and did homage (saying) ‘The king is Marduk.’”⁴

¹III.6-10. in *ibid.*. 111.

²IV.2. in *ibid.*. 127.

³IV.10. in *ibid.*. 129.

⁴IV.27-28. in *ibid.*

With the confidence of the support of the pantheon Marduk challenges Tiamat:

Against the gods my fathers (*ilāni abê-e-a*) thou hast established thy wickedness.
Let thy host be equipped and let thy weapons be girded on.
Stand thou by and let us, me and thee, make battle.¹

When it is all over, the new temple is built, and the celebrations are underway, Marduk allocates a special place for “the gods his fathers” (*ilāni abê-šū*),² likely here in this context the Annunaki. Finally, as Marduk is being praised before the whole assembly, and given prime status, one of the fifty names allocated to him is “^{du}ADUNUNNA, counselor of Ea, creator of the gods his fathers (*ba-an ilāni abê-šū*).”³

Other Literature

In the “Myth of Zu,” a lesser-known Akkadian myth, a council is called by the Igigi, who are dismayed at the action of Zu (possibly a god of the underworld) of stealing the “Tablet of Destinies.” They insist on his death, but none is powerful enough to confront him. “Father Enlil, (*a-bu-um . . . En-lil*) their counselor, is speechless” at these developments.⁴ Adad (Baal in the Ugaritic pantheon) steps forward “to Anu his father” (^{du} *A-nim a-bi-šū*—line 16), and, addressing him as “My father” (*a-bi*—line 17), reminds him that anyone who opposes Zu become like clay. The goddess Mah then speaks, enthusing the assembly with the potential of some of her offspring being able to tame Zu,

¹IV.84-86, in *ibid.*, 139.

²VI.50-52, in *ibid.*, 175.

³VII.81, in *ibid.*, 201.

⁴II.2, in V. Scheil, “Fragments de la Légende du Dieu Zû.” *RA* 35, no. 1 (1938): 14; *ANET*, 111.

thus neutralizing his power. The tablet ends at that point, so we have no more than “Father” being used as a term of honor for the one presiding over the gods.

Conclusion

Working with a revised pantheon, in which the main Sumerian gods are still in place, but with different names and inserted generations, the predominant view of fatherhood of the gods seems to be one of title for the god presiding over the heavenly council. In the *Enuma Eliš* it is Anšar that presides, and in the *Myth of Zu* it is Enlil. Marduk addresses Anšar as father, but also as father-creator (II.112), linking together the dimensions of creatorship and judgment (presiding over the council of the gods to ensure the maintenance of the divine order) to that of father-god. (Something similar is seen in the *Myth of Zu* with Adad addressing the presiding god as “Father.”) When Marduk summons the full assembly of the gods, he speaks of the gods collectively as “my fathers” (*ilāni abê-ja*), and uses a similar expression when challenging Tiamat (*ilāni abê-e-a*). This seems to add an air of credibility and legitimacy to his demands. Finally, when he has defeated Tiamat and the gods rejoice together, he is promoted to head of the pantheon and addressed as the creator of the gods his fathers (*ba-an ilāni abê-šu*). This reinforces the link between the creator-judge concept, and introduces a cyclical element to the picture. The one who is at the head of the pantheon becomes, by virtue of his position, the creator-judge.

Egypt

The Development of Father Deities

At least five gods were called “Father” by the ancient Egyptians: Nun (Ptah), Atum (Rē¹ or Ra), Shu, Geb,¹ and Osiris. In order to understand what was meant by this term, it is necessary to briefly review the landscape of Egyptian mythology, a task made somewhat complicated by the huge amount of material available² and the apparently contradictory evidence that is sometimes obtained. Gods proliferated among the scattered centers of population (740 different gods were accounted for by the time of Tuthmosis III³—1504-1450 B.C.E.), the most prominent being the religiopolitical centers of Heliopolis, Memphis, and Thebes. Each of these centers had its own theology, adding complexity to the question of father-gods. In order to gain a vantage point over the range of Egyptian theological ideas, and because this dissertation is not an exhaustive study in Egyptian mythology, I limit my enquiry to those three main centers. See fig. 3.

¹Utterance 219.167-177 *Pyramid Texts*, in Samuel A. B. Mercer. *The Pyramid Texts: In Translation and Commentary* (New York: Longmans Green, 1952), 46, 47. Note there the series of statements affirming familial relationship. The deceased, self-identified as Osiris, claims to be son of Atum, Shu, Tefēnet, Gēb, Nūt, brother of Isis, Seth, Nephthys, Thoth, and father of Horus.

²Leonard H. Lesko. *The Ancient Egyptian Book of Two Ways* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), 1.

³Veronica Ions. *Egyptian Mythology* (New York: Peter Bedrick, 1983), 34.

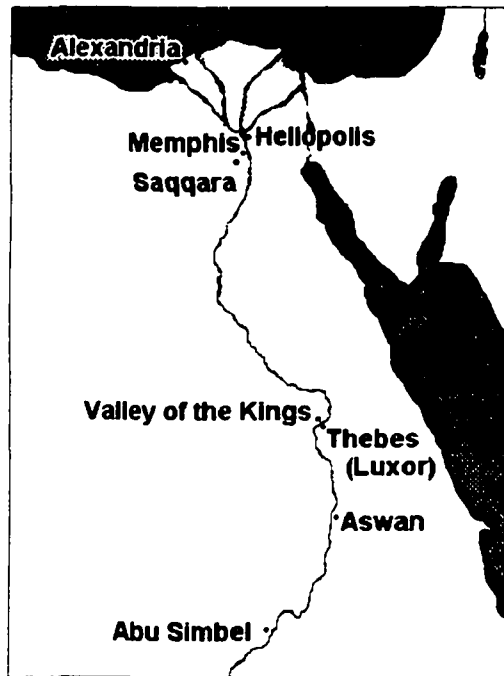


Fig. 3. Ancient Egypt.

Heliopolis

The theology of Heliopolis (also known as Iunu, Anu, and On, and today enveloped by a northern suburb of Cairo) is best known from the *Pyramid Texts*,¹ dated to about 2350-2175 B.C.E. Taking cosmogony for granted, the Pyramid texts focus on the need of the dead king to know spells sufficient to get him through the afterlife.

¹Found inscribed on the walls of pyramids at Saqqara, the ancient necropolis of Memphis, dated from the 5th and into 7th dynasties (Unis, Teti, Pepi I, MerenRē', Pepi II— and his queens, Oudjebten, Neit, Apout, and Ibi). They possibly existed in oral form much before then, and were preserved by a combination of oral tradition and inscriptions on papyrus and potsherds. These were royal texts, with no evidence that the common people ever had access to them during the time of the Old Kingdom, but during the Middle Kingdom their use spread to the nobles, and in the New Kingdom parts were incorporated into the popular Theban Book of the Dead. Mercer, *Pyramid Texts*, 1-2.

Nevertheless there is a reasonably clear picture of Heliopolitan theology¹ and the origins of the Ennead (the group of nine main gods), which plays a large part in all Egyptian theology. The impressive detail in the writings of Plutarch, written in the early part of the second century AD, present us with perhaps the most coherent view, largely consistent with what is found in more ancient Egyptian texts.²

Heliopolitan cosmogony commences with Atum³ emerging as an unconscious and undifferentiated entity from Nun, the great surfaceless, motionless, primordial ocean.

Becoming aware of himself, he rises as a mountain in the midst of the sea⁴ (upon which a temple is later built⁵ and from which the sun comes) “to possess being in the midst of an

¹Rather than being merely a cosmogony (an account of origins), the Egyptian creation myths essentially form a theogony (an account of the origin and descent of deities). see Ragnhild Bjerre Finnestad. “Ptah, Creator of the Gods: Reconsideration of the Ptah Section of the Denkmal,” *Numen* 23, no. 2 (1976): 82. Frank Moore Cross distinguishes between “theogony” (the birth and succession of the gods), and “cosmogony” (a conflict between old and young gods out of which comes order in the cosmos, and especially monarchy). Frank Moore Cross, *From Epic to Canon: History and Literature in Ancient Israel* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), 73.

²J. Gwyn Griffiths, *Plutarch's de Iside et Osiride* (Cambridge: University of Wales Press, 1970).

³Atum was represented as a bearded man, or with the head of a frog, beetle, or serpent, standing up to his waist in water and holding the solar bark (in which the sun disk was being raised up by a scarab) in his up-stretched hands. He was shown wearing the *pschent*, the double crown of Upper and Lower Egypt, and holding the *ankh* scepter, symbol of life and royal authority. Atum was sometimes called the Bull of the Ennead, a reference to his cult animal, or the bull Mnevis, while at other times he was depicted as a serpent or with the head of an ichneumon (the North African mongoose—*Herpestes ichneumon*—revered for its reputation of devouring snakes and crocodile eggs), but he was more commonly represented as a bearded old man tottering toward the western horizon, symbolic of the setting sun: Ions, *Egyptian Mythology*, 35.

⁴Or “as the *bmbn*-stone in the Mansion of the ‘Phoenix’ in *Ön*,” Ut.600.1652.

⁵Which temple was built depends on where the priests came from who related the story. Those from Heliopolis of course claimed that their original temple was the one referred to (dedicated to *Rē*¹-Harakhte—the youthful winged sun-disk of the horizon and the principal god of

absence of being.”¹ He later becomes identified with the sun god Re⁴—the light that comes to dispel the chaotic darkness of Nun.

The next phase of creation involves the god ejaculating² (possibly into his own mouth), and spitting/sneezing out the sexually differentiated god Shu and goddess Tefnut³—an action that must be understood in more than just a physical sense. Rather than merely a description of masturbation and spitting, creation is sometimes considered as something formulated in the mind of the god, and then realized through his word.⁴

It is here that we get the first hint of fatherhood among the Egyptian gods. Atum is known as the universal “father of gods” because of his actions in the primeval ocean, bringing forth the first deities apart from a mother figure.⁵ He is therefore given

Heliopolis—Anchor Bible Dictionary, s.v. “Heliopolis”). The priests at Thebes were convinced their city was the archetype city from which all others were modeled: *ANET*, 8.

¹Pascal Vernus, *The Gods of Ancient Egypt*, trans. Jane Marie Todd (New York: John Braziller, 1998), 75.

²“Atum is he who (once) came into being, who masturbated in Ōn. He took his phallus in his grasp that he might create orgasm by means of it, and so were born the twins Shu and Tefēnet.” Ut.527.1248, in R. O. Faulkner, *The Ancient Egyptian Coffin Texts*, vol. 1 (Warminster, England: Aris and Phillips, 1973), 198.

³“You spat out Shu, you expectorated Tefēnet, and you set your arms about them as the arms of a ka-symbol, that your essence might be in them.” Ut.600.1652-1653, in R. O. Faulkner, *The Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1969), 246.

⁴Vernus, *Gods of Ancient Egypt*, 79.

⁵From the New Kingdom on the sky goddess Nut was regarded as the “mother of the gods,” being distinguished from other goddesses who bore other specific deities. Nut was said to swallow the heavenly bodies and then bear them again each day. Erik Hornung, *Conceptions of God in Ancient Egypt: The One and the Many*, trans. John Baines (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1982), 146-148.

hermaphroditic qualities by the ancient Egyptians who saw creation primarily, but not exclusively, in terms of sexual generation.

Developing the theme of divine fatherhood, we note Atum's attempt at "solo-parenting" amidst surroundings of chaos. Shu (air) and Tefnut (humidity), while being nurtured through childhood by Nun, and supervised by Atum's eye,¹ one day wander off by themselves. When the anxious Atum is reunited with his children, he weeps tears of joy, and these tears became humanity.² Therefore, the "father of the gods" becomes the father of humanity, linking them to himself from that point.

Atum was also known as Rē'.³ In this form, his fatherhood was seen in terms of kingship over his earthly children. Initially, in a golden age known as the "First Time," gods and humans lived together. Rē' reigned contentedly on earth and enjoyed an

¹Or the eye of Rē'—separable from Rē' and with a mind of its own.

²There is a play on words here, since "tears" and "men" had a similar sound in Egyptian (*remit* and *romet* respectively); *ANET*, 8. At this point it appears that the "fatherhood of god" is limited to the effects of the bodily fluids of semen, mucous, and tears with the first gods and humans being generated from them. Note that the "birth" of the human race is neither planned for nor anticipated, but is incidental to another "normal" bodily function—crying.

³Rē', also known as Re, Ra or Phra—a name simply meaning "sun." As the sun disk he was known as Aten; as the rising sun, Khepri (a great scarab beetle rolling the sun globe before him); at its zenith he was Rē', the supreme god of Heliopolis; and when setting he was the old man Atum. In ancient Egyptian art he was variously presented as (1) divine child in a lotus flower; (2) as the Bennu bird (phoenix) that rose at dawn from the *Benben* stone (the gilded pyramidal cap of the obelisk at the temple of Rē' in Heliopolis—a symbol itself of a ray of the sun which dazzled in the early morning light) heralding the dawn and the power of creation in its call; (3) a falcon; (4) a lion or cat (in which form he decapitated his arch enemy Apep the serpent); (5) the bull Mnevis; (6) the bull Kamephis; (7) or an old man bearing the solar disk on his head, and wearing the *uraeus* (i.e., Atum, the setting sun); Ions, *Egyptian Mythology*, 44. This identified Rē' with Atum, creator-god of Heliopolis.

impressive daily procession (following his ablutions¹ and breakfast) through the twelve nomes (i.e., provinces—daylight hours) of his realm. Although his close inspection sometimes seemed oppressive and his people tried to rebel (e.g., during the summer heat), they were powerless against him. But when he grew old, became incontinent, and dribbled constantly, the people saw their chance to free themselves from his subjugation.

Aware of their rebellion, Rē' turned his eye (in the form of his daughter Hathor, or Sekhmet the lioness) on the rebels. Having begun her work of annihilation, she was eager to destroy all humanity, but seeing that the balance between gods and humanity was being upset, Rē' restrained Hathor in order to uphold the divine order.² However, the constant squabbling of his earthly subjects had tired him, so he decided to withdraw from the earth riding into the heavens upon the cow goddess Nut, with the other gods clinging to her belly. They became the stars, separating gods from men, heaven from earth, and bringing into being the world as we know it. Being creator of gods and men, and of divine order in heaven and earth, Rē' became known as "Lord of the Two Lands."³

After Rē' abdicated his position, it eventually became the lot of the Pharaohs to

¹One of the principal features of the cult was the ritual cleansing, symbolic of Rē''s purity as creator: Ions. *Egyptian Mythology*, 44.

²By making her drunk with beer made to look like human blood: *ANET*, 11.

³The "two lands" is generally a reference to Upper and Lower Egypt, part of the divine order established by Rē'. However, similar expressions point to Rē''s sovereignty over the realm of the living as well as the realm of the dead, e.g., the "two skies," and the "two banks" (Ut. 273-4.406, in Faulkner, *Pyramid Texts*, 81, 82); the "two shores" (Ut. 439.812, in Faulkner, *Pyramid Texts*, 146); and the "two domains of the god," sky and earth (Ut. 509.1120, in Faulkner, *Pyramid Texts*, 184).

govern, cementing the link between the pharaohs and the gods for the Egyptians.¹ The common people were led to believe in the divine sanction of their king, and their need to obey the gods through him. To reinforce this idea, Heliopolitan theology taught that the wife of a priest of Rē^c was chosen by Rē^c to bear him a son (through her husband), so the boy would grow up being considered as an actual son of Rē^c, fitting him to become the Pharaoh, and ensuring that his commands had divine authority.² Because the reigning pharaoh was perceived to be a son of the gods, he was able to address them as his father.³ It was therefore up to the pharaoh to continue the unfinished work of creation,⁴ taming the undifferentiated—the flooding of the Nile, the threat of enemies at the borders, and injustice within the realm.⁵

We see more of Atum's father-god connection in the context of death and

¹Vernus, *Gods of Ancient Egypt*, 83.

²Ions, *Egyptian Mythology*, 44- 45.

³After the death of the pharaoh, and his regeneration in the heavenly realm, the gods were now regarded as his siblings; Hornung, *God in Ancient Egypt*, 148.

⁴Because creation was intrinsically inclined toward disorder, and the primeval chaos continually threatened to reassert itself, both sleep and death were seen as incursions into the realm of chaos. So too was the planting of a seed, and the going down of the sun. The earth was seen as porous, and at times Nun, the primeval sea, would ooze out to flood the land. The endless round of rituals, processions, and ceremonies served to maintain the momentum of creative forces, and keep back the forces of chaos, and commenced each day with the awakening of the god's statue—contained in a sacred box (called a *naos*) in the most holy place of the temple—by hymn singing. The image was then “washed, anointed, perfumed, dressed, censured, and supplied with libations and offerings of all sorts.” On a larger scale, the pyramid became the focal point for a re-enactment of god in the primeval chaos, rising up on the mountain in its midst to differentiate himself from it; Vernus, *Gods of Ancient Egypt*, 93.

⁵*Ibid.*, 86.

resurrection, in the Pharaohs' inscribed hopes and wishes for the afterlife. For example, Pepi II says of himself: "The king was fashioned by his father Atum before the sky existed, before the earth existed, before men existed, before the gods were born, before death existed."¹ Furthermore he states:

The glory of the king is in the sky,
His power is in the horizon
Like his father Atum who begot him.
He begot the king,
And the king is mightier than he.²

Pepi saw his origins with his "father" Atum. Maybe this was an attempt to identify with the god to ensure his safe arrival in the realm of the gods. The king appears to overstep the mark when he thinks himself superior to the god, but this is understandable in light of the ANE practice of the father deferring to the son (as evidenced in Sumerian mythology), passing on his wealth and authority, ensuring care for himself in his old age. This is suggested in the following statement of Pharaoh Pepi:

O my father, O my father in darkness! O my father Atum in darkness! Fetch me to your side, so that I may kindle a light for you and that I may protect you, even as Nu protected these four goddesses on the day when they protected the throne, namely Isis, Nephthys, Neith, and Selket-hetu.³

Pepi's desire to protect his "father" is a theme that will appear again later, but its inclusion here serves to illustrate its significance in the ancient Egyptian mind. He further declares:

¹Ut.571.1466, in Faulkner, *Pyramid Texts*, 226; Mercer, *Pyramid Texts*, 233. Mercer observes that Sethe (whose notes form the basis of both Faulkner's and Mercer's translations) uses "N" as shorthand for NeferkaRē', or Pepi II. Ibid., 4.

²Ut.273-274.395, in Faulkner, *Pyramid Texts*, 80; Mercer, *Pyramid Texts*, 93.

³Ut.362.605-606, in Faulkner, *Pyramid Texts*, 118.

It is well with me and with them,
 It is pleasant for me and for them,
 Within the arms of my father,
 Within the arms of Atum.¹

The death of the king and his subsequent resurrection (here likened to the stars being swallowed by the netherworld when they get to the horizon—i.e., at dawn) find their fulfillment when he and the stars reside comfortably in the arms of Atum. The significance of this may be understood in light of what the deceased is told before he ascends into the sky: “The messengers of your double, the messengers of your father come for you, the messengers of Rē^c come for you.”² Literary parallelism links Rē^c to the *ka* of the pharaoh, calls Rē^c the father of the deceased, and suggests a melding of the two.

The *Pyramid Texts* further underscore the intimacy of the relationship between pharaoh and god when the former died. After the corpse had been ritually cleansed, mummified, censed, restored to life, presented with bread and water; after his mouth had been ritually opened, and he had been presented with a preliminary repast, weapons, garments, and insignia; after he was prepared with unguents and eye paint, given a morning meal and sandals,³ he was then told that it was his father “Rē^c who gives to him barley, spelt, bread, beer.”⁴ Rē^c, the proclaimed father of the dead pharaoh, was seen as

¹Ut.216.151, in Faulkner, *Pyramid Texts*, 44; see also Ut.215.140, in *ibid.*, 42; Mercer, *Pyramid Texts*, 61, 60.

²Ut.214.136, in Faulkner, *Pyramid Texts*, 41. Mercer leaves “double” untranslated—*ka*.

³Faulkner, *Pyramid Texts*, 2, 3, 8, 11, 17, 19, 20, 23.

⁴Ut.205.121a, in Faulkner, *Pyramid Texts*, 37.

the provider in the afterlife. In the spirit of that assurance, a series of proclamations is made, alternating with the statement, “I will ascend and rise up to the sky,” “I am the well-beloved son of Rē’,” “I was begotten for Rē’,” “I was conceived for Rē’,” and “I was born for Rē’.”¹ This leaves the relationship between the pharaoh and the god in no doubt.

After the extensive and intricate funerary celebrations for the dead king, his ascension through the skies into the heavenly realm occurred. Again the pharaoh had confidence in a father-deity for the accomplishment of this feat. “I ascend on this ladder which my father Rē’ made for me.”² Once there, the resurrected pharaoh could declare: “[. . . I have come to you my father], I [have come] to you, O Rē’, a calf of gold born of the sky, a fatted calf of gold which *Hẓꜥ* created.”³ This makes Rē’ a key figure as a father-god, not only in the creation of gods and humanity, but in the resurrection of the dead as well. He not only makes the journey to the realm of the gods possible, but he also becomes the focus of attention on the arrival of the resurrected one.

Continuing further into the cosmogenic narrative, Shu and Tefnut bore Geb (the earth) and Nut (the sky), and from them in turn came Isis (the land) and Osiris (the Nile), Nephthys and Seth (or Set, the troubling destructive powers of the desert). This fulfilled the complement of nine gods that made up the Ennead of Heliopolis, as shown in fig. 4.⁴

¹Ut.539.136-1318. in *ibid.*, 207.

²Ut.271.390. in *ibid.*, 791.

³Ut.485A.1029, in *ibid.*, 172. The square brackets indicate a reconstructed text, rather than an editorial addition.

⁴See John A. Wilson. “Egypt.” in *Before Philosophy: The Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man*, ed. H. and H. A. Frankfort. John A. Wilson. and Thorkild Jacobsen

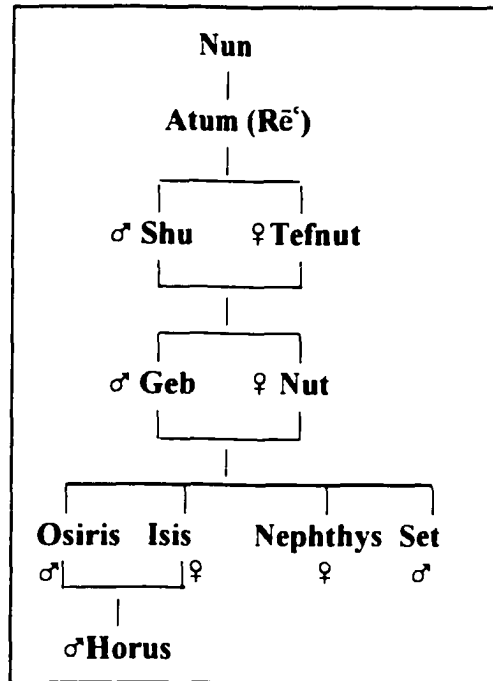


Fig. 4. The Ennead of Heliopolis.

Therefore Shu could also say: "I am Shu, father of gods."¹ The newer members of the Ennead became an integral part of Egyptian belief, and additional father relationships can be observed between them and the dead pharaohs. In the resurrection process a number of these gods performed different duties to restore life to the deceased, including attaching the head to the bones,² Geb was to "Collect his bones, group together the

(Harmonsworth, England: Penguin, 1951), 63. The Ennead originally consisted of Atum, Shu, Tefnut, Geb, Nut, Osiris, Isis, Seth, and Nephthys; *ANET*, 3.

¹See Spell 76, Coffin Texts, Faulkner, *Coffin Texts*, vol. 1, 78.

²Ut. 13, 9b—the text has been damaged at this point, not revealing which god was to do this, but it appears likely to be Geb.

intestines of his body,”¹ and to give the eyes.² Horus was there to open the mouth,³ allowing access to the *ba*,⁴ enabling the deceased to speak before the Ennead, wear the crown of Horus, and to rule over the inhabitants of the land.⁵

Accompanying the extensive funerary rituals, the son of the dead king was to proclaim the immortality of his father:

Oho! Oho! I will make it for you, this shout of acclaim, O my father, because you have no human fathers and you have no human mothers; your father is the Great Wild Bull, your mother is the Maiden.⁶

In the spirit of that optimism, when the resurrected pharaoh is greeted by the gods he denies having earthly parent. “It is my rebirth today, you gods; I do not (now) know my first mother whom (once) I knew, it is Nūt who has borne me and also Osiris.”⁷ He also proclaims:

For I am Horus,
I have come following my father,

¹A Pharaoh customarily called himself by the name of one of the gods to ensure safe passage in the afterlife; see “Pyramid Text of Pepi II.” in *Osiris: The Egyptian Religion of Resurrection*, vol. 2, ed. E. A. Wallis Budge (New York: University Books, 1961), 314.

²Ut.14.9c. in Ut.15.

³Ut.21. 13a-14b.

⁴Ut.22.15. The *ba* was a person’s spiritual double, reunited with him at death.

⁵Ut.21.14c-14d.

⁶Ut.438.809, in Faulkner, *Pyramid Texts*, 145.

⁷Ut.565.1428, in Faulkner, *Pyramid Texts*, 220. Compare Ut.438.809, in Faulkner, *Pyramid Texts*, 145, where at the funeral of the dead pharaoh, his son proclaims: “Oho! Oho! I will make it for you, this shout of acclaim, O my father, because you have no human fathers and you have no human mothers; your father is the Great Wild Bull, your mother is the Maiden.”

I have come following Osiris.¹

This claim of both Nūt and Osiris as his parents introduces a multilayered, multi-generational, father-son relationship, complicated further when he himself assumes the identity of Osiris:

Behold he has come as Orion, behold, Osiris has come as Orion, Lord of wine in the *Wꜣg*-festival. ‘My beautiful one!’ says his mother; ‘My heir!’ said his father (of) him whom the sky conceived and the dawn light bore.²

Here the pharaoh is called the heir of his father Osiris. Despite the divine names being somewhat interchangeable, it is clear that the intent is for the pharaoh, the son of the gods, to assume the prerogatives of his father. As well as a new life, he was given a new dominion:

Ascend to the place where your father is, to the place where Gēb is, that he may give you that which is on the brow of Horus, so that you may have a soul thereby and power thereby and that you may be at the head of the Westerners thereby.³

The significance of Geb’s fatherhood is further seen in the following prayer of Pepi. New life and a new throne were not all the king would receive—he would also receive the guiding hand of his father in traveling the unknown:

I have come to you, my father, I have come to you, O Gēb; may you give me your hand, so that I may ascend to the sky to my mother Nūt.⁴

¹Ut.310.493, in Faulkner, *Pyramid Texts*, 97.

²Ut.442.819, in *ibid.*, 147.

³Ut.214.139, in *ibid.*, 41. “That which is on the brow of Horus” was the royal uraeus, the coiled serpent-emblem of authority. The Westerners were the inhabitants of the land of the dead, and Anubis was said to be their head; see Ut.419.745, in *ibid.*, 138.

⁴Ut.485A.1030, in *ibid.*, 172.

The thought of Geb helping the deceased to ascend the sky is continued:

Hnty-mmwt f comes out to you and grasps your hand, he takes you to the sky, to your father Gēb. He is joyful at meeting you, he sets his hands on you, he kisses you and caresses you, he sets you at the head of the spirits, the Imperishable Stars.¹

When the resurrected pharaoh prays for his acceptance by the gods, he addresses Geb, and his prayer is answered when *Hnty-mmwt f*, presumably one of Rē's messengers, escorts him to the divine father. The pharaoh is recognized as Geb's "legitimate heir,"² firstborn son of Nut³ "with whom his father Geb is satisfied,"⁴ and in much the same way as Atum gave his son Geb "his heritage," "the assembled Ennead" now makes the pharaoh the "chiefest of the gods," and the "the sole great god."⁵ The honor that belonged to Geb is transferred to the resurrected king on the basis of their father-son relationship.

Memphis

Memphis (or Noph), near the apex of the Nile delta, and about 25km south of modern Cairo, became the capital when the two Egypts were united under Pharaoh Menes. Memphan theology, recorded in the Shabaka Stone⁶ and reflected in some of the

¹Ut.373.655-656, in *ibid.*, 123-124.

²Ut.127.80a, in Mercer, *Pyramid Texts*, 44.

³The sky goddess, Ut.1.1a, in *ibid.*, 20.

⁴Ut.3.3a, in *ibid.*, 20.

⁵Ut.592.1615-1619, in Faulkner, *Pyramid Texts*, 243.

⁶The Shabaka stone (dating to the Nubian, or 25th dynasty: now located in the British Museum, No. 498— see also *ANET*, 4-6) has been instrumental in the understanding of the role of Ptah in the Memphis pantheon. It was said to have been rewritten (under orders from King Shabaka, 716-702 B.C.E.) from an older manuscript damaged by worms. One of its sections deals

Coffin Texts, became the credentials for the new center. Ptah was the High God, the one seated upon the Great Throne, declared to be the master of destiny and the creator of the world.

The gods who came into being as Ptah:—
 Ptah who is upon the Great Throne . . . ;
 Ptah-Nun, the father who [begot] Atum;
 Ptah-Naunet, the mother who bore Atum;
 Ptah the Great, that is, the heart and tongue of the Ennead;
 [Ptah] . . . who gave birth to the gods.¹

Ptah was equated with Nun, the Father, as well as his consort Naunet, who gave birth to Atum. To the Memphite priests, the Heliopolitan Ennead was merely a manifestation in different forms of the supreme god Ptah—aspects of his creative will. Yet the process described is different to that of Heliopolis:

His Ennead is before him in (the form of) teeth and lips. That is (the equivalent of) the semen and hands of Atum. Whereas the Ennead of Atum came into being by his semen and fingers, the Ennead (of Ptah), however, is the teeth and lips in this [*sic*] mouth, which pronounced the name of everything, from which Shu and Tefnut came forth, and which was the fashioner of the Ennead.²

The method of fathering employed by Ptah is rather ambiguous here. On the one hand we are introduced to Naunet, his consort, and on the other, we are told that he spoke the gods and everything else into being by the power of his teeth and lips. However he did

with the mythical peace deal between Seth and Horus, emphasizing Memphis as the main center because of the burial of Osiris there when his body drifted to shore after Seth drowned him. Finnestad. *Ptah, Creator of the Gods*, 6. See p. 82 for an account of the differing theories for the purpose of the text of the Shabaka stone.

¹Shabaka Stone, 48-52. in *ANET*, 5a.

²Shabaka Stone, 55, in *ibid.*

it, he was still recognized as the Creator of everything: gods, food, drink, offerings for the gods, shrines, images to be worshiped, the *ka* or soul of each being, plus the cities and nomes (provinces) of Egypt (i.e., political order).

As well as introducing us to Ptah, Memphite theology also highlights Osiris, and it is on him that the spotlight of public adoration seems to fall.¹ Possibly originating in Syria as a corn-deity responsible for the fertility of crops,² and in contrast to the gods of the Pharaohs who were traditionally considered unapproachable by the masses,³ Osiris was to become the central figure of the religion of Ancient Egypt⁴ as the judge of souls and “great type and symbol of the Resurrection,”⁵ changing the emphasis of his cult from the cult of the dead to one that stressed fertility and life.⁶ In his anthropomorphic form he was depicted everywhere with a massively oversized erect phallus to emphasize his procreative

¹The myth (described on the walls of the pyramids at Sakkâra, and forming part of the corpus of Pyramid Texts) assumes greater importance in later pyramid inscriptions: Griffiths, *Plutarch's de Iside et Osiride*, 33.

²Ions, *Egyptian Mythology*, 49.

³Ibid., 34.

⁴Budge, *Osiris* I, xi.

⁵Ibid., 1.

⁶Paralleling the Greek myth of Hades and Persephone, which may have been the attraction for Plutarch to write extensively of this myth; Ions, *Egyptian Mythology*, 18.

and nourishing nature.¹ At no time in Egypt's long history is the position of Osiris usurped by any other god, even though he displaced a number of gods.²

According to Plutarch, the basic story line is as follows.³ Set tricked his brother Osiris into climbing into an ornately decorated chest. Once inside, Set quickly fastened down the lid, then threw Osiris into the Nile, where he drowned. To complete the indignity, and to prevent Isis from performing magic to bring him back to life, Set dismembered the body into fourteen pieces and scattered them widely. Isis searched diligently for the pieces, reassembled them, embalmed the body, then became pregnant by it, later bearing Horus (the younger).

Despite his youthful incompetence, Horus began an odyssey to avenge his father with a series of prolonged struggles against Set, in which the young Horus eventually prevails.⁴ In avenging the murder of his father Osiris, Horus rose to prominence and became the archetype of the pharaohs,⁵ idealizing the virtue of the preservation of the

¹Griffith, *Plutarch's de Iside et Osiride*, 201.

²Budge, *Osiris* 1, 1.

³Plutarch, ΠΕΡΙ ΙΣΙΔΟΣ ΚΑΙ ΟΣΙΡΙΔΟΣ, chaps. 12-20, in Griffiths, *Plutarch's de Iside et Osiride*, 135-147.

⁴*ANET*, 14-17.

⁵Ions, *Egyptian Mythology*, 25.

father deity.¹ The pathos of this story touched the Egyptian people deeply, and gave them great incentive for loyalty to the pharaoh.²

The strong sense of family loyalty and devotion the Osiris myth engendered, not only between Isis and Osiris, but between Horus and his parents—Horus is called the “pillar of his mother” and the “Saviour of his father”³—was further enhanced by his mother Isis’s approaching the old and dribbling Rē⁴ to obtain by trickery his secret name, thus his power. Thus was the power of Rē⁴, the sun’s strength, commuted to Horus.⁴

Thebes

Thebes, a city of upper Egypt, was the seat of centralized government for the New Kingdom (1570 - 1085 B.C.E.). The Theban priests incorporated the main features of important national cosmogonies into the local one to give it greater national credibility. *The Book of the Dead*,⁵ a collection of “spells” adapted from the *Pyramid Texts* and

¹One of the Pyramid texts describes Horus this way: “[He] giveth life to his divine Father, he maketh great the serenity of Osiris, as chief of the gods of Amenti”: the *Pyramid Text* of Pepi II, which appears in Budge, *Osiris* 2, 356. The Amenti were probably a people based 20 km south of present-day Luxor in the town of Iuny (not to be confused with Iunu—Heliopolis); Barbara Watterson, *The Gods of Ancient Egypt* (New York: Facts on File Publications, 1984), 190.

²Ions, *Egyptian Mythology*, 60.

³Griffiths, *Plutarch’s de Iside et Osiride*, 344-345.

⁴ANET, 12-13.

⁵The *Book of the Dead* we have today is based on the Theban Recension: T. G. H. James, “Preface,” in Raymond O. Faulkner, *The Ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead*, ed. Carol Andrews (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990), 7. For a tabular correlation between *Book of the Dead*, *Coffin Texts*, and *Pyramid Texts*, Appendix I, Thomas George Allen, *The Book of the Dead or, Going Forth by Day: Ideas of the Ancient Egyptians Concerning the Hereafter as Expressed in Their Own Terms*, The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilization, 37 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), 225-241.

Coffin Texts, was one of the by-products of this concern and remains a good source of their theological understanding. However, rather than tracing through their pantheon, we shall just concentrate on those gods considered by them to be “father” gods.

Atum was appealed to in spells to penetrate the underworld (i.e., resurrection). In the following example, he was seen as the sustainer of those who would remain behind (the living):

My father Atum has given to me and established (for me) my house that is on earth, with innumerable barley and wheat therein, provided for me there for my food by my son (of) my body.¹

Atum was seen as the one to facilitate resurrection: “O Osiris N., Atum the father of the gods lifts thee; he makes thy duration eternal.”²

As noted earlier, the names of the gods blur somewhat, especially it seems in Thebes. Atum, for example, is linked to Rē^ε, Harakhte, Horus, and Khepri with a compound name.³ In an abbreviated form of that name, we are introduced to Rē^ε-Harakhte, a commonly occurring name in Theban literature that emphasizes the youthful vigor of the sun as it rises in the hours before noon:

Hail to thee, Rē^ε, [maker of] all mankind, Atum-Harakhte, sole God, living on truth, maker of what is and creator of what exists of animals and human beings

¹Spell 72.S3. in Allen, *Book of the Dead*, 65.

²Spell 170.S3. in *ibid.*, 178. “N” used to denote the name of a king for which the book of the dead was written—shorthand for his name and all its “explanatory additions.” *Ibid.*, 3.

³From the 21st dynasty comes the statement: “Hail to thee, Rē^ε-Harakhte-Atum-Horus-Khepri, great falcon with festively adorned breast.” Spell 15A1c.S1. in Allen, *Book of the Dead*, 17.

that came forth from his eye, lord of sky and earth, maker of mankind below and (the stars) above, Lord of the Universe, bull of the Ennead, King of the sky, lord of the gods, Sovereign at the head of the Ennead, divine God who came into being of himself, Primeval One who came into being in the beginning.

Joy to thee, maker of the gods, Atum who brought into being the common folk, lord of sweetness, great of love, at whose shining everyone lives.¹

The universal appeal of this deity is here evidenced. Rē^c-Harakhete is extolled not only as the creator of all, Lord of the Universe, and source of fertility (the bull), but the focus of joy for the “common folks,” the source of “sweetness” and “love,” and the reason for existence. A variant of the spell just cited is more specific in naming these functions as a prerogative of Rē^c's divine fatherhood:

Hail to thee, Rē^c of Bakhu, King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Rē^c lodging in the night bark. Thou risest, thou risest, thou shinest, thou shinest. The screeching baboons adore thee; they who are in the seats of the Horizon-Dwellers cheer thee. Prone snakes stand on their tails for thee; erect ones squat for thee. Opened for thee are the double doors of the horizon; swept for thee is the way of eternity. They That Are in the southern sky adore thee; They That Are in the northern sky exalt thee. The Ennead comes to thee bowing down; on their bellies they kiss the ground before thee. They say to thee; “Welcome, father of the Fathers of all the gods, Many-faced One whose substance is unknown, hot in his body, shining in his disk, who overthrows his enemies every day.”²

Again Rē^c's eternal qualities are extolled first, but then attention turns to the adoration of all creatures from all places. They express their adoration and exaltation to the “father of the Fathers of all the gods” (the one who can sweep open the “double doors of the horizon,” and daily overthrow his enemies) by prostrating themselves and kissing the ground.

¹Spell 15B2.1-2. in Allen, *Book of the Dead*, 21.

²Spell 15A4.2-3. in *ibid.*, 19.

However, the bulk of the *Book of the Dead* focuses on the Osiris myth, with few references to gods being father unless it is in relation to resurrection, for example:

O my father Osiris, mayest thou do for me what thy father Rē^c did for thee. May I endure on earth; may I establish my throne. . . .
I am thy son, (O) my Father Rē^c; mayest thou do this for my life; soundness and health, while Horus abides on his façade.¹

Osiris is petitioned to ensure life beyond death, which sounds perhaps somewhat manipulative, rather than descriptive of a joyful relationship as previously described. Nevertheless, hope is still placed in the god, and the father motif is appealed to: “My Father{s} judges me in my favor at eventide. I open my mouth that I may eat of life. I live on <air>; I live again after death like Rē^c every day.”² Rē^c was seen as the one to provide the ladder between the two worlds, making it possible for a mortal to reach the lands of immortality. “N. ascends on this ladder which his father Rē^c made for him, and Horus and Seth grasp his hand.”³

Geb too was accorded significance in much the same way. In a spell to ward off crocodiles in the gods’ domain (which were believed to be able to rob a man of all the spells he had saved up for the occasion), Father Geb was appealed to; the one being threatened could remind the crocodile that “I am the bull presiding over the fields,” or,

¹Spell 175b.S3. in *ibid.*, 184.

²Spell 38.S2. in *ibid.*, 45. Allen uses the following brackets to indicate: () supplied from elsewhere; [] lost; < > emended; and { } superfluous. *Ibid.*, 4.

³Spell 153.S7. in *ibid.*, 152.

“Geb is my Father; Nut is my mother,” or, “I am Osiris,” or Horus or Anubis.¹ Hopefully by identifying closely with the gods the thieving crocodile would think twice before proceeding with his malicious mischief. Similarly when the earthly throne of the dead king was under threat, he could appeal to Father Geb to ensure no coup or foreign attack could succeed; “I have embraced my father Geb for all eternity.”² Presumably this was seen as sufficient cause to ensure political continuity and stability.

To Geb also belonged the power of resurrection. The deceased pharaoh could appeal to Geb’s fatherhood as leverage to ensure his resurrection, as well as identifying with other deities for good measure: “[I am] Osiris, first-born of the (5) gods, heir of my father {Osiris} Geb;”³ and, “Geb is my father; Nut is my mother. I am Horus the first-born on coronation day. I am Anubis (on the day) of the Centipede. It is [I], the Lord of All; I am Osiris.”⁴

Osiris remains a significant father figure in all this. Most of the *Book of the Dead*’s mention of Osiris is in the context of his large domain, his generosity in providing bountiful food, his power over death, and his equity in the judgment process. But there are a few times he is addressed as father of the deceased, for example:

Hail to thee, (my) father Osiris. I have come to treat thee; mayest thou treat this

¹Spell 31b.S. in *ibid.*, 41.

²Spell 47.S3, in *ibid.*, 51.

³Spell 69a.S2-S4, in *ibid.*, 63. The Theban Pantheon had five children for Geb and Nut, rather than four. Horus the elder was added.

⁴*Ibid.*

flesh of mine. This corpse of mine shall not pass away, for I am complete like my father Khepri. He is like me, one who passes not away.¹

Again we see the father-rescuer motif emerging:

Horus is the rescuer (of his Father), Horus is <the brother> (Horus is the friend). Horus came from his Father's seed while the former was undergoing decay. He rules Egypt, and the gods work for him. He nurtures millions, he gives (new) life to millions, by means of his eye, sole one of her Lord, Lady of the Universe.²

Conclusion

The Heliopolitans believed that after Atum rose from the chaotic primordial abyss and dispelled the darkness, his next action was to bear children, even before completing the created realms. Just how that happened is not clear, but in so doing, Atum became known as the "universal father of gods." Then came the unexpected arrival of the human race through the tears of grieving Atum. As time progresses, the relationship between gods and humanity is not a happy one, and after a revolt, in which the annihilation of the human race is averted by Rē's sense of justice, the gods escape to their own realm. Up to this point, it seems that any reference to the gods' being "father" is incidental or ambivalent.

Divine fatherhood assumes greater significance with the arrival of the pharaohs, after Rē' seemingly abdicated his earthly throne. The pharaohs establish themselves and claim that the gods are their father/s.³ As the pharaohs assume control of the maintenance

¹Spell 155.S1, in *ibid.*, 153-154; Spell 181*d*.S.1, in *ibid.*, 194.

²Spell 78.S16, in *ibid.*, 69.

³Rē' first handed rulership of the earth over to Thoth (the moon), who restored light to the world (*ANET*, 8), but power was passed from demigod to demigod until it eventually ended up with

of creation order, preventing the reemergence of primeval chaos through elaborate public ceremonies and rituals, and by maintaining civil order, the common people savor peace and prosperity, enjoying perhaps secondhand the benefits of their heavenly father.

The death of the pharaohs provides a closer look at the father-god concept, describing in greater detail the role of each father-god. When Pepi II says of himself that he is mightier than Atum,¹ it infers that the father defers to the son, allowing the son to receive the wealth and power of the father, initially to care for his parents in their old age, but also to provide for future generations. It seems strange that a god would follow the same practice, unless this is an anthropomorphism describing a transaction unintelligible to Western, postmodern minds. But there are two more aspects to this enigma: the son's desire to protect his father, and the fusion of *ka* and resurrected king (described in terms of being in the arms of Father Atum).² This suggests an eternal cycle of fusion between father and son, and a son's son *ad infinitum*, a kind of unending *ka* recycling program, fusing together the generations, the living and the dead, melding humanity and gods. It also suggests a multilayered, multigenerational, father-son relationship.

Yet Rē³ still retains his primacy of place, because it is he who provides barley, spelt, bread, and beer.³ He is still the provider in the afterlife. He provides the ladder for

the pharaohs; Vernus, *Gods of Ancient Egypt*, 83.

¹Ut.273-274.395, in Faulkner, *Pyramid Texts*, 80; Mercer, *Pyramid Texts*, 93.

²Ut.216.151, in Faulkner, *Pyramid Texts*, 44; see also Ut.215.140, in *ibid.*, 42; Mercer, *Pyramid Texts*, 61, 60.

³Ut.205.121a, in Faulkner, *Pyramid Texts*, 37.

the resurrected soul to ascend into the sky,¹ he sends his messengers to ensure the deceased makes it safely,² then he becomes the focus of attention on the resurrected king's arrival in the heavenly realm.

Meanwhile, Geb's father-role was defined in terms of putting all the bones back together, restoring intestines and eyes,³ and providing a helping hand on the journey through the sky.⁴ He affectionately welcomes the resurrected king into the heavenly realm and places him at the head of the other resurrected beings.⁵ He facilitates the acceptance of the newcomer by the other gods, calling the resurrected pharaoh his rightful heir in whom he is satisfied.⁶ Then follows a ceremony in which Father Geb's honor is transferred to his son, the king.⁷

Memphan theology is not all that different, perhaps reinforcing the ambiguity that exists between physical description and metaphor. The introduction of Ptah's (i.e., Nun's) consort-cum-alter-ego Naunet and the declaration that Shu and Tefnut were born of the power of his lips and teeth add to the idea that the ancient Egyptians thought in more abstract metaphorical terms than in concrete actualities to express their theology.

¹Ut.271.390, in *ibid.*, 791.

²Ut.214.136, in *ibid.*, 41.

³Ut.14.9c, Ut.15, Pyramid Text of Pepi II, in Budge, *Osiris*, vol. 2, 314.

⁴Ut.485A.1030, in Faulkner, *Pyramid Texts*, 172.

⁵Ut.373.655-656, in *ibid.*, 123-124.

⁶Ut.127.80a, in Mercer, *Pyramid Texts*, 44; Ut.3.3a, in Mercer, *Pyramid Texts*, 20.

⁷Ut.592.1615-1619, in Faulkner, *Pyramid Texts*, 243.

Both Shu and Geb were confirmed as “father of the gods,”¹ the latter becoming instrumental in the resurrection process. He was regarded as father of the deceased,² and the god responsible for the resurrection-restoration of the dead back to their original living form.³ Geb was said to open his mouth to release the dead, while Nut was said to open her mouth to receive them.⁴

In Memphan theology we also see the idealization of the son protecting and preserving the father-deity, even to the extent of being called the “Saviour of his father.”⁵ We also see the introduction of the complicity of the mother-figure obtaining by trickery from the aged father more rights and prerogatives for her son.⁶

Finally, the Thebans added their perspectives to the earlier theologies. For them, Atum was the sustainer of those left behind when a pharaoh died,⁷ and the one who made it possible for someone to live eternally.⁸ Rē^c was still affirmed as the “father of the Fathers of all the gods,” whose substance was unknown,⁹ with the addition that he was the

¹“Pyramid Text of Pepi II,” in Budge, *Osiris*, vol. 2, 314.

²Spell 44, in Faulkner, *Coffin Texts*, vol. 1, 37, and Spell 45, in *ibid.*, 39.

³Spell 20, in *ibid.*, 11.

⁴Spell 834, in *ibid.*, vol. 3, 22.

⁵Griffiths, *Plutarch's de Iside et Osiride*, 344-345.

⁶*ANET*, 12-13.

⁷Spell 72.S3, in Allen, *Book of the Dead*, 65.

⁸Spell 170.S3, in *ibid.*, 178.

⁹Spell 15A4.2-3, in *ibid.*, 19.

focus of joy for the “common folks,” the source of “sweetness” and “love,” and the reason for all existence.¹ This seems to be different from the earlier dynasties when only the pharaohs seemed to have access to the gods.²

In common with Memphis, the theology of Thebes links the ruling pharaoh with the father-god (they highlighted Rē‘), which would ensure a long and stable reign.³ In common with Heliopolitan tradition, it was Rē‘ who would provide the ladder between the two worlds for the resurrected soul.⁴

Father Geb was also a key player, providing the guarantee of resurrection for a dead pharaoh,⁵ promising to ward off magic-stealing crocodiles in the gods’ domain,⁶ and ensuring no coup or foreign attack could succeed during the transition of power from father to son.⁷ The Theban priests also taught the idea of Father Osiris being integral to the resurrection, his prerogative being to preserve the flesh of the deceased.⁸ They also extolled Horus for the rescue of his father.⁹

¹Spell 15B2.1-2, in *ibid.*, 21.

²Vernus, *Gods of Ancient Egypt*, 97.

³Spell 175b.S3, in Allen, *Book of the Dead*, 184.

⁴Spell 153.S7, in *ibid.*, 152.

⁵Spell 69a.S2-S4, in *ibid.*, 63.

⁶Spell 31b.S, in *ibid.*, 41.

⁷Spell 47.S3, in *ibid.*, 51.

⁸Spell 155.S1, in *ibid.*, 153-154; Spell 181d.S.1, in *ibid.*, 194.

⁹Spell 78.S16, in *ibid.*, 69.

It is difficult to determine in all of this the nature of the relationship between gods and humans, as the majority of the spells and utterances seem to be quite manipulative, ensuring the success of the human supplicant in the afterlife. The joyous ceremonies portrayed in them may even suggest something similar. From the perspective of the pharaoh, they may have been useful tools to keep the masses compliant; and from the perspective of the masses, they were there to guarantee peace and prosperity for the present, and security for the future. In either case, it appears to be a rather materialistic relationship. Certainly the relationship of the masses to Rē' must be colored by the early human attempts to rebel, despite later attempts to sweeten the bond between them.

The relationship between pharaoh and the father-god is a little different. It becomes apparent that there is a fusion of their identities to some extent, with the father-god deferring to his pharaoh-son. This certainly reinforces the notion that the masses did not really count for much, with the pharaohs receiving such preferential treatment.

We may at least conclude that the Egyptian gods were called "father" in the context of the generation of other gods, in the creation of the world and all that is in it, in relation to the pharaohs, and in relation to assisting souls through the afterlife into the presence of Rē'. This means that it was in the context of creation and resurrection that their fatherhood was made manifest. But as far as the form this relationship took is concerned, we may have to reserve judgment.

Ugarit

Ugarit and Its Pantheon

Second-millennium Canaanite mythology was “significantly enhanced” through the discovery—considered to be the most important archaeological discovery of the century up to that time¹—of the library of a chief priest of the Storm-god Baal in the ancient city of Ugarit.² French researchers, working on the north coast of Syria between 1928 and the start of World War II, unearthed it while excavating the port and capital of the kingdom of Ugarit that thrived during the Amarna period (15th - 14th centuries B.C.E.)

The concept of the fatherhood of the gods in the Canaanite pantheon has proved more difficult to unearth.³ There is no clearly discernable “family tree” of the gods, and

¹Cyrus H. Gordon. *Ugaritic Literature: A Comprehensive Translation of the Poetic and Prose Texts* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1949), ix. Ugarit “fell squarely within the Hittite sphere of influence,” being a suzerain state of the Hittite empire. But she remained outside direct Egyptian control, and was even too far from the latter to be able to play one power off against the other. The library tablets date from between 1400 and 1200 B.C.E., at the height of Ugarit’s international trade, at a time when internationalism thrived. Gordon, *ibid.*, ix-x. They were written in a previously unknown language using a cuneiform script, deciphered soon after their discovery due to the relative simplicity of the characters. Johannes C. de Moor, *An Anthology of Religious Texts from Ugarit* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1987), vii-viii. The significance of Ugaritic religious literature seems to lie in its strategic position between the Hittite nation and Israel, forming a possible ideological bridge between them. Although the inhabitants of Ugarit may have distanced themselves from the Canaanites, it has been shown that their culture is largely Canaanite, allowing data obtained there to give “a fairly accurate view of the Canaanite pantheon.” Jonathan N. Tubb, *Canaanites, Peoples of the Past* (London: British Museum Press, 1998), 73.

²John W. Miller, “God as Father in the Bible and the Father Image in Several Contemporary Ancient Near Eastern Myths: A Comparison.” *SR* 14, no. 3 (1985): 349.

³See for example E. Theodore Mullen, Jr., *The Divine Council in Canaanite and Early Hebrew Literature* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1980), 16-17, 19-22, where Mullen traces some of the struggles over the genealogy of the gods because of who calls whom father. See also Conrad E. L’Hereux, *Rank Among the Canaanite Gods: El, Ba’al, and the Repha’im*. Harvard Semitic Monographs 21 (Missoula, MO: Scholars Press, 1979), 12-14; N. Wyatt, “The Titles of the Ugaritic Storm God,” *UF* 24 (1992): 406.

like other ANE religious writings, no systematized account of their creation myth.¹

The problem of trying to determine the interrelationship of the gods arises at this point.

Unless there is an actual description of a god being engendered by another god, it is difficult to tell which god is father to whom—the simple designation of “father” is not sufficient to inform us of filial relationship. Although the main filial relationships seem to be as shown in fig. 5, there is still an element of uncertainty because of the lack of data.

We do well to heed Nicolas Wyatt’s warning that “we are constitutionally in constant danger of underestimating the complexity and subtlety of polytheistic thought!”²

Father El

As Creator

The evidence suggests that El was considered to be the creator god, and that the other gods of the pantheon were the children of El and Atirat (Asherah).³ Although El did not physically conceive all the gods, he is still referred to as “father of the gods,” and stands at the head of the pantheon because of his status among the deities⁴ and by virtue of

¹Although there is no creation account as such in Ugaritic literature, Mullen argues that the struggle with, and eventual defeat of, Yamm, the sea, constitutes the “first phase of creation—the restriction of the bounds of the sea—the separation of water and dry land.” Mullen, *Divine Council*, 13. Unfortunately, that debate cannot be pursued here.

²Wyatt, *Titles of the Ugaritic Storm God*, 403.

³Mullen, *The Divine Council*, 15-19. Recent scholarly opinion links Asherah with Athirat and Ashratu. Steve A. Wiggins, *A Reassessment of ‘Asherah: A Study According to the Textual Sources of the First Two Millennia B.C.*, *Alter Orient und Altes Testament* 235 (Darmstadt: Neukirchener, 1993), 1-2.

⁴Lowell K. Handy, *Among the Host of Heaven: The Syro-Palestinian Pantheon as Bureaucracy* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1994), 78.

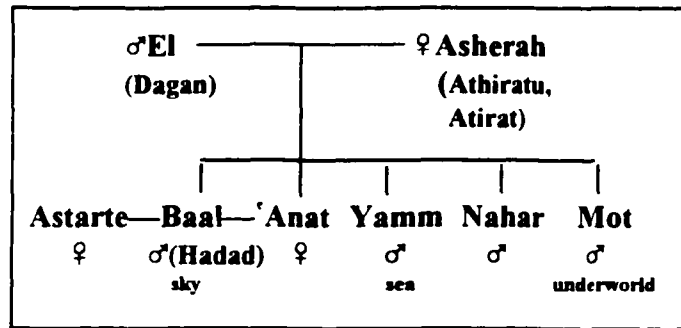


Fig. 5. Partial Ugaritic Pantheon.

his being the creator.¹ As expected, some of his creation activity was expressed in sexual terms, as in the following description of when he seduced two goddesses:

In kissing and conception,
In embracing, pregnancy,
They crouched and gave birth
To Shahar and Shalim.²

However, he was not just a physical progenitor, but a craftsman as well, when he made a healing goddess for Kirta out of clay:

I will craft and I will establish;
I will establish one who casts out pain,
One who chases away lingering illness.³

¹Mullen, *The Divine Council*, 15. Handy suggests, however, that the narratives from Ugarit show that both El and Asherah functioned together as the highest authority in the Syro-Palestinian pantheon. Handy, *Among the Host of Heaven*, 69.

²KTU 1.23.51-52, in Handy, *Among the Host of Heaven*, 78.

³KTU 1.16.V.25-28, in *ibid.*

As Father-god

The father-god/human relationship is well illustrated in two narrative poems, the so-called Kirta (Keret) and Aqhat Epics. In the Kirta Epic, El is called “father of humanity” (*ab adm*) by the human king Kirta.¹ When “all his descendants have perished,” Kirta, discouraged, goes to bed and has a vision of El (here called the “Father of Man”) who approaches him to ask why he weeps:

What ails Kirta, that he cries?
That he weeps, the Pleasant, Lad of El?
Is it kingship like his Father (*kabh*) he wants?
Or dominion like the Father of Man (*kab.adm*)?²

In answer to the prayers and tears, the sacrifices and libations of King Kirta, El grants him a wife,³ but that entails besieging a city and demanding the daughter of the besieged king.

Kirta therefore sacrifices to father El before going off to do battle:

He lifted up his hands heavenward,
He sacrificed to Bull, his father (*abk*), 'Ēl,
He served Ba'l with his sacrifice,
The son of Dagnu with his offering.⁴

¹KTU 1.14.I.37, in *ibid.*, 78. This poem was written in the mid-14th century B.C.E. Greenstein, in Simon B. Parker, *Ugaritic Narrative Poetry*, trans. Mark S. Smith, Simon B. Parker, Edward L. Greenstein, Theodore J. Lewis, and David Marcus. SBL 9, Writings from the Ancient World, ed. Simon B. Parker (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997), 42, n. 176.

²1. CAT 1.14. I. 33-43, in Parker, *Ugaritic Narrative Poetry*, trans. Edward L. Greenstein, 13. Gordon translates the last two lines this way: “Does he wish the kingship of Tôr, his father? Or the sovereignty *like the father of M[an]*?” Krt:41-42 in Gordon, *Ugaritic Literature*, 68. Mullen translates similarly: “Does he desire the kingship of Bull, his father? Or dominion like the Father of Man?” Mullen, *The Divine Council*, 24.

³Henri Adrien Drouault, “The Canaanite Gods and Some Biblical Parallels in the Ras Shamra Tablets” (Unpublished master’s thesis, Andrews University, 1952), 28.

⁴CTA 14.IV.167-171, in Mullen, *The Divine Council*, 31-32.

The fatherhood of El was appealed to when a sin offering was made—it was said to be carried to “the father of the gods,” suggesting that father El has a salvific role. In poetic parallelism the additional phrases, “to the assembly of the gods” and “to the totality of the gods,” add further repute to his fatherhood role.

Ye transgress or ye sin
 for *sacrifice* or for offering
 [Our] sac[rifice] is sacrificed.
 It is the offering offered
 It is the libation poured
 It is carried [to the father of the gods]
 It is carried to the assembly of the gods
 To the totality of the go[ds].¹

After a seige lasting seven days, King Pabuli of the city of Udum pleads with Kirta not to harm the city:

Do not harass Udum the great,
 Do not harass Udum majestic.
 For Udum is a gift of El,
 A grant from the Father of Man (*ab.adm*).²

It is readily seen that both kings claim their regnal legitimacy through father El, but according to the story, it is Kirta who finally ends up with the city—as one of the spoils of war—a gift from father El: “Udum is a gift of ’Él and a present of the Father of Man (*ab.adm*).”³

Therefore the “father of man” is seen in terms of providing progeny to his earthly

¹Text 107.2:15-19, in Gordon, *Ugaritic Literature*, 109.

²1. CAT.1.14. III. 29-32, in Parker, *Ugaritic Narrative Poetry*, trans. Edward L. Greenstein, 17.

³CTA 14.III.135-136; V.258-259; VI.227-228, in Mullen, *The Divine Council*, 32.

subjects, and sufficient resources to maintain them in response to their cultic practices. Certainly human rulers were called the sons of god just as the deities in the pantheon were considered his sons, making El not only ruler over the universe, but over the monarchical hierarchy of the human sphere as well. As Lowell K. Handy suggests, “to be *the* parents in the cosmic scheme was to be the highest authority.”¹

So Kirta takes home the lovely “Lady Huraya, the Fair One,” “fair as the goddess Anath,” and “as comely as Astarte.”² They have a son, Yassib, then many more children, but tragedy strikes when Kirta falls ill because of a forgotten vow to Asherah. Ilha’u, Kirta’s younger son, laments that his father—a “scion of El”—could die. After a break in the text, the narrative picks up again with El calling the gods together and asking them seven times which of them was able to drive out the disease afflicting Kirta. After none of them respond, he finally sends them away with the resolve to do it himself.³ The implication is that Kirta is recognized as a son of El, and the old father-god is moved to pity for one of his children.

There is an ironic twist at the end of the story. Yassib, now a virile young man, goes to his father Kirta, suggesting it is now time for him to replace his father as king:

In time of attack you take flight,
And lie low in the mountains.
You’ve let your hand fall to vice.

¹Handy, *Among the Host of Heaven*, 79. Handy maintains that Asherah was co-regent with El. *Ibid.*

²1. CAT 1.14 I 23-28.

³Legend of Krt 126:V:7-28, in Drouault, “Canaanite Gods,” 29.

You don't pursue the widow's case,
 You don't take up the wretched's claim.
 You don't expel the poor's oppressor.
 You don't feed the orphan who faces you,
 Nor the widow who stands at your back.
 Your sickbed is your consort,
 Your infirmity, your company.
 Step down—and I'll be the king!
 From your rule—I'll sit on the throne!¹

The offended and enraged Kirta is not ready to defer to his son—he is clearly unimpressed and unwilling to abdicate:

May Horon crack, my son,
 May Horon crack your head,
 Astarte-named-with-Baal, your skull!

May you fall at the peak of your years,
 Be subdued while you still make a fist(?)!²

The request is obviously a little premature, and shows that the process of a father's being replaced by a son was not always a smooth one.³ The recurring theme of the transfer of power from an older sky god to a younger storm god is attested in many contemporary, eastern Mediterranean cultures,⁴ and this story gives it a human perspective.

¹3. CAT I.14. VI. 43- 54. in Parker, *Ugaritic Narrative Poetry*, trans. Edward L. Greenstein, 41-42.

²3. CAT I.14. VI. 54- 58, in *ibid.*, 42. Horon was a god of the underworld. This follows an ancient curse used also by Nahar against Baal in the Baal epic. KTU 1.2 I.7-9.

³Similar tensions have been observed in El's relationship with Baal. Arvid S. Kapelrud, "The Relationship Between El and Baal in the Ras Shamra Texts," in *The Bible World: Essays in Honor of Cyrus H. Gordon*, ed. Gary Rendsburg et al. (New York: KTAV, 1980), 79-85.

⁴Kronos confined Zeus, Teshub displaced the Hittite high god Kumarbi, and Baal replaced El. Michael David Coogan, *Stories from Ancient Canaan* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1978), 81. To this list it could be added that Enlil superseded An.

The other narrative poem, the “Epic of Aqhat,” is of the hero Danil (Dan’ilu, Danel or Daniel) who also pleads to the gods for a son, and after he gives food and drink to the gods for seven days we see Baal pleading on his behalf before the high god:

Bless him, Bull, El my father (*lfr. il aby*),
Prosper him, Creator of Creatures (*bny. brwt*).

Let him have a son in his house,
Offspring within his palace.¹

The narrative continues by listing the advantages of a son: “to set up his Ancestor’s stela” in the sanctuary, “to rescue his father’s smoke from the Underworld,” “to stop his abusers’ spite,” “to grasp his arm when he is drunk,” “to eat his portion in Baal’s house,” and “to daub his roof when there’s [mu]d.”² This gives us an inside view of the filial relationship of those times. To add further significance to the poem, it has recently been demonstrated that its structure is based on filial duty, dividing it into six scenes that define the duties of a son to his father:³

1. Six-day long cultic action		i]1-15
2. Baal appeals to El on behalf of Danil	1 st list of filial duties	i 15-33
3. El blesses Danil who will have a son	2 nd list of filial duties	i 34-[
4. [Danil is told the news]	3 rd list of filial duties	ii]1-8
5. Danil rejoices	4 th list of filial duties	ii 8-27
6. Six-day long cultic action		ii 27-42

¹4.CAT 1.17. I. 23- 26, in Parker, *Ugaritic Narrative Poetry*, 52-53.

²4.CAT 1.17. I. 26-33, in *ibid.*, 53; 4.CAT 1.17. II 0-8, in *ibid.*, 55.

³Jean-M. Husser, “The Birth of a Hero: Form and Meaning of KTU I.17 i-ii.” in *Ugarit. Religion and Culture: Proceedings of the International Colloquium on Ugarit, Religion and Culture. Edinburgh, July 1994*, ed. N. Wyatt, W. G. E. Watson, and J. B. Lloyd (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1996), 86.

Although this is in reference to Danil's connection to El, it can also be seen in the relationship between Danil and his son Aqhat, and serves to illustrate the father-son bond between them. Its relevance to the discussion of the fatherhood of the gods is to demonstrate the two-way effect of the bond and the advantages to the god of having a virtuous "son."

The ending of this story is not a happy one. The young man Aqhat is presented with a bow fashioned by the craftsman of the gods at his coming of age. When the goddess 'Anat sees it, she is sure she must have it, and is furious when Aqhat makes light of her request, so asks permission of her father El to use any means to obtain it. She "proceeds to the precinct of El," and comes to "the Father of Years,"¹ making her feelings known by threatening to make El's head "run with blood" and his "old grey beard with gore."² El answers:

I know you, daughter, as desperate,
 [Among goddesses no]thing resists you.
 Go off, daughter, haughty of heart,
 [Lay] hold of what's in your liver,
 Set up the [in] your breast.
 To resist you is to be beaten.³

The seeming impunity that 'Anat operates under here casts El in a bad light. He does not consider himself under any obligation to protect his earthly "children" from the bad-

¹4. CAT 1.17 VI. 48-49.

²5. CAT 1.18 I.11-12.

³5. CAT 1.18 I.16-19. This story is reminiscent of the scene between Gilgamesh and Ishtar, where the goddess also complains to her father, head of the pantheon, and revenge is by means of an animal. The death of the hero in both stories is followed by 7 years of famine.

tempered 'Anat. Aqhat is assassinated by a hired killer, Ytpn, causing a famine to descend on the land and old Danil to mourn for his son for seven years. He finally agrees to let his daughter Pgt set off to avenge Aqhat's death,¹ and she goes with a concealed weapon to the abode of Ytpn. There her disguise is not recognized and she is treated to a feast.² But this is where the tablets end, so we can only guess what happens next. The ANE theme of a woman going to avenge the death of her brother does not augur well for Ytpn in this story, though.³ Chances are that Pgt was successful in her quest.

As Bull

The bull metaphor reveals another aspect of the father-god concept. Aside from the obvious fertility and warrior-god motifs in the symbolism,⁴ it may be an indicator of perceived parentage, or at least of a significant relationship, as well as an indication of rank. Found most often in reference to El being Bull is the recurring phrase and its cognates, "The message of Tôr-'Il *thy* father, the word of Ltpn, *thy* begetter."⁵ It seems to be used in the context of the delivery of a message to El or in the reception of one by

¹ Aqht:190-202, in Gordon, *Ugaritic Literature*, 100.

² Aqht:210-219, in *ibid.*

³ Compare the story of 'Anat avenging the death of Baal. and Isis avenging the death of Osiris.

⁴ Mullen, *The Divine Council*, 30.

⁵ nt:pl. ix:III:6-7, in Gordon, *Ugaritic Literature*, 25. Wyatt translates it this way: '[Message of Bull El your father], word of the Compassionate. [your progenitor].' Nicolas Wyatt, *Religious Texts from Ugarit: The Words of Ilmilku and His Colleagues* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 44.

him, for example, when El receives Asherah's request for Baal to have a house,¹ when the divine craftsman (Kothar-and-Hasis)² are commissioned to build it,³ when Yamm and Nahar come to seek the dominion of Baal,⁴ when he sends a message to 'Anat,⁵ or when Baal approaches El to bring the case of Danil to him: "Bless him, Bull, El, my father (*lfr.il aby*), prosper him, Creator of Creatures (*bny.bmwt*)."⁶

The parallelism identifies "Bull-El" as the "Creator of Creatures,"⁷ which casts the net wider than just the gods, and his function as more than creator. It is also used to describe his kingship. In the narrative of Yamm (Yam) and Nahar's challenging Baal, the bull motif is combined with that of king. Shapsh, "luminary of the gods," here addresses Athtar, a deity who attempts to displace Baal, but ends up being ruler of the underworld.

Bull El your father (*fr.il.abk*) [has sh]own favour to Prince Yam,
to [Ru]ler Nahar.

[How will] Bull [E]l your father (*fr.[i]l.abk*) listen to you?
He will surely pull up the [sup]port of your seat;
he will surely [overturn the throne of] your kingship;

¹KTU 1.3 I.v 35-36.

²This is just one example in Sumerian mythology of a double name being applied to a single entity. Sometimes the anomaly is described in terms of a dual identity. Yamm and Nahar is a further example and Thakaman-wa-Šanam the twin messenger/s of the gods is another.

³KTU 1.1.iii 6, in Nicolas Wyatt, *Religious Texts from Ugarit*, 44.

⁴KTU 1.2 i.16-17.

⁵KTU 1.1 II.ii 17-18.

⁶4. CAT 1.17 23.

⁷1.17:I.23-24, in Baruch Margalit, *The Ugaritic Poem of AQHT: Text, Translation, Commentary*, BZAW 182 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1989), 144.

He will shatter the sceptre of your rule!¹

When Yamm sends messengers to El to demand the power of Baal, envoys from Judge River are also sent to back up the request, and the messengers all prostrate themselves before El. When El gets up to speak he is designated Bull, his (Baal's) father.

And Bull, his Father, 'Ēl (*tr.abh.il*) answered,
 "Ba'l is your servant, O Yamm,
 Ba'l is your servant forever,
 The son of Dagnu, your prisoner."²

A royal decree is given, using the nomenclature of Bull-El, linking the two traditions of progenitor and king.

As King

As well as being noted as creator and father of the gods, El is the only god in the Ugaritic pantheon to be called "king."³ In the earthly realm as well, El is seen as the clansman-protector of Kirta, the earthly king. He identifies with the human king by calling himself king, showing that he has dominion over all humanity.

But the nature of El's kingship is difficult to establish.⁴ Mullen notes that when he is called king, he is very often called "the king, father of years." Note the following scene,

¹KTU 1.2.iii 15-17, in Wyatt, *Religious Texts from Ugarit*, 52; KTU 1.6.vi 26-29, in Steve Wiggins, "Shapsh, Lamp of the Gods, in *Ugarit, Religion and Culture: Proceedings of the International Colloquium on Ugarit, Religion and Culture, Edinburgh, July 1994*, ed. N. Wyatt, W. G. E. Watson and J. B. Lloyd, *Essays Presented in Honour of Professor John C. L. Gibson. Ugaritisch-Biblische Literatur* (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1996), 336.

²CTA 2.136-37, in Mullen, *The Divine Council*, 124.

³Mullen, *The Divine Council*, 22.

⁴*Ibid.*, 25.

where Asherah comes to visit her husband to ask him to consider building a house for their son, Baal.

She opened the dome tent of 'Ēl and entered
The tabernacle of the King, Father of Years (*ab[.šnm.]*).
She bowed and fell at the feet of 'Ēl,
She did obeisance and honored him.¹

The epithet is usually applied to El when he is enthroned, and visited by another god/divine messenger falling at his feet in obeisance and requesting something of him,² much as we saw in the Bull-El motif.

However, a view that has been popular has seen El “represented as an aging king with declining strength, who seldom takes an active part in the affairs of gods and men.”³ He is portrayed as graying, an indication of his nobility with “long experience and much wisdom.”⁴ Part of the popular concept makes much of 'Anat's visit to El in which she threatens him and he meekly complies. Is it with sarcasm that she then remarks:

Your judgment, Ilu is wise.
May your wisdom last forever!
Long live the sharpness of your judgment.
Ba'lu the Almighty is our king,
our judge—nobody is over him.⁵

¹CTA 4.IV.23-26, in Mullen, *The Divine Council*, 23. The subject here is Asherah.

²Ibid., 23-24.

³Drouault, “Canaanite Gods,” 109.

⁴Ibid., 25.

⁵KTU 1.3 I.v 30-33, in de Moor, *Anthology of Religious Texts*, 17.

At this locution, “Bull-Ilu, his [Baal’s] father” groans and cries out,¹ perhaps aware that his daughter has outwitted him. Something similar happens in the poem of Aqhat, when ‘Anat again goes to see her father to demand the right to kill Aqhat for his bow. As Drouault observes, “How could El protect Aqhat from the goddess if he could not protect himself from her?” It seems the old god cannot resist the whims of his daughter, and he knows it. “Meekly he submits to her will.” Perhaps El’s reaction could be compared to the way Mot cowers at the sound of the name of El when he struggles with Baal on one occasion.² So the issue of the weakness of El is not as straightforward as it has seemed if the powerful Mot still cowers before the name of the old high god. To determine the matter further, we need to turn to the characteristics of El.

Characteristics of El

Kindness, Compassion, and Mercy

One of the names given to El is *Lṭpn* meaning mercy, and becomes one of his major attributes.³ He calls himself “God of mercy,”⁴ as well as “the Benevolent,” and the “good-natured.”⁵ As Drouault observes,

¹KTU 1.3 I.v 35, in de Moor, *Anthology of Religious Texts*, 18. This same sequence is seen when Asherah approaches El after Baal and ‘Anat approach him. KTU 1.3 IV.iv 41-44, in de Moor, *Anthology of Religious Texts*, 53.

²Drouault, “Canaanite Gods,” 32-34. For the account of Mot and Baal struggling together, see KTU 1.6 VI.vi 16-31.

³nt:pl. ix:III:21, in Gordon, *Ugaritic Literature*, 25.

⁴nt:pl. ix:IV:18, in *ibid.*, 26.

⁵KTU 1.3 iv 17-18, in de Moor, *Anthology of Religious Texts*, 26.

Above everything else, El is the good and kind god; he is the god of mercy. This is an unusual quality among the ancient gods of the Near East, a sort of foreign element. In fact, if it were not for El, the words “kindness, compassion, and mercy,” would have been practically left out of the language of the pantheon.¹

Asherah refers to his compassion when she pleads with El (Ilu) on Baal’s behalf for the building of a new house:

You are great, O Ilu!
Surely the greyness of your old age is wisdom,
surely the compassion which is in your breast instructs you!²

These are almost the exact words used by ‘Anat earlier in the poem. In both instances, when El reacts to what they have just said, he is introduced as “the Bull-Ilu, his [Baal’s] father,” immediately relating his compassion to his fatherhood.³

Laughter and Grief

That El enjoys laughter can be seen when Asherah comes to visit him. El’s face changes visibly when she arrives, from a frown to laughter. He is taken by her charm and speaks of romance, even though she is more concerned with Baal’s need of a house. The extremes of his emotion can be better appreciated when he hears of Baal’s death. He sits in the ground, scatters dust on his head, dresses only in a loin cloth, gashes his cheeks and chin with a flint blade, “ploughs” his chest three times, and cries aloud in profound grief.

¹Drouault, “Canaanite Gods,” 26.

²KTU 1.4 v 3-4, in de Moor, *Anthology of Religious Texts*, 54; KTU 1.4 iv 41-42, in *ibid.*, 53.

³KTU 1.3 v 30-45, cf. KTU 1.4 iv 40-58.

This “extravagant emotional display does not seem to be incompatible with his dignity.”¹

Drunkenness

However, one incident does impinge on father El’s image, that of his drunken state after a drinking feast. In a banquet he held for the gods, El becomes so intoxicated that he collapses in his own excrement, much to the disgust of one of the lesser gods, who declares:

He has fallen into his own dung and urine!
 Ilu is like a dead man,
 Ilu is like those who descend into the earth!²

He is cleaned up and brought back to his senses by the care of his two daughters (wives of Baal), ‘Athtartu and ‘Anatu.³ The gods collectively drink to satiety and inebriation, but El goes beyond this to delirium, diarrhea and enuresis, and loss of consciousness.⁴ Dignity does not appear to be a concern of the father of the gods, and it may be assumed that the other gods follow the leader.⁵ It is interesting to note with M. J. Boda that the function of

¹Drouault, “Canaanite Gods,” 29.

²Myth and Ritual III (KTU 1.114): 21-22, in de Moor, *Anthology of Religious Texts*, 136.

³Myth and Ritual III (KTU 1.114): 26-27, in *ibid.*

⁴M. H. Pope, *Ugarit in Retrospect: 50 Years of Ugarit and Ugaritic*, ed. Gordon D. Young (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1981), 178, quoted in M. J. Boda, “Ideal Sonship in Ugarit,” *UF* 25 (1993): 17.

⁵Pope, *Ugarit in Retrospect*, 17; Coogan, *Stories From Ancient Canaan*, 12. The description of drunken El falling down in his own excrement may be a mistranslation. Note the following alternative.

Ilu sits in his banquet place.
 He drinks wine to satiety,
 must to drunkenness.
 Ilu goes to his house,

the ideal son characterized in the Aqhat legend was to provide for the father in his obligation in the *Marzeah* (the drinking feast that El appears to have participated in). Here it was the duty of the father to toast the ancestors to the point of intoxication, and it was then the duty of the son to see the father safely home. Thakaman-wa-Šanam fulfills this for El when the high god becomes inebriated.¹ The motive for El's inebriation in this incident has yet to be determined if in fact it is a parallel to the human experience.

Apparent Ineptitude

El is criticized in another direction as well, with three narratives said to reveal his ineptitude as father-god:²

1. Yamm and Nahar demand Baal from the assembly of gods, and the weak father accedes to their demands. Baal refuses this submission, and beats Yamm-Nahar into submission.

2. Following this, Baal requests his own house from El, but is refused. His sister

he arrives at his court.
Thukamuna and Sunama
are supporting him.
Then the 'crawler' confronts him,
the one with two horns and a tail,
that defiles itself in its excrement and urine.

Ilu falls like a dead man, Ilu (falls) like those descending into the earth.

Kevin J. Cathcart. "Ilu, Yarihu and the One with the Two Horns and a Tail," in *Ugarit, Religion and Culture: Proceedings of the International Colloquium on Ugarit, Religion and Culture, Edinburgh, July 1994*, ed. N. Wyatt, W. G. E. Watson and J. B. Lloyd, Essays Presented in Honour of Professor John C. L. Gibson, Ugaritisch-Biblische Literatur (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1996), 3.

¹M. J. Boda, "Ideal Sonship in Ugarit," *UF* 25 (1993): 18.

²Miller, *God as Father*, 349-350.

'Anat threatens to bloody El's head if he does not grant Baal's request.

3. Mot (death) swallows Baal, much to El's helpless despair. While the old father-god mourns in the dust with his loins covered in sackcloth, it is 'Anat who succeeds in rescuing her brother Baal.

To Miller's list could be added the following incident from the Aqhat narrative. When 'Anat covets Aqhat's bow and he mockingly refuses her advances, the angered goddess seeks El's permission to slay him for it, threatening to bloody her father's gray head with blood and to make gore flow down his beard if he denies her request.¹ El replies by acknowledging her impetuosity and lack of forbearance, acceding to her request by declaring, "depart my daughter," "gratify thy heart."²

There is reason for concern if these examples are taken at face value; however, there may be a nuance to these tales that escapes the limits of Western mentality, and we may be misreading the cues. What may be interpreted as El's weakness may indeed have some other significance—perfectly legitimate in its cultural context. Unfortunately, this is not the place to resolve it, and further study is needed to determine the dynamics here.

Baal and El

Scholars have been divided on whether or not El is a deposed and superfluous nonentity,³ or whether he maintains control of the macrocosm, giving Baal responsibility in

¹3 Aqht:rev:11-12, in Gordon, *Ugaritic Literature*, 91.

²3 Aqht:rev:16-17, in *ibid.*

³See for example M. H. Pope, *El in the Ugaritic Texts* (Leiden: Brill, 1955); U. Oldenburg, *The Conflict Between El and Baal in Canaanite Religion* (Leiden: Brill, 1969); quoted

a subordinate sphere.¹ To support Baal's superiority, the instance of 'Anat approaching her father is referred to. She extols Baal above the level of her father, suggesting that Baal is the new king of the pantheon:

Our king is Aliyn Baal
 Our ruler, there is none above him.
Let us both drain his chalice
Both of us drain his cup!

Tôr-'Il her father (*tr.il.abh*)
 'Il, the king who brought her into being.²

Thus she places her brother above her father, but the arguments in favor of El's impotency and decline are far from conclusive and in some cases invalid.³ Keeping in mind the

in N. Wyatt, "The Titles of the Ugaritic Storm God," *UF* 24 (1992): 403. L'Hereux suggests that the perceived tension between El and Baal may reflect the major social polarity of the 2nd and 3rd millennia B.C.E., between the monarchical institutions of the urban centers and the tribal structures of the rural areas. The rural population identified with El (who lived in a tent) while the urbanites identified with Baal (who had to undergo a prolonged process of permission before building a palace/temple). L'Hereux, *Rank Among the Canaanite Gods*, 105-108. He also suggests that the conflicts of Baal with Yamm and Mot can be seen as evidence of a conflict between Baal and El, presupposing Baal's rise to power at the expense of El. L'Hereux cites examples of U. Oldenburg, *The Conflict Between El and Ba'al in Canaanite Religion* (Leiden, Brill, 1969), 120-121; and Kapelrud, *Baal in the Ras Shamra Texts*, 103, quoted in L'Hereux, *Rank Among the Canaanite Gods*, 14.

¹See for example D. L. Petersen and M. Woodward, "Northwest Semitic Religion: A Study of Relational Structures," *UF* 9 (1977): 233-248; S. B. Parker, "The Historical Composition of KRT and the Cult of El," *ZAW* 89 (1977): 161-175; Nicolas Wyatt, "Quaternities in the Mythology of Ba'al," *UF* 21 (1989): 451-459; quoted in Wyatt, *Titles of the Ugaritic Storm God*, 403.

²nt:V:40, in Gordon, *Ugaritic Literature*, 23. *Aliyn* is usually spelt *Alyan* and is cognate to the Hebrew *El Elyon*.

³L'Hereux, *Rank Among the Canaanite Gods*, 10.

chronological order of the texts, there is no evidence of a weakening of the position of El.¹ There is no evidence that either El or Baal fought to gain ascendancy over the other,² and Mullen goes so far as to say that El was never displaced by Baal.³ It may not be possible to remove all traces of tension between Baal and El, but it must be recognized in the final analysis that El still designates authority to Baal and to other younger gods.⁴

Baal's House

Baal's house-building saga assumes great significance in the study of the father-god El. It is not simply a house, but needs to be understood on three levels: as a dwelling, as a temple, and as a palace for the ruling monarch—the latter being the reason for the delay in El's acquiescing.⁵ Being built after the defeat of Yamm is a parallel theme to that found in the story of the defeat of Tiamat by Marduk in the *Enuma Eliš*. After that defeat, the gods worked for a year to build Esagila, then celebrated their new king with a feast. "The possession of a palace was thus proof of royal status."⁶

Conclusion

As there is no clearly discernable "family tree" of the gods, and no systematized

¹Ibid., 12.

²Mullen, *The Divine Council*, 92-110.

³Ibid., 281-284.

⁴L'Hereux, *Rank Among the Canaanite Gods*, 17.

⁵Coogan, *Stories from Ancient Canaan*, 78.

⁶Ibid., 79.

account of their creation myths, there is a problem of trying to determine the inter-relationship of the gods of the Ugaritic pantheon. The simple designation of “father” is not sufficient to inform us of filial relationship. El did not physically conceive all the gods; he crafted some out of clay as well, yet he is still referred to as “father of the gods.” Therefore to be able to determine the nature and quality of the fatherhood of the gods, we need to look for clues elsewhere. Some of these are provided in the narrative poems in which human-divine relationships are chronicled. In researching these I have found that El is the only god in the Ugaritic pantheon spoken of as “father” in relation to both gods and humanity.

The “father of man” is seen in terms of providing progeny for his earthly subjects and sufficient resources to maintain them, as seen in both the Kirta and Aqhat epics. Kirta, for example, is recognized as a son of El, and the old father-god, moved with pity for one of his children, orders circumstances so that Kirta sires a number of children, including Aqhat. In that context we observe that “to be *the* parents in the cosmic scheme was to be the highest authority.”¹

El proves not only to be clansman-protector of Kirta, the earthly king, but he is shown to have dominion over all humanity, and is known in that regard as “the king, father of years.” However, the story shows us that this is a two-way relationship, with the importance of filial duties being highlighted, implying that there are a number of advantages to the god for having a virtuous “son.” One of these is to provide for the

¹Handy, *Among the Host of Heaven*, 79.

father in his obligation in the *Marzeah*, by taking him by the arm back to his house. We also notice the importance of the father's partaking in that ceremony, even to the point of shameless inebriation.

Father El has typically been represented as an aging king with declining strength, and we are reminded of instances where his daughter 'Anat outwits him, and he seems to meekly submit. The seeming impunity that 'Anat operates under appears to cast El in a bad light, revealing his ineptitude as father-god.¹ This "ineptitude" is also seen when Yamm and Nahar demand Baal from the assembly of gods, and the apparently weak father accedes to their demands. Mot (death) swallows Baal, and it seems that all El can do is to display helpless despair. He mourns in the dust and covers his loins with sackcloth, while Baal's sister 'Anat rescues Baal from death. 'Anat also threatens to bloody El's head if he refuses Baal's request for a house. El also bows to 'Anat's demand for vengeance against earthling Aqhat for refusing to give her a bow that she covets from him. These examples seem to reveal the limited scope of protection El offered his earthly children.

However, 'Anat's behavior before El in those instances not only reveals her nature but her father's as well. Although Divine fatherhood here appears to be somewhat pliant in the hands of demanding children, (rather than harsh and vindictive as sometimes portrayed,) there may be another aspect to this question—it may be an example of power transition from the older god to the younger. El's delay before manifesting his divine prerogative demonstrates the principle of his deliberating and measured response to the

¹Miller, *God as Father*, 349-350.

premature demands of his children. Take for example Baal's request for a house. As noted above, there were three levels to this request: as a dwelling, as a temple, and as a palace for the ruling monarch, and the third level appears to be the reason for the delay in El's agreeing to it.¹ El was not yet ready to hand over his monarchy to Baal.

This principle is illustrated in the Kirta epic, when Kirta gives an ancient curse to his son for presuming that it is time for the younger to replace the elder. "May Horon crack, my son, May Horon crack your head,"² was a warning at the human level of Baal's overstepping his mark with El. There is a satisfactory outcome in the successful completion of Baal's house, but the story appears to be an anthropomorphic illustration of an important divine principle seen in a number of ANE traditions. Transfer of power from an older sky god to a younger storm god is attested in many contemporary eastern Mediterranean cultures,³ with a harmonious resolution of it in the Ugaritic version.

The bull metaphor reveals further aspects of the father-god concept. As well as "Bull-El" being the "Creator-of-Beings," an obvious fertility symbol, we see a further extension in Baal's plea to El on the heirless Danil's behalf. Here the bull metaphor becomes synonymous with the future prosperity of a human dynasty. This then connects El to the hope and the fortunes of his human subjects. His "Bull" nature is the guarantee

¹Coogan, *Stories from Ancient Canaan*, 78.

²3. CAT 1.14. VI. 54- 58, in Parker, *Ugaritic Narrative Poetry*, trans. Edward L. Greenstein, 42.

³Kronos confined Zeus, Teshub displaced the Hittite high god Kumarbi, and Baal replaced El. Coogan, *Stories from Ancient Canaan*, 81. Note also that Enlil superseded An.

that they may have future generations to come after them to keep family dynasties alive. Their sacrifices and oblations appear to be answered by favor, protection, progeny, and material security.

However, we also see the aspect of judgment with the statement “He will shatter the sceptre of your rule!”¹ This provides checks and balances to what we have just been saying. The future is not a blank check. If the human or divine subject oversteps the bounds, there must be consequences, and more so if it is a king who does it. We see Bull-El identified with the traditions of being progenitor, king, and judge.

In conclusion, we see the fatherhood of El as being his highest authority, in which he provides future hope for his children—by giving progeny and the means to support them. He is the clansman-protector, who is sometimes seen as compliant in the hands of his children, but remains firm when a deliberated and measured response is needed to protect his kingdom. He provides accountability for his children by being their judge, and provides the time and the place for them to advance to their highest potential.

Conclusion

A number of themes recur as we compare the ANE mythologies. First, it is evident that the father-gods were instrumental in the creation process. Enlil, considered “by far the most important deity” of the Sumerian pantheon,² was the prime mover in

¹The “luminary of the gods, Shapsh,” to Athtar, a deity who attempted to displace Baal: KTU 1.2 iii 15-17, in Wyatt, *Religious Texts from Ugarit*, 52; KTU 1.6 vi 26-29, in Wiggins, *Shapsh, Lamp of the Gods*, 336.

²Kramer, *History Begins at Sumer*, 88.

maintaining the creation process by separating his parents, earth and sky. Similarly in the Egyptian cosmogony, Rē' was the one responsible for separating the realm of the gods from the human realm, and establishing the pharaohs to prevent the reemergence of primeval chaos by elaborate public ceremonies and rituals, and by maintaining civil order.

To maintain the momentum of creation, the bull metaphor was employed by each of the cultures studied above. For the Sumerians, Enlil was the “bull that overwhelms,”¹ who ensured the most productive functions of the cosmos to provide prosperity for all. Enki also was seen as the one giving fecundity to land, ewe, cow, goat, and field.² For the Egyptians, Rē' was born as a calf each morning, growing to be a bull by midday, fertilized his mother, then died at the end of the day to be reborn as his own son the next day.³

The metaphor was extended by the Egyptians in Osiris (who was to become the central figure of ancient Egyptian religion,⁴ as the judge of souls and “great type and symbol of the Resurrection”),⁵ and they changed the emphasis of his cult from the cult of the dead to one that stressed fertility and life.⁶ His cult object was the Apis bull⁷ and in his

¹Zimmern KL II, in Langdon, *Sumerian Liturgies and Psalms*, 292.

²“Enki and the World Order.” in Kramer, *The Sumerians*, 174.

³Ions, *Egyptian mythology*, 36; cf. Ut.485A.1029, in Faulkner, *Pyramid Texts*, 172.

⁴Budge, *Osiris*, 1, xi.

⁵Ibid., 1.

⁶Paralleling the Greek myth of Hades and Persephone, which may have been the attraction for Plutarch to write extensively of this myth; Ions, *Egyptian Mythology*, 18.

⁷Plutarch, ΠΕΡΙ ΙΣΙΔΟΣ ΚΑΙ ΟΣΙΡΙΔΟΣ, chap. 43, in Griffith, *Plutarch's de Iside et Osiride*, 187.

anthropomorphic form he was depicted everywhere with a massively oversized erect phallus to emphasize his procreative and nourishing nature.¹ These innovations of the Osiris cult combine the themes of fertility and resurrection.

In Ugarit, “Bull-El” is seen not only as the “Creator-of-Beings,” but as the one who provides future prosperity for human dynasties, as in the story of Danil. Here the metaphor connects El to the hope and the fortunes of his human subjects. The name “Bull-El” identifies the fatherhood of the god as progenitor, king, and judge.

The monarchical aspect of the father-gods is seen as they uphold the divine laws that “like heaven cannot be overturned” or “shattered.”² Enlil, as “father of the gods,” adjudicates at the highest court available to the gods and, as father of kings, gives earthly monarchs their sovereignty, to prosper their reign and subdue their enemies.³ Enki, who is the recipient of the *me*’s from the hand of Enlil,⁴ upholds and maintains the created realms, promotes social structure, law, and order, and enables urban and rural realms to flourish and continue in prosperity. The annihilation of the human race is averted by Rē’s sense of justice, Ptah creates the cities and nomes (provinces) of Egypt, i.e., political order, while

¹Griffith, *Plutarch’s de Iside et Osiride*, 201.

²“Hymn to Enlil,” in Kramer, *History Begins at Sumer*, 91.

³Kramer, *History Begins at Sumer*, 89.

⁴“Enki and the World Order,” in Kramer, *The Sumerians*, 175.

in Ugarit El's coregency with Asherah demonstrates that "to be *the* parents in the cosmic scheme was to be the highest authority."¹

Part of the prerogative of monarchy is judgment, and the father-gods are cast in this role too. Nanna is called father in relation to the judgments that come upon the city of Ur. Utu's judgment is seen in terms of his care as the father of humanity, particularly for the wanderer, the homeless, and the orphan.² In Egypt, Rē turns his eye (in the form of his daughter Hathor, or Sekhmet the lioness) on rebelling humanity, but restrains her when he sees the danger of upsetting the balance between gods and humanity.³

In the Akkadian understanding, the father-god was creator-judge who prevented the forces of chaos from upsetting the divine order. When the forces of chaos threatened, the god that could conquer and ensure the continued survival of his fellow gods became revered as the new creator-judge, and would be celebrated with feasting.

Meanwhile in Ugarit, El appears to dither in important moments requiring judgment, sometimes allowing his daughter 'Anat to give vent to her fancies without counting the cost to the humans involved. But as with Rē and Hathor, we note that in the end, despite divine fatherhood appearing somewhat pliant in the hands of demanding children, El's deliberate and measured response to the sometimes premature demands of

¹Handy, *Among the Host of Heaven*, 79.

²BM 23631, in Kramer, *Poetry of Sumer*, 96.

³ANET 11.

his children maintains cosmic order. The other gods know that if they overstep their bounds, “He will shatter the sceptre of [their] rule!”¹

A further aspect of divine fatherhood is the personal relationship possible with them. Enlil, for example, is a “friendly, fatherly deity who watches over the safety and well-being of all humans, particularly the inhabitants of Sumer.”² The personal gods, passed from the body of the father to the son from generation to generation, were a beloved deity understood to be physical engenderer, provider, protector, and intercessor, claiming obedience as any parent would from his children.³ And in Egypt, Rē^c was the focus of joy for the “common folks,” the source of “sweetness” and “love,” and the reason for all existence.⁴

The extensive funerary rites also provide clues for the personal relationship the Egyptians had with their father-gods. The fusion of *ka* and resurrected king (described in terms of being in the arms of Father Atum)⁵ suggests an eternal cycle of fusion between father and son, fusing together the generations, the living and the dead, melding humanity and gods. It also suggests a multilayered, multigenerational, father-son relationship.

On arriving in the realm of the gods, a ceremony is conducted in which Father

¹KTU 1.2 iii 15-17, in Wyatt, *Religious Texts from Ugarit*, 52; KTU 1.6 vi 26-29, in Wiggins, *Shapsh. Lamp of the Gods*, 336.

²Ibid.

³Jacobsen, *Treasures of Darkness*, 158.

⁴Spell 15B2.1-2, in Allen, *Book of the Dead*, 21.

⁵Ut.216.151, in Faulkner, *Pyramid Texts*, 44; Ut.215.140, in *ibid.*, 42; Mercer, *Pyramid Texts*, 60, 61.

Geb's honor is transferred to his son, the king.¹ This would explain why Pepi II could say of himself that he is mightier than Atum²—he is now assuming the prerogatives of his father, and the father abdicates in favor of his “son.”

Meanwhile, Atum is the sustainer of those left behind when a pharaoh dies,³ the one who makes it possible for a person to live eternally, and Rē' is seen as the provider in the afterlife. He sends his messengers to ensure the deceased passes safely through the tests,⁴ provides the ladder for the resurrected soul to ascend into the sky,⁵ and then becomes the focus of attention. Although Osiris figures largely as the judge of the dead, it is not in his role as father. This dynamic is reserved for the resurrection in which Osiris is integral—his prerogative is to preserve the flesh of the deceased.⁶

In Ugarit, El is the clansman-protector, “the king, father of years,” having dominion over all humanity. As “father of man” he provides progeny for his earthly subjects. There is also evidence of personal deities in Ugarit as in Sumer, but we know nothing of their father relationship.⁷

¹Ut.592.1615-1619, in Faulkner, *Pyramid Texts*, 243.

²Ut.273-274.395, in *ibid.*, 80; Mercer, *Pyramid Texts*, 93.

³Spell 72.S3; Allen, *Book of the Dead*, 65.

⁴Ut. 214.136; Faulkner, *Pyramid Texts*, 41.

⁵Ut. 271.390; *ibid.*, 791.

⁶Spell 155. S1; Allen, *Book of the Dead*, 153-154; Spell 181d.S.1. *ibid.*, 194.

⁷Alt attempted to reconstruct a type of religion of the seminomads of the area. It involved a lesser deity attaching himself in relationship to an ancestor. This view was corrected by J. Lewy, “Les textes paléo-assyriens et l’Ancien Testament,” *RHR* 110 (1934): 29-65, who suggested that the names of these deities included the high gods of the contemporary pantheon, in L’Hereux,

It is interesting to note the scope of the fatherhood of the gods. We see it in the dynamic activity of creation, in the maintenance of civil and divine order, in the accountability of gods and men in judgment, in the provision of hope for the future, and finally in resurrection from the dead. The way humans relate to this is largely positive, although it does seem that the kings had somewhat of an advantage, but extant data do not permit us to speculate on the comparative levels of devotion and hope between king or commoner and their father-gods. We now turn to the Hebrew concept of God's fatherhood to see whether there has been significant borrowing, or a new paradigm.

Rank Among the Canaanite Gods, 52, 53; also Karel van der Toorn, "Ilib and 'God of the Father,'" *UF* 25 (1993): 383.

CHAPTER II

GOD AS FATHER IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

There are eighteen references in seventeen verses of the Hebrew Scriptures that explicitly call God “father.”¹ Five of these refer to God as the father of David and his dynasty,² eleven to Him as the father of His people,³ and twice His love is compared to the love of a father for his child.⁴ Although they range across the breadth of the canon, there are strong thematic and linguistic parallels that may be observed among them. To facilitate their study, the Father-God texts are simply grouped together under the following heads: the Song of Moses, the Vision of Nathan, Hymnic and Wisdom Literature, and the Prophets. Each text that mentions God as father is analyzed. This order has been followed to give an approximate chronological sequence (according to their own reckoning) rather than the order found in the Hebrew Scriptures.

First the individual Father-God references are displayed and analyzed. The literary

¹This includes only verses that call God אב (Father), and does not include references where the relationship is implied, or described in different terms, as in the “son” texts (e.g., “You are my son” Ps 2:6; Exod 4:22-23; Hos 11:1; etc.). This has been an arbitrary decision of delimitation—the “son” texts would make a separate study in themselves.

²2 Sam 7:14; 1 Chr 17:13; 22:10; 28:6; Ps 89:27[26].

³Deut 32:6; 1 Chr 29:10; Ps 68:6[5]; Isa 63:16 (x2); 64:8; Jer 3:4, 19; 31:9; Mal 1:6; 2:10.

⁴Ps 103:13; Prov 3:12.

breaks in the passage are indicated by “|” according to the Massoretic punctuation of the BHS. Textual variants relevant to God’s fatherhood are noted. This is followed by a linguistic analysis to observe grammatical and syntactical peculiarities and clausal relationships for each text, followed by an analysis of common keywords and other words unique to a particular verse that may impact other references. Then the literary context of each Father-God passage is discussed, including its structure, and genre, followed by the historical setting of the passage. Although the debates may not have been settled when each particular reference was composed, I have taken the historical milieu for each according to the time they speak of for themselves. That enables a comparison with contemporaneous ANE references to attitudes from other cultures. Although discussion of the theology of a passage is often included in the process of exegesis, this is discussed in the next chapter.

The Song of Moses

Text—Deut 32:6

^f | ^e ^d ^c ^b ^a
 הַלֹּא־הוּא אָבִיךָ קָנֶךָ | וְלֹא חָבֵם | עַם נִבְלָל | תִּמְלֹצְוֹתָ
 הוּא עֲשֶׂךָ | וַיִּכְנַנְךָ:

Do you thus repay the Lord, O foolish and unwise people?

Is He not your father who acquired you?

Is He not the one who made you, and established you?¹

In the MT, 6d and 6e are introduced by הוּא (indicating that both are governed by הַלֹּא, making two separate לֹא-type questions—“Is He not . . . ?”). However, the LXX

¹This and subsequent translations are my own, unless otherwise indicated.

understands the text differently, substituting the second **וְהָיָה** with **καὶ** and combining the two questions into one: οὐκ αὐτὸς οὗτός σου πατὴρ ἐκτήσατό σε καὶ ἐποίησέν σε καὶ ἔκτισέν σε— “Did not He, this your father, acquire you, and make you, and create you?”¹

Linguistic Analysis

This verse contains two questions that act as contrasting parallels—the “foolish and unwise” people are compared with the Father who “acquired,” “made,” and “established” them. The second half of the verse (6d-f) divides the second question into two, commencing with the general interrogative **הֲלוֹ הִיא**, then leading into each sub-question with **וְהָיָה**.

Is He not your father who acquired you?

Is He not the one who made you, and established you?

God’s fatherhood is explained by the term **כִּוְּן**² (establish), and the verb **קָנָה** (acquire) is more precisely defined by **עָשָׂה** (make). Therefore we see an ABB’A’ chiasm, linking **אֵל**

¹John William Wevers. *Notes on the Greek Text of Deuteronomy*. SBL Septuagint and Cognate Studies Series. 39. ed. Bernard A. Taylor (Atlanta: Scholars Press. 1995). 511-512.

²That **אֵל** and **כִּוְּן** are associated is readily seen in a review of the contexts of the passages on God’s Fatherhood. God as Father acts in establishing in the following references: 2 Sam 7:12, 13, 16(x2), 24, 26; 1 Chr 17:11, 12, 14, 24; 22:10; 28:7; 29:16, 18; Pss 68:10[9], 11[10]; 89:3[2], 5[4], 15[14], 22[21], 38[37]; 103:19; and Prov 3:19. Furthermore, of its 217 occurrences in Scripture (according to Abraham Even-Shoshan), at least 15 contain the sense of creation— nine of those in the Wisdom literature, and the remaining six in the prophets—Job 31:15; Pss 8:4[3], 24:2; 51:12[10]; 65:7[6]; 74:16; 93:1; Prov 3:19; 8:27; Isa 45:18; 51:13; Jer 10:12; 33:2; 51:15; and Ezek 28:13. Abraham Even-Shoshan. *A New Concordance of the Bible: Thesaurus of the Language of the Bible Hebrew and Aramaic Roots, Words, Proper Names, Phrases, and Synonyms* (Jerusalem: Kiryat Sefer. 1987), s.v. **כִּוְּן**.

(father) with *בִּוֶן* and *קָנָה* with *עָשָׂה*,¹ suggesting the passage has a double focus— Creation and Exodus—Creation by its choice of words, and Exodus because of the chapter's immediate context.

The possibility of a Creation motif being introduced here is already anticipated in the exordium of vs. 1. The invocation of the heavens and earth suggests an alliance confirmation,² but in the Song certain grammatical features point to something more. The copulative *וַאֲנִי* that separates the hortatory subjunctive³ *וְאָדַבְרָה* (and let me speak) and the indirect cohortative⁴ *וְחָשְׁמַע הָאָרֶץ* (that the earth may obey) shows intended

¹The association of these two words clarifies the meaning of *קָנָה* in this context. While *עָשָׂה* is immediately recognized as a word with connotations of creation, *קָנָה* is usually translated "acquire," or "purchase." However, of its 84 occurrences in Scripture (see Even-Shoshan, *New Concordance of the Bible*, s.v. *קָנָה*), in at least five places it carries the sense of "create" or "Creator"—Gen 4:1 (Eve's exclamation of "making" a child with the Lord); 14:19, 22 (used by Abraham and Melchizedek as the name for God "Maker of Heaven and Earth"); Ps 139:13 ("you formed my inward parts"); and Prov 8:22 ("the Lord Created [see LXX—but sometimes translated "possessed"] me" [wisdom]). Therefore, even if *קָנָה* is translated "acquire" in Deut 32:6 its association with other "creation" words gives it the sense of creation.

²For an extensive bibliography on treaties and their effect on the OT see Dennis J. McCarthy, "Covenant in the Old Testament: The Present State of Inquiry," *CBO* 27 (July 1965): 217-240. George E. Mendenhall contends that calling to the heavens and earth has nothing to do with the divine assembly. George E. Mendenhall, "Samuel's 'Broken Rib': Deuteronomy 32," in *No Famine in the Land: Studies in Honor of John L. McKenzie*, ed. James W. Flanagan and Anita Weisbrod Robinson, 63-74 (Missoula, MO: Scholars Press, 1975), 71. Solomon A. Nigosian declares that on the Oriental resources on which he drew, heaven and earth were invoked to obligate the entire divine world. Solomon A. Nigosian, "The Song of Moses (DT 32): A Structural Analysis," *ETL* 72, no. 1 (1996): 14; while Robert Martin-Achard observes that the invocation of the heavens and earth is a characteristic expression of an alliance document, and he points out similar occurrences in Esth 1:2; Mic 6:2; Jer 2:12; and Ps 50:1, 4. Robert Martin-Achard, *Permanence de l'Ancien Testament: Recherches d'exégèse et de Théologie*, Cahiers de la Revue de Théologie et de Philosophie 11 (Geneva: Kundig, 1984), 41.

³Wevers, *Greek Text of Deuteronomy*, 509.

⁴Paul Joüon, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, trans. and ed. T. Muraoka (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1966), 382 (§116b).

consequence.¹ This is reminiscent of the Creation process, where God speaks (ten times)² and creative forces come into play—“all the creative works of God are related to the word of God.”³

Wevers notes that *καὶ ἔκτισέν σε* (“and He created you”) is an interesting rendering of *וַיִּסְדֵּק* (“and He established you”) as the verb *סָדַק* usually means “to establish, make firm,” but the LXX rendering was influenced by the parallel expression *ἐποίησέν*, “He created you.” There is evidence here of a play on words since the translator uses *ἐκτήσατό σε* (“He acquired you”) in the first hemistich and *ἔκτισέν σε* (“and He created you”) in the second.⁴ Not only does this further strengthen the connection of *סָדַק* and creation, but it broadens the scope of covenant as well, suggesting that the bonds between God and His people existed not just at the time of the Exodus, but at Creation as well.

In the drama of the passage, the Exodus motif is also important, giving the context for the contrast between God’s faithful guidance and provision in the desert, and the people’s faithless response. When vs. 6 opens, “you,” the subject, is qualified in 6b—“O foolish and unwise people.” In 6d the subject changes to God, and the staccato-like

¹E. Kautzsch, ed., *Gesenius’ Hebrew Grammar*, rev. A. E. Cowley (Oxford: Clarendon, 1909), 320 (§108d).

²Gen 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26, 28, and 29.

³Jacques B. Doukhan, “The Literary Structure of the Genesis Creation Story” (Th.D. diss., Andrews University, 1978), 96. Here Doukhan notes the classic heaven-water-earth sequence observed in biblical creation passages. In Deut 32:1-2 we have the same three elements: Heavens and earth (vs. 1), and water—rain, raindrops and dew (vs. 2).

⁴Wevers, *Greek Text of Deuteronomy*, 512. Note also the use of the word in Exod 15:16 in the song of Miriam after the Red Sea crossing, where the Israelites are described as the “people you acquired.”

repetition of the קל - ending (emphasized by the simple *qal* perfects in 6e giving way to a *piel* imperfect in 6f) leads to a rising dramatic intensity in the second half of the verse that builds till the end. This rapid-fire warning sounds a note of incredulity that the people would be so foolish and unwise as to reject God, whose work on their behalf is the very reason for their existence. God's fatherhood is seen in this context in terms of His continual patience and tolerance in the face of their stubborn rebellion and apathy.

In the Song of Moses, the concept of God as father is associated with five different words in eight cola: קנה ¹ ("acquire," 6d); בון ("establish," 6f); עשה ("make," 15c); ילד ("bear," 18a); and four variations of בן (son)— בָּנָיו ("his sons/children," 5a); $\text{בָּנָיו וּבָנֹתָיו}$ ("his sons and daughters," 19b); בָּנִים ("sons/children," 20c); and υἱοὶ θεοῦ ("sons of God," 43—4Q and LXX).² However, opinion is divided over the meaning of the concept of God's fatherhood of the nation, and it has been understood either as the establishment³

¹The Hebrew verb קנה is as multifaceted as the English word "get." See George A. F. Knight. *The Song of Moses: A Theological Quarry* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 29.

²Jos Luyten. "Primeval and Eschatological Overtones in the Song of Moses (Dt 32.1-43)." in *Das Deuteronomium: Entstehung, Gestalt und Botschaft*, Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium 68, ed. Norbert Lohfink (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1985), 343.

³According to S. R. Driver, vs. 6 refers to God's calling Israel into being as a nation at the Exodus. The word couplet therefore means to make and establish, i.e. fashion into a nation and consolidate (cf. Ps 119:73; vs. 15; Isa 44:2). S. R. Driver. *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Deuteronomy*. The International Critical Commentary, ed. Charles Augustus Briggs, Samuel Rolles Driver, and Alfred Plummer (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1895), 354. He may have taken his lead from Rashbam who described the Exodus as a redemption "through which God acquired Israel as a nation and established His paternal relationship towards it." Quoted in Joseph Reider. *The Holy Scriptures: Deuteronomy with Commentary* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1937), 301.

of the nation of Israel, or by assigning Israel's physical parentage¹ to the Father-God. Although "father" may indicate the notion of "progenitor," or the "one who created," the context in vs. 6 seems to avoid the aspect of procreation with its use of synonymous verbs, pointing rather to the establishment of the people of Israel as a nation, and by introducing the idea of covenant or election.

Both creative activity and Exodus are further hinted at in the choice of words throughout the poem. Jeffrey H. Tigay lists a number of parallel terms, declaring that their use is a feature of ANE, especially Canaanite poetry:² "rain," "dew," "showers," and "droplets" (vs. 2); "create" and "make endure" (or bring into existence, vs. 6); "of old" and "ages past" (vs. 7); and "asp" and "viper" (vs. 33). These word pairs maintain a primordial tone throughout the poem, suggesting that the roots of God's fatherhood date back to creation, although the inclusion of other word-pairs and keywords shows a focus on the Exodus and the Land of Promise: **צוּר** "Rock" (vss. 4, 15, 18, 30, 31, 37); **נָבֵל** "foolish," (vss. 6, 15, and 21); **הֶאֱזִינוּ** "give ear" and **תִּשְׁמַע** "hear" (v. 1); **נֵיץ** "vine" and

¹Edward L. Greenstein sees this is a reference to God being the biological father of Israel. Edward L. Greenstein, "The God of Israel and the Gods of Canaan: How Different Were They?" in *Proceedings of the Twelfth World Congress of Jewish Studies*, Division A, The Bible and Its World (Jerusalem: World Union of Jewish Studies, 1999), 55. Sanders notes that **קָנָה** mostly means to acquire, but when the subject is God, it can mean to create or procreate: Gen 14:19, 22; Ps 139:13; Prov 8:22; see also Exod 15:16 and Ps 74:2 which are close in meaning to Deut 32:6. Paul Sanders, *The Provenance of Deuteronomy 32*, *Oudtestamentische Studiën*, ed. Johannes C. de Moor (Leiden: Brill, 1966), 360. Similarly, **בָּרָא** in the *polet* form with God as the subject also relates to bringing into existence: Isa 45:18; Jer 51:15; Ps 8:4; 24:2; 99:4; 119:73, 90; Job 31:15; Prov 3:19, sometimes being used in parallel with **עָשָׂה** as in Deut 32:6b; see *ibid.*, 361. He notes that both verbs in Ugaritic and Hebrew may relate to childbirth, creation, and procreation, and that in the ANE, creation and procreation were difficult to differentiate. *Ibid.*, 150-151.

²Jeffrey H. Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, The JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1996), 508-509.

שָׂדֵמֶת “vineyards” (vs. 32); חֶמְצָאָה “curd” and חֶלֶב “milk” (vs. 14); אֹיֵב “foe(s),” and עֵרֵב “enemy,” (vs. 27); אֶלֶף “thousand,” and רֶבְבָה “ten thousand” (vs. 30); אב “father,” (vss. 6, 7, and 17); גוֹי “nation” (vss. 8, 21, 28, and 43); and עַם “people” (vss. 6, 8, 9, 21, 36, and 43).

These keywords suggest that God’s fatherhood applies to a wide spectrum of circumstances—whether or not the people are foolish, face enemies, or enjoy a land of plenty (with vineyards and milk). He would always be their Father, and they would always be His people, however significant or insignificant their number.

Literary Context

The “Song of Moses” in Deut 32, also known by its Hebrew name *Ha'azinu*, appears to follow a pattern similar to that of Deuteronomy as a whole,¹ which has been shown to imitate a Hittite suzerainty treaty of the second millennium B.C.² After a

¹Sanders. *Provenance of Deuteronomy* 32, 12-13. See also Nigosian. *Song of Moses*, 12-13; C. J. Labuschagne. “The Song of Moses: Its Framework and Structure.” in *De Fructu Oris Surti: Essays in Honour of Adrianus Van Selms*, ed. I. H. Eybers, F. C. Fensham, C. J. Labuschagne, W. C. Van Wyk, and A. H. Van Zyl (Leiden: Brill, 1971), 94-98.

²Herman Gunkel was the first to speak of the *Rib* or “Prophetic Lawsuit” in 1923. See Dwight R. Daniels. “Is There a »Prophetic Lawsuit« Genre?” *ZAW* 99 (1987): 339. More recently, Moshe Weinfeld includes Deut 32 among a list of biblical passages that have been designated as “Covenant Lawsuit” or *rib*. Moshe Weinfeld, “Ancient Near Eastern Patterns in Prophetic Literature.” *VT* 27 (1977): 189. However, Mendenhall now considers the term inappropriate. Mendenhall. *Samuel’s ‘Broken Rib.’* 70. See also Michael de Roche. “Yahweh’s Rib Against Israel: A Reassessment of the So-Called ‘Prophetic Lawsuit’ in the Preexilic Prophets.” *JBL* 102, no. 4 (1983): 574; and Daniels. *Is There a »Prophetic Lawsuit« Genre?* 360. Despite these aspersions, the “Covenant Lawsuit” is still a useful tool to apply in some situations, and may be seen in the book of Deuteronomy as follows:

- I. Preamble: Covenant Mediator (1:1-5)
- II. Historical Prologue: Covenant History (1:6-4:49)
- III. Stipulations: Covenant Life (5:1-26:19)
 - A. The Great Commandment (5:1-11:32)

preamble and historical prologue, stipulations to maintain the treaty are outlined, followed by sanctions that outline the consequences of treachery. The treaty concludes with measures that ensure its long-term continuity. Because the Song of Moses appears in the last section of the Deuteronomic “treaty,” the Father-God metaphor forms a part of the guarantee for covenant continuity.

It comes as no surprise, then, to see that the fatherhood of God is featured throughout the poem, beginning in the prologue with the poet’s proclaiming the “name of the LORD.”¹ He first gains the attention of his hearers—“Give ear, O heavens,” “hear, O earth.” His use of “heaven” and “earth” immediately arouses an awareness of the universal scope of what is to come—something that affects all of creation—all in the heavens and all on the earth. Then the poet refers to the “teaching” he wants to impart, and likens it to

-
- B. Ancillary Commandments (12:1-26:19)
 - IV. Sanctions: Covenant Ratification (27:1-30:20)
 - V. Dynastic Disposition: Covenant Continuity (31:1-34:12)
 - A. Final Arrangements (31:1-29)
 - B. The Song of Witness (31:30-32:47)
 - C. Moses’ Testament (32:48-33:29)
 - D. Dynastic Succession (34:1-12)

Meredith G. Kline. *Treaty of the Great King: The Covenant Structure of Deuteronomy: Studies and Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963), 9-10. See also George Ernest Wright, “The Lawsuit of God: A Form-Critical Study of Deuteronomy 32,” in *Israel’s Prophetic Heritage: Essays in Honor of James Muilenburg*, ed. B. W. Anderson and W. Harrelson (New York: Harper, 1962), 34-36. Nigosian suggested a 7-part structure. Nigosian, *Song of Moses*, 12-13. Wright suggests a different 7-part structure. Wright, *Lawsuit of God*, 34-36. Labuschagne modifies Wright’s lineup and adds another section. Labuschagne, *Song of Moses*, 94-98. Skehan divides it into 3 parts. Patrick W. Skehan, “The Structure of the Song of Moses in Deuteronomy (Deut 32:1-43),” *CBQ* 13, no. 4 (Oct. 1951): 151-163, concluding that “the structure itself of the composition attests that no whole line within it has been lost, nor has any single line been violently displaced within it, since it was first written; and those who would affirm the contrary do so in the face of striking evidence for the unity and integrity of the poem.” *Ibid.*, 163.

¹Compare Exod 34:5-7 where, in the proclamation of God’s name at Sinai, qualities of character are enumerated.

rain, dew, raindrops, and showers—a potent fertile foursome for a part of the world that has more than its fair share of desert lands. All of this serves to introduce the subject of the “speech”—the “Rock,” the one whose ways are “justice”; a “righteous” and “upright” God of “truth,” “without injustice.” So, after gaining the attention of his hearers, the poet establishes the trustworthy credentials of the subject of his speech, then briefly contrasts Him to the “foolish” and “unwise” people (forming the “historical prologue” of the “treaty”).

The poem proceeds by intertwining the metaphors of God as a rock and as father—“He is the Rock” (vs. 4); and “Is He not your father?” (vs. 6). In vs. 15 poetic parallelism connects God the “maker” of His people with the Rock, and vs. 18 speaks of the Rock that “fathered” the people of Israel. To drive the point home, vs. 13 speaks of God’s nurture of His people, which enabled them to “ride on the heights of the earth”—achieved by giving them abundant garden produce, and by being “breast-fed” (נָנִי) with honey from rock and oil from the “flinty” Rock—a suggestion of plenty despite apparent prevailing adversity. This is an unusual contrast to the obvious fertility/virility symbol of a bull, seen so often in the ANE. There is nothing sensuous about a rock, so the lesson being taught here (Moses introduces his address as “teaching”—vs. 2) has nothing to do with the Father-God being the great progenitor. However, the Father-God is still pictured as the source of fertility and plenty, and the bountiful provider for His people—but in a way different from the fertility gods of the ANE.

The imagery that describes the nature of God’s fatherhood is extended by the introduction of another metaphor—the eagle (vs. 11). Just as an eagle stirs up its nest

(עור), hovers (רחף) over its young, spreads its wings and catches (לכח) them, bearing them up (נשא) in its pinions, so too the Father-God bore His people while they were in the desert (Exod 19:4). This picture, with the adult teaching its young how to survive on their own in a harsh environment, is not just one of nurture, for the root used here to describe the action of the eagle (רחף) is also significant in the Creation story—it describes the action of the spirit hovering (מרחפת, a f.s. *piel* participle) over the waters (Gen 1:3). Therefore God's fatherhood is further linked to the Creation motif, giving both a theological and practical rationale to His fatherhood. He not only brings His children into existence, but encourages their growth and enables them to become more self-sufficient. However, the problem has arisen that the people have turned self-sufficiency into a rejection of the "parent" who "established" them and placed them on their feet.

The fatherhood theme is illuminated in a number of different ways throughout the chapter: as well as being the "Rock" and the "eagle," the poet affirms that the Father "made" and "established" His people (vs. 6); "found" them in the desert (vs. 10), carried them (vs. 11), led them (vs. 12), and caused them to "ride on the heights" (vs. 13)—actions that seem to clarify the "making" and "establishing" first mentioned in vs. 6.

The fatherhood of God is connected to human history, and to the living memory of the "elders" (vs. 7). The hearer of the discourse is expected to confirm what will be spoken of with an earthly father, and the old people of the community. This implies that God's fatherhood is effectual and recognizable in the physical world, and is not just an ethereal notion. More ancient history is alluded to when the Father-God divided up the "inheritance to the nations" (Deut 32:8-9), as the ANE human father would divide the

inheritance among his sons. Again this description is given in real terms, cementing the reality of God's fatherhood as far back as history could take the poet in his discourse. The Father-God is portrayed in concrete terms as a father dividing up his property among his sons, with the added detail that all nations can claim God as their father.

As W. F. Albright observed, the Song of Moses is one of the most impressive religious poems in the entire OT, but it differs significantly from other poems in genre.¹ While God is seen as the Suzerain Lord in the book of Deuteronomy and Israel as His vassal people, in chap. 32 the relationship is described in terms of parent and child.² Moshe Weinfeld observes that there are three relationships used as metaphors of covenant in the ANE: husband-wife, master-vassal, and father-son.³ The relationship between God and His people settles on the latter in Deut 32, taking it beyond the realm of sterile legal arrangements to one that touches the core of human existence.

Historical Setting

The antiquity of these concepts can be demonstrated when comparing the Song with other ANE sources. L'Heureux, for example, sees a most striking parallel between

¹W. F. Albright, "Some Remarks on the Song of Moses in Deuteronomy 32," in *Essays in Honour of Millar Burrows*, ed. Martin Noth (Leiden: Brill, 1959), 339. For a review of scholarship regarding the historical setting, language, conceptual background and genre of the Song over the last 200 years, see Sanders, *Provenance of Deuteronomy 32*, 1-98. Sanders concludes by observing that after 200 years of intense study, there is still no consensus among scholars as to the provenance of the Song. *Ibid.*, 96. At least 14 hapex legomena in Deut 32 show that it is "very original." Luyten, *Primeval and Eschatological Overtones in the Song of Moses*, 341; see also Nigosian, *Song of Moses*, 8.

²Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 509-510.

³Weinfeld, *Patterns in Prophetic Literature*, 188.

El and YHWH in the shared epithet, “creator” and “father,” as in “Bull El his father, king El who created him.”¹ Ugaritic evidence also links El and YHWH with a statement made by the non-Israelite Melchizedek, אֵל עֲלִיּוֹן קִנָּה שָׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ “El the most high, Creator of heaven and earth” (Gen 14:19), a designation also used by Abraham in Gen 14:22.²

The allusion to Canaanite theology indicates that the origin of the song could be dated into the second millennium B.C.E., consistent with its overall setting. Therefore God could be called Israel’s אָב (Father) from a “very early stage.”³ Despite suggestions that in his opening statements Moses may have been drawing on contemporary “Oriental resources” that obligated the entire Canaanite/Ugaritic pantheon in some way to come to a society’s aid,⁴ the heavens and earth are not being called upon here in a Canaanite or Ugaritic sense. Heaven and earth are invoked as witnesses because they are eternal and immutable.⁵ They were there in the creation process, have “declared the glory of God” ever since (Pss 19:1 and 97:6), and are now called upon to be present for the “teaching.”

¹CTA 3.5.43; 4.1.5; 4.4.47. in L’Heureux, *Rank Among the Canaanite Gods*, 49 n. 69. Note also the Ugaritic expression *Ab ‘adm* “father of mankind.” e.g., KTU 1.14.i. 37, 43; iii.32, 47; vi.32. in Sanders, *The Provenance of Deuteronomy* 32, 150.

²Ibid., 361.

³Ibid.

⁴For example, see W. L. Moran, “Some Remarks on the Song of Moses,” *Biblica* 43 (1962): 317-320.

⁵So Rashi and Ibn Ezra. Reider, *Deuteronomy*, 298. The Midrash *Tanhuma* asserts that if Israel defaulted on the covenant, Moses would then have summoned heaven and earth to punish Israel with drought and crop failure on the basis that the hand of the witness should be first to act against the violator (Deut 17:7). Even though heaven and earth play no such role in Deut 32, and are merely called on to hear, the contrast is being highlighted between faithless humanity and the rest of God’s creation. Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 299.

Conclusion

Deut 32 is dramatic in the way it portrays God as father. Instead of merely proclaiming the “name of the LORD” as the poet affirmed in vs. 3, his powerful rhetorical questions contrast the folly of the people with a Father-God who is impeccably trustworthy, unbelievably tolerant, and all-providing. This is fleshed out in the chapter by intertwining the “Rock” and “father” metaphors for God, particularly in vs. 15 where poetic parallelism connects God the “maker” of His people with the Rock, and vs. 18 that speaks of the Rock that “fathered” and “breast-fed” the people of Israel, bearing them on His back like a father eagle. The unusual contrast between the obvious fertility/virility symbol of a bull, seen so often in the ANE, and the non-sensuous Rock, distances the biblical description of God’s fatherhood from the notion that the Father-God is the great progenitor, showing Him to be the Great Nurturer, instead. It must be remembered that the context of the chapter points to the long-term viability of a “treaty” or covenant between God and His people, and this, in the first instance, is what is being addressed. The dramatic genius of the passage is that the poet has chosen to describe the bond between God and His people as that of parent and child rather than that between a sovereign and vassal.¹ Furthermore, just as an eagle teaches its young to fly, “God is father in order to assist Israel to a life of responsibility for itself.”²

The purpose of the creation theme is to demonstrate first of all that God, as

¹Ibid., 509-510.

²Ohler, *The Bible Looks at Fathers*, 186. “God wishes for responsible sons and daughters who ‘fly’ in their own strength. Therefore God brings Israel to Sinai, the place of the Law.” Ibid., 214.

Father, “made” and “established” His people (the parallelism between קנה and עשה in vs. 6 explains God’s fatherhood in terms of כּוּן). The Creation motif also emphasizes the universal scope of God’s fatherhood, first noticed in the exordium that uses the heaven-earth hendiadys,¹ and further seen in the division of “inheritance” among the nations. That God is Father to all is accepted as a given in these instances. The Exodus motif is seen when God establishes the people (divides the inheritance of the nations, vss. 8-9), finds them in the desert (vs. 10), leads them (vs. 12), and causes them to ride on the heights (vs. 13). This clarifies the nature of the relationship, and rules out any correspondence with the ANE notion of father-god progenitorship.

Instead, God’s fatherhood is described in terms of rock-like consistency and trustworthiness, standing by the covenant made between Him and His people. This covenant consistency is reinforced by God being the Creator, effectively doubling the efficacy of the relationship between God and people—the Father-God first bought His people into existence at creation, then He brought them into being as a nation in covenant with himself during the Exodus, and He periodically challenged their covenant loyalty.

The Vision of Nathan

The vision of David’s court prophet, Nathan, of a Davidic dynasty that would last into the far-distant future must have been a “politico-religious bombshell of the first magnitude.”² No routine consultation by the court prophet would ever have produced

¹Where two extremes are chosen to represent the whole.

²Heinz Kruse, “David’s Covenant,” *VT* 35 (1985): 139. Kruse also notes, “There is hardly any prophecy in the Old Testament that has had so many repercussions in biblical literature as the

such an impact on Israel's tradition.¹ It is significant that the "fatherhood of God" motif is prominent in this important literature tradition, and it becomes necessary to explore it to see how it impacts our understanding of God's fatherhood.

The primary sources for the vision are found in 2 Sam 7 and 1 Chr 17— one of a pair of five prophetic passages that are paralleled in both Chronicles and Samuel-Kings.² Two other passages refer directly to the vision and mention the father-son bond between God and Solomon.³ A fifth reference (1 Chr 29:10) is David's prayer at the conclusion of his reign, when he presents to God, before the assembled nation, all the materials gathered

oracle given to king David by the prophet Nathan." Ibid.

¹Contra Mowinckel see Sigmund O. P. Mowinckel. "'Die letzten Worte Davids'. 2 Sam xxiii 1-7." *ZAW* 45 (1927): 30-58; Kruse, *David's Covenant*, 139. Kruse wonders how an imaginary pseudo-prophecy given as a normal cultic event could have had such an "exceptional reaction."

²The others are: Gad (1 Chr 21 // 2 Sam 26:4), Shemaiah (2 Chr 11 // 1 Kgs 12), Micaiah ben Imlah (2 Chr 18:4-27 // 1 Kgs 22:5-28) and Huldah (2 Chr 34:22-28// 2 Kgs 22:14-20). M. Patrick Graham, Kenneth G. Hoglund, and Steven L. McKenzie, *The Chronicler as Historian*, JSOTSS 238, ed. David J. A. Clines and Philip R. Davies (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 232-233.

³Sara Japhet notes that the book of Chronicles calls David God's son three times, the other two places being 1 Chr 22:10 and 28:6, which are all connected to Nathan's words in 2 Sam 7:14. Sara Japhet, *The Ideology of the Book of Chronicles and Its Place in Biblical Thought*, Beiträge zur Erforschung des Alten Testaments und des Antiken Judentums 9, ed. Matthias Augustin and Michael Mach, trans. Anna Barber (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1997), 412. Kruse lists 42 passages that he says contain elements or motifs of Nathan's oracle: Gen 49:10 (cf. Ezek 21:32); Num 24:17 (cf. 24:7); 2 Sam 23:1-7; Ps 72; Jer 23:5-6; 30:8-9, 21-22; Hos 3:5; 1 Sam 25:28, 30 (cf. 2:35); 2 Sam 7:1-19; 1 Kgs 2:1-4, 24, 45; 5:1-6 [5:15-20]; 6:11-13; 8:15-26; 9:4-6; 11:11-13, 34-39; 15:4-5; 2 Kgs 8:19; 21:7; Ezek 27:22-24; 34:23-24; 37:24; Isa 4:2; Isa 55:3 (16:5); Amos 9:11-12 (cf. Mic 4:8); Jer 33:14-22 (MT); Ps 18:51 (cf. 2 Sam 22:51); 89:4-5, 20-38 (MT); 132; Zech 3:8 (cf. 6:12-13); 9:9-10; 1 Chr 17:1-7; 22:6-11; 28:2-11; 2 Chr 2:1-4 [1:18-2:3]; 6:4-7, 42; 7:17-19; 8:5; 21:7; 33:7-8; Sir 45:25 [31]; 47:11, 22; 1 Macc 2:57. He omits Ps 2:45; 110; Isa 9:5-6; 11:1-10; and Mic 5:1-4 because he suspects them of containing later ideas. Kruse, *David's Covenant*, 140-141. He also notes traces of the vision in the Pentateuch (Genesis, Numbers), in the Latter Prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea), and in the Hagiographa (Psalms, Chronicles) from the earliest times (Gen 49) to the latest (Ben Sira, 1 Macc 2:57). Ibid., 139.

in preparation for the building of the temple. Four of these texts (2 Sam 7:14; 1 Chr 17:13; 22:10; and 28:6) are considered together in this study because of their close similarity. The fifth text (1 Chr 29:10) is examined separately—because it is not so closely allied to the previous four, and because it is not generally accepted as a verse dealing with God's fatherhood.

2 Sam 7

Text (vss. 12-14)

12 כִּי יִמְלֹאוּ יָמַי | וְשָׁכַבְתָּ אִתִּי אֲבֹתַי | וְהִקִּימְתִי אֶת־יָרֵךְ אַחֲרָיָהּ |
 אֲשֶׁר יֵצֵא מִמֶּעֶד | וְהִכִּינְתִי אֶת־מַמְלַכְתּוֹ: |
 13 הוּא יִבְנֶה־בַּיִת לִשְׁמִי | וְכִנֵּנְתִי אֶת־כִּסֵּא מַמְלַכְתּוֹ עַד־עוֹלָם: |
 14 אֲנִי אֶהְיֶה־לּוֹ לְאָב | וְהוּא יִהְיֶה־לִּי לְבֵן |
 אֲשֶׁר בְּהַעֲוֹתוֹ | וְהִכַּחֲתִי בְּשֶׁבֶט אַנְשִׁים | וּבִנְנֵי בְנֵי אָדָם

- 12 When your days are full and you lie down with your fathers,
 then I will raise up your descendant after you,
 who shall come out of your body,
 and I will establish his kingdom.
- 13 He will build a house for my name,
 and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.
- 14 I will be his father, and he will be my son.
 When he does perversely, then I shall correct him with the rod of men,
 and with the blows of the children of humanity.

The MT use in 14c of בְּהַעֲוֹתוֹ (“in his committing of iniquity”)—an infinitive construct (*hifil*) becomes καὶ ἐὰν ἔλθῃ ἡ ἀδικία αὐτοῦ (lit. “and if his wrongdoing appears”) in the LXX, changing the voice from an active to a subjunctive.

Linguistic Analysis

Vs. 12 commences with a temporal clause that implies cause and effect. The *waw* consecutives commencing 12a and 12b add to the temporal sense and lead to an anticipated outcome in 12c—“when . . . then” The first verb of the passage is an imperfect, setting the tone for verbs that follow, and introducing the future orientation of the address. But significantly, the future is rooted in the past. Contingent to the raising up of David’s descendant to become God’s son, is the act of David joining his ancestors—the protasis statement (“when your days are full and you go to be with your ancestors/fathers”) is followed by the apodosis (“then I will raise up your descendant”). This interplay between the generations is no accident and is there to show the real origins of David’s son. He has ancestral roots going back generations, so the intended father-son relationship between Solomon and God must be seen in that context.

God’s fatherhood is observed in His action of “raising up” and “establishing”—something that David’s son would experience after David’s death. Solomon’s success as king would not be dependent on his breeding, but on his relationship with his Father-God.

In 13a the imperfect of בנה (“he will build”) reinforces the future tenor of the passage. The promise of establishing the kingdom is repeated in 13b, using the verb כּוּן¹ (*polal* perfect), which first appears as a *hifil* perfect (in 12e). Usually in the Hebrew Scriptures, when כּוּן appears in the *hifil* it has a broad meaning: to set up, to prepare, to

¹William Johnstone identifies this word as a “keynote root” when used to describe Solomon’s throne. William Johnstone, *1 and 2 Chronicles: Volume 1, 1 Chronicles 1-2, 2 Chronicles 1-9. Israel’s Place Among the Nations*, JSOTSS, ed. David J. A. Clines and Philip R. Davies, no. 253 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 177, 205, 241.

make solid or firm, to prepare something (e.g., Exod 23:20; Num 23:29; Deut 19:3; Josh 1:11, etc.), and in some instances it refers to the establishment of a relationship (1 Sam 7:3) or kingdom (e.g., 1 Sam 13:13; 2 Sam 5:12; 1 Chr 14:2). The *polal* seems to be more specific, meaning to set up, or to establish.¹

Vs. 14 (a-b) establishes the father-son relationship, but a conditionality element is introduced in 14c. The protasis statement (“If he does perversely”) is followed up by the apodosis (14d-e), “then I will correct him. . . .” Therefore, the nature of the father-son relationship that is established in the first half of the verse (14a-b) is qualified in the second (14 c-e). This structure parallels that of vs. 12, and would suggest the binding of vss. 12-14 into a structural unit.

Literary Context

The book of 2 Samuel can be divided into three sections: David as king of Judah (1:1-4:12), David as king of Israel (5:1-20:26), and the “Samuel appendix” (21:1- 24:25).² Chap. 7 comes within the second section, and is introduced by two implied questions raised by the events of chap. 6: What would be the future of the Jerusalem shrine, and who would succeed David to the throne since Michal was childless?³ 2 Sam 7:14 lies at the heart of a prophetic discourse, the so-called “dynastic oracle” of vss. 8-16 which, as

¹Gerhard Lisowsky, *Konkordanz zum Hebräischen Alten Testament* (Stuttgart: Württembergische Bibelanstalt, 1958), 671-672, art. ׀ׁׁ.

²Robert P. Gordon, *1 & 2 Samuel: A Commentary* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1986), 68.

³David F. Payne, *1 & 2 Samuel*, *The Daily Study Bible*, ed. John C. L. Gibson (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1982), 187.

Gordon suggests, makes 2 Sam 7 not only an ideological summit of “Deuteronomistic History” but also of the OT as a whole.¹

The oracle itself has a relatively simple structure:

5-7	a negative oracle
8-11a	a short survey of David’s fame and rise to power
11b-16	the dynastic promise ²

The first section (vss. 5-7) is formed by an inclusio of God’s words *הֲבֵנָה לִי בַיִת* (“[are you going to] build me a house?” vs. 5), and *לֹא־בִנִיתֶם לִי בַיִת* (“[why have you] not built me a house?” vs. 7). First the rhetorical question is asked, “Are you going to build me a house to live in?” then, after saying that He never needed one during the Exodus, God insists that He had never asked anyone to build Him a house.

The second section (vss. 8-11a) commences as the first, with a command to go and tell, followed by the prophetic formula, “Thus says the Lord.” The focus of the first section (of building/not building a house for God) now moves to a history of God’s dealings with David: “I have been with you,” “have cut off all your enemies,” “have made your name great” (vs. 9), then shifts again, this time to the future: “I will appoint a place for my people,” “I will plant them,” “the sons of wickedness shall not oppress them as before” (vs. 10). The future security is explained more in vs. 11 with the setting up of judges over the people and God-given rest from surrounding enemies.

The third section (vss. 11b-16) returns to the question of building a house, but

¹Gordon. *1 & 2 Samuel*, 235; A. A. Anderson. *2 Samuel*, WBC 11, ed. John D. Watts (Dallas: Word, 1989), 112.

²Anderson. *2 Samuel*, 112.

instead of one for God there is a promise to build David a house, which would mean establishing the kingdom and throne of his son, forever. Just as the judges would ensure Israel's future safety and security, God would chasten David's son if necessary to ensure his and the dynasty's future. The promise given in vss. 11-13 is repeated in vs. 16 that David's house, kingdom, and throne would be established forever.

This is the context in which God is called Father—not a Father to build monuments to, but one who would himself build nations and dynasties, who, with fatherly concern (דָּבָר), would discipline His people in the process of ensuring them a future and a name. In the first instance, this relationship would apply to David's son Solomon, but by implication (vs. 10), it was to apply to the nation as well.

1 Chronicles

Wider Literary Context

The structure of the books of Chronicles may be depicted as follows:

- | | |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| I. Genealogical Prologue | chaps. 1-9 |
| II. The United Monarchy | chaps. 10-29 |
| A. The David History | 10-21 |
| B. Transitional Unit | 22-29 |
| C. The Solomon History | 2 Chr 1-9 |
| III. The Divided Monarchy | 2 Chr 10-36 ¹ |

1 Chronicles commences with genealogical lists from Adam and continues until post exile. After a quick progression from Adam to the immediate family of David (2:13) further branches of David's family are outlined (2:18-54) before his own family of procreation is traced (3:1-24). The next four chapters (4-7) cover the twelve tribes of

¹Roddy Braun, *1 Chronicles*, WBC 14, ed. John D. Watts (Waco: Word, 1986), xli.

Israel, followed by the genealogy of Saul (chap. 8) and the clans of postexilic settlers returning to Jerusalem (chap. 9). The buildup to David is unmistakable, and gives us the setting for God to declare that Solomon would be His son, a dramatic shift from the genealogical foundation already laid down. Following David's natural lineage that has just been linked back to Adam, Nathan's vision recommences a new lineage, with David's son Solomon being called, not the son of David, but the son of God. Chap. 10 is the account of the death of Saul, and chap. 11 of the accession of David to the throne.

Following the account of David's consolidation of power (chaps. 11-14), the ark of the covenant returns to Jerusalem (chap. 15), and is placed in a specially-prepared tent (16:1-6), accompanied by the singing of a psalm of thanks (16:7-36). The account of Nathan's vision comes soon after, followed by more of David's military successes, then the book concludes with the preparation of supplies and organizational structure for the temple (chaps. 22-29:25), and the death of David (29:26-30.)

Therefore chap. 17 comes as a climax to the book to which the genealogical foundation is leading. The Davidic covenant has much greater prominence in Chronicles than either Samuel or Kings as indicated in its expansion in a number of passages, most of which are unparalleled in the earlier books.¹

¹1 Chr 22:6-13; 28:2-10; 2 Chr 6:4-11, 14-17; 7:17-18; 13:5, 8; 21:7; 23:3. Martin J. Selman. *1 Chronicles: An Introduction and Commentary*. Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries. ed. D. J. Wiseman (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), 175.

1 Chr 17:13

Text (vss.11-13)

11 וְהָיָה כִּי־מָלְאוּ יָמֶיךָ לָלֶכֶת עִם־אֲבוֹתֶיךָ | וְהִקְיִמֹתִי אַחֲרָיֶךָ אַחֲרֶיךָ |
 אֲשֶׁר יִהְיֶה מִבְּנֶיךָ | וְהִכִּינֹתִי אֹתוֹ מְלָכוֹתוֹ:
 12 הוּא יִבְנֶה־לִּי בַּיִת | וְכִנֵּנְתִּי אֹתוֹ כִּסֵּאוֹ עַד־עוֹלָם:
 13 אֲנִי אֶהְיֶה־לּוֹ לְאָב | וְהוּא יִהְיֶה־לִּי לְבֵן |
 וְחִסְדִּי לֹא־אֲסִיר מֵעַמוֹ | כִּי־אֲשֶׁר הִסִּדֹתִי | מֵאֲשֶׁר הָיָה לְפָנֶיךָ:

- 11 And it shall be, when your days are full,
 (and you) go (to be) with your fathers,
 then I will raise up your descendant after you
 who will one of your sons,
 and I will establish his kingdom.
 12 He will build a house for me, and I will establish his throne forever.
 13 I will be his father, and he will be my son;
 so I will not divert my faithfulness from him
 as I diverted (it) from the one who was before you.

The critical apparatus of BHS notes that לָלֶכֶת (“to go,” vs. 11a) is replaced by וְשָׁכַבְתָּ (“and you will lie down”) in some versions of the LXX (which translates it as κοιμηθήσῃ—a future passive, “you shall fall asleep” or “you shall be laid down”) based on the reading in 2 Sam 7:12. Similarly with מִבְּנֶיךָ (“from your sons,” vs. 11c)—the Syriac and the Vulgate as well as the LXX substitute מִמֶּנִּיךָ (“from you”), reflecting 2 Sam 7. Finally, הָיָה (“he was,” vs. 13e) is in the plural in the LXX, which is unwarranted in light of Saul being the first king and David his immediate successor.

Linguistic analysis

These verses are structured in much the same way as 2 Sam 7:12-14, with a few adjustments in phraseology and choice of words. Vs. 11a commences with a *waw*-perfect combination that leads straight into the temporal aspect with the use of **כִּי**. The verb **שָׁכַב** (“lie down,” in the *perfect* in 2 Samuel) is here replaced by an infinitive construct of **הֵלֵךְ** (“go), and the preposition **אִתּוֹ** (with) is replaced by **עִמּוֹ** (with). The next change is found in 11c where the statement **אֲשֶׁר יֵצֵא מִמֶּעֶד** (“who will come forth from your organs”) becomes **אֲשֶׁר יִהְיֶה מִבְּנֵיךָ** (“who will be from among your sons”), further indicating that the author of the passage wants to emphasize the earthly origins of the king’s son, and to avoid any suggestion of the ANE notion of gods physically engendering people.

In vs. 12a there is a slight change from 2 Sam 7:13, with building “a house for my name” (**בַּיִת לְשִׁמִּי**) becoming “a house for me” (**לִי בַּיִת**). Then in 12b, instead of the “throne of his kingdom” being established, it is simply “the kingdom.”

Vs. 13 commences with a pair of parallel statements establishing the father-son relationship between God and Solomon, similar to 2 Sam 7:14. The second half of the verse qualifies the first half, just as in the previous example. God’s fatherhood is being characterized here as one that keeps faith with His son, but what is missing from this parallel text is the statement of warning of the consequences for abusing the relationship. Encouragement is given instead that God’s covenant mercy or faithfulness (**חֶסֶד**) would not be diverted from the line of David as it was from Saul his predecessor (by means of an

asyndetic relative final clause “as I diverted [it] from the one who was before you”).¹

Literary context

Simon J. de Vries declares that vss. 3-15 are a special prophetic genre, “prophetic commission report” with the “adoption formula” in vs. 13.² This is consistent with Sara Japhet, who observes that Chronicles is undoubtedly a historiographical text by nature.³

The chapter itself is of simple structure:

- vs. 1-2 Introduction: David’s plan
- vs. 3-15 Nathan’s oracle
- vs. 16-27 David’s prayer⁴

Within it are two major transition points: (1) “not David but Saul was the first king,” and (2) “not David but Solomon was the temple builder,” both crucial to Israel’s history, and neither of which could be left to chance.⁵ Therefore the vision of Nathan connects the Davidic throne with the religious institution of the nation, which is characteristic of much of OT theology.⁶

¹See Jouon-Muraoka, §158d.

²Simon J. deVries, *1 and 2 Chronicles*, *The Forms of Old Testament Literature* 11, ed. Rolf P. Knierim and Gene M. Tucker (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 156. Mowinckel calls the prophecy of Nathan a theological etiology. S. Mowinckel, “Natanforjettelsen 2 Sam Kap. 7.” *SvEA* 12 (1947): 224. quoted in Kruse, *David’s Covenant*, 142.

³Japhet, *Ideology of the Book of Chronicles*, 412.

⁴Braun, *1 Chronicles*, 198.

⁵Piet B. Dirksen, “Why Was David Disqualified as Temple Builder? The Meaning of 1 Chronicles 22.8.” *JSOT* 70 (1996): 56.

⁶Jacob M. Meyers, *1 Chronicles: Introduction, Translation and Notes*, AB, ed. William Foxwell Albright and David Noel Freedman (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1965), 127.

Because this chapter is largely a repetition of 2 Sam 7, the structure of the Nathan oracle itself may be assumed to be as follows:

4-6	a negative oracle
7-10a	a short survey of David's fame and rise to power
10b-14	the dynastic promise

Many minor differences may be observed between the two passages, but they are basically the same, and follow the same sequence of God's denying His need for a house, then an account of how He mentored David, concluding with the promise to establish an everlasting kingdom because of the father-son relationship between God and Solomon. Instead of guaranteeing the future of David's dynasty on the basis of maintaining discipline with his descendants, it is now on the basis of **חֶסֶד**—hinted at in 2 Sam 7, but emphasized in 1 Chr 17. So it is in reference to the Fatherhood of God that the most significant changes are seen. The relationship becomes one of promise and of hope, and may be explained in the historical context of both passages. 2 Sam 7 speaks from the perspective of the commencement of the Davidic dynasty, which was to witness many disastrous results from its rejection of the Davidic covenant. In contrast, the perspective of the author of Chronicles looks back over those experiences, with the bitter aftertaste of the Babylonian exile still in their mouths. To labor the point of divine discipline at that time would have been inappropriate, but to reassure the people of a continuing and everlasting relationship with their Father-God on the basis of His **חֶסֶד** would have given them the courage to face rebuilding their shattered lives and nation again.

1 Chr 22:10

Text (vss. 9-10)

9 הַנְּהַבֵּן נֹלֵד לְךָ | הוּא יִהְיֶה אִישׁ מְנוּחָה | וְהִנַּחֲתִי לוֹ מִכָּל־אֹיְבָיו מִסָּבִיב |
 בִּי שְׁלֹמֹה יִהְיֶה שְׁמוֹ | וְשָׁלוֹם וְשִׁקְטָאֲתָן עַל־יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּיָמָיו:
 10 הוּא־יִבְנֶה בַּיִת לְשִׁמִּי | וְהוּא יִהְיֶה־לִּי לְבֵן | וְאֲנִי־לוֹ לְאָב |
 וְהִכִּינוֹתִי כִסֵּא מַלְכוּתוֹ עַל־יִשְׂרָאֵל עַד־עוֹלָם:

- 9 Behold a son will be born to you, and he will be a man of rest,
 and I will give him rest from all his surrounding enemies.
 For Solomon will be his name,
 and I will ensure peace and tranquility over Israel in his days
 10 He will build a house for my name, so he will be my son, and I his father,
 then I will establish the throne of his kingdom over Israel forever.

In 9e some Syriac versions have אֶהְיֶה (I will be) instead of אֲתָן (I will ensure).

There is limited textual support¹ for the inclusion of אֶהְיֶה (I will be) before לוֹ לְאָב (a father for him) at the end of 10c, but it can be implied from the reading of the text anyway.

Many manuscripts also add אֶחָ (direct-object marker) to כִּסֵּא (throne) in 10d.

Linguistic analysis

The declaration is made that a son would be born to David, and that he would be “a man of rest” (9b). The next clause (9c) uses a wordplay on נִוַּח (rest)—9b uses it in a construct chain, and 9c uses it as a *hifil* perfect—emphasizing the peace and stability of the realm under the blessing of the Father-God. Something similar is repeated in the next

¹Including the Codex Alexandrinus, Syriac, Vulgate, and Arabic manuscripts. See critical apparatus of BHS.

two clauses (9d and 9e) with a wordplay between Solomon's name (שִׁלְמֹה) and the peace (שָׁלוֹם) that God offers him. This double-declaration emphasizes the peace and rest that Solomon would enjoy because God would be his Father.

What is striking about vs. 10 is its collection of prepositional phrases—each clause has at least one and some have two. This adds to the sense of purpose and action—“for my name,” “I will be to him for a father [lit.],” “he will be to me for a son [lit.],” “over Israel,” “until eternity [lit.].” Note also the use of the *waw* with the perfect in the last clause. This *waw-consecutive* construction gives the *perfect* an *imperfect* sense, pointing to a future promise. The building intensity seen in the verb-sequence of the verse climaxes with God's intention (yet to some degree being dependent on the previous verbs) of establishing the Davidic throne (through Solomon) forever.¹ On that basis I have translated the *waw* in the temporal sense, “then . . .”

Literary context

The structure of the chapter is as follows:

- A. David's arrangements for the temple, vss. 2-5
- B. David's first speech to Solomon, vss. 6-16
 - 1. David designates Solomon as temple builder, vss. 6-13
 - 2. David's provisions for the temple, vss. 14-16
- C. Exhortation to the princes, vss. 17-19²

The identification of the father-son relationship in vs. 10 forms the center of this structure, again highlighting the importance of the Father-God motif. Vss. 6-13 may be broken up

¹See Bruce K. Waltke and M. O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), §32.1.3b; §32.2a.

²Braun, *1 Chronicles*, 221. A typographical error incorrectly assigns vss. 7-16 for B2.

further with vs. 6 being an introduction of David's speech to Solomon. vss. 7-8, the build/not-build dialogue; vss. 9-10, the son shall build declaration; and vss. 11-13, David's charge to Solomon.

The key phrase in vss. 7-8 "build a house"¹ (the root בנה—"build" in conjunction with בית—"house") first appears in this context in vs. 7 with David's desire to build God's house. This notion is negated in vs. 8 with the phrase "you have shed much blood" which appears as an inclusio that sandwiches the phrase of (not) "building a house," giving the reason why David is denied the privilege of building. His role as a man of war and of drenching the earth with blood exempted him from direct involvement in the building of the temple, but that would not preclude his son from doing the work. Evidently the Father-God considered life so important, that one so actively involved with death was disqualified from building a house of worship.

Vss. 9-10 also carefully weave their wording around key words, this time rest (נוח) and peace (שלום). First, the son who is to be born is to be a man of rest (מנוחה), for God will cause him to have rest (*hifil* of נוח). Then his name is to be שלמה, for God will give him peace (שלום) and tranquility in his time. This again reveals the nature of the Father-God—as one who rewards men of peace with peace.

Another crucial keyword in this sequence is בן "son," with the parallel being drawn between the son of David and the son of God. The announcement, "Behold a son will be born to you" (9a), is changed in vs. 10 when Solomon is called God's son ("he will be my

¹Seen elsewhere in 2 Sam 7:5, 7, 13, 27; 1 Chr 17:4, 6, 10, 12, 25; 22:7, 8, 10, 11, 19[x2]; 28:2, 3, 6; and 29:16.

son”—**יְהוָה לִי לְבֵן**). However, in addressing Solomon in vs. 11, David calls him **בְּנִי** (“my son”). The mention of Solomon being God’s son is sandwiched in an inclusio of reference to him being David’s son—another important reminder that the father-son relationship with God is not considered physical, but is understood on a different level. It also emphasizes the natural origins of Solomon, making clear distinction between his relationship with God and any possible ANE concept of either monarchical divinity or divine progenitorship. For Solomon, the Father-son relationship would commence when he became king, and would be evidenced by the peace, tranquility, and stability given to his reign.

Finally, in the charge David gives to Solomon, he prays that God give him **שִׁבְל** (wisdom) and **בִּינָה** (understanding) to keep the **תּוֹרָה** (Torah) of God (vs. 12). He was promised prosperity in his reign if he fulfilled the **חֻקִּים** (statutes) and **מִשְׁפָּטִים** (judgments) that God had given Moses. So although it was said that Solomon’s throne would be established forever, in David’s words, “you will prosper if you carefully observe the statutes and judgments which the Lord commanded Moses concerning Israel” (vs. 13). God’s words were not to be irresponsibly taken as a blank check, but were accepted as part of a covenantal relationship. Therefore, in this context, God’s fatherhood was not something to be imposed on the one unwilling to accept it, but was guaranteed to the one who remained in covenant with him.

1 Chr 28:6

Text (vss. 6-7)

c b a

וַיֹּאמֶר לִי | שְׁלֵמָה בְנִי | הוֹאֲדִבֶנָה בֵּיתִי וְחֲצֵרוֹתָי | 6

b a

כִּי־בִחַרְתִּי בּוֹ לִי לְבֵן | וָאֲנִי אֲהַדְדִּלּוֹ לְאַבִּי:

a

וְהִכְיִנּוּתִי אֶת־מַלְכוּתוֹ עַד־לְעוֹלָם | 7

c b

אֲשֶׁר־יִחְזֹק | לַעֲשׂוֹת מִצְוֹתַי וּמִשְׁפָּטַי כִּיּוֹם הַיּוֹם:

- 6 Then He said to me,
 “Solomon your son, he is the one to build my house and my courts,
 for I have chosen him to be my son, and I will be his father.
 7 Then I will establish his kingdom forever,
 if he is determined
 to perform my commandments and my judgments as at this day.”

Lucian’s recension of the LXX omits “and my courts” (vs. 6c),¹ and in 7b, the Syriac has *w'nlnw l'nšb'* (although he is unwilling) instead of אֲשֶׁר־יִחְזֹק (if he is determined).

Linguistic analysis

The nominal clause (6c) that identifies the subject of the verse, “Solomon,” is followed by the appositional “your son.” The relationship is emphasized further by the personal pronoun הוּא (he) together with the verb יִבְנֶה (“he will build”). This combination gives the sense of “your son, Solomon, he is the one . . .” a tripartite affirmation. This is followed by a causal clause, “for I have chosen him to be my son,”

¹See critical apparatus BHS.

indicating the relationship between the building of the temple and God's fatherhood of Solomon. Solomon is not being declared God's son on the basis of building the temple—he is to build the temple because he has been declared to be God's son.

When comparing the contexts of each of the four “Vision of Nathan” passages studied thus far, it is remarkable to see how much verbal and conceptual repetition there is. This repetition may be seen in reference to the raising up of a descendant from David, whose kingdom would be established forever, who would be a son of God, and for whom God would be father. A quick comparison of key words and phrases that link the four verses together may be seen in table 1.

The phrase “I will be his father,” is repeated verbatim in each case,¹ except for 1 Chr 22:10 where the verb “to be” is omitted. Each of these phrases is preceded by the personal pronoun **וְאֲנִי** (“and I”) that serves to emphasize God as the subject—“It is definitely I that will be his father.” This emphasis is missing in 1 Chr 22:10. Similarly the phrase **וְהוּא יִהְיֶה-לִּי לְבֵן** (“and he will be my son”) contains the personal pronoun to intensify the subject of the verb “to be”—“It is definitely Solomon who will be my son,” and occurs in the first three references. In the fourth text it becomes **וְאֲנִי בָחַרְתִּי בּוֹ לִי לְבֵן** (“I have chosen him to be my son”), which substitutes the additional intensive pronoun (seen in the first three references) with the action of God's personal choice.

Note the divergence in the last line of table 1. Here we find the stress for the relationship in each context. In 2 Sam 7, the relationship was guaranteed by discipline, in

¹Note that the father-son declaration in the first two references reverses, and becomes a son-father declaration in the following two.

TABLE I

COMPARISON OF INTERTEXTUAL VERBAL LINKS

2 Sam 7:12-14	1 Chr 17:11-13	1 Chr 22:9-10	1 Chr 28:6-7
וְהִקְמַתִּי אֶת־זַרְעֲךָ I will raise up your descendant	וְהִקְמַתִּי אֶת־זַרְעֲךָ I will raise up your descendant	בֶּן נוֹלָד לָךְ A son shall be born to you	שְׁלֹמֹה בִנְךָ Your son Solomon
וְהִכִּינֹתִי אֶת־מַמְלַכְתּוֹ I will establish his kingdom	וְהִכִּינֹתִי אֶת־מַמְלַכְתּוֹ I will establish his kingdom	וְהִנְחֹתִי לוֹ מִכָּל־אוֹיְבָיו I will give peace to him from all his enemies	בְּחָרְתִּי בוֹ I have chosen him
הוֹאִיבֵנָה בַּיִת he shall build a house	הוֹאִיבֵנָה־לִּי בַּיִת he shall build me a house	הוֹאִיבֵנָה בַּיִת he shall build a house	הוֹאִיבֵנָה בַּיִתִּי he shall build my house
כִּנְנֹתִי אֶת־כִּסֵּא מַמְלַכְתּוֹ I will establish the throne of his kingdom	כִּנְנֹתִי אֶת־כִּסֵּא מַמְלַכְתּוֹ I will establish the throne of his kingdom	הִכִּינֹתִי כִסֵּא מַלְכוּתוֹ I will establish the throne of his kingdom	הִכִּינֹתִי מַלְכוּתוֹ I will establish his kingdom
עַד־עוֹלָם forever	עַד־עוֹלָם forever	עַד־עוֹלָם forever	עַד־עוֹלָם forever
אֲנִי אֶהְיֶה־לוֹ לְאָב I will be his father	אֲנִי אֶהְיֶה־לוֹ לְאָב I will be his father	אֲנִי־לוֹ לְאָב I (will be) his father	אֲנִי אֶהְיֶה־לוֹ לְאָב I will be his father
הוּא יִהְיֶה־לִּי לְבֵן he will be my son	הוּא יִהְיֶה־לִּי לְבֵן he will be my son	הוּא יִהְיֶה־לִּי לְבֵן he will be my son	בוֹ לִּי לְבֵן he will be my son
יִכַּח chasten	חֶסֶד faithfulness	שְׁלוֹם וְשָׁקֵט peace and serenity	מִצְוֹתַי וּמִשְׁפָּטַי My commandments and judgments

1 Chr 17 faithfulness, 1 Chr 22 peace and serenity, and 1 Chr 28 by fidelity to the commandments and judgments.

That David is called a servant (2 Sam 7:5) in no way detracts from the later father-son relationship. Although עֶבֶד and בֵּן sometimes stand in parallelism (e.g., Josh 7:19; 1 Sam 4:16; 25:8; 2 Sam 18:22; and 2 Kgs 16:7) to indicate subordination,¹ only a privileged few were called “My servant” (e.g., Moses).² The father-son relationship was not something offered to Saul.³ According to 2 Sam 7:14 divine sonship is granted to the “seed”—an individual—Solomon. This is compatible with ANE practice, and may be reflected in the statement, “You are my son” (Ps 2:7), which has been recognized as a formula of adoption.⁴ Although sonship was originally promised to Israel (Exod 4:22, cf.

¹H. Haag, “עֶבֶד” *TDOT*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren, trans. John T. Willis (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 2:152.

²Gordon, *1 & 2 Samuel*, 237. See also Kruse, *David's Covenant*, 152. Among those given the title were Abraham (Gen 26:24); Moses (Num 12:7); Caleb (Num 14:24); Joshua (Josh 24:29); Job (1:8); Isaiah (20:3); Nebuchadnezzar (Jer 25:9); and Zerubbabel (Hag 2:23). The epithet was also given to the prophets, but only rarely to individual prophets: Ahijah (1 Kgs 14:18); Elijah (2 Kgs 9:36); Jonah (2 Kgs 14:25); and Isaiah (Isa 20:3). H. Ringgren, “עֶבֶד,” *TDOT*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. Douglas W. Stott (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 10: 394.

³Joyce G. Baldwin, *1 and 2 Samuel: An Introduction and Commentary*, TOTC, ed. D. J. Wiseman (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1988), 216.

⁴Kruse, *David's Covenant*, 153. In the Code of Hammurabi, when a man called the children of his slave girl his children, they were then considered eligible to share in the paternal estate. CH §170. A foster child could never be reclaimed if the adoptive father reared him (CH §185) or taught him his trade (CH §188), cementing their father-son relationship from that time on. If that son should later say “You are not my father,” his tongue was cut out (CH §192). If any son “incurred grave wrong” so that his father wished to disinherit him, the case would be examined by the judges (CH §168), and after the second offense he could be disinherited (CH §169). *ANET*, 173-175. For the view that Ps 2:7 is generally accepted as “royal protocol giving the substance of the Davidic covenant,” see A. A. Anderson, *The Book of Psalms: Volume I, Psalms 1-72*, NCBC, ed. Ronald E. Clements (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 67. For the contrary view, that Ps 2:7 is

Isa 55:3) it is now concentrated in the Davidic line (Pss 2:7; 89:27).¹

It has been asserted that just as no one woman is ever called the bride of Yahweh (because of its ANE implications), “no single Israelite is ever called a son of Yahweh.”² However, the popular and widespread use of theophoric names paints a totally different picture, revealing the personal and individual relationship enjoyed between people and God.³ One in twenty of the theophoric names in the Hebrew Scriptures is compounded with אב (father), and most of those come from the pre-monarchial period.⁴ Therefore, the

not connected to the Davidic covenant, see R. A. Carlson, *David the Chosen King: A Tradition-Historical Approach to the Second Book of Samuel* (Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell, 1964), 125, n. 2.

¹Selman, *1 Chronicles*, 179.

²See Isa 54:5; Jer 3:20; 31:32. See also Kruse, *David's Covenant*, 154.

³Some of these names include: אבִי־דָן—(my) Father is judge (Num 1:11), אבִי־טוֹב—(my) Father is goodness (1 Chr 8:11), אבִי־יָהוּדָה—(my) Father is majesty (1 Chr 8:3), אבִי־עֹזֶר—(my) Father is help (Josh 17:2), אבִי־יָדָבֵר—(my) Father is generous (1 Sam 7:1; 16:8), אבִי־מֶלֶךְ—(my) Father is king (Gen 20:2; Judg 9:22), אבִי־אֱלֹהִים—(my) Father is God (1 Sam 9:1), אבִי־יְהוָה—(my) Father is YHWH (1 Sam 8:2), אבִי־יְהוָה—(my) Father is YHWH (2 Chr 13:20, 21), יְהוָה—YHWH is Father (3 Reg 18:3) [*sic*], and אֱלֹהִים—(my) God is Father (Num 1:9; 16:1). W. Marchel, *Abba, Père! La Prière du Christ et des Chrétiens*, *Analecta Biblica, Investigationes Scientifacae in Res Biblicas* 19 (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1963), 20.

⁴Jeanene D. Fowler, *Theophoric Personal Names in Ancient Hebrew: A Comparative Study*, JSOTSS, vol. 49, ed. David J. A. Clines and Philip R. Davies (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1988), 44. Only six come from the period of the divided monarchy, and three for the exilic and postexilic period. Fowler, *Theophoric Personal Names*, 45. From the biblical evidence, names compounded with אב (father) are more common than any other theophoric name except those compounded with יהוה (YHWH) and אֱלֹהִים (God). Extrabiblical names indicate אבִי (brother) was more popular than אב. Ibid., 45. According to Wright, names compounded with אב were freely formed down to the tenth century BC, when they started to become more rare, disappearing well before the exile, but continuing in use among the Phoenicians and Arameans for centuries after. More well-known among the Israelite names were Joab (David's commander, “YHWH is a father”) and Abijah (a son of the successor to Rehoboam [1 Kgs 14:31ff.], “My father is YHWH”). George Ernest Wright, “The Terminology of Old Testament Religion and Its Significance,” *JNES* 1 (Jan.-Oct. 1942): 409.

sonship enjoyed by Solomon was not his exclusively, but shared (at least informally) by the people of his realm.

The father-son relationship between God and Solomon becomes the sign of future hope. The presence of a son indicates life and continuity (Adam and Eve's first son was the promise to them of continued life and hope), and in a sense the life of the father (and mother—see Gen 30:1) has meaning as it is continued in the life of the son (Gen 15:2f).¹ God's special relationship with the king becomes a prototype of God's "judging and saving activity with regard to the Davidic dynasty," and "takes on the character of a covenant formula"² that in turn becomes the guarantee of the eternal efficacy of God's fatherhood. His new status with God becomes a model to his people of the personal relationship they too may have with God.

Literary context

While the passage in chap. 22 is in the context of a personal father-son conference, this passage refers to a nationally called assembly, in which David repeats, almost verbatim, what he had said to Solomon in private. The substance of the speech is embellished in places, most significantly at the end, where Solomon is told that if he forsakes God, he would be cast off forever (vs. 9).

¹Kruse, *David's Covenant*, 153-154.

²*Ibid.*, 156.

1 Chr 29:10

Text (vss.10-12)

10 וַיְבָרֵךְ דָּוִד אֶת־יְהוָה | לְעֵינֵי כָל־הַקָּהָל |
 וַיֹּאמֶר דָּוִד | בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲבִינוּ | מֵעוֹלָם וְעַד־עוֹלָם:
 11 לָךְ יְהוָה הַגְּדֹלָה וְהַגְּבוּרָה וְהַתְּפָאֶרֶת וְהַנּוֹצֵחַ וְהַהוֹד | כִּי־כָל בְּשָׁמַיִם וּבָאָרֶץ |
 לָךְ יְהוָה הַמַּמְלָכָה | וְהַמְתַּנְשָׂא לְכָל־לְרֹאשׁ:
 12 וְהָעֶשֶׂר וְהַקְּבוּד מִלְּפָנֶיךָ | וְאַתָּה מוֹשֵׁל בְּכָל | וּבְיָדְךָ כֹחַ וּגְבוּרָה |
 וּבְיָדְךָ | לַגְּדֹל וְלַחֹזֶק לְכָל:

10. Then David extolled the Lord in the eyes of the whole assembly,
 and David said: You are blessed O Lord God of Israel our Father
 from eternity to eternity;
11. Greatness, might, splendor, permanence, and majesty are yours, O Lord—
 everything in the heavens and earth.
 Lord, the kingdom is yours—you are exalted as head over everything!
12. Riches and honor (lie) before you, for you rule over all,
 and in your hand are strength and might;
 it is in your hand to give greatness and strength to all.

The only significant textual variant to this passage is the addition of the phrase
 κύριε ὁ ἄρχων πάσης ἀρχῆς (“O Lord, ruler of all rulers”) to the end of 12b in the LXX.

Linguistic analysis

The most pressing issue of this passage as it relates to fatherhood is the
 identification of “father” in the phrase בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲבִינוּ (“Blessed are
 you O Lord God of Israel our Father”) in 10d, which may be taken in either of two ways.

On the one hand it can be translated with most modern exegetes as “God of our father Israel.”¹ This may be supported by an inclusio between vs. 10 that features the phrase: **יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אָבִינוּ מְעוֹלָם וְעַד־עוֹלָם**: (Lord God of our fathers forever and ever), and vs. 18 that states: **יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי אֲבֹתֵינוּ יִצְחָק וְיִשְׂרָאֵל אֲבֹתֵינוּ . . . לְעוֹלָם** (Lord God of our fathers Abraham, Isaac and Israel . . . forever). This parallel seems to suggest that Israel is the father spoken of in this passage.

On the other hand, this translation is hard to justify if the grammatical structure is strictly adhered to. The phrase **יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל** (the Lord God of Israel [the patriarch]) is in construct, therefore cannot be broken apart, and **אָבִינוּ** (our father) acts in apposition to it. The phrase **יִשְׂרָאֵל אָבִינוּ** (Israel our father) is found nowhere else in Scripture, and if Jacob is mentioned as a father of the people, it is usually in association with Abraham and Isaac (e.g., Exod 3:15, 16). The fact that this trilogy of fathers becomes “Abraham, Isaac, and Israel” in 1 Chr 29:18 seems to indicate contrast between God as father and the

¹Braun, *1 Chronicles*, 281. This position is not new, and was also a favored viewpoint of 19th- and early 20th-century scholars as well. C. F. Keil, for example, argues that it refers to the forefathers rather than to God, by paralleling vs. 10 with vs. 18, “the God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Jacob, our fathers.” C. F. Keil, *The Books of the Chronicles*, trans. Andrew Harper, Clark’s Foreign Theological Library Series 4, vol. 35, Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament, ed. C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1872), 299. Curtis and Madsen do the same in the International Critical Commentary. Edward Lewis Curtis and Albert Alonzo Madsen, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Books of Chronicles*, ICC, ed. Charles Augustus Briggs, Samuel Rolles Driver, and Alfred Plummer (New York: Scribner, 1910), 305-306. Braun rejects the position, because “such a translation gives too much weight to the admittedly similar phrase ‘the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel’ of vs. 18, which is clearly creedal/liturgical, and too little to 1 Kgs 11:48 [*sic*], upon which our passage is dependant.” *Ibid.* He probably means 1 Kgs 1:48.

ancestors rather than to specially highlight Israel as the ancestor *par excellence*.¹ In vs. 10 it is stated that God is blessed “forever,” while in vs. 18 the prayer is offered that the people’s hearts may be fixed towards God “forever.” Note that the intention of both of these verses rests in the hand of God. He is the one who takes the center of attention here, not Israel. As Sara Japhet points out, the epithet “God of the fathers” is used twenty-seven times in its cognate forms throughout the book of Chronicles.² but 29:10 is not listed as one of them. This is significant in light of this discussion—it appears that the author of the passage is in fact comparing the fatherhood of God, in contradistinction to the ancestors.

It may be readily observed that there are not as many verbal links between this chapter and other “Nathan Oracle” passages as seen among the previous references; however, there are still significant key words in common to maintain their interrelationship. The most obvious may be seen in table 2.

Literary context

1 Chr 29:10-19 is an account of “David’s blessing,” given during a public assembly at the end of his life to Solomon the new King. Its structure is as follows:

1. Ascription of praise, vss. 10b-12
 - a. Formula of blessing, vs. 10b

¹Compare Mal 2:10 where this contrast is seen in one verse: “Have we not all one Father? Has not one God created us? Why do we deal treacherously with one another by profaning the covenant of the fathers?” (NKJV).

²1 Chr 5:25; 12:18; 29:18, 20; 2 Chr 7:22; 11:16; 13:12, 18; 14:3 [4]; 15:12; 19:4; 20:6, 33; 21:10; 24:18, 24; 28:6, 9, 25; 30:7, 19, 22; 33:12; 34:32, 33; 36:15. See Japhet, *Ideology of the Book of Chronicles*, 14.

TABLE 2

COMPARISON OF VERBAL LINKS BETWEEN THE CHRONICLES TEXTS

1 Chr 17:4-27	1 Chr 22:5-19	1 Chr 28:2-9	1 Chr 29:10-19
הואִיבְנֶה־לִי בַיִת he shall build me a house	הואִיבְנֶה בַיִת he shall build a house	הואִיבְנֶה בֵּיתִי he shall build my house	לְבַנוֹת־לִךָ בַיִת to build me a house
לִי for me	לְשִׁמִּי for my name	לְשִׁמִּי for my name	לְשֵׁם הַפְּאָרֹס for your name of splendor
עַד־עוֹלָם forever	עַד־עוֹלָם forever	עַד־עוֹלָם forever	מֵעוֹלָם וְעַד־עוֹלָם from eternity to eternity
מִי־אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים וּמִי בֵּיתִי who am I Lord God, and who is my house			וְכִי מִי אֲנִי וּמִי עַמִּי but who am I and who are my people

- b. The incomparability of God, vss. 11-12
2. The thanksgiving, vss. 13-16
 - a. Statement of thanksgiving, vs. 13
 - b. Reason for thanksgiving, vss. 14-16
3. The supplication, vss. 18-19
 - a. The basis for the supplication, vs. 17
 - b. The supplication, vss. 18-19

The pericope opens with David labeling God as Universal Father. He first says that He is blessed forever (lit. "from eternity to eternity," vs. 10) introducing a timeless quality that does not restrict God to any era, then adds that "all that is in heaven and in earth" (vs. 11) is God's. So God is described as a Father for all time and for all creation.

Furthermore, He is described as having dominion over "the kingdom" (vs. 11) with

greatness,¹ power,² glory, victory, majesty, riches, and honor. In these few verses God's fatherhood is qualified by a combination of creation ("all that is in heaven and earth is yours," vs. 11), "permanence" (vs. 12), dominion (majesty, riches, reigning over all, vs. 12), and earthly fatherhood (honor, vs. 12, described in the fifth commandment).

As the narrative flows into the second section, a contrast is set up between the faithful Father, and the alienated people—"who am I and my people," vs. 14, and "we are aliens and pilgrims before you" (vs. 15, seen also in Deut 32:5-6). This in turn leads to a contrast between God the Father and the forefathers (vs. 15)³ seen in the tripartite structure of vss. 10-19, with "father" being featured in each section— אֱבֹתֵינוּ ("our Father," vs. 10) in the first section, and אֲבוֹתֵינוּ ("our fathers," vss. 15 and 18) in the second and third. Compared to the greatness, power, splendor, permanence, majesty, riches, honor, strength, and power (vss. 11-12, note the repetition of "power") of "our Father" is the "who am I and who are my people" (vs. 14) and "we are strangers and sojourners before you, just like all our fathers" (vs. 15). However, it is noted that it is in God's hand to give greatness and strength to all (vs. 12, again note the universality), emphasizing the contrast between the Father-God's power and permanence and the forefathers' impotent transience.

The third section (vss. 17-19) returns to the focus on God with a plea for Him to

¹The same quality of greatness is found in other Father-God texts: 2 Sam 7:22, 23; 1 Chr 17:19 [bis], 21; and Mal 1:11.

²Also found in Ps 89:14[13] and Isa 63:15.

³Compare Isa 63:16; Jer 3:24, 25.

establish the hearts of the people toward Him (vs. 18) and by extension, to Solomon, so that he may keep God's commandments and statutes. This plea again highlights the contrast between the Father-God and the forefathers. The only way to ensure the ongoing integrity and heritage of the fathers is to ask the divine Father to establish (ׁוּבְנֵי) the intent of the hearts of the people toward God. Since the divine Father is "from eternity to eternity" (vs. 10), only He could ensure that the people would maintain a "loyal heart" (vs. 19) forever (vs. 18)—manifested in the observance of the commandments, testimonies and statutes, and in the building of the temple (vs. 19). The moral behavior of not only the king, but of the people also, was something that interested the Father-God, evidenced by His testing the heart, and His pleasure in its "uprightness" (vs. 17).

Historical Setting

That the king would ask the court prophet for divine approval to build a temple is consistent with the context of ANE times, and became a commonly followed practice, more so in Mesopotamia than Egypt, where, because the Pharaoh was considered divine, he did not need to consult the gods in such matters.¹ It was a matter of course for an ANE king to build a temple after successful military campaigns, so David is a "typical"² ANE king—he too has just completed successful military campaigns (cf. 2 Sam 7:1).

¹Victor Hurowitz, *I Have Built You an Exalted House: Temple Building in the Bible in Light of Mesopotamian and Northwest Semitic Writings*. JSOTSS 115, ed. David J. A. Clines and Philip Davies (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992). 163-165, 167.

²Gordon, *1 & 2 Samuel*, 236. See also ANET, 66-69. In *Enuma Eliš*, after Marduk defeats Tiamat, he sets out to build a temple (Esharra IV.141-146), and after slaying Kingu, he builds Esagila (VI.50-68), establishing a pattern of success in war, followed by temple-building. See also Hurowitz, *I Have Built You an Exalted House*, 93.

Parallel to this theme is the concept of an everlasting dynasty, also present in other ANE traditions, and seen just prior to David's time in an Akkadian inscription from the reign of Tiglath-pileser I (1114-1076 B.C.E.):

... to him [Tiglath-pileser] you [the great gods] granted leadership, supremacy (and) valour, you pronounced forever his destiny of dominion as powerful and (the destiny) of his priestly progeny for service in Eḫursagkurkurra.¹

Later, the king continues:

May they [the gods] pronounce a favourable blessing over me and my priestly progeny; and may they firmly place my priesthood in the presence of the god Aššur and their great divinity forever like a mountain.²

The evidence strongly suggests that the account given in 2 Sam 7 and 1 Chr 17 is consistent with contemporary ANE practice. Leonhard Rost, while arguing for three layers of text, concludes his arguments by saying that “there can be no doubt that there must be some historical basis for this tradition.”³

The narrative in 2 Sam 7 commences with a description of King David settling back in his palace after a series of successful military campaigns (defined in this chapter as simply “rest from all his enemies”—vs. 1), pondering with the prophet Nathan on the desirability of a temple to house the ark of the covenant and in which to worship God. The prophet's initial reaction is wholehearted endorsement, but he later realizes that David

¹A0.87.1 especially col. 7, lines 36-59, in Antti Laato, “Second Samuel 7 and Ancient Near Eastern Royal Ideology,” *The CBQ* 59 (April 1997): 252.

²Col. 8 lines 17-38; Laato, *ANE Royal Ideology*, 252.

³Leonhard Rost, *The Succession to the Throne of David*, trans. Michael D. Rutter and David M. Gunn, *Historic Texts and Interpreters in Biblical Scholarship* 1, ed. J. W. Rogerson (Sheffield: Almond Press, 1982), 49. This is a convenient summary of arguments for three layers of the text seen in 2 Sam 7. For further affirmation of the congruity of tradition and text see Gerald Cooke, “The Israelite King as Son of God,” *ZAW* 73 (1961): 206.

is not the man to build the temple. The prophet returns to the king with a word from the Lord assigning Solomon the task, also assuring him of an everlasting dynasty.¹

In spite of debate about when the vision in its final form (as recorded in 2 Sam 7) was written down,² the era it describes dates back to about 1000 B.C.E.³ Although describing the same events, a date around 400 B.C.E. is most likely for the Chronicles.⁴

Conclusion

Just as the Song of Moses commences with dramatic impact, so too does the Vision of Nathan. As Kruse comments, “There is hardly any prophecy in the Old Testament that has had so many repercussions in biblical literature as the oracle given to king David by the prophet Nathan.”⁵ It is therefore significant that the “fatherhood of God” motif is prominent in this important literature tradition.

In 2 Sam 7:14, the main passage of the Nathan-vision corpus, the father-son relationship is established by the act of God in raising up a descendant from David’s body,

¹As prophetic counselor of the king, Nathan would have been one of the most important people of the court. W. W. Hertzberg, *I & II Samuel: A Commentary*. Old Testament Library. trans. John Bowden (London: SCM, 1964). 284. Therefore to bring an oracle of God that disagreed with his initial enthusiasm for a permanent and stable structure to house the ark seems quite remarkable, and puts him in a different class from the time-servers who surrounded Ahab (for example) who told him what he wanted to hear (1 Kgs 22:6). Gordon, *I & 2 Samuel*, 237.

²See Rost, *Succession to the Throne of David*, 35.

³Georges Auzou, *La Danse Devant l’Arche: Étude du Livre de Samuel*. *Connaissance de la Bible 6* (Paris: Éditions de l’Orient, 1968), 23.

⁴Meyers, *1 Chronicles*, lxxxix. See H. G. M. Williamson, “Eschatology in Chronicles: Tyndale Old Testament Lecture, 1977.” *TB* 28 (1977): 122. Williamson notes that it must be after 515 B.C.E. when the first Darics (coins mentioned in 1 Chr 28:7) appear. *Ibid.*, 124.

⁵Kruse, *David’s Covenant*, 139; Gordon, *I & 2 Samuel*, 235; Anderson, *2 Samuel*, 112.

more precisely, his sexual organ.¹ This demonstrates that God is not the great Procreator as we observed in other father-gods of the ANE, nor is this a physical relationship.

David, for example, stresses that he is the father of Solomon (1 Chr 28:5; 29:19), even though Solomon had previously been designated as God's son (1 Chr 17:13; 28:6; 29).

Solomon was not divine like the Pharaohs, as his genealogy clearly shows. This is rather a unique relationship, perhaps unfamiliar to the other ANE cultures.

Contingent to the raising up of David's descendant to become God's son, is the act of David joining his ancestors. The interplay between the generations is no accident, but clarifies the real origins of David's son. His ancestral roots go back generations, so the intended father-son relationship between Solomon and God must be seen in that context. In each of the Nathan-vision passages the narrative speaks of the impending death of David, after which God would "raise up" or "choose" Solomon, almost as if God steps in to replace David when Solomon loses his natural father. This is followed by God's activities of establishing, building, declaring ("he will be my son")—seen in the anointing² and adoption of the royal son³ in Ps 2)—and then maintaining him. In other words, David's natural lineage (linked back to Adam in the context of 1 Chr 17) has become a

¹See *BDB*, s.v. **אֵימָה** (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), § 2, 589.

²Sigmund Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, trans. D. R. Ap-Thomas, 2 vols. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1972; reprint, Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992), 2:61.

³*Ibid.*, 1:62. See Willem Van Gemeren, *Psalms-Song of Songs*, The Expositor's Bible Commentary Vol. 5, ed. Frank E. Gaebelain (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1991), 586-591 for a handy summary of the textual links for the "Messianic King" theme in the Hebrew Scriptures. See also Aage Bentzen, *King and Messiah* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1970), 16-20; Walter C. Kaiser Jr., *The Messiah in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 14-23, 77-87, 96-99.

new lineage, so Solomon's success as king would not be dependent on his breeding, but on his relationship with his Father-God.

Note the developing relationship in the action flowing back and forth between God and Solomon in descriptions such as "I will raise up," "he will build," "I will be his father," "he will be my son." Both are involved in building or establishing—God will establish Solomon's throne, and Solomon will build a house for God's name. This shows that God is not a Father to build monuments to, rather, it is He who would build nations and dynasties, who, with fatherly concern (חֶסֶד), would discipline His people in the process of ensuring them a future and a name. The bonds in this relationship are described in the most intimate of terms, depicting much more than just a formal arrangement. The flow of action between them is not only constructive but nurturing. Initially this relationship would apply to David's son Solomon, but by implication (vs. 10), it was to apply to the nation as well.

The relationship is to be maximized by Solomon's compliance to the חֻקִּים (statutes) and מִשְׁפָּטִים (judgments) that God had given Moses, tempered by the warning of discipline should he "turn aside." It introduces the idea of conditionality, hence David's prayer that God would give Solomon חָכְמָה (wisdom) and בִּינָה (understanding) to keep the תּוֹרָה (Torah) of God. This not only implies human responsibility in this relationship, but also that God's fatherhood is not something to be imposed on those unwilling to accept it, and is guaranteed to those who remain in covenant with him.

There is a distinct contrast between the Faithful Father and the alienated people, between the power and permanence of the Father-God and the forefathers' impotent

transience. Although the “perverse and crooked generation” and the “foolish and unwise people” spoken of in the Song of Moses (Deut 32:5-6) had been subdued (along with the enemies) by David through the agency of the judges (2 Sam 7:11), there was still the need for God to “appoint a place” for His people, and “plant” them where they would be free of oppression from the “sons of wickedness” (2 Sam 7:10). Just as the judges had ensured Israel’s past safety and security, God would chasten David’s son if necessary to ensure his and the dynasty’s future, all the while (from the divine Father’s perspective) maintaining the relationship on the basis of **חֶסֶד** (2 Sam 7:14-15).

From David’s perspective, a guarantee for the ongoing integrity and heritage of the fathers was to ask the divine Father to establish (**בָּרַךְ**) the intent of the hearts of the people toward God (1 Chr 29:18-19). Since the divine father is “from eternity to eternity” (vs. 10), only He could ensure that the people would maintain a “loyal heart” (vs. 19) forever (vs. 18)—manifested in their allegiance to the Torah. But here the basis of the guarantee for the future of David’s dynasty is more clearly defined—rather than being on the basis of his descendants maintaining discipline, it is on the basis of **חֶסֶד**. The relationship becomes one of promise and of hope.

So the Vision of Nathan adds to our understanding of God’s fatherhood by affirming that He raises up children from human progenitors (hence avoiding the “great progenitor” tradition of the ANE), and maintains a relationship with them. Just as the presence of a son indicates life and continuity, and the life of the father has meaning as it is

continued in the life of the son (Gen 15:2f.),¹ so the father-son relationship between God and Solomon becomes the sign of future hope. Their relationship becomes the guarantee of the eternal efficacy of God's fatherhood. This relationship is said to be everlasting, and is maintained on the basis of unswerving faithfulness, peace, tranquility, and intimacy—and commandments and judgments—each of which originates in God Himself. However, it was not just up to Solomon's "determination" to see it through—the fact that eternity is mentioned in each instance would suggest that even if Solomon failed, God's covenant with His people would still stand עַד־עוֹלָם—forever.

Hymnic and Wisdom Literature

Although Joachim Jeremias states: "One looks in vain for God to be addressed as Father anywhere in the Psalter, or in any other prayer in the Old Testament."² he is mistaken to assume that the Psalms carry no notion of God's fatherhood. A particular form of address is not the only way God's fatherhood is identified, and the Hymnic and Wisdom literature shows the rich ambience of the fatherhood-of-God motif.³ The references therein that explicitly connect God with His fatherhood of humanity are: Pss 68:6[5]; 89:27[26]; 103:13; and Prov 3:12.

¹Ibid., 153-154.

²Joachim Jeremias, *The Prayers of Jesus*, trans. John Bowden (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978), 24. The differentiation that Jeremias makes between אָבִי and אֱלֹהֵי, suggesting that the nonvocative אָבִי is not as intimate as אֱלֹהֵי, becomes an academic exercise. Ibid., 22-24, 57-65.

³William W. Hallo observes that although the prayers of an individual addressed to the gods by the Sumerians are "very poorly represented in Sumerian literature," individual prayers "form the largest single quotient of the Biblical psalter." William W. Hallo, "Individual Prayer in Sumerian: The Continuity of a Tradition," *JAOS* 88 (1968): 75.

Ps 68:6[5]

Text (vss. 5-7 [4-6])

5 שִׁירוּ לְאֱלֹהִים זְמִירוֹ שְׁמוֹ | סִלּוֹ לְרֶכֶב בְּעֵרְבוֹת | בְּיַהּ שְׁמוֹ וְעֲלוּ לְפָנָיו:^c
 6 אֲבִי יְתוּמִים וְדֹנֵן אֱלֹמְנוֹת | אֱלֹהִים בְּמַעוֹן קָדְשׁוֹ:^b
 7 אֱלֹהִים מוֹשִׁיב יְחִידִים בְּיָתֵהּ | מוֹצִיא אֲסִירִים בְּכוֹשְׁרוֹת |
 אֶךְ סוֹבְרִים שְׂכְנוּ צְחִיקָה:^c

- 5 [4] Sing to the Lord, praise His name,
 pave the way for the one riding through the desert plains.
 With His name Yah, rejoice before Him!
- 6 [5] Father of orphans and Defender of widows,
 Is God in His holy dwelling.
- 7 [6] God causes the lonely to dwell in a home,
 He leads prisoners out into prosperity,
 yet the rebellious settle down on parched land.

It has been proposed that בְּעֵרְבוֹת (through the desert plains) in 5[4]b should be emended to בְּעֵבוֹת or בְּעֵרְפוֹת (in the clouds) to reflect the Ugaritic expression *rkb 'rpt* "rider of the clouds."¹ Only in this psalm and in Jer 5:6 is עֵרְבוֹת pointed this way, while in its eight other occurrences in Scripture, it is pointed differently.² The question remains,

¹As reflected in some Syriac and LXX manuscripts; see BHS critical apparatus. The Canaanite counterpart to the biblical expression found here in Ps 68:5, 8-9 appears to be *[r]/[l] šmm šmn arš rbb rkb 'rpt*, "dew of heaven, oil of earth, showers of the Rider of the Clouds." UT, *nt:II:39-40*. This was a standard appellation of the Storm-god Baal. Mitchel Dahood considers it unnecessary to emend the biblical *'rpt* to *'rpt* because "non-phonemic interchange between *b* and *p* in Northwestern Semitic is common. Mitchel Dahood, *Psalms II: 51-100*, AB, ed. William Foxwell Albright and David Noel Freedman (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1968), 136. Although similar to the Ugaritic expression, בְּעֵרְבוֹת רֶכֶב could also mean "one who rides through deserts," an allusion to the desert wanderings of Israel. Anderson, *Book of Psalms. I*, 484-485.

²Num 22:1; Josh 4:13; 5:10; 13:32; 2 Sam 15:28; 17:16; 2 Kgs 25:5; Ps 68:5; Jer 5:6; 39:5. Its spelling with the prefix is usually בְּעֵרְבוֹת, but in Ps 68:5 it is בְּעֵרְבוֹת.

why the inconsistency? What justification is there to make this one exception? The meaning in every other instance is “desert plains,” so there is justification in being consistent, and translating it the same way here.

Linguistic Analysis

A number of key words in this passage inform us of the nature of God’s fatherhood. The first is in relation to God acting as judge (שֹׁפֵט). This reference reinforces what we have already observed of the role of gods in the ANE. The Father is seen here as one who defends the oppressed (see also Ps 72:2) and restores legal rights.¹

Another key word, identified by Marc Girard, is the word אֲבִי, significant because it identifies the context as the Exodus.² It is while He leads the prisoners out (vs. 7[6]), and leads His people through the desert (vs. 8[7]) that He is called “Father.”

Then there are a few words that recur in the Father-God texts. The first of these is the hendiadys שָׁמַיִם (heavens) and אֲרֶצֶה (earth) seen in theophany in vs. 9[8]. Usually they appear in relation to the Creation theme, and it may be possible that the same is happening here at Sinai, with the whole of creation being affected by God’s presence. It is significant that a further Father-God keyword כִּוֵּן (establish/provide) also appears here (vs. 11[10]).

¹Anderson, *Book of Psalms*. 1:519-520. See also UT, 2 Aqht:v:7-8. *ydn dn almnt ytpi tpi ytm*. “He judges the case of the widow, defends the cause of the fatherless.” referring to El. The protection of widows and orphans was one of the specific tasks of the ideal king. See also Dahood. *Psalms II*. 136. Rashi applies the term “orphans” to Israel, based on Lam 5:3. “we have become orphans, fatherless.” and Lam 1:1 that says of Israel, “She became like a widow.” Gruber. *Rashi’s Commentary on Psalms 1-89*, 300-301.

²Marc Girard. *Les Psaumes Redécouverts: De la structure au sens (51-100)* (Chicoutimi, Quebec: Bellarmin, 1994), 2:221-222. Hereafter Girard. *Les Psaumes Redécouverts II*.

The effect of the presence of the Father-God is that the poor are provided for.

Finally, the significant influence of Ugaritic studies must be acknowledged. It was only after W. F. Albright's study showing the development of the Hebrew language in light of the Ras Shamra tablets that Ps 68 ("widely admitted as textually and exegetically the most difficult and obscure of the psalms") began to yield its secrets.¹ Albright maintains that about half the unique words of Ps 68 may be elucidated by the Ugaritic.² The pair of synonyms, שִׁיר and זָמַר (Sing! and Sing praises! in 5[4]a), for example, are one of over 240 parallel word pairs that are also seen in the Ugaritic, and identified by Dahood up to the time of publishing his Psalms II commentary.³

Literary Context

The complexities of this Psalm have been described as "almost legendary."⁴ W. F. Albright attempted to solve its difficulties by suggesting that Ps 68 consists of a string of about thirty *incipits* (scribal introductions to early Hebrew lyric poems), as if an index

¹Dahood, *Psalms II*, 133.

²W. F. Albright, "A Catalogue of Early Hebrew Lyric Poems," *HUCA* 23 (1950-1951): 3. To give some idea of the extent of the Ras Shamra finds, the Ugaritic texts, which date to the first three or four decades of the 14th century B.C.E., include about 9,000 words, about half of the approximately 18,000 words of the Hebrew Psalter. The Baal Epic contains about 4,000 words, while the Keret and Aqhat Epics contain about 2,000 words each. *Ibid.*

³Dahood, *Psalms II*, 54.

⁴Marvin E. Tate, *Psalms 51-100*, WBC, ed. David A. Hubbard (Dallas: Word Books, 1990), 170. Dahood states that this Psalm is "widely admitted as textually and exegetically the most difficult and obscure of all the psalms." Dahood, *Psalms II*, 133.

page from a hymn book has been included in the book of Psalms.¹ Countering Albright, Sigmund Mowinckel recognized Ps 68 as one of the oldest of the psalms, and because of its antiquity, said that it is artistically superior to, and poetically more powerful than, later psalms.² John Philip LePeau argues for its integrity on literary grounds.³

There has also been considerable discussion regarding the genre of the psalm, but there seems to be a measure of agreement that there are strong hymnic elements present.⁴ Claus Westermann considers Ps 68 a "Hymn of Victory," and includes it with the Exodus victory songs of Exod 15 and Deut 32.⁵ Mowinckel identifies Ps 68 as a procession psalm for the feast of tabernacles,⁶ belonging to "Yahweh's royal entry" along with Pss 132 and 24.⁷ It could be termed a triumphal hymn (much like Exod 15) which celebrates defeat

¹Albright, *Catalogue of Early Hebrew Lyric Poems*, 9. More recently, George A. F. Knight, concurring with Albright, observed that Ps 68 is very different from the previous psalm, seeming to be a collection of "psalm material" some of it originating in David's day. G. A. F. Knight, *Psalms: Volume 1, Daily Study Bible*, ed. John C. L. Gibson (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1982), 305. Dahood allows for a greater conceptual unity to the poem than Albright's analysis allows. Dahood, *Psalms II*, 133. Van Gemeren provides a useful summary of the range of possibilities for the psalm's structure. Van Gemeren, *Psalms-Song of Songs*, 443.

²Mowinckel, *Psalms in Israel's Worship II*, 96-97. Rashi notes the antiquity of the psalm by saying that it is one of the earliest chapters in the Hebrew Bible. Mayer I. Gruber, *Rashi's Commentary on Psalms 1-89 (Books I-III): With English Translation, Introduction and Notes*, South Florida Studies in the History of Judaism 161, ed. Jacob Neusner et al. (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998), 10.

³John Philip LePeau, "Psalm 68: An Exegetical and Theological Study" (Ph.D. diss., University of Iowa, 1981), 234-248.

⁴Tate, *Psalms 51-100*, 133-134.

⁵Claus Westermann, *The Praise of God in the Psalms*, trans. Keith R. Crim (Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1961), 90.

⁶Mowinckel, *Psalms in Israel's Worship I*, 182.

⁷Mowinckel, *Psalms in Israel's Worship II*, 172.

over the enemy and the deliverance of the Israelites (vss. 2-7[1-6]), escape into the wilderness, theophany at Sinai (vss. 8-9[7-8]), and finally the settlement in Canaan implied by the plea for rain (vss. 10-15[9-14]). The rest of the poem repeats variations of these themes—vss. 16-19[15-18] replay the Sinai theme, vss. 20-24[19-23] are the defeat of the Egyptian at the Red Sea, 25-28[24-27] describes a procession for worship, 29-31[28-30] are the prayer for deliverance from a new threat by Egypt, and 32-36[31-35] are a summons for all the nations to praise the Most High.¹

Le Peau suggests a tripartite structure for the psalm, vss. 2-11[1-10], 12-24[11-23], and 25-36[24-35],² which J. P. Fokkelman has organized around three different mountains—Sinai, Bashan, and Zion.³ A number of key terms clustered in the Psalm gives credence to LePeau's suggestion, for example, in the first section (vss. 2-11[1-10]) אֱלֹהִים ("before God") or its equivalent appears six times,⁴ and the term for God אֱלֹהִים appears eleven times.⁵ Fokkelman has observed that אֱלֹהִים appears at the beginning and

¹Dahood. *Psalms II*. 133. Knight suggests that the poem is about the warrior Lord which describes God creating victory by speaking, in the same way as His initial creation. Cf. Gen 1 and Ps 33:6. Knight. *Psalms: Volume 1*. 309.

²LePeau. *Psalms 68*. 245-246. He identifies the theme of each part as the Ideal King, the Cosmic King, and the Universal King. Ps 68 has been difficult to outline. Tate. *Psalms 51-100*. 172-173.

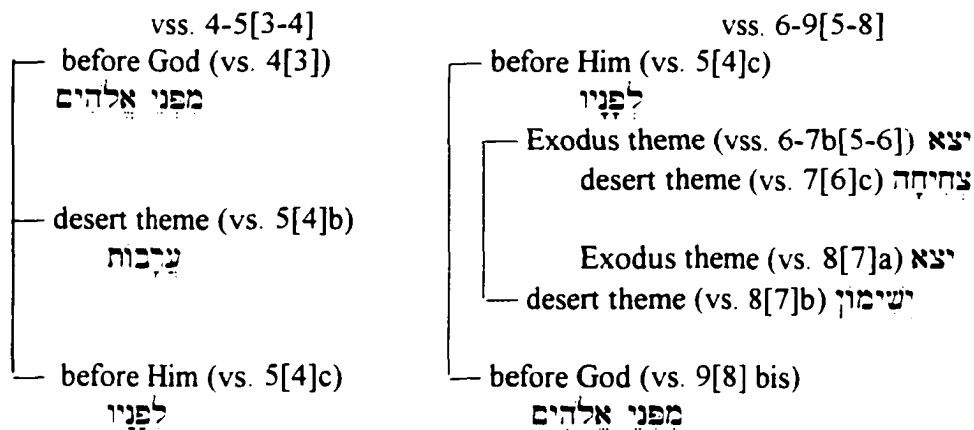
³J. P. Fokkelman in a private communication with Robert Alter, cited in Robert Alter. "Psalms," in *The Literary Guide to the Bible*, ed. Robert Alter and Frank Kermode (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 1987), 256.

⁴Vss. 2[1], 3[2] [bis], 5[4], and 9[8] [bis]. There are also related expressions אֵשׁ מִפְּנֵי אֵשׁ ("before the fire," vs. 3 [2]), and לְפָנֵי עַמֶּךָ ("before your people," v. 8[7]).

⁵Vss. 2[1], 3[2], 4[3] [bis], 6[5], 7[6], 8[7], 9[8] [bis], 10[9], and 11[10]. אֱלֹהִים actually appears 25 times in the Psalm (see also vss. 16[15], 17[16], 18[17], 19[18], 22[21], 25[24]).

end of strophes, and is a useful tool in detecting the structure of the psalm.¹

However, note the importance of the drama that unfolds around Mt. Sinai in the first section and outlined in microstructure by Girard as follows:²



The obvious Exodus theme³ that revolves around Mt. Sinai becomes the setting for the introduction of God as Father. But the helpful scheme suggested by Girard may be taken one step further. In the first part of the Psalm (vss. 2-11[1-10]) the recurring themes suggest a chiasmic structure, with God as Father being the centerpiece.

27[26], 29[28] [bis], 32[31], 33[32], 35[34], and 36[35] [bis]). Other names for God used in Ps 68 include יְהוָה (twice in vs. 5[4], and vs. 19[18]), אֲדֹנָי 6x (vss. 12[11], 18[17], 20[19], 21[20] [bis], and 33[32]), שִׁדְדִי once (vs. 15[14]), יְהוָה 3x (vss. 17[16], 21[20], and 27[26]), and אֱלֹהִים 5x (vss. 20[19], 21[20] [bis], 25[24], and 36[35]). See also Tate, *Psalms 51-100*, 184-185.

¹Appears in Alter, *Psalms*, 256. In the second section (vss. 12-24[11-23]) all the divine names of the psalm are used—אֲדֹנָי and אֱלֹהִים are the most common, followed by אֱלֹהִים, יְהוָה, יְהוָה, and שִׁדְדִי. In the third section (vss. 25-36[24-35]) אֱלֹהִים predominates again, there are two occurrences of אֱלֹהִים, and one mention each of יְהוָה and אֲדֹנָי.

²Girard, *Les Psaumes Redécouverts II*, 222.

³“Force nous est de conclure: structurellement, l’invitatoire hymnique (v.4-5) nous situe déjà, géographiquement, spatialement, en contexte de désert: les énonciations qui suivent (v.6-9) complètent l’idée en nous situant, temporellement, historiquement, à l’époque de la sortie d’Égypte.” Ibid.

- A before Him מִפְּנֵי (vs. 2[1])
 B smoke driven away, wax melts, wicked perish, righteous rejoice
 at the presence of God מִפְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים (vss. 3-4[2-3])
 C [the one] riding through the desert plains לָרֶכֶב בְּעֶרְבוֹת (vs. 5[4])
 D Father (vss. 6-7[5-6])
 C' [you] went out through the wilderness בִּישִׁמּוֹן בְּצִעְדְּךָ (vs. 8[7])
 B' earth shook, heavens dropped, Sinai moved,
 at the presence of God מִפְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים (vs. 9[8])
 A' at the presence of God מִפְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים (vs. 9[8])

This produces a very powerful collage of the Father-God. The picture of God's enemies being driven away like smoke reflects the Ugaritic concept of death.¹ What is being described here is the Father-God driving away the “wicked,” so that evil could never be resurrected or rescued from the underworld. Hence the ensuing description of great rejoicing in vss. 4-5[3-4]. It is then that the Father-God is described as לָרֶכֶב בְּעֶרְבוֹת (“riding through the desert plains”). The commonly suggested emendation “riding on the clouds” is creative, but not justified. The chiasmic parallel is בִּישִׁמּוֹן בְּצִעְדְּךָ (when you marched through the wilderness vs. 8[7]). Note also vs. 34[33], לָרֶכֶב בַּשָּׁמַי שְׁמַיִם-קָדָם (to the one riding through the ancient heaven of heavens). A progression is seen here moving from one section of the psalm to another. In the first, God is pictured riding a chariot through the desert plains to meet His people at Sinai. In the second, He is among untold thousands of chariots at Mt. Bashan (vs. 18[17]), and in the third section He rides through the heavens to get to His sanctuary (vs. 25[24])—the depicted meeting of God with His

¹One of the duties of a “faithful” son was to rescue his father’s “smoke” from the underworld. See, for example, 4. CAT 1.17. I. 27-28, in Parker, *Ugaritic Narrative Poetry*, 53; 4. CAT 1.17. II 1-2, in *ibid.*, 55. The “life” of the dead was depicted as departing through the nostrils “like a breath,” “like a sneeze,” or “like smoke” before going to the realm of the dead. See 5. CAT 1.18. IV. 24-26, 36-37; *ibid.*, 66.

people at each mountain becomes more magnificent than the one preceding it.

The centerpiece of the chiasm is the description of God as the Father, Defender, Restorer, and Redeemer¹ who offers identity to the fatherless, legal protection to widows,² a sense of belonging to the estranged, and an economic future to the released prisoner. Although not explicitly stated, the impression given here is an individual relationship enjoyed between the people and their Father-God, especially the downcast among the people. Amidst the grandeur of military and regnal might, the Father-God's first concern is the disenfranchised. This is unprecedented in ANE literature.

Historical Setting

Albright did much to demonstrate the antiquity of Ps 68, and in attempting to date it, he suggested it goes back earlier than the tenth century because of its archaic prosody (the prevalence of 2+2+3 meter and stylistic peculiarities), related expressions found in the Ugaritic—*rkb 'rpt* and *Yáhū*,³ stylistic comparison with the Dead Sea Scrolls,⁴ and swarms of defective spellings at the end of words, characteristic of the orthography of

¹Van Gemeren, *Psalms-Song of Songs*, 445.

²Compare the story of the "Protests of the Eloquent Peasant," in *ANET*, 408, in which the chief magistrate in the story is called "father of orphan," "husband of the widow," by the peasant (from the early 21st century B.C.E.). See also Le Peau, *Psalm 68*, 86.

³Albright, *Catalogue of Early Hebrew Lyric Poems*, 18.

⁴*Ibid.*, 5. He comments: "Our new recognition of the great antiquity of the standard Hebrew text makes it impossible to indulge in the reckless emendations and interpretations of a Duhm or a Wutz," and "reduces to absurdity" the dating of many Psalms to the Maccabean period. *Ibid.*, 4.

early Israel.¹ It was not until the divided monarchy, ninth century B.C.E., that Hebrew spelling became standardized.² Therefore the original Israelite poems, upon which Ps 68 draws, may be dated to between the thirteenth and tenth centuries B.C.E., while they were collated during the Solomonic period or a little later.³

According to Michael Goulder, "Psalm 68 is the victory hymn of the royalists after the defeat of Absalom's rebellion at Zalmon in the forest of Ephraim."⁴ It describes a triumphal procession of the ark of the covenant accompanied by minstrels and girls with tambourines, commencing with lifting up the ark, and the choir singing the words, "God arises, His enemies are scattered" (vs. 25[24]).⁵ From the language, it appears as if the writer of the psalm is present, and he gives "magnificent insight into the detail of the rites and the feelings of those present."⁶ The story line tells of the flight of kings (vs. 13[12])

¹Although Tate does not agree with Albright's methodology, he admits that the similarity between Ps 68:12-19 and the Song of Deborah is further support for an early date. Tate, *Psalms 51-100*, 174.

²Albright, *Catalogue of Early Hebrew Lyric Poems*, 10.

³Ibid. Michael Goulder proposes that the author was an associate of David, not present at the battle, but a part of his retinue who had stayed with the king at Mahanaim. This poet speaks in the third person of Joab's force in 66:6—"They went through the river on foot"—as with any reference to military movement in Ps 68. Michael Goulder, *The Prayers of David (Psalms 51-72): Studies in the Psalter, II*, JSOTSS 102, ed. David J. A. Clines and Philip R. Davies (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990), 192.

⁴Goulder, *Prayers of David*, 191. Tate cautions that any such cultic reconstruction can be "highly speculative" and it is preferable to derive the meaning from the literary structure of a passage rather than an "imaginative reconstruction." Tate, *Psalms 51-100*, 175.

⁵Goulder, *Prayers of David*, 192. According to Num 10:35, this was the signal given before the ark set out on a march or in battle. Anderson, *The Book of Psalms*, 1:482. Dahood prefers to see this, not as the march from Horeb with the ark (the ark is not mentioned here), but rather as a description of theophany. Dahood, *Psalms II*, 134.

⁶Goulder, *Prayers of David*, 191.

—possibly from the Egyptian frontier. It recounts the execution of “enemies” (vs. 22[21])—probably a reference to the Ishmaelites who served in Absalom’s army (and who do not recognize God’s laws). It also describes the fate of the rebels lurking among God’s people (vs. 31[30]—Absalom’s army had consisted of both enemies and rebels). It concludes with the fulfillment of God’s promise that David would return from Bashan (vss. 16-17[15-16])—the East Bank.¹

If this reconstruction is correct, when the psalm refers to God’s fatherhood, it is in the context of David’s returning to Zion after quelling the uprising to find hundreds of new widows and orphaned children that he is now responsible for after the death of many of his men in battle. He distributes land in Succoth to them (confiscated from the rebels), and they rejoice (compare the parallel statements in 60:8[6] and 68:5[4]). Other loyal supporters had been cut off from home and family by the conflict and now they could be restored to their land and loved ones. Still others of David’s supporters had been kept in chains, so they could be released and given prosperity for their loyalty and suffering. (Zadok and Abiathar may have been included in one or both of those two groups.) Meanwhile the rebels, after having their lands around Shechem or the Jabok confiscated, were banished to the desert lands to eke out an existence.²

¹Ibid.. 192-193.

²Ibid.. 193-194.

Conclusion

The suggested chiastic structure for the first section of the psalm gives clear direction for the description of the fatherhood of God. Throughout the psalm He is pictured as the One who meets with His people at three strategic mountains, but here at Sinai (the first of the mountains) the celebration is described in terms of redemption in the Exodus. The Father-God is introduced as the One Triumphant over the forces of evil (symbolized by smoke being driven away), which gives the psalm an apocalyptic tone.

The climax of the chiasm describes God's fatherhood in terms of His intimate care of the most vulnerable in society—the orphan, widow, estranged, and imprisoned— and the way that His very presence causes lush plentitude. In this context, the Creation theme is introduced, making the psalm a complex interrelationship between Exodus, apocalyptic themes, and Creation themes. Maybe this explains why the psalm is a hymn of victory—the songwriter has chosen all the realms over which the Father-God has jurisdiction with which to offer Him praise.

Ps 89:27[26]

Text (vss. 27-29[26-28])

ba

27 הוא יִקְרָאֵנִי אָבִי אֲתָהּ | אֵלֵי וְצוֹר וְשׁוֹעֲתִי:

ba

28 אֲפִאֲנִי בְּכֹר אֲתַנְהוּ | עֲלִיּוֹן לְמַלְכֵי אֲרָץ:

ba

29 לְעוֹלָם אֲשַׁמְרֵהֶם | וּבְרִיתִי נֶאֱמָנָה לּוֹ:

27 [26]

He will call out to me “You are my Father!”

“(You are) my God, and the Rock of my salvation.”

- 28 [27] Indeed, I will make him firstborn,
 Exalted over the kings of the earth.
 29 [28] I will keep my faithfulness for him forever,
 Upholding my covenant with him.

The MT replaces the *kethib* אֲשֶׁמְרֶה in 29a[28a] with the *qere* אֲשֶׁמְרֶה.

Linguistic Analysis

Vss. 27[26] and 28[27] are linked by the way they are structured—an emphatic statement followed by a nominal clause that forms a synthetic parallelism. The initial statement, “He shall call out, ‘You are my father!’” is expanded to “(You are) my God, and the Rock of my salvation.”¹ Similarly the simple explanation in 28[27]a, “Indeed, I will make him firstborn,” becomes “(I will make him) the exalted one over the kings of the earth.”² Therefore, in this structural sequence, the fatherhood of God is explained using emphasis and parallelism. It emphasizes the certainty of the father-son relationship between God and King David, with David acknowledging God as the source and strength of his very being. God recognizes David as a king exalted above all other earthly

¹E. Lipinski argues that the two “noms hymniques” that David had chosen for God “My Father!” and “Mountain (of) my victory!” not only gave him his strength, but form a central place in the poem. See E. Lipinski, *Le Poème Royal du Psaume LXXXIX 1-5. 20-38* (Paris: Gabalda, 1967), 57. Dahood notes that the word-pair of אב and צור is reminiscent of the Ugaritic juxtaposition of *abi* and *sur* in UT 125:6-7 *ab 'gr b'l špn*. See Dahood, *Psalms II*, 317. Perhaps that connection is the reason Klaus Seybold connects the Rock with the “Rock of Zion” upon which the temple was built. Klaus Seybold, *Introducing the Psalms*, trans. R. Graeme Dunphy (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1990), 148-149.

²George A. F. Knight observes that the use of עֲלִיָּו (exalted one) for David “demands of us deep theological thought.” See G. A. F. Knight, *Psalms: Volume 2, Daily Study Bible*, ed. John C. L. Gibson (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1983), 85. G. W. Ahlström explains by commenting that just as God is king over all the gods, so is His firstborn over all the kings of the earth. G. W. Ahlström, *Psalm 89: Eine Liturgie aus dem Ritual des leidenden Königs*, trans. Hans-Karl Hacker and Rudolf Zeitler (Lund: Gleerups, 1959), 113.

kings—forever. Vs. 29[28] serves to explain the previous two verses by showing how the transaction takes place with the introduction of the keywords עוֹלָם (forever), חֶסֶד (kindness/faithfulness), בְּרִית (covenant), and אָמֵן (to stand firm).

The keyword חֶסֶד (covenant faithfulness) may be observed paired with a number of other keywords in the psalm. In vss. 20[19] and 25[24] it occurs alongside אָרָם (arise), the verb determining the main idea of the elevation of David in the midst of his people.¹ It is the חֶסֶד (faithfulness) of God that elevates David and maintains him at a high level.

This “height” is paralleled in the description of God’s throne² where there is another qualification of God’s fatherhood. Here we have “four extensions of Yahweh’s presence which take the names of ‘virtues’” that possibly took the form of animals surrounding His throne.³ At Tabor (vs. 15[14]) the four virtues/creatures were Mercy and Truth before, Righteousness and Judgment behind. At Dan, it was Righteousness and Peace, Mercy and Truth (85:10f., 13); at Jerusalem, Honor and Majesty, Strength and Beauty (96:6). These descriptors serve to qualify the type of fatherhood displayed from the divine throne, depicting God as the sovereign on His throne administering justice on behalf of His people.

¹Girard. *Psaumes Redécouverts II*, 480.

²Pss 85:11-12 [10-11] and 89:15 [14].

³Michael D. Goulder. *The Psalms of the Sons of Korah*. JSOTSS 20. ed. David J. A. Clines. Philip R. Davies. and David M. Gunn (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1982). 225. As evidence of this suggestion. Goulder cites the example of Solomon’s throne that had a lion on each side (1 Kgs 10:19); and Ezekiel’s vision of a throne-like chariot borne by four living creatures—a lion, an ox, a man, and an eagle. Note that in Ps 89 this description is followed by an account of shouting and celebration (17-18 [16-17]).

Another distinctive word pair is חֶסֶד (faithfulness) and אֱמוּנָה (fidelity), each encountered separately seven times.¹ In 89:29[28] we see חֶסֶד paired with אֱמֵן, the verbal root of its cognate, אֱמוּנָה. The covenant language here is significant. God's fatherhood becomes firmly linked to the covenant by the rapid-fire succession of covenant words.

Other word pairs also occur seven times, including בְּרִית (covenant),² and its cognate שָׁבַע (to swear);³ בָּנָה (to build);⁴ כּוּן (to establish);⁵ and עוֹלָם (eternity).⁶ Again these words sound pregnant with covenant theology. The word יָד (hand)⁷ signifies that the hand of God is there to strengthen David's hand against evil, which was an ANE royal ideology implying that the king was to be the son of divinity.⁸ Finally, YHWH's establishment (כּוּן) of His covenant and of the king is a repeated theme of the psalm—note

¹ חֶסֶד 2[1], 3[2], 15[14], 25[24], 29[28], 34[33], and 50[49]; and אֱמוּנָה 2[1], 3[2], 6[5], 9[8], 25[24], 34[33], and 50[49]. They also occur together five times (2[1], 3[2], 25[24], 34[33], and 50[49]).

² 4[3], 29[28], 35[34], and 40[39].

³ 4[3], 36[35], and 50[49].

⁴ 3[2], and 5[4].

⁵ 3[2], 5[4], 15[14], 22[21], and 38[37]. See also Jungwoo Kim, "Psalm 89: Its Biblical-Theological Contribution to the Presence of Law Within the Unconditional Covenant" (Ph.D. diss., Westminster Theological Seminary, 1989), 51. Note that the last list includes כּוּן (in vs. 15) which is not a verb but a noun, although it could be argued that it comes from the verbal root.

⁶ 2[1], 3[2], 5[4], 29[28], 37[36], 38[37], and 53[52]. Girard does not see its repetition as significant. Girard, *Psaumes Redécouverts II*, 477.

⁷ Featured in 22-23[21-22], and 26-28[25-27].

⁸ Girard, *Psaumes Redécouverts II*, 480.

that vss. 21 and 37 form the beginning and end of the covenant section.¹

Literary Context

Ps 89 is a lament (penance and prayer), attributed to the king after a day of lost battles.² It commences as a hymn of praise exalting God for His mercy and faithfulness, His omnipotent power in defeating the mighty monster (Rahab) of the primeval sea, His subsequent “deeds of righteousness” and victorious help for His people. The rejoicing is followed by a reminder of God’s covenant with David and the promise He would never forsake His seed. Then comes the lament—God has apparently cast off His anointed, and the covenant appears to have been laid aside, hence the concluding query, “How long?”³ The psalm ends without any apparent resolutions, and this becomes important as we determine the parameters and limitations of the Father-God metaphor.

At the heart of Ps 89, (recognized as one of the “Royal Psalms”),⁴ vss. 20-28[19-

¹2[1], 4[3], 21[20], and 37[36]. Goulder, *Psalms of the Sons of Korah*, 218.

²The national lament psalm may either have an individual or a national focus—the so-called “I-psalm” or “we-lament.” Mowinckel, *Psalms in Israel’s Worship I*, 225. The lament is directed at God in the discouraged belief that He has forgotten His covenant with David. *Ibid.*, 198. Mowinckel suggests that among the national psalms of lamentation, of which Ps 89 is one, there is a group that gives a general description of distress or disaster brought about by the enemy upon the land (Ps 44, 74, 89). *Ibid.*, 219.

³Mowinckel, *Psalms in Israel’s Worship I*, 70-71. Goulder suggests there are a number of different genres through the psalm: 1-18 is a hymn (except vs. 3f.), 19-37 and vs. 3f. are citations of the Davidic covenant, 38-45 are a lament, 46-51 an appeal, and vs. 52 is a doxology, probably intended for the whole of book III. Goulder, *The Psalms of the Sons of Korah*, 212.

⁴The Royal Psalms include: Pss 2; 18; 20; 21; 28; 45; 61; 63; 72; 89; 101; 110; 132; 144; and 1 Sam 2:1-10. Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel’s Worship II*, 152; *idem*, *The Psalms in Israel’s Worship I*, 47. Although original, modern, scientific study of the Psalms concluded that there was no royal figure in the Psalms, it is quite clear that the royal psalms concern a real king, “a definite individual person,” not some poetical personification. *Ibid.*

27] form a dynastic or enthronement oracle, based on the oracle of Nathan.¹ However, the language used in the psalm appears to be stronger than in the earlier account in 2 Sam 7, e.g., the reference to God having “sworn” (Ps 89:4[3]) rather than His declaring (הַגִּיד 2 Sam 7:11)² appears to highlight the problem of the apparent renegeing of God on the assurances made to David as recorded in the Nathan oracle.

The “overture”³ of the psalm (vss. 2-5[1-4]) is pregnant with keywords relative to God’s fatherhood—אֱמוּנָה (faithfulness),⁴ חֶסֶד (kindness),⁵ בָּנָה (build, 3[2] and 5[4]), כּוֹן (establish, 3[2]), and עוֹלָם (forever)⁶—and they appear throughout the psalm, sometimes included in the series of inclusios that follow each other, occasionally “leap-frogging” throughout the psalm.⁷

¹Kim, *Psalm 89*, 159; Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel’s Worship I*, 63. A. Malamat calls Ps 89 the poetic counterpart—a reflection of 2 Sam 7:1-17. A. Malamat, “A Mari Prophecy and Nathan’s Dynastic Oracle,” in *Prophecy: Essays Presented to Georg Fohrer on His Sixty-Fifth Birthday 6 September 1980*, ed. J. A. Emerton (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1980), 78.

²Goulder, *Psalms of the Sons of Korah*, 230.

³A term suggested by Jean-Bernard Dumortier, “Un Rituel d’Intronisation. Le Ps. LXXXIX 2-38.” *VT* 22 (1972): 177.

⁴This word appears a significant seven times altogether in the psalm: vss. 2[1], 3[2], 6[5], 9[8], 25[24], 34[33], 50[49].

⁵Appears a total of seven times too: vss. 2[1], 3[2], 15[14], 25[24], 29[28], 34[33], 50[49].

⁶Also appears seven times: vss. 2[1], 3[2], 5[4], 29[28], 37[36], 38[37], 53[52].

⁷There are at least 10 inclusios that follow in sequence, which are all enclosed in turn by an inclusio of עוֹלָם appearing in vss. 2[1] and 53[52]. The sequential inclusios are: לְדָרֶךְ וְדָרֶךְ (“from generation to generation”), vs. 2[1] and vs. 5[4]; אֱמוּנָתְךָ (“your truth”), vs. 6[5] and vs. 9[8]; אַתָּה (“you”), vs. 10[9] and vs. 12[11]; “they rejoice in your name,” יִרְנְנוּ in vs. 13[12], and בְּשִׁמְךָ יִגְלוֹן in vs. 17[16]; “our/his horn is exalted,” קַרְנֵנוּ in vs. 18[17] and קַרְנוּ in vs. 25[24]; חֶסְדִּי (“my mercy”), vs. 25[24] and vs. 29[28]; his seed and throne

A number of issues arise from Ps 89 relating to the fatherhood of God. The obvious motif of father-son is couched in the context of Creation, the Exodus, and the monarchy. The firstborn-son relationship was a holy one with God (see Exod 13:2; 22:29f.), recognized from the time of Abel (Gen 4:4; Deut 12:6; 15:19; 1 Sam 1:11);¹ therefore the extension of this principle to include the relationship between God and the king is hardly surprising.

The language of creation is echoed in Ps 89 with the words: create (Gen 2:4); man (2:7, etc.); live (immortality, 3:2, etc.); death (2:17, etc.) and soul (2:7)² The allusions become more obvious when comparing Ps 89 to the psalms closest to it in ideology and linguistic parallels, the closest being Ps 24,³ which dwells on an obvious creation theme. Ps 104 is also closely related, tying it in turn to Ps 103 which is another Father-God passage.⁴ The first part of Ps 89 (vss. 1-38 [37]) uses the creation motif to validate the Father-son relationship between God and Solomon. If God is powerful enough to defeat the primeval chaos monster Rahab⁵ (vs. 11[10]); found (יָסַד) the heavens and earth and

are/shall be forever. וְיִרְעוּ לְעוֹלָם in vs. 30[29], and וְיִרְעוּ לְעוֹלָם . . . וְיִרְעוּ in vs. 37[36]; break/profane חָלַל vs. 35[34] and vs. 40[39]; לְאָרֶץ ("to the ground") vs. 39[38], and vs. 45[44]; and יְהוָה ("O, Lord") in vvs. 47[46] and 52[51].

¹Ahlström, *Psalm 89*, 113.

²Goulder, *Psalms of the Sons of Korah*, 236.

³Ibid., 226.

⁴The parallel Ps to 89 is 104, a hymn of thanksgiving that closely follows the Gen 1 account. Ibid., 237.

⁵The reference to the ANE mythology of the primeval chaos monster serves well to highlight the contrast between the two worldviews of Israel and her neighbors, especially as it impacts on the ensuing father-son covenant—temporal vs. spatial, conditional/obligatory vs.

their fullness (vs. 12[11]); create (בִּרְא) north and south (vs. 13[12]); make righteousness (צִדִּיק), justice (מִשְׁפָּט), mercy (חֶסֶד), and truth (אֱמֶת) the foundation (מְכוּן) of His throne (vs. 15[14]); then He is well able to choose (בַּחַר vs. 20 [19]), anoint (מִשַּׁח vs. 21[20]), establish (כוּן), strengthen (vs. 22[21]), beat down his foes (vs. 24[23]), ensure faithfulness (אֱמוּנָה) and mercy (חֶסֶד vs. 25[24]), and keep covenant (וּבְרִית) with him forever (לְעוֹלָם, vs. 29[28]).

A chiasm may be observed that incorporates these themes, and which climaxes in the Father-God:¹

- A kindness of the Lord, forever חֶסֶד יְהוָה עוֹלָם vs. 2[1]
- B kindness חֶסֶד and faithfulness אֱמוּנָתְךָ sworn to David vss. 3-4[2-3]
- C Rahab broken חָלַל in pieces vs. 11[10]
- D kindness חֶסֶד, foundation מְכוּן, throne כִּסֵּאךָ vs. 15[14]
- E they walk in the light of your countenance בְּאוֹר־פְּנֵיךָ יִהְיֶה לְכוּן 16[15]
- F my kindness shall be with him עִמּוֹ חֶסְדִּי vs. 25[24]
- G you are my Father אָתָּה אָבִי vs. 27[26]
- F¹ I will keep my kindness with him חֶסְדִּי לּוֹ אֲשַׁמְרֶנּוּ vs. 29[28]
- E¹ they walk in my judgments וּבְמִשְׁפָּטֵי יִלְכוּן vs. 31[30]
- D¹ kindness חֶסְדִּי, throne כִּסֵּא established יִכּוּן, vss. 34-38[33-37]

unconditional/promissory covenant. Malamat, *Mari Prophecy*, 79, 82.

¹The variety of possibilities for the structure of Ps 89 may be seen in the following representative works: Goulder, *Psalms of the Sons of Korah*, 212 (who argues that the metrical division closely coincides with the division of subject in the psalm. The metrical division is seen in 1f., 5-15, 48-51, where the meter is 4:4, and in 3f., 17-45, the meter is 3:3. However, he divides the subject division from 1f., 5-18—a hymn exalting YHWH over the other gods. His victory over the waters, and the foundation of the world—and 3f., 19-51, which focuses on the Davidic covenant and God's apparent disregard of it); Dahood, *Psalms II*, 311, who suggests a six-part structure (2-5, prelude: 6-19, a hymn to the creator—using phrases that echo ancient poems like Exod 15: 20-38, a Messianic oracle—cf. 2 Sam 7:8-16: 39-46, king's defeat and humiliation: 47-52, the king pleads with God to remember his sorrow and sufferings at the hands of heathen adversaries: 53, doxology—not a part of the psalm, marks end of Book III); and Girard, *Psaumes Redécouverts II*, 477, who sees the psalm divided into 5 sections: vss. 2-19, 20-28, 29-38, 39-47, 48-52.

C¹ defiled חָלַל his crown vs. 40[39]

B¹ kindnesses חַסְדֵיךָ and truth אֱמוּנָתְךָ sworn to David vs. 50[49]

A¹ blessed is the Lord, forever יְהוָה לְעוֹלָם בָּרוּךְ vs. 53[52]

The whole of the psalm becomes, then, an attempt to reconcile God's fatherhood with the harsh realities of a defeated battle, and the resultant social devastation. Tate suggests that it is in the lament of vss. 40-53[39-52] that meaning for the psalm is found.¹ The distress reflected in these verses explains the purpose of the whole.

Historical Setting

To widen the context of the psalm a step further, it is necessary to observe some of the historic references in the psalm. In that process, Dahood cautions that with the use of "much archaic material," any attempt to date this psalm becomes "rather precarious."² Some of this older material includes mention of the mythical monster Rahab.³ Allusion to these old mythic concepts may have been a way for the poet to express his angst when chaos seems to have broken in upon the royal order.⁴

Finally, Goulder sees in the reference to Tabor and Herman, remnants of the old

¹Tate, *Psalms 51-100*, 416.

²Dahood, *Psalms II*, 311. He notes, however, that the language and concepts fit well with a post-Davidic monarchial date, contra Mowinckel, who doubts that Ps 89 was written in preexilic times. Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship I*, 118.

³There is a connection between victory over the primeval ocean and the dragons (Leviathan and Rahab) and creation and the kingdom of YHWH. See Ps 89:10-13 (cf. 74:12-17). For another version without the monster, Ps 104:5-9; Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship I*, 144. It appears that the mythology of *Enuma Elish* "was accepted and remained a part of popular cosmogony long after the sober accounts of Gen 2-3 and Gen 1 became orthodoxy." Goulder, *Psalms of the Sons of Korah*, 222.

⁴Seybold, *Introducing the Psalms*, 188. Compare Ps 95 which shows that YHWH the Rock is unshakable against the "rivers," "great waters," and "oceans."

Danite priesthood from the Northern kingdom assimilated into the Judean cult after the destruction of Israel by the Assyrians in the eighth century B.C.E.¹ Our knowledge of conditions at Tabor are limited to a single significant passage: Hos 5:1; “Hear this, O priests! Take heed, O house of Israel! Give ear, O house of the king! For yours *is* the judgment, Because you have been a snare to Mizpah And a net spread on Tabor.” Vs. 3b continues; “O Ephraim, you commit harlotry; Israel is defiled.”² Therefore Mt. Tabor and Mt. Hermon, the two holy mountains where the Ethanite and Korahite priests resided,³ were noted for their whoredom, idolatry, and worship of gods other than Yahweh. That being the case, God’s fatherhood is being described in Ps 89 in relationship to his appraisal of Israel’s interaction with the polytheistic deities of the nations.

Conclusion

The grammatical structure of Ps 89:27-29 emphasizes the father-son relationship between God and King David, and its eternal nature. Parallelism expands the sense of the simple description of relationship to include God as the “Rock of Salvation” for David, and God seeing David as the “exalted one over the kings of the earth.” Both of these expressions emphasize the intimacy of the arrangement, and its wide-reaching effects. The “engine” that drives these dynamics is embodied in the rapid-fire succession of words that signal a covenant context, drawing inspiration from the Nathan Oracle of 2 Sam 7. As

¹Goulder. *Psalms of the Sons of Korah*. 220.

²Goulder. *Psalms of the Sons of Korah*. 227.

³*Ibid.*, 224.

well as the obvious words like **חֶסֶד** (faithfulness), **בְּרִית** (covenant), and **אֱמוּנָה** (fidelity), there are word pairs such as **בְּרִית** and **שָׁבַע** (swear), **בָּנָה** (build), and **כִּוֵּן** (establish) together with the ubiquitous **עוֹלָם** (forever).

However the main contribution of the psalm to the subject of God's fatherhood lies in the historical implications of the relationship, sometime after the original arrangements were made. That the psalm is a lament shows that there is a problem, and expectations on both sides of the arrangement have been frustrated. In ANE language and concepts, the rift in the relationship has meant that chaos has encroached in areas that are incongruent with any original covenant arrangement. References to anger (vs. 39[38]), lack of support in battle (vs. 44[43]), the throne being cast to the ground (vs. 45[44]), and the taunts and mocking of the enemy (vs. 51[50]) on the one hand, and implied rebellion (vss. 31-33 [30-32]) and idolatry (reference to Mt. Tabor and Hermon)¹ on the other, show the friction points leading to potential covenant disintegration.

However, this lament is given from the human perspective, therefore it is easier to see divine shortcomings in it than human ones. Despite this fact, when God's fatherhood is mentioned, it is in terms of the perceived qualities of the covenant (**חֶסֶד** etc.). Yet the incredulous attitude of the poet² cannot reconcile what has happened with what he

¹Goulder, *Psalms of the Sons of Korah*, 220-229.

²Evidenced by such expressions as "you have rejected, you have spurned." "You have been very angry." vs. 39: "you have renounced the covenant . . . defiled the crown." vs. 40: "you have broken through all his walls." vs. 41: "you have exalted the right hand of his foes." "you have made all his enemies rejoice." vs. 43: "you have turned back the edge of his sword . . . have not supported him in battle." vs. 44: "you have put an end to his splendor and cast his throne to the ground." vs. 45: "you have cut short the days of his youth, you have covered him with a mantle of shame." vs. 46: "How long . . . ?" vs. 47: "where is your former great love?" "Remember, Lord."

understands of God's fatherhood. And the psalm finishes without even a hint of hope in finding an answer to the conundrum.¹ If there is an answer, it must be found elsewhere.

Ps 103:11-14

Text (vss. 11-14)

11 כִּי כַגְבוֹהַ שָׁמַיִם עַל־הָאָרֶץ | נִבְרָה חֶסְדּוֹ עַל־יֹרְאָיו׃^b | ^a

12 כִּרְחֹק מִזְרַח מִמַּעַרְב | הִרְחִיק מִמֶּנּוּ אֶת־פְּשָׁעֵינוּ׃^b | ^a

13 כְּרַחֵם אָב עַל־בָּנָיִם | רַחֵם יְהוָה עַל־יֹרְאָיו׃^b | ^a

14 כִּי־הוּא יָדַע יַצְרָנוּ | זְכוֹר כִּי־עָפָר אָנַחְנוּ׃^b | ^a

11. For as high as the heavens above the earth,
His faithfulness is powerful for those who fear Him.
12. As far as East is from West,
He has removed our rebellion from us.
13. As a father yearns for his children,
The Lord yearns for those that fear Him.
14. For He is the one that knows our form,
He remembers that we are dust.

Linguistic Analysis

The first obvious feature about this unit is the repetition of the preposition כִּי at the beginning of each bicolon. In the first three of the four bicola it is in conjunction with

vs. 50.

¹Unless the doxology to end Book III is meant to be included with the body of the psalm, forming an inclusio with the opening verses of praise. This would not be out of character with other ANE poems.

an infinitive construct.¹ It becomes a stylistic demarcation with the word **וַיִּ** linking vss. 11-14 together to form an inclusio,² and demonstrates a particular unity brought out among these verses.

Another obvious feature is the use of a series of wordplays. The word **גְּבוּהָ** (to be high) in 11a is linked to **גִּבּוֹר** (to be powerful) in 11b—his faithfulness is as powerful as the heavens are high. In vs. 12 the same result is achieved by using cognates of **רָחֵק** (to be far away) in 12a and 12b (he has removed our rebellion to the furthest extent), and similarly, **צָחַק** (yearn) is used in vs. 13 (the Father-God yearns for His “fearing” children). This play on words is extended between 12a and 13a, and 12b and 13b with **רָחֵק** being played off against **צָחַק** (his act of separating the people from their transgressions is a part of His yearning for them). These all climax in vs. 14 with the emphatic **וַיֵּדָע יְהוָה**—“He himself intimately knows.” This is a powerful picture of God as Father, and although it is used in a figurative sense (the references we have seen to date directly state that God is Father), it gives a very clear indication of the tenor of His fatherhood.

There are a number of textual links to other passages significant to the study of God’s fatherhood. Ps 103 not only quotes the divine epithets proclaimed in Exod 34:6-7 but alludes to the whole story of their revelation to Moses in chaps. 33-34 of that book.³

¹Paul E. Dion, “A Meditation on the ‘Ways’ of the Lord,” *ÉetT* 21 (1990): 19. See *ibid.*, 20-21, for a chart of lineation and syntactic analysis for the complete Psalm.

²T. M. Willis, “A Rhetorical Analysis of Psalm 103,” *Bib* 72 (1991): 531.

³Dion, *Meditation*, 26. Hermann Gunkel notes that vss. 7-8 recall the “fundamental revelation of God” when he heard words describing “the ways which he goes, the law of his acting.” Hermann Gunkel, “Psalm 103: An Interpretation,” *BW* 22 (Sept. 1903): 212.

Just as vss. 6-8 and vss. 17-18 draw their inspiration primarily from Exodus 33-34, more subtle links may be perceived between vss. 9-11 and 11-13 with Exod 34. In vss. 10-12 the forgiveness of sins (using the three terms חָטָא, עָוֶן, and פְּשָׁע) is celebrated. The three terms are also found in Exod 34:7a in the context of divine clemency.¹

Another significant motif, as we shall observe more fully later, is that of the eagle (vs. 5). We first noted this symbol in Deuteronomy 32, and its presence here serves to strengthen the link with the Exodus theme.²

A further textual link is the reference to “clay” in vs. 14.³ Although the word used here is עֶפֶר, and the symbolism evoked seems closer to the creation of man from the dust, Dahood asserts that this is a reference to the potter, and although he talks about creation, he contends that the reference to clay also points to the eventual return of humans to the “slime of Sheol” at the end of life.⁴ If he is correct in his link to the clay of creation-resurrection, we would also see an intertextual link to Isa 64:8, which describes the relationship between God and His people as a potter working the clay.

Literary Context

Artur Weiser notes that “this psalm is one of the finest blossoms on the tree of

¹Dion. *Meditation*, 27.

²I would therefore disagree with Dahood’s assertion that this is a symbol of immortality. Mitchel Dahood. *Psalms III: 101-150*, AB. ed. William Foxwell Albright and David Noel Freedman (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1970), 27.

³Ibid., 28.

⁴Ibid., 28.

biblical faith,”¹ and Dion affirms that vss. 11-13 (that speak of God as a father) are “undoubtedly the peak of the whole psalm.”² The psalm commences with its author summoning his whole being to respond to God’s five “benefits,”³ and from there it is relatively easy to see the structure of the psalm, facilitated by the distribution of repeated lexical elements: vss. 1-5 are linked to vss. 6-18 by the use of *חֶסֶד* (“faithfulness,” 4, 8, 11, 17), *חַחֵם* (“compassion,” 4, 8, 13[bis]), *עָוֹן* (“perversity,” 3, 10) and *נָמַל* (“repay,” 2, 10), and the unity of 6-8 is strengthened by the repetition of *יְהוָה* (YHWH) in a pivotal place in the first and last bicola.⁴

The *inclusio* is a major stylistic device of the psalm that has been used to demarcate its individual strophes.⁵ The first obvious example is found in the introduction and conclusion (a threefold blessing in vss. 1-2, 20-22) that serves to bracket the entire psalm. Formed within this overall *inclusio* there are three lesser *inclusios* (vss. 6 and 10,

¹Artur Weiser. *The Psalms: A Commentary*. trans. H. Hartnell, OTL. ed. Peter Ackroyd et al. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962), 657.

²Dion. *Meditation*, 30.

³Dahood lists these as: forgiveness of sins, healing of illnesses, rescue from Sheol, admittance to a blessed afterlife, and eternal enjoyment of God’s beauty in Heaven. Dahood. *Psalms III*, 24. The latter two benefits do not need to be speaking of the afterlife in this context. (Goulder gives a summary of scholarly opinion that sees the “ransom from Sheol” motif as an indication of eternal life. He mentions Kirkpatrick, Gunkel, and Mowinckel as opposing this majority view. See Goulder, *Psalms of the Sons of Korah*, 182.) The context indicates that the psalmist has been rescued from the jaws of death, has been reinstated, and could now enjoy the good things of life with a renewed vigor, thanks to God’s working on the psalmist’s behalf.

⁴Dion. *Meditation*, 23-24.

⁵Willis. *Rhetorical Analysis of Psalm 103*, 534.

11 and 14, 15 and 19) which highlight three strophes that make up the body of the psalm.¹

Although in the first strophe it may appear that the focus is on the psalmist, vss. 3-5 lead the reader to focus on the object of worship—not the individual, but God.² In the second strophe (6-10) he encourages the people of Israel to join him in praise, recalling incidents from the Exodus—especially the proclamation of God’s name from Sinai (Exod 33:12-34:7).³ The third (11-14) further elaborates qualities associated with God’s name (Exod 34:6-7), and explains God’s dealings with His children in a series of contrasts. The fourth (15-19) sets up a distinction between human impermanence and God’s permanence as a means of demonstrating that a person can depend on God to continue displaying His (fatherly) character. The fifth (19-22) is an extension of the previous strophe, showing that because God rules over all He is more able to be a loving, merciful, gracious, and forgiving king.”⁴ The scene shifts to God’s throne-room in heaven, from where He rules over all creation, and where He receives the praise of all His creatures.

¹Ibid., 535. Although Gunkel suggested a three-part structure for the psalm early in the 20th century (Gunkel, *Psalm 103*, 210), there have been many different alternatives suggested. See Willis, *Rhetorical Analysis of Psalm 103*, 21. The repetition of dominant themes also reveals links between certain verses within the psalm, e.g., חַסֵּד (faithfulness) in vss. 8, 11, 17; רַחֲמִים (compassion) in vss. 8, 13a, 13b; עַל־יִירֵאָיו (“upon the ones fearing him” in vss. 11, 13, 17); three terms for sin in vss. 10, 12; the stem עָשָׂה (make or do), vss. 6, 10, 18, and again in vss. 20-22. See Leslie C. Allen, *Psalms 101-150*, WBC, vol. 21, ed. David A. Hubbard and Glenn W. Barker (Waco, TX: Word, 1983), 21. Similarly, 9-10 belong together, so too 12-13 because of their identical beginnings. Ibid. A detailed examination of semantic parallelism indicates special affinities between 1-5 and 19-22 and between 6-19 and 17-18. See Dion, *Meditation*, 22.

²Willis, *Rhetorical Analysis of Psalm 103*, 534.

³For an exegetical analysis of the link between Ps 103:8 and Exod 34:6, see Josef Scharbert, “Formgeschichte und Exegese von Ex 34,6f und seiner Parallelen.” *Bib* 38 (1957): 130-150.

⁴Willis, *Rhetorical Analysis of Psalm 103*, 535-537.

This is the context of God being likened to a father, and there are a number of points that these verses make in the process. First is the pair of hendiadys “heavens” and “earth” (vs. 11) and “east” and “west” (vs. 12). Although the former is suggestive of Creation,¹ in this instance they refer to the extent of the Father-God’s realm—he is able to separate the transgressions from the people as far away as God’s dominion stretches (vs. 12). The boundless **חֶסֶד** (covenant faithfulness) referred to here is a keyword in this psalm, as it is in many of the Father-God passages.² Here, it is mentioned four times,³ and is a descriptor of the strongest of bonds possible between two parties.

The third aspect of God’s fatherhood highlighted in these verses is the unusual association with God of the term **חַמּוּד**,⁴ usually translated as “compassion.” The verbal root comes from the noun **חֶמְדָּה**—womb—which seems to imply the sense of a mother’s yearning for her infant child, her very gut being twisted with anxiety for her offspring.⁵

¹Mowinckel, *Psalms in Israel’s Worship*, 1:119, observes that this particular hendiadys is a feature of the enthronement psalms.

²2 Sam 7:15; 1 Chr 17:13; Pss 89:3[2], 15[14], 25[24], 29[28], 34[33], 50[49]; 103:4, 8, 11, 17; Prov 3:3; Isa 63:7 [bis]; Jer 2:2; 31:3.

³Vss. 4, 8, 11, 17.

⁴See the following for a range of meanings for the word: Georg Schmuttermayr, “RHM—Eine lexikalische Studie,” *Bib* 51 (1970): 499-525, who argues that **חַמּוּד** is a synonym to **חַמּוּד**, on the basis of semantic and etymological comparison with Egyptian, Canaanite, Ugaritic and Akkadian; Robert B. Coote, “Amos 1:11: RHM̄YW,” *JBL* 90 (1971): 206-208, who notes that in Akkadian, *rhm* may denote the mercy of a suzerain who restores a wayward vassal; and S. David Sperling, “Biblical *rhm* I and *rhm* II,” *JANES* 19 (1989): 149-159, who believes similarly to Schmuttermayr.

⁵See, for example, 1 Kgs 3:26, which describes the anguish of the genuine mother after Solomon suggests cutting the baby in two to settle the dispute between two mothers who claimed one baby. The verbal form occurs 47 times and the noun **חֶמְדָּה** 39 times. Even-Shoshan, *New*

The fourth facet of God's fathering that is highlighted here is the fact of remembering—He remembers (זָכַר) that we are dust (vs. 14). This theme is often present in the Father-God passages.¹ In four of its six occurrences, God as Father remembers some aspect to do with His people: in Ps 103:14 He “remembers that we are dust;” He remembers Moses and his people (Isa 63:7) and their “ways” (Isa 64:4[5]); and He remembers Ephraim (Jer 31:20). The prophet prays on one occasion for God not to remember the sins of the people forever (Isa 64:8[9]), and on the other occasion, Moses asks the people to remember beyond the fathers and elders back to their origins (Deut 32:7). Note the contrast between the soliloquy in vs. 2 “forget not” (O my soul), and the contrary affirmation, “He remembers” in vs. 14. Although humans are prone to forget and need constant reminding, God never forgets. Because He remembers (זָכַר) that “we are dust,” He knows human limitations and is sympathetic to their cry.

The fifth aspect of the fatherhood of God is “that we are dust.” This not only

Concordance of the Bible, s.v. זָכַר and s.v. אֶפְרַיִם. Of the verbal occurrences, the great majority describe God's feelings towards His people (Exod 33:19 [bis]; Deut 13:18[17]; 30:3; 2 Kgs 13:23; Pss 102:14[13]; 103:13 [bis]; 116:5; Prov 28:13; Isa 9:16[17]; 13:18; 14:1; 27:11; 30:18; 49:10; 13; 15; 54:8, 10; 55:7; 60:10; Jer 12:15; 13:14; 30:18; 31:20 [bis]; 33:26; 42:12; Lam 3:32; Ezek 39:25; Hos 1:6, 7; 2:3[1], 6[4], 25 [bis]; 14:4[3]; Mic 7:19; Hab 3:2; Zech 1:12; 10:6). Another four instances describe the feelings of invaders or enemies of the land, showing no “mercy”: 1 Kgs 8:50; Jer 6:23; 21:7; 50:42; and the last instance is a human (David) describing his feelings for God, in Ps 18:2[1]. The nominal form describes God's attitude towards His people as well, in 30 of the 39 occurrences: Deut 13:18[17]; 2 Sam 24:14; 1 Kgs 8:50; 1 Chr 21:13; Neh 9:11; 9:19, 27, 28, 31; Pss 25:6; 40:12[11]; 51:3[1]; 69:17[16]; 77:10[9]; 79:8; 103:46; 119:77, 156; 145:9; Isa 54:7; 63:7, 15; Jer 16:5; 42:12; Lam 3:22; Dan 9:19, 18; Hos 2:21[19]; Amos 1:11; Zech 1:16. Five times the noun refers to the treatment of the people as captives, some positive, some negative: 2 Chr 30:9; Neh 1:11; Prov 12:10; Isa 47:6; Dan 1:9; and four times it describes human interrelationships: Gen 43:14, 30; 1 Kgs 3:26; and Zech 7:9.

¹Deut 32:7; Ps 103:14, 18; Isa 63:7, 11; 64:4[5], 8[9]; and Jer 31:20.

recalls human origin from the dust of the earth in Gen 1, but also distances them from any notion of innate or even bestowed divinity. Just because God claims to be our Father does not imply that humans become gods in the process. Their origin is in the dust, and their makeup is that still—“we are dust”—עָפָר אֲנַחְנוּ. More than this, God’s חֶסֶד (covenant faithfulness), being “from eternity to eternity” (vs. 17), contrasts with human transitoriness (“we are dust,” vs. 14), and shows that “His mercy is aroused when He looks at us,” and that forgiveness is possible, giving the human spirit the “hope of dawn for a new day.”¹

Just as it has been difficult to precisely determine a structure, the determination of the psalm’s genre has been equally elusive. It is not difficult to recognize the forms used for various parts of the psalm, but which one to apply to the whole is a matter of dispute.² Mowinckel initially suggests that the psalm is a “thanksgiving psalm” that becomes a hymn,³ but he later refines his choice and proffers that it is a “psalm of confidence.”⁴

Nor is the literary context of the psalm as straightforward as some other passages

¹Hans K. LaRondelle, *Deliverance in the Psalms: Messages of Hope for Today* (Berrien Springs, MI: By the author, 1983), 182.

²Allen, *Psalms 101-150*, 19. As one example, Allen suggests that 1-5 is an individual self-exhortation to praise, 6-18 is a communal hymn of praise, 19-22b an imperatival hymn summoning all God’s creatures to praise, and 22c a reiteration of the psalm’s preliminary self-exhortation. Ibid.

³Mowinckel, *Psalms in Israel’s Worship*, 2:38.

⁴He suggests that Ps 103, usually termed a “protection-thanksgiving psalm,” has, with its related psalms sometimes so far moved from their particular style that they could be separated into a distinct group of “psalms of confidence.” Some of the “highest ranking” from both the religious and poetic aspect (Pss 23, 73, 103) would belong to this new group. *ibid.*, 132. With this view, cf. Gunkel, who suggests that in vss. 9-12 at least, there is evidence of “prophetic speech.” Hermann Gunkel and Joachim Begrich, *Introduction to Psalms: The Genres of the Religious Lyric of Israel*, trans. James D. Nogalski, Mercer Library of Biblical Studies, ed. Joseph Blenkinsop et al. (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1998), 251.

we have dealt with. Seybold observes that Pss 90-119 are a far less structured group than the preceding David/Asaph and Korah collections, but that they belong with Ps 104 because of their common Hallelu-Yah headings.¹ It is likely that Ps 103 opens a group of psalms of praise, Pss 103-107,² and is probably a response to the prayer for God's mercy in Ps 102.³

Historical Setting

While there has been a preference for a postexilic date because of the presence of Aramaisms (including מְלִכּוּת [kingdom] at vs. 19), evident reflection of Isa 40:6-8 in vss. 15, 16, and possibly Isa 57:16 in vs. 9,⁴ Dahood suggests an alternative. He maintains that the putative suffix יָ, which is often used as evidence of Aramaic influence in vss. 3-5, and the dependence of vss. 15-16 on Isa 40:6-8, may show evidence of an earlier Canaanite influence. He suggests that it is possible that יָ is a Canaanite archaism, and a common source for both this Psalm and the reference in Deutero-Isaiah. That, according to Dahood, would effectively “drain” the arguments for a postexilic date of “much of their cogency,” rendering a postexilic date of composition unlikely.⁵

Because the psalms are a collection of literary works with no overt indication of

¹Seybold. *Introducing the Psalms*, 20-23.

²Allen. *Psalms*, 21.

³Goulder. *Psalms of the Sons of Korah*, 215.

⁴Allen. *Psalms*, 21. See also Seybold, *Introducing the Psalms*, 23; Knight. *Psalms: Volume 2*, 136.

⁵Dahood. *Psalms III*, 24.

narrative or chronological sequence, it is more difficult to place any psalm in a particular historical context. Goulder's work of reconstructing the liturgical use of the psalms has been a creditable attempt in placing the psalms in liturgical context.¹ If he is correct in his assumptions, Ps 103 would have been sung as part of the climax of the festivities of the Feast of Booths,² linking the concept of the fatherhood of God to the very social and religious fabric of the nation.

Conclusion

Ps 103 is an echo of the proclamation of God's name at Sinai.³ After recounting some of the character qualities highlighted to Moses, the psalm then likens God to a Father. His emotional yearnings for His children are expressed in motherly terms with the use of אָמֵן. This makes His fatherhood unique. His fatherhood is of a different nature than human fatherhood, as it includes qualities that in the human realm belong to the mother. The use of the hendiadys statements, "heavens" and "earth," and "east" and "west," points out the universality of His fatherhood, and the lengths He will go to

¹This in no way negates the seminal work of Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, first printed in 1962, in which Mowinckel sets out to understand the psalms from an historical perspective, attempting to find their place and function in Jewish religious life. Mowinckel, *Psalms in Israel's Worship I*, 1. Goulder takes Mowinckel's work to its next step and provides a structure surrounding the Autumn feasts, suggesting the psalms used in the liturgies for those occasions. Goulder, *Psalms of the Sons of Korah*, 215-217. Here, he outlines the 10 days of the feast (from the 10th -21st of the month—not every day has celebrations), and suggests that Ps 103 was one of the psalms used on the last evening of the feast—its climax. (He suggests Ps 89a was sung on the morning of the 21st and Pss 103 and 104 were sung in the evening.)

²Exod 23:16b; 34:22b; Lev 23:33-36a, 39-43; Num 29:12-34; Deut 16:13-15; Zech 14:16-19.

³See especially vss. 6-10. Compare Exod 34:6-7 and Deut 32:3.

maintain relationship with His children (e.g., separating their rebellion to the furthest possible extent).

Memory and ritual appear to be another important ingredient as revealed in this psalm. If Ps 103 was one of the psalms employed in the annual Autumnal feasts (as Goulder suggests), then the concept of God's fatherhood would have become an important part of the socioreligious calendar to say the least. Unfortunately we have little evidence to suggest that it was any more than that. But the Father-God's memory serves a different purpose. His memory of the past becomes a reality check for the present when He remembers that humans are dust, and gives them assurance of God's taking their human limitations into account. It also confirms God's historic consistency in His dealings with His children. These factors work against the notion of humans becoming gods by virtue of God being their Father, and negate human claims that God has been unfaithful to them, for history shows the opposite to be true.

That may explain the threefold blessing that opens and closes the psalm, and why it has become known as "one of the finest blossoms on the tree of biblical faith."¹ Its firm note of confidence is in marked contrast to the muted whisper of hope in Ps 89, and if Goulder is correct in his liturgical reconstruction, Ps 103 (sung on the last evening) may be the answer to Ps 89 (sung on the last morning) during the Feast of Booths.

¹Weiser. *Psalms*. 657.

Prov 3:11-12

Text (vss. 3:11-12)

11 מוֹסֵר יְהוָה בְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים^a | וְאֵל־תִּקַּץ בְּתוֹכָחָתוֹ:^b

12 כִּי אֵת אֲשֶׁר יֵאָהֵב יְהוָה יוֹכִיחַ^a | וְכָאֵב אֶת־בֶּן יִרְצֶה:^b

11. Do not reject the discipline of the Lord, my son,
and do not loathe His correction;
12. For the one whom the Lord loves He corrects,
and He is like a father with the son He favors.

The LXX renders 12b *μαστιγοῖ δὲ πάντα υἱοὺς ὃν παραδέχεται*, “and He disciplines every son whom He favors.” One explanation for this is that the parallelism between 12a and 12b was thought to be elliptical, hence the addition of the *yod* in the LXX to form the verb *כָּאֵב* (to be in pain).¹ A more likely explanation is that rather than necessitating an emendation, the *vav* serves the purpose of emphasis. God is not being “described as a father who reproveth his favourite son, but is compared with a father who acts in this way.”²

¹W. A. Van der Weiden. *Le Livre des Proverbes: Notes Philologiques*. *Biblica et Orientalia* 23 (Rome: Biblical Institute, 1970), 32.

²P. Wernberg-Møller. “‘Pleonastic’ *Waw* in Classical Hebrew.” *Journal of Semitic Studies* 3 (Oct. 1958): 324, emphasis in original. Crawford H. Toy translates vs. 12 this way: “and [= yea, reproveth him] as a father [reproveth] the son in whom He delights, or delights in him as a father in his son.” He maintains this is supported by the parallelism, by the LXX, and by Job 5:18. “Happy is the man whom God reproveth, therefore despise [or reject] not the instruction of Shaddai. For He wounds and binds up. He smites and his hand heals.” Crawford H. Toy. *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Proverbs*. ICC, ed. Samuel Rolles Driver, Alfred Plummer, and Charles Augustus Briggs (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1899), 65. Lennart Boström considers McKane’s translation more accurate than Toy’s: “For Yahweh disciplines the one whom he loves, like a father with the son in whom he takes pleasure.” William McKane. *Proverbs: A New Approach*, OTL, ed. Peter Ackroyd, James Barr, John Bright, and G. Ernest

Linguistic Analysis

The parallelism in these two verses is intriguing, although not readily apparent because of many grammatical irregularities—each hemistich is composed differently. Vs. 11a begins with the object, and is followed by the subject, then the verb; 11b starts with the subject, then there is the verb, then the object; 12a commences with a compound object followed by the subject and verb; and 12b starts with the subject, followed by the object, and concludes with the verb—no two hemistichs are alike.

It is when the various elements are compared that the parallelism shines. In vs. 11 the two objects are *מוֹסֵר יְהוָה* and *תּוֹכַחְתּוֹ*—the “discipline of the Lord” and “his correction”; the two subjects are *בְּנִי* “my son,” and an understood “you” in the *qal 2ms imperfect*; and the two verbs are *אַל-תִּמְאַס* and *וְאַל-תִּקַּץ*—“do not reject,” and “do not loathe” (both *qal 2ms imperfects* are negative imperatives). In vs. 12, the two objects are *אֹת אֲשֶׁר יֶאֱהֵב יְהוָה* and *אֶת-בֶּן*—“the one whom the Lord loves,” and “the son”; the two verbs are *וְיִכַּח* and *וְיִרְצֶה*—“he reproves,” and “he favors”; and the subjects are the implied “he” in the *hifil 3ms verb*, and *אָב*, “father.” In other words, internal parallelism explains the fatherhood of God by linking the terms “the one whom the Lord loves,” “the son,” with reproof and favor. This is a similar association to the one that we observed in 2 Sam 7:14, “when he does perversely, then I shall correct him with the rod of men.” The same root *יכח* is used in both instances to denote correction/reproof.

Wright (London: SCM, 1970), 214; Lennart Boström, *The God of the Sages: The Portrayal of God in the Book of Proverbs*, Coniectanea Biblica Old Testament Series 29, ed. Tryggve N. D. Mettinger and Magnus Y. Ottosson (Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell, 1990), 224.

A number of other keywords found in Proverbs 3 may also be seen in other Father-God passages we have already studied: (1) **מִצְוֹתַי** (my commands, vs. 1) is also seen in 1 Chr 28:7, 8; 29:19; and Ps 89:32; (2) **כִּוֵּן** (to establish, vs. 19) we have already met in Deut 32:6; 7:16, 24, 26; (3) **שָׁמַיִם** and **אֶרֶץ** (heavens and earth, vs. 19) also occur together in Deut 32:1; 1 Chr 29:11; Pss 68:9; and 89:2; (4) **טֶל** (dew, vs. 20) is also in Deut 32:2; (5) the root **קנא** (to envy, vs. 31) appears also in Deut 32:16, 21; (6) **צְדִיקִים** (the just, vs. 33) in Ps 68:4; and (7) the root **נחל** (inherit, vs. 35) is seen as well in Deut 32:8, 9 and 2 Chr 28:8. The high concentration of similar words would indicate the high probability of some sort of ideological relationship between the passages, and may even place Prov 3 among other passages that contain the Davidic covenant theme.

Literary Context

There are nine recognized collections of wisdom sayings within the book of Proverbs,¹ the first five of which seem to share common features, while the last four

¹Following the title and purpose statement in 1:1-7, the collections are as follows: Introductory Instructions (1:8-9:18), the Proverbs of Solomon (10:1-22:16), the Words of the Wise (22:17-24:22), the Words of the Wise (24:23-34), the Proverbs of Solomon (25:1-29:27), the Words of Agur (30:1-14), Numerical Sayings (30:15-33), the Words of Lemuel (31:1-9), and the Ideal Woman (31:10-31). Roland E. Murphy, *Proverbs*, WBC 22, ed. John D. W. Watts (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998), vii-viii. See also Arndt Meinhold, *Die Sprüche: Teil 1. Sprüche Kapitel 1-15*, Zürcher Bibelkommentare, ed. Hans Heinrich Schmid, Siegfried Schulz, and Hans Weder (Zürich: Theologischer, 1991), 23; Jehoshua M. Grintz, "The Proverbs of Solomon." Clarifications on the Question of the Relation between the Three Collections in the Book of Proverbs Attributed to Solomon," *Lešonānu* 33 (1968): 243-269, reprinted in David C. Snell, *Twice-Told Proverbs: And the Composition of the Book of Proverbs* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1993), 88; Edgar Jones, *Proverbs and Ecclesiastes: Introduction and Commentary* (London: SCM Press, 1961), 21-22; and André Barucq, *Le Livre des Proverbes* (Paris: Gabalda, 1964), 16-18. James D. Martin, *Proverbs*, Old Testament Guides, ed. R. N. Whybray (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 33-34, compresses VI and VII into one and likewise VIII and IX into another leaving a total of seven divisions. See also R. N. Whybray, *Proverbs*, NCBC, ed.

sections (the last two chapters) are seen as appendices.¹ Each collection among the first five has its own special vocabulary, yet they each have a commonality with one or more other collections.²

Chap. three consists of three or four parts, although definition of those parts is a little elusive.³ They appear to form a skillful unity,⁴ first appreciated in the six quatrains of 3:1-12, each beginning with an exhortation and concluding with a promise of special

Ronald E. Clements (*Grand Rapids: Marshal Pickering, 1994*), 16. Michael V. Fox, *Proverbs 1-9: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 18a, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 5, argues for six sections (because of "headings in 1:1; 10:1; 22:17; 24:23; 25:1; and four appendices in 30:1-31:31). R. B. Y. Scott, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes*, AB 18, ed. William Foxwell Albright and David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1965), vii-viii, sees only five sections, 1-9, 10-22:16, 22:17-24:34, 25-29 and 30-31.

¹See for example, Scott, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes*, viii.

²Grintz, *Proverbs of Solomon*, 106. Grintz noted that there are strong linguistic connection between chaps. 1-9 (A) and 10:1-22:16 (B). A and 22:17-24:22 (C), B and chaps. 25-29 (E): while there is no (or almost no) linguistic contact between A and E, B and C (-D [24:23-24:34]), E and C (-D). Snell, *Twice-Told Proverbs*, 5; after Grintz, *Proverbs of Solomon*, 111.

³Three independent discourses (vss. 1-10; 11-20; 21-35) each introduced by the address, "my son." Toy, *Proverbs*, 55. This was accepted in part by Rolf Schäfer, who maintains that "My son" in vs. 11 refers back to vs. 1 and forms an inclusio. Rolf Schäfer, *Die Poesie der Weisen: Dichotomie als Grundstruktur der Lehr- und Weisheitsgedichte in Proverbien 1-9*, Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament 77, ed. Cilliers Breytenbach, Bernd Jankowski, Reinhard G. Kratz, and Hermann Lichtenberger (Tübingen: Neukirchener, 1999), 84-85. Delitzsch also proposed the chapter contained a series of three "mashal discourses (1-18; 19-26; 27-35). Franz Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Proverbs of Solomon*, vol. 1, trans. M. G. Easton, Clark's Foreign Theological Library, Fourth Series, vol. 43 (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1874), 85-105. McKane argues for four sections: 1-12, 13-20, 21-26, and 27-35. McKane, *Proverbs*, 290-299; and Murphy, *Proverbs*, 20; so too does Whybray: 1-12, 13-18, 19-20, 21-35. Whybray, *Proverbs*, 58-69.

⁴So Achim Müller, *Proverbien 1-9: Der Weisheit neue Kleider*, Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 291, ed. Otto Kaiser (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2000), 171-191 (contra "manchen Kommentatoren," e.g., McKane, *Proverbs*, 297-299.) Fox also argues that although there is general agreement that chap 3 is a composite, the whole is richer than the sum of its parts. Fox, *Proverbs*, 170.

reward for heeding it.¹ William McKane observes that there is no “sharp discontinuity between the second section and the preceding verses, certainly not in respect of subject-matter.”² Nor does the subdivision of material in 21-35 necessarily imply a collection of separate sayings, since change of subject matter need not evidence discontinuity.³

It is clear, even with a superficial reading, that we are not dealing with a collection of one-liners, but a sustained monologue of someone to his son.⁴ When these sentiments are compared with the “Nathan Vision” passages that stress the longevity of the dynasty by repeated use of the expression, לְעוֹלָם “for ever” (e.g., 2 Sam 7:13, 16 [bis], 24, 25, 26, 29), it is striking that wisdom is seen as the means to ensure that longevity, not just for the individual king, but for the dynasty as a whole. Therefore it is not unreasonable to assume that we have here a collection that reflects the wishes of King Solomon for his son to ensure the maintenance of the Davidic covenant as outlined in 1 Sam 7:12-15.

This special relationship between Prov 3 and the Davidic covenant may be appreciated further when verbal and thematic links are explored in the wider scriptural corpus. Links to Prov 3:11-12 have been identified with 2 Sam 7:14-16, and Ps 89:31-34

¹Scott, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes*, 46. Müller, *Proverbien 1-9*, 155, speaks of a chain of six warnings (1, 3, 5-6a, 7, 9, 11) and their justification (2, 4, 6b, 8, 10, 12). Murphy calls these units “couplets.”

²McKane, *Proverbs*, 294. The similarities in structure between 3:13-26 and 8:22-31 (the two passages on Creation in the first part of Proverbs—1-9) show the unity that exists, at least between vss. 13-26. Boström, *God of the Sages*, 48-49. See also G. Von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel*. (London: SCM, 1972), 151.

³McKane, *Proverbs*, 289.

⁴Or possibly even a teacher to his student. Martin, *Proverbs*, 35. Fox asserts that the call to obey the father’s precepts is evidence that Part I is not a “collection” of independent instructions. The ten lectures were composed as a unit. Fox, *Proverbs*, 143.

[30-33]—which are both concerned with the Father-God keeping covenant with His son.¹

The first reminder of the Father-God passages is the exhortation אִל־חֲשָׁכָה “do not forget,” an expression along with its parallel “remember,” which serves to ensure long-term continuity of the arrangements made between humans and their Father-God.² But the most significant parallels lie with 2 Sam 7, in which the Davidic covenant is first established. The first parallel from 2 Sam 7 is חֶסֶד³ (faithfulness, mercy) also found in Prov 3:3, then אֱמֶת (truth) also in vs. 3. The idea of turning aside [from evil] (from the root סוּר, Prov 3:7) is also an echo from the assurances God gives David that He would not turn aside (סוּר) His mercy from Solomon as He did from Saul (2 Sam 7:15, three times). The idea of discipline that is so prominent in 2 Sam 7:14 (root יָצַח) is also featured in Prov 3:12, and rather than being explained as a part of the Father’s חֶסֶד

¹Whybray, *Proverbs*, 65. Other scriptural links have also been observed. Although Whybray sees a “striking parallel” to Job 5:17-18—wording so similar that one may have influenced the other, there is no agreement on which came first, and they may both in fact be drawing on a common heritage. He also sees parallels in Ps 119:71 and 75 (*ibid.*, 64) and Deut 6:1-15 (*ibid.*, 59). Further parallels are noticed with Deut 8:5-6 (Müller, *Proverbien 1-9*, 6) that speaks of God disciplining Israel as “a man disciplines his son,” and Deut 11:18-22 (*ibid.*) that expresses Mosaic concern that the Israelites must share their heritage with their children to ensure their success and longevity in the promised land.

²Seen also in Deut 31:21 (in reference to the Song of Moses in Deut 32); Ps 103:2; and here in Prov 3. See also n. 2 on p. 166.

³Opinion is divided over whether these stand for both divine and human qualities. Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary*, 85; Murphy, *Proverbs*, 21; or whether they are exclusively divine. Van der Weiden, *Proverbs*, 30; and Fox, *Proverbs*, 144. חֶסֶד also appears in 2 Sam 7:15 and Ps 89:3; as well as Prov 3:3. אֱמֶת (truth) is found in 2 Sam 7:28, as well as Prov 3:3, while both words occur together in Ps 89:15. Fox makes the point that חֶסֶד does not always have to refer to covenantal loyalty (Fox, *Proverbs*, 144-145), but this is in the context of his argument refuting the association of Prov 3 with the Sinai covenant, or even the covenant spoken of by Jeremiah (31:33). He has overlooked the possibility of the Davidic covenant, therefore his comments do not negate the possibility of the connection that I am suggesting.

(covenant faithfulness, or grace) as it is in 2 Sam 7:15, here in Prov 3:12 the motivation is love (אהב)— the Father-God corrects the ones He loves.

The impressive list of keywords from Prov 3 that are also found in other Father-God passages suggests that similar ground is being covered, and since Solomon is named in 1:1, and he announces a series of exhortations in 1:8 to his son, which is repeated in 1:10, 2:1, 3:1, 11, 21, etc., it would appear that Solomon is passing on to his son what David passed on to him in 1 Chr 22. He does it through the medium of wisdom teachings, which is an innovation, and unique to the Father-God biblical passages. “Fear God and depart from evil” is the twofold representation of practical piety in the wisdom writings.¹ God is depicted as “close to the person who is righteous, fears the Lord, trusts Him and is obedient to the wisdom teachings.”² But here in Prov 3, a sapiential discourse soon turns to a Creation theme, and rather than being a mistaken insertion,³ or an interruption to the

¹Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary*, 88; compare Prov 16:6; Ps 34:10, 15; and Job 28:28. Chap. 3 continues the theme of the motto of the book (1:7, “the fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom”), showing that the promise of long life and prosperity results from following wise teaching (Murphy, *Proverbs*, 20; cf. the fifth commandment, Exod 20:12), a traditional mark of divine favor that is seen as the fruit of “higher” wisdom (cf. 8:18, 35). Scott, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes*, 47. See also the concluding words of Ptah-hotep’s instruction, *ANET* 414b, where he points to his 110 years of life being the result of his “doing right for the king up to the point of veneration.” *Ibid.* This is consistent with the “Instruction” genre evidenced in the book of *Proverbs*, a source book of material for the instruction of youth and the more advanced study of their elders. Scott, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes*, xix.

²Boström, *God of the Sages*, 213. Especially with the theme of protection and safety, as in 3:21-26. *Ibid.*, 216.

³Murphy, *Proverbs*, 22-23.

smooth flow,¹ it is an essential part of the king's argument to his son and heir.² The vocabulary of wisdom is connected to God's creative works—the mention of two fertilizing agencies, rain or dew which falls from above, and the springs which well up from beneath.³ This same creative power is promised to the obedient “son” in his role as king over God's people.

To begin his discourse, though, the sage king encourages his son not to forget (שכח), which refers not so much to the “natural slippage of memory” but to willful neglect.⁴ Likewise יצַר (from נצַר—retain) is a deliberate act of protecting, maintaining, and nurturing. He then speaks of trust (vs. 5), which forms the next section of the monologue, with that trust being translated into God's smoothing the path of the one heeding his admonition (vs. 6) and fearing God in order to bring health to the bones (vs. 8),⁵ and communal worship in vs. 9, whether in prosperity or adversity.⁶ The gaining of

¹Scott, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes*, 47.

²The Creation theme is present in at least the following Father-God passages: Deut 32:1-3; Pss 68:9-10 [8-9]; 89:10-15 [9-14]; Prov 3:18-20; and Isa 64:8.

³McKane, *Proverbs*, 297. Delitzsch remarks that the division of waters and the “fructifying” of the earth by them is “a fundamental fact in creation.” Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary*, 95-96. Kenneth T. Aitken wonders whether there is “some subtle interplay going on between Proverbs and Genesis because of references to the tree of life (also in 11:30; 13:12; and 15:4) and the “fountain of life,” possibly a reference to the rivers which watered the garden. Kenneth T. Aitken, *Proverbs, The Daily Study Bible*, ed. John C. L. Gibson (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1968), 47. The Tree of Life, a frequent metaphor in the book (11:30; 13:12; 15:4), becomes for Murphy, in the context of this book, a metaphor for happiness that was associated with “the good life” in sapiential teaching. Murphy, *Proverbs*, 22. Whybray simply regards the Tree of Life as an emblem for the happy outcome of life. Whybray, *Proverbs*, 67.

⁴Fox, *Proverbs*, 142.

⁵Boström, *God of the Sages*, 98. The “clear indication” of “divergent modes of expression” in vs. 6 and vs. 8 may instead be an indication of latitude in expressive style in wisdom

wisdom (vss. 14-15) is “clearly superior to any material gain that precious objects could achieve.”¹

He suggests that in some instances God’s actions are reciprocal—good to good and evil to evil (as in 33-34),² and he underscores the teaching of the previous two verses by specifying the nature of God’s reaction, and an example of an especially negative result being expressed by means of an impersonal formulation.³ In other words, “the curse and the blessings are meted out according to the conduct of individuals.”⁴ Therefore the issue is more than one simply of explaining the problem of suffering,⁵ but rather addresses the issue of relating to it.⁶ Nor is it simply a matter of “mechanical retribution” as Fox points out,⁷ although 3:32 does allow for the possibility that, on occasion, God steps in on a retribitional basis as one facet of His overall role.⁸

circles, and may have been viewed as identical to the sages’ styles.

⁶Aitken, *Proverbs*, 41-44.

¹Murphy, *Proverbs*, 22.

²Ibid., 220.

³Boström, *God of the Sages*, 98.

⁴Murphy, *Proverbs*, 23.

⁵Ibid., 21. Fox suggests rather that it is to teach an attitude towards it. Fox, *Proverbs*, 153.

⁶Ibid. Fox draws attention to the imperatives in the chapter that are “primarily concerned with shaping attitudes”: “trust,” “rely not,” “know,” “do not reckon,” “fear,” “honor,” “do not reject,” “do not despise,” and “shun.” Ibid., 154.

⁷Ibid., 153.

⁸Boström, *God of the Sages*, 136.

If the assumption is correct that this chapter is a reflection of David's exhortation to his son (or another father-son duo further along the dynastic line), then this may have been the traditional account of kingly fathers sharing lineage values with their heirs, and so on down the line, to ensure the perpetuity of the covenant. If the son failed to heed these words, then the consequence of 2 Sam 7:14 would eventuate, and it is presumed that the father featured in Prov 3 could not entertain that thought.

The implication of this for God's fatherhood is that He is seen as the one to ensure the covenant continues. His acts of discipline are reminders of His love, and if they are not heeded, then the continuation of the covenant is in danger. There is certainly no thought of dread here about the possibility of God bringing disciplinary action, nor is there distrust in His motives. The simple matter-of-fact statement given by the father to his son is that any such discipline administered by God is evidence of His fatherly love for the one being disciplined, with the promise to the obedient king of sharing God's wisdom—described in the chapter as His creative powers—in the progress and prosperity of the realm.

Historical Setting

The "proverbs of Solomon, copied by the men of Hezekiah king of Judah" (25:1) are found in various "collections": I (1-9), II (10:1-22:16), and V (25-29). The remaining sections, III (22:17-24:22), and IV (24:23-34), were collected by "wise ones."¹ Finally the two appendixes were added when the collections were incorporated into the one

¹Grintz, *Proverbs of Solomon*, 112.

book.¹ Because of the range of time periods suggested for the origins of the book, and because of the lack of agreement, the debate will not be pursued here.² What is significant, however, are the parallels that may be observed between chaps. 1-9 and Egyptian wisdom literature.³ As to the question of Proverbs being a copy of the Egyptian wisdom, Snell states: "The Book of Proverbs is not a slavish extension of Egyptian models. The book shares worldviews and language with comparable Egyptian works, but it is very much an independent book."⁴

Here is a further example of contemporary ANE culture being congruent with the writings of the Bible. It is not necessary to point to a pre-eminence of one tradition over the other, but simply to acknowledge that it is not unreasonable for them to co-exist.

Furthermore, if I am right in suggesting that the exhortations in Prov 3 originated in the

¹Ibid., 114.

²Jones argues that section II was composed in the 8th century B.C.E., II, IV, and V in the 7th century, VI, VII, and VIII some time preexilic, and I and IX possibly in the third century B.C.E. Jones, *Proverbs and Ecclesiastes*, 22-23. As far as chaps. 1-9 are concerned, Fox favors a Hellenistic date but admits that the arguments are "far from decisive." Fox, *Proverbs*, 49. Whybray maintains that despite a general belief that chaps. 1-9 are entirely postexilic, mainly on theological grounds, but that view has now been challenged by several scholars. Whybray, *Proverbs*, 29. Grintz asserts that there is no reason to doubt that collection A did not come from the time stated in 1:1, the time of Solomon. Grintz, *Proverbs of Solomon*, 113.

³See R. N. Whybray, *Wisdom in Proverbs: The Concept of Wisdom in Proverbs 1-9*, *Studies in Biblical Theology* 45, ed. C. F. D. Moule et al. (Naperville, IL: Alec R. Allenson 1965), 53-71. Whybray argues that a significant difference between the Egyptian discourses and those found in Prov 1-9 is that the teacher in Proverbs does not appeal to the antiquity of his tradition as do his Egyptian counterparts. Ibid., 70. See Jones, *Proverbs and Ecclesiastes*, 33-40, for a series of parallels between the proverbs and ANE wisdom. He concludes that it is not necessary to draw the conclusion that there is a direct dependence of one upon the other. Ibid., 40. For a table of the principal Egyptian sapiential writings, see André Lelièvre, *La Sagesse des Proverbes: Une Leçon de Tolérance*, *Essais Bibliques* 23 (Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1993), 17.

⁴Snell, *Twice-Told Proverbs*, 73.

context of the Davidic covenant, and that these formed the basis of a dynastic challenge that was passed on to each succeeding generation, then it would not be unreasonable to place the origin of this chapter in the time of Solomon. This is at least in harmony with the existing evidence.

Conclusion

The unusual grammatical construction of vss. 11-12 pinpoints a very important relationship between God and His “son.” God’s correction (from the root יָסַח that also appears in 2 Sam 7:14) is equated through parallelism to His favor (from the root רָצָה, also seen in 1 Chr 28:4; 29:3, 17; and Mal 1:8). It is significant that these terms are also found in passages that also speak of the Father-God. However, the importance of the association is that it qualifies the concept of correction/discipline and removes it from the realm of abusive father-child relationships by linking it to an everlasting covenant based on concepts of חַסֵּד and אֱמֶת (mercy and truth, vs. 3); אָהַב and רָצָה (love and delight, vs. 12), for a people deemed the יְשָׁרִים and צְדִיקִים (the upright and the just, vss. 23-33). In other words, God shows that He favors His son by reproving him, and although that sounds strange to postmodern ears, it must have been understood well enough in the time it was written. It may even explain the reason for the outburst of praise at the end of Ps 89.

The Prophets

Isa 63:16; 64:7[8]

Text (63:16; 64:7[8])

63:16 כִּי־אַתָּה אָבִינוּ | כִּי אֲבֹתֵהֶם לֹא יָדְעֵנוּ | וְיִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא יִכְיָרְנוּ |

אַתָּה יְהוָה אָבִינוּ | נִאֲלָנוּ מֵעוֹלָם שְׁמִדָּה:

64:7 וְעַתָּה יְהוָה אָבִינוּ אַתָּה |

אֲנַחְנוּ הַחֲמֵר וְאַתָּה יִצְרָנוּ | וּמַעֲשֵׂה יָדְךָ כָּלֵנוּ:

63:16 For you are our Father,
since Abraham does not know us, and Israel does not recognize us;
You, O Lord, are our Father;
“Our Redeemer from Eternity” is your name.

64:7[8] But now O Lord, you ARE our Father,
We are the clay, and you are the Potter.
And we are the workmanship of your hand—all of us.

Linguistic Analysis

Isa 63:16 is composed of a number of emphatic (subject preceding the verb), regularly patterned clauses (a-d) except for the last clause (e), which is a nominal clause. This gives the effect of building intensity until a climactic point is reached. “For you are our Father!” (16a) sets the tone of this intensity, then the insufficiency/inability of the fathers (Abraham and Israel) for any present help is noted (b and c), followed by a repetition of the introductory declaration with an additional vocative יהוה (O Lord!) inserted (d). The climax point is reached in 16e with the statement “Our Redeemer from

Eternity' is your name." Note that 16d and 16e have an A B B' A' structure, so that the parallelism equates YHWH and **שִׁמְךָ** (your name); and **אֲבִינוּ** (our Father) with **נִאֲלָנִי** (our Redeemer).

The repeated Father-God phrase in 64:7[8] is patterned quite differently,¹ and although the verse commences with much the same statement, the word order is reversed, the vocative **יְהוָה** is inserted (as in 63:16d), and the compound conjunction/temporal adverb (and/but now) is used to introduce it. Vs. 7[8] is composed of a series of three nominal clauses, each with a pithy statement (which the translation cannot do justice to) to drive the point home. This is for the purpose of highlighting the original statement (in 16a) but to show the very different circumstances in the argument being presented in this section.

Literary Context

J. Alec Motyer observes that Isaianic literature is characterized throughout by a tension anticipating the "not yet,"² and it is not until the last chapter of the book that the promised rest finally comes. This may be appreciated in the Father-God passages found in the Isaiah corpus, whose context in the developing climax of the last section may be portrayed as follows:

¹John D. W. Watts notes that they are the same words, but have quite a different meaning. John D. W. Watts. *Isaiah 34-66*. WBC 25, ed. John D. W. Watts (Waco: Word Books, 1987), 336.

²J. Alec Motyer. *The Prophecy of Isaiah: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 512. Contrary to current practice, he proposes that the three parts of the book of Isaiah are: chaps. 1-37, 38-55, and 56-66, suggesting they are Messianic portraits describing the King, the Servant, and the Anointed Conqueror. *Ibid.*, 13-16.

- A¹ The worldwide people keeping the Lord's Sabbath (56:1-8)
- B¹ Two parties in tension: opposition, peace and no-peace (56:9-57:21)
- A² The Sabbath-test: standards for a holy people (58:1-14)
 - C¹ Sin and need: the Lord's people confess (59:1-13)
 - D The Lord and His Anointed: the day of vengeance, the year of redemption (59:14-63:6)
 - C² Sin and need: the Lord's people intercede (63:7-64:11[12])
- A³ The worldwide people responding (65:1)
- B² Two parties in tension: opposition, inclusion and exclusion (65:2-66:17)
- A⁴ The worldwide people keeping-Sabbath with the Lord (66:18-24)¹

It is interesting that the Father metaphor for God comes in the context of tension, opposition, redemption, and Sabbath rest. Section C² (63:7-64:11[12]), generally termed a "community lament,"² contains three references in two verses that mention God's fatherhood. The structure of this unit has been identified by Elizabeth Achtemeier as: (1) a recounting of God's saving acts—63:7-14; (2) a description of the current plight of the people—63:15-19; and (3) their plea for help—64:1-11[12].³

God's acts recounted in the first unit, a psalm,⁴ launch straight into a covenantal setting that draws on Exodus and salvation themes (see Exod 14:30). It describes the relationship of the people as sons of God, their deliverance from distress, and the

¹Ibid., 461.

²John F. A. Sawyer, *Isaiah: Volume 2, The Daily Study Bible*, ed. John C. L. Gibson (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986), 200. It may be divided into their strophic structure as follows: 63:7-10, 63:11-14, 63:15-19, 64:1-5b, 64:5c-7, and 64:7-11. Compare Pss 44: 64: 74: 79; and Lam 5.

³Elizabeth Achtemeier, *The Community and Message: A Theological Commentary* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing, 1982), 112-120.

⁴Julian Morgenstern, "Isaiah 63.7-14," in *Hebrew Union College Annual* 23 (part 1, 1950-1951): 195. Achtemeier, *Community and Message*, 113, notes that this "recounting" is longer than most.

rebellious activity of the people in the aftermath of the Exodus.¹ The psalm commences with an inclusio that frames the first verse of the pericope (63:7) with the word **חֲסִדִּי** (acts of faithfulness). Avraham Gileadi observes that the word **חֲסִד** is synonymous with “covenant,”² and notes the close similarity between the secular covenants and the Davidic covenant.³ Other keywords in the psalm include: the *hifil* of **זָכַר**, make known,⁴ and the unusual, but not rare, description of the Father’s yearning for His children, using the motherly term **יָחַם**. These keywords highlight the Father-God metaphor, and give it the landscape in which it operates. The reference to bearing (**נָטַל**) and carrying (**נָשָׂא**) them is a reference to the eagle metaphor of Deut 32 and Ps 103, and reinforces the Father theme. Other Exodus themes referred to include election (“surely they are my people,” vs. 8); salvation (he “saved” and “redeemed” them, vs. 9); and the “days of old” (**יָמֵי עוֹלָם**)—vss. 9 and 11. More obvious references to the Exodus include bringing the people through the sea (vs. 11), or the depths (vs. 13); dividing the water (vs. 12); and leading the people (vs. 14) with the right hand of Moses (vs. 12). The Fatherhood of God is closely associated with the Exodus in this context.

The second part (63:15-19a[19]) begins with the plea for God to “look down from

¹Motyer, *Prophecy of Isaiah*, 513-515.

²See Avraham Gileadi, *The Literary Message of Isaiah* (New York: Hebraeus, 1994), 68; Moshe Weinfeld, “בְּרִיתִי,” *TDOT*, 2:258.

³Gileadi, *Literary Message of Isaiah*, 67-68.

⁴Reminiscent of Ps 89:2[1] (“I will sing of the *mercies* [חֲסִדִּי] of the Lord”). See also Deut 32:1 (“I will speak”); 2 Sam 7:15; and 1 Chr 17:4 (“go and tell”) which uses the same root, **זָכַר**, and Ps 103 which features a contrast between remembering and forgetting (esp. vs. 2 and vs. 14).

heaven,” suggesting distance between the Father and His children. The questions fly: “Where are your zeal . . . your strength . . . the yearning of your inner being . . . your yearnings (אֲנִי־לְךָ) toward me?” (vss. 15-16). The author accuses God of withdrawing His affection¹ in a prayer that reminds God of the special relationship that exists with His people.² At the heart of the prayer, and its recital of the historical saving deeds of YHWH, is the covenant.³ The history of God’s gracious acts is rehearsed to show the reasonableness of His demands on Israel, and is contrasted with Israel’s perfidy.⁴ But the question remains: If the Father’s love never changes, where is He now?⁵

The same thing is more or less stated in the reference to the fathers Abraham and Israel (63:16). They no longer count in the present crisis—but a contrast is being drawn with God the Father, showing that “even the greatest and most honoured members of the family can offer no help.”⁶ The verbs describing the “fathers’” lack of attachment and recognition, יָדָע (know) and יָכֵן (recognize), also occur together in Deut 33:9 where the negative “to have no regard for” and “not to recognize” denote detachment from family

¹Irmtraud Fischer. *Wo ist Jahwe? Das Volksklagelied Jes 63,7-64,11 als Ausdruck des Ringens um eine gebrochene Beziehung*, Stuttgarter Biblische Beiträge 19. ed. Hubert Frankemölle and Frank-Lothar Hossfeld (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1989), 111.

²Motyer. *Prophecy of Isaiah*, 512, 515.

³Achtemeier. *Community and Message*, 113.

⁴Ibid., 114.

⁵Motyer. *Isaiah*, 389.

⁶Motyer. *Prophecy of Isaiah*, 516-517.

relationships and refusal of family obligations.¹ Not only does this mean that because their forefathers are dead, they are alienated from Abraham, the father of their family, and from Israel who gave them their name and spelled out their privileges,² but the rejection of the forefathers meant that Israel counted its beginning from the Exodus.³

Further, the reference made to God's being father to Israel since the time of the Exodus (64:7[8])⁴ is framed by a series of images of helplessness. These images include: (1) the unclean (טִמְאָה—as in the leper of Lev 13:45), (2) filthy rags (garments of menstruation),⁵ (3) the “fading leaf” image (decay ending in death, cf. 1:30; 24:4; 28:1; 34:4; 40:7), (4) disinterest in the Lord (figure of someone rousing from slumber), and (5) divine alienation (you have hidden your face).⁶

The declaration of God as father is an appeal to His faithfulness,⁷ made twice as if to say that someone was contesting the claim.⁸ The repetition of אָתָּה אֲבִינוּ (you are our Father, vs. 16 [bis]) also parallels the repetition of מִעוֹלָם (from eternity, vss. 16, 19).

¹Ibid., 517.

²Ibid.

³Fischer, *Wo ist Jahwe?* 52.

⁴Achtemeier, *Community and Message*, 120.

⁵Literally a “garment of times”—a garment stained by menstrual blood. John T. Willis, *Isaiah* (Austin: Sweet, 1980), 467.

⁶Motyer, *Prophecy of Isaiah*, 520.

⁷Dieter Schneider, *Der Prophet Jesaja: 2: Teil Kapitel 40 bis 66*, Wuppertaler Studienbibel, ed. Gerhard Maier and Adolf Pohl (Zürich: R. Brockhaus, 1990), 312.

⁸Paul D. Hanson, *The Dawn of Apocalyptic* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), 92.

This timeless quality suggests the universality of God’s fatherhood—it is not restricted to a point in time, neither to one generation, nor even to one monarchical dynasty. The author is suggesting that God’s fatherhood even stretched down to his own time.

Hence the cry of despair in 63:19[64:1], “If only you would split open the heavens, (that) you would come down, (that) the mountains would tremble at your presence.” The use of the word *אִם־כִּי* (if only), which sometimes carries the connotation of unlikelihood,¹ adds to the sense of despair. With the alluded parallel to the Exodus (the mountain quaking),² the author is asking for a theophany as obvious and as convincing as the one at Sinai. But he is also reflecting the despair seen at the end of Ps 89, that cannot resolve the disparity between God’s impressive actions on behalf of His oppressed people at the time of the Exodus, combined with His covenantal assurances of protective fatherhood, and the present realities of Zion being a wilderness, Jerusalem a desolation (64:9[10]), and “our holy and beautiful temple” being burned to the ground (vs. 10[11]).

Hence the more confident³ shift to the present in 64:7[8] with *וְעַתָּה* (“But now!”).⁴ There is also a move away from the covenantal language to Creation language. No longer is the Father appealed to on the basis of covenant, for the author has just recounted how the human share of that arrangement has been negated by the admission that “we have

¹BDB. s.v. *אִם־כִּי*.

²Achtemeier, *Community and Message*, 119.

³R. N. Whybray, *Isaiah 40-66*, NCBC, ed. Ronald E. Clements (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 265.

⁴Walter Brueggemann, *Isaiah 40-66*, Westminster Bible Companion, ed. Patrick D. Miller and David L. Bartlett (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1998), 235.

been in them (our iniquities) always: can we be saved?" vs. 4[5].¹ This admission presumes that all covenant arrangements have already been invalidated by human intransigence, hence the uncertainty about any future deliverance. However, note the change in tactics. Although the Father had already been equated with the Redeemer in 63:16, now the attention turns to the Father, not on the basis of the Exodus, but on the basis of His having created His people. The description of the Father's forming a person out of the clay (the "potter" is literally the one forming—"צַר" —the same root as God's "forming" Adam in Gen 2:7) is a direct link to the Creation story.² In other words, because the people could no longer draw on the broken covenant for God's help and support, they reminded Him He was still their father on the basis of Creation, and that it would be unthinkable for God to hold His peace forever if in fact He made His people in the first place³—"Look, we are all your people!" (64:8[9]).⁴

Historical Setting

Hanson argues for a background of temple politics with dissident Levitical priests singing the psalm of 63:7-64:11 for being left out of restoration arrangements promoted

¹See John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40-66*, NICOT, ed. Robert L. Hubbard (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 625.

²The reference to clay and the creation of humanity is found in two other places in Isaiah: 29:16 and 45:9. Job also mentions twice that he was made from clay: 10:9 and 33:6.

³Achtemeier, *Community and Message*, 120. This is especially incongruous considering God's judgments against His people are a "strange act"—out of character. *Ibid.*, 114-115.

⁴Watts, *Isaiah 34-66*, 336.

by the reigning Zadokite priests after the return from exile.¹ Hugh G. M. Williamson prefers to see the passage forming part of an exilic penitential liturgy, recited on the site of the ruined temple,² arguing this poem was written during the exile, because of the similarity of its structure to Neh 9 and Ps 106 that repeat a cycle of rebellion and deliverance, with a historical presentation that brings out themes of Creation and Exodus, then rebellion, then handing over to a foreign power, followed by a cry for help and God's response.³ Yet the language may be considered much older than these hypotheses suggest, reflecting the custom during the time of vassal-suzerain relationships of calling the suzerain the "father" of the vassal.⁴

Conclusion

The "not yet" style of the Isaianic corpus is especially poignant in this last section that deals with the fatherhood of God. In a context of tension, opposition, worldwide redemption and Sabbath rest, the drama flows back and forth between the Exodus and the present woes of the people of God. The father-son relationship that the people enjoyed during the Exodus—the "eagle" carrying them, being led through the divided waters and

¹Hanson, *Dawn of Apocalyptic*, 95-96. For the contrary view, see 55-56. Achtemeier identifies this as a firm Northern tradition. See Achtemeier, *Community and Message*, 117-118.

²Hugh G. M. Williamson, "Isaiah 63.7-64.11: Exilic Lament or Post-Exilic Protest?" *ZAW* 102 (1990): 58.

³Hugh G. M. Williamson, "Laments at the Destroyed Temple: Excavating the Biblical Text Reveals Ancient Jewish Prayers," *BR* 4, no. 6 (Aug. 1990): 12-17, 44. Williamson asserts that Isa 63:7-64:11 is generally understood as a separate section from the exilic period, predating the rest of 56-66. See *idem*, *Exilic Lament*, 48-49.

⁴Gileadi, *Literary Message of Isaiah*, 72.

desert waste, seeing the quaking mountain at God’s presence—all this is recounted, and more. But now there is silence. What of the special relationship now?

However, the people perceive that there is an organic difference between their memory of the acts of God, and the exploits of their forefathers (specifically Abraham and Israel). The fatherhood of God is more significant to them than the fatherhood of their patriarchs, mainly on the basis of God’s eternity. Yet there still seems to be a cry of despair. “If only” God would do something now—split the heavens and shake a mountain or two (63:19[64:1]).

Restoring confidence in the Father-God begins by moving away from covenant language and focusing on Creation language. There is no point in appealing to a broken covenant (and the people freely admit their guilt), but there is hope in appealing to God as their Maker. Here begins a restoration of hope amidst hopelessness, together with a measure of submission and acceptance of the will of God—“we are the clay, and you are our potter.” As well as making them in the first place, they are acknowledging that God, as their Father, still has the right to shape and form their destinies, for “we are all the work of your hand” (64:7[8]), “we are all your people” (vs. 8[9].)

Jer 3:4-5, 19-20; 31:7-9

Text (Jer 3:4-5)

4 הַלֹּואַ מִשְׁתָּהָ ^a | קָרָאתִי לִי אָבִי ^b | אֱלֹהִי נִעַבְרִי אִתָּהּ: ^c

5 הַיִּנְטֵר לְעוֹלָם ^a | אִמְרוּשְׁמֵר לְנִצָּח ^b | הִנֵּה דַבַּרְתִּי וַתַּעֲשִׂי הַקְּשׁוֹת וַתּוֹכַל: ^c

4. “Have you not just called out to me; ‘My Father!’

- ‘You (have been) my intimate from my youth!’
5. ‘Will He keep (silence) for eternity? Will He (be) guarded for ever?’
 “Behold, you speak, but you do evil, and (as much as) you can.”

In these two verses, there are two cases of *kethib-qere*: קָרָאתִי (I called) becomes קָרָאתָ (you called) in 4b, and דִּבַּרְתִּי (I speak) becomes דִּבַּרְתָּ (you speak) in 5c. This may be an indication of the difficulty encountered by the Massorettes with this passage, and may explain why the LXX has rewritten it in an attempt to clarify what is being said. The verses in the LXX read:

4. οὐχ ὡς οἶκόν με ἐκάλεσας καὶ πατέρα καὶ ἀρχηγὸν τῆς παρθενίας σου
 5. μὴ διαμενεῖ εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα ἢ διαφυλαχθήσεται εἰς νεῖκος
 ἰδοὺ ἐλάλησας καὶ ἐποίησας τὰ ποιηρὰ ταῦτα καὶ ἠδυνασθήσῃς
4. Do you not call to me as father of a household and guardian of your virginity?
 5. “Will He not continue forever or carefully guard until the final end?”
 Behold, you not only spoke, but you did this evil, and you were able.

Linguistic analysis

It may be that the Massoretic punctuation needs to be re-examined. That they considered it necessary to change the person of speech twice in a row either points out confusion for the copyist, or for the later Massorettes. If the original wording was retained, then the pauses may need to be placed elsewhere, so that it would read:

c b a

:אָתָּה אֲנִי אֱלֹהֶיךָ נִגְדִי אָתָּה: 4

c b a

:אֲנִי דִבַּרְתִּי וְתַעֲשֶׂי הַרְעוֹת וְחוֹבְלִ: 5

4. “Have I not just called out:
 ‘To me, my Father, You (have been) an intimate from my youth!’
5. ‘Will He keep (silence) for eternity? Will He (be) guarded for ever?’
 “Behold, I (do) speak, but you do evil, and (as much as) you can.”

Vs. 4 begins with a rhetorical question that leads directly into reported speech, which the context indicates is a personified, feminized Judah. “My Father, you are the intimate (friend, chief) of my youth.” Then there is a shift of focus, with Judah still speaking, but this time addressing the third person (in נַטַּר and שָׁמַר) rather than the second—to whoever will listen rather than directly to God (5a-b). God answers in 5c by contrasting and highlighting the impossible disparity between Judah’s pious professions and “her” past actions.

Text (Jer 3:19-20)

19 וְאָנֹכִי אָמַרְתִּי אֵיךְ אֲשִׁיחַךְ בְּבָנִים | וְאֶתְּנֶלְךָ אֶרֶץ חֲמֻדָּה | נַחֲלַת צְבִי עֲבֹאוֹת נוֹגִים |
 וְאָמַר אָבִי תִקְרָאוּלִי | וּמֵאַחֲרַי לֹא תָשׁוּבוּ: |
 20 אֲכֵן בְּגִדָּה אִשָּׁה מִרְעֵהָ | כֵּן בְּגִדְתֶם בֵּי בַיִת וְיִשְׂרָאֵל נִאֲמָרְתֶּהּ: |

19. And I said (to) myself, “How can I put you among the sons,
 and give you a desirable land,
 a beautiful inheritance for the armies of the nations?
 And I said, you shall call me “My Father,”
 And not turn away from following me;
 20. Indeed, (like) a woman cheating on her partner,
 in the same way, O house of Israel, you are cheating on me.
 A declaration of the Lord.

This passage has also two examples of *kethib-qere*: תִּקְרָאִי (she calls) instead of תִּקְרָאוּ (you call—*ms*) in 19d, and תָּשׁוּבִי (she returns) instead of תָּשׁוּבוּ (you return—*ms*) in 19e. Note that they both change the second person masculine plural to second person feminine singular, in order to preserve consistency in the context.

Linguistic analysis

Commencing with an emphatic personal pronoun, God points out the reasoning behind His actions. With another rhetorical question, He asks how Israel could ever imagine that she, a “choice virgin,” could be placed among the nations on the choicest real estate around, without being molested by the voracious armies surrounding her (19a-c). This could be possible, God asserts, by calling Him Father, and by not “turning away” (19e) or “cheating” on Him (20b). He is ready to step in to protect His “daughter” from those menacing her. The emphatic אֲנִי (“Indeed!” 20a) sounds as a note of despair on God’s part, that the “calling” and “not turning away” are not what is happening (compared to Ps 89 where it is the Psalmist who is wondering about God ever making good on His promises to uphold the covenant).

Text (Jer 31:7-9)

7 כִּי־כֹה אָמַר יְהוָה קִנּוּ לַיַּעֲקֹב שִׂמְחָה | וְצַהֲלוּ בְּרֵאשֵׁי הַגּוֹיִם |
הַשְּׂמִיעוּ הַלְלוּ וְאָמְרוּ | הוֹשִׁעַ יְהוָה אֶת־עַמּוֹךְ | אֶת שְׂאֵרֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: |
8 הֲנִי מְבִיא אוֹתָם מֵאֶרֶץ צָפוֹן | וְקִבְּצֹתִים מִן־כַּחַי־אֲרָץ | בָּם עוֹר וּפְסָם |
הָרָה וַיִּלְדֹת וַתִּבְרֶן | קָהֵל גְּדוֹל וְשׁוֹבוֹ הָרָה: |
9 בְּבָבִי וּבָאוּ וּבַתְּחַנּוּנִים אוֹבִילִם | אוֹלִיכֶם אֶל־נַחְלֵי מַיִם | בְּדַרְךְ יֵשֶׁה לֹא יִכְשְׁלוּ בָּהּ |
כִּי־הָיִיתִי לְיִשְׂרָאֵל לְאֵב | וְאֶפְסֹם בְּכָרִי הוּא: |

7. For thus says the Lord; “Shout for joy for Jacob!
Sing out among the chief of the nations!
Proclaim! Praise! And say;
‘Save your people, O Lord! The remnant, Israel!’

8. Behold, I am bringing them from the land of the north,
and I will gather them from the ends of the earth,
the blind and lame among them,
together (with) the pregnant, and the one giving birth.
They will return here (as) a great community,
9. They shall come with weeping but I will bear them with (my) coaxing.
I will lead them beside rivers of water,
along a level road in which they shall not stumble;
Because I am a Father to Israel,
and Ephraim, he is my firstborn.

Linguistic analysis

This passage is remarkable for its preponderance of imperatives and intensive verb forms (mostly *hifil*, a few *piel*). The prophetic oracle formula that begins the passage, **כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה** (thus says the Lord), leads into a string of imperatives (*qal* **רִנְּנוּ** [shout for joy] and **צִהֲלוּ** [sing out],¹ *hifil* **שִׁמְעוּ** [proclaim], *piel* **הִלְלוּ** [praise], *qal* **אָמַר** [say], and *hifil* **יִשַׁע** [save]) in which the prophet is trying to generate enthusiasm among the people for a spirited international announcement of God's restoration of His people Israel (vs. 7). The intensive verb forms (*hifil* **בִּוֵּא** [bring], and *piel* **קִבְּצוּ** [gather]) and nominal clauses (8b and c) combine to add color to the drama, and an announcement explains the rejoicing—a “great company” (**גְּדוּלַת קְהָלָה נְדוּלָה**)—with an emphasis on the most vulnerable—the blind, lame, pregnant, and those giving birth) will be gathered, and will return from the ends of the earth. They return with traumatized relief shown by their weeping (9a), while God coaxes them along with His entreaties (9a), assuring them of cool running water to refresh them (9b) and level roads to make their going as easy as possible (9c). The climax comes in 9d

¹Literally to ululate, the shrill warbling sound of jubilation, produced in the soft palate at the back of the mouth, and still heard today in the Middle East and some parts of Africa.

with the announcement to this group of refugees, that God is their Father, by His declaration of Ephraim becoming His firstborn.¹ The language of 9d-e points to adoption, a kinship by choice, similar to the promise to adopt David's son² (2 Sam 7:14).

Literary Context of the Book

It is generally recognized that the book of Jeremiah is divided into four structural units,³ with chaps. 1-25 containing sayings attributed to Jeremiah, 26-45 reporting the

¹If the parallelism between **ישראל** and **אפרים** were strictly synonymous, it would mean that the inhabitants of the former northern kingdom of Israel are being addressed. William McKane, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Jeremiah*, vol. 2 (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1996), 792. McKane is not convinced that they are synonymous.

²Gerald L. Keown, Pamela J. Scalise, and Thomas G. Smothers, *Jeremiah 26-52*, WBC 27, ed. John D. Watts (Dallas: Word, 1995), 114.

³A convenient summary is provided by Philip J. King:

chaps. 1-25	prophecies against Jerusalem and Judah
1	introduction
2-6	events in the time of Josiah
7-20	oracles in the time of Jehoiakim
21-25	oracles in the last years of Jerusalem
chaps. 26-45	biographical narratives about Jeremiah
26-29	conflicts with religious leaders
30-33	Book of Consolation
31:1-40	new covenant
34-36	biography of Jeremiah
37-40	siege and fall of Jerusalem
40-45	Jeremiah after the fall of Jerusalem
chaps. 46-51	judgments against foreign nations
chap. 52	historical appendix on the fall of Jerusalem.

Philip J. King, *Jeremiah: An Archaeological Companion* (Louisville, KY: Knox, 1993), 13. R. K. Harrison compresses this schema, saying that 1-45 are prophecies relating to current history and domestic matters, 46-51 are oracles against foreign nations, and 52 is an historical appendix. R. K. Harrison, *Jeremiah and Lamentations: An Introduction and Commentary*, TOTC, ed. D. J. Wiseman (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 1977), 45. John Bright sees a fragmented structure, with three "books" of Jeremiah (1-25, 30-33, and 46-51) plus an inserted biographical section (26-44.) and an appendix (52). John Bright, *Jeremiah: Introduction, Translation, and Notes*, AB, ed. William Foxwell Albright and David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1965), lviii. The book as we have it is the result of the "coalescing of various streams of Jeremiah

prophet's activities, 46-51 being a collection of oracles against foreign nations, and 52 a brief historical appendix.¹ Within the first section, 3:1-4:4 is seen as a discrete unit,² while chap. 3 itself has been identified as an A-B-A'-B' structure (with "A" as 1-5, "B" as 12b-14a, "A'" as 19-20, and "B'" as 21-25).³ Holladay notes the symmetry shaped by the uses of "father" and "sons" in the chapter:

vs. 4	my Father
vs. 14a	sons
vs. 19	my Father
vss. 21, 22	sons [bis]
vs. 24	our fathers ⁴

An inclusio is formed by אָבִי in vs. 4 and vs. 24, adding to the symmetry and strengthening the structure.⁵ This makes it fairly certain that the two verses currently under study (Jer 3:4, 19) are part of the same literary unit. That God's fatherhood is

tradition." Ibid., lxiii.

¹Henry McKeating, *The Book of Jeremiah*, Epworth Commentaries, ed. Ivor H. Jones (London: Epworth, 1999), 9.

²Walter Brueggemann, *To Pluck Up, to Tear Down: A Commentary on the Book of Jeremiah 1-25*, ITC, ed. Fredrick Carlson Holmgren and George A. F. Knight (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 39. Bright suggests that 3:1-5 and 19-25, 4:1-4 form a continuous unit. Bright, *Jeremiah*, 25. Robert M. Patterson broadens the pericope by calling 2:1-6:30 a poem that he entitles "the choice for a rebellious people: repentance or judgment." See Robert M. Patterson, "Repentance or Judgment: The Construction and Purpose of Jeremiah 2-6," *Exp Tim* 95 (March 1985): 199. J. G. McConville shows that the theme of the section from 2:1-4:4 is Judah's apostasy, while in 3:1-4:4 the theme of repentance or return (שׁוּב) is developed. J. G. McConville, *Judgment and Promise: An Interpretation of the Book of Jeremiah* (Leicester: Apollon, 1993), 28.

³William L. Holladay, *The Architecture of Jeremiah 1-20* (London: Associated University Presses, 1976), 49-52.

⁴Ibid., 50.

⁵Ibid., 55.

mentioned twice in this unit underscores the crucial role it plays. Because of the number of rhetorical questions in chap. 2, the genre seen here in Jer 3:1-5 is not an example of “the didactic question” common in wisdom literature,¹ but is better described as a disputation, paralleled in the prophets in Mal 2:10-11.²

Context of chap. 3

The context of chap. 3 is a description of the uncleanness of the land and its people. They address God with a title of covenant loyalty, “Father,” yet they are likened to a brazen woman ambushing travelers to find lovers.³ Because of Judah’s “promiscuity,” the pious talk of calling God “Father” only adds to the hypocrisy and infidelity,⁴ especially in light of their professions in 2:27 when they say to a tree “you are my father,” and to a stone “you gave birth to me.” In chap. 3:9 it is said that Judah committed adultery with trees and stones, explaining the symbolism in these two chapters as a reference to the fertility cult of the Canaanites. She had made gods for herself and had “prostituted” herself with them.

God has been portrayed in chap. 3 as both a betrayed husband and affronted

¹T. R. Hobbs, “Jeremiah 3.1-5 and Deuteronomy 24.1-4,” *ZAW* 86 (1974): 25. Therefore the passage is about marriage conduct whereas the Deuteronomy passage has wider social and legal implications.

²Burke O. Long, “The Stylistic Components of Jeremiah 3.1-5,” *ZAW* 88 (1976): 387, 388.

³Brueggemann, *To Pluck Up*, 42.

⁴Derek Kidner, *The Message of Jeremiah: Against Wind and Tide*. *The Bible Speaks Today*, ed. J. A. Motyer (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1987), 35-36. Judah has only paid lip-service to covenantal ideals while pursuing immorality. Harrison, *Jeremiah*, 67.

parent, with the poetry moving easily between the two metaphors of intimate relationship.¹ The text is crafted to hold in tension the motifs of Israel's fickleness and God's resilient fidelity in the face of that fickleness.² Chap. 3:1-5 declares the impossibility of reconciliation between God and the apostate people and likens the situation to the irreconcilability of a husband and wife after their divorce and the wife's remarriage (based on Deut 24:1-4).³ There is an appeal for the people to return to God, despite their apparent passing of the point of no return, with the assurance that God's anger does not last forever—unlike the persistence of the people to maintain their rebellion.⁴

Vss. 19-20 resume the central issue of vss. 1-5, Israel's tendency to turn away from God.⁵ Vs. 19 is said to be "among the most poignant" in the book of Jeremiah,⁶ and is a soliloquy on the high hopes that God has for a relationship of trust and intimacy—the anguish of a parent with not quite the mood of hopelessness, but certainly one well on its way to being so. Judah is referred to in the feminine—God's only daughter, whereas the other nations are described as sons. According to Mosaic Law, a daughter does not

¹Brueggemann, *To Pluck Up*, 43. Jeremiah's use of "Father" "strongly recalls" imagery which is prominent in Hosea (especially Hos 11:1-4). McKeating, *Jeremiah*, 40.

²Brueggemann, *To Pluck Up*, 44-45.

³McConville, *Judgment and Promise*, 33.

⁴H. Freedman, *Jeremiah: Hebrew Text and English Translation with an Introduction and Commentary*, rev. A. J. Rosenberg, Soncino Books of the Bible, ed. A. Cohen (London: Soncino, 1985), 19.

⁵McConville, *Judgment and Promise*, 39.

⁶Brueggemann, *To Pluck Up*, 43.

inherit if there are sons, but God is making an exception here by giving her (Judah) a portion of the inheritance.¹

Context of chap. 31

The general context of chap. 31 is restoration and the new covenant,² and it is found within the book of consolation (chaps. 30-33), itself within the second part of the book that contains biographical narratives about Jeremiah. Jer 31:7-14 forms a unit describing the promise of God to bring the people home from captivity,³ and it has been recognized that 7-9 and 10-14 are separate poems with a similar theme.⁴ The prophetic messenger formula that commences vs. 9, כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה (thus says the Lord), is echoed in vs. 10 with שִׁמְעוּ דְבַר־יְהוָה (hear the word of the Lord), indicating a discrete unit of text in vss. 7-9.

The tone is set for this section by 30:1-3 where the prophet is told to write in a book the things that God has spoken, then delineates the main themes of gathering and restoring His people Israel from captivity. The poetry then begins with promises of consolation for Israel and Judah (30:4), the hint of the restoration of the Davidic

¹Freedman and Rosenberg, *Jeremiah*, 23.

²Harrison, *Jeremiah*, 135. C. F. Keil entitles the section from 31:4-13 "Repair of the injuries and renewal of the prosperity of Jerusalem and Judah." C. F. Keil, *The Prophecies of Jeremiah*, vol. 2, trans. James Kennedy, Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament, ed. C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956), 64.

³McKane, *Jeremiah II*, 787. See also Walter Brueggemann, *To Build, to Plant: A Commentary on Jeremiah 26-52*, ITC, ed. Fredrick Carlson Holmgren and George A. F. Knight (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 61.

⁴McKeating, *Jeremiah*, 149.

monarchy (30:9), and hope (31:17) amidst despair (31:15). The description of the renewal of the covenant (31:31-33) is followed by the description of Jeremiah's real-estate deal (32:6) during Babylon's siege of Jerusalem (32:2)—a powerful personal act of solidarity with the message of restoration he is currently giving in the face of extreme national crisis. The Book of Consolation concludes (33:14-26) with a more complete account of the earlier promise of restoration for the Davidic monarchy. The language sounds very familiar—"David shall never lack a man to sit on the throne of the house of Israel" (33:17), and is concluded by an oath in which God says that it would be as likely for Jeremiah to be able to break the "covenant" of day and night as it would be for God to reject the descendants of Jacob and David (33:23-26.) Therefore God's fatherhood is again associated with the Davidic covenant.

The reference to the "first-born" suggests an Exodus motif (cf. Exod 4:22) added to by the "Father" taking the orphaned and making them a home (cf. Hos 14:3b).¹ The implications of declaring Israel as God's "firstborn" in Exod 4:22 set the tone for the contest with the Pharaoh and led to the Exodus. Similarly in this passage, the stakes are high.² A. Van der Wal lists explicit references to the Exodus seen in Jer 31

1. vs. 2, wandering in the desert (בַּמִּדְבָּר, Exod 14:11; 15:22; 16:32; 19:2) see also Jer 2:2

2. vs. 9, God will lead the people beside flowing brooks; cf. Marah and Elim (Exod 15:22-27), and water will flow from the rock at Meribah (Exod 17:1-7)

¹Brueggemann, *To Build, to Plant*, 61-62.

²Kcown, Scalise, and Smothers, *Jeremiah 26-52*, 114. Ephraim is called firstborn either because of Jacob's blessing to Joseph giving him two shares, or because Jewish tradition has it that Ephraim was first to go into exile. Freedman and Rosenberg, *Jeremiah*, 205.

3. vs. 32, God makes a covenant with the fathers of Israel during the Exodus
4. vs. 32, God takes the people by the hand and leads them from Egypt (יָמַחַם, cf. 31:16 that uses the same term for the future return from Babylon)¹

It is therefore significant that the language of 31:1 resembles the covenant formula.²

In these significant passages, Jeremiah changes the gender of the object of God's fatherhood to feminine, and personifies the metaphor as "Virgin Israel" (31:4, 21).³ It is also interesting to note that the metaphors are sometimes switched, with "father" and "husband" being alternated, and similarly "son" and "daughter." Brueggemann sees no difficulty in the poetry moving easily between the two metaphors of familial relationship,⁴ and it may simply be necessary to accept the poetic inconsistencies of an ancient art-form without imposing artificial emendations to make the passage better suit our modern sense of aesthetics.

¹A. J. O. Van der Wal, "Themes from Exodus in Jeremiah 30-31," *Studies in the Book of Exodus: Redaction, Reception, Interpretation*, ed. Marc Vervenne (Leuven: University Press, 1996), 560-561.

²Keown, Scalise, and Smothers, *Jeremiah 26-52*, 114.

³Achtmeier notes the occasions where Israel is called God's son: Exod 4:22-23; Deut 8:5; Isa 1:2; Jer 31:20; and Hos 11:1.

⁴Brueggemann, *To Pluck Up*, 43. See also Holladay: "There is little doubt in my mind that 'abi 'my father' 3:4 implies 'my husband,'" contra Duhm, Giesebrecht, and Rudolph who all emend the text by removing the word "as spoiling the wife motif." Holladay, *Architecture of Jeremiah*, 51. "My father" was a common address of wife to husband, but "the specific relationship is of secondary importance, but the identification of who it is to whom Israel belongs is all important." Idem, *Jeremiah: Spokesman out of Time* (Philadelphia: Pilgrim, 1974), 44. Although McKeating recognizes that the fatherhood of God is a familiar theme in Canaanite religion, he suggests (simplistically perhaps) that "Father" in "Old Testament usage is a title of respect." McKeating, *Jeremiah*, 37.

Historical Setting

The book of Jeremiah may be described as “a personal account of the momentous events between 627 and 580 B.C.E.” when Judah was contending with three super-powers—Neo-Assyria, Egypt, and Neo-Babylonia. The first two allied themselves with the impending demise of Assyria against the threat of the new rising star, Babylon and its ally Media. With the collapse of Assyria in 612 B.C.E., Judah found itself caught in the struggle between Babylon and Egypt.¹ Jeremiah had “firsthand experience” of Egypt, having lived there for some time after the fall of Jerusalem,² and shows “intimate acquaintance of the Egyptian Delta.”³ The passage that includes 3:4, 19 was written in the time of Josiah, and 31:9 in the time of Zedekiah.⁴

Conclusion

In 3:4-5, “unfaithful Judah” (considered in a more hopeless state than her “sister”—“faithless Israel” [3:6-11]) is making a pious pretense of loyalty to her “Father” while maintaining her “promiscuous” lifestyle. So when she calls God “Father,” it is only for the manipulative purpose of maintaining the rains (3:3), the fertility of the crops,

¹King, *Archaeological Companion*, 14. See pp. 14-27 for a full historical review. See also Ernest W. Nicholson, *The Book of the Prophet Jeremiah Chapters 1-25*. CBC, ed. P. R. Ackroyd, A. R. C. Leaney and J. W. Packer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 1-10.

²King, *Archaeological Companion*, 30.

³Eliezer D. Oren, “Migdol: A New Fortress on the Edge of the Eastern Nile Delta.” *BASOR* 256 (Fall 1984): 32.

⁴Harrison, *Jeremiah*, 33. McKane notes that the characterization of Ephraim as the first-born is a mark of earliness that is difficult to reconcile with the generally assumed postexilic date for the passage as a whole. McKane, *Commentary on Jeremiah*, 792.

therefore an abundant income, and pampered living standards. In a change of metaphor, the personified Judah becomes the unfaithful wife, claiming God as her אֱלֹהֵי (intimate, close friend, spouse, vs. 4), a despicable misuse of the intimate bonds between them, and further evidence of the people's manipulation of God, hence the contrasts drawn by the prophet between Judah's actions and the hypocrisy of her religious professions.

From vs. 12 on, God turns the question around. Instead of Judah's pleading for God to do something, God pleads with Judah for action.¹ "Return, faithless Israel," He says, intending for Judah to follow (3:18). The picture of two brazen young women being implored by their heartbroken father (or husband) to return to the safety (and by implication, purity) of the home is why I have translated אֵיךְ אֲשִׁיתֶךָ בְּבָנִים "how can I put you among the sons," rather than "how I would like to . . ." He was standing by as a protective father to keep His "virgin" daughters from being preyed upon by the "sons," yet the irony is that the daughters are going out and preying upon the sons (3:2). This act of defiance has resulted in the land being "defiled" (3:1) so that its normal processes have ceased (3:3), and its wealth has been depleted (3:24).

Restoration is possible, and it comes from the Father-God who takes the initiative, wishing to welcome His rebellious family back home (3:19). The description of their return is telling, with God coaxing the refugees back along a well-watered and level road

¹Note for example the contrast between Isa 63:7 ("I will cause the faithfulness [חֶסֶד] of the Lord to be remembered [זָכַר]"; cf. Deut 32:1; 2 Sam 7:5; 1 Chr 17:4) where God is the object of the remembrance, and Jer 2:2 ("I remember [זָכַר] you, the faithfulness [חֶסֶד] of your youth"), where Judah is the object. In the first example, God's faithfulness is remembered because He now appears silent to the people, while in the second, God remembers the peoples' faithfulness because it is nonexistent in the present.

(31:8-9) that is accessible enough for the most vulnerable of society—the blind, lame, pregnant, and those giving birth. The imperatives of rejoicing and restoration (31:4-5) contrast with the despair of His rebellious children. The impossibility of reconciliation (3:1-5) is contrasted with the impossibility of breaking the intimate bonds that tie the Father to His children—He surely remembers them (זָכַר אֶזְכְּרֶנּוּ), His gut churns for them (רָחַם אֶרְחַמֶנּוּ), and He desperately yearns for His children (הָמוּ מֵעַי לוֹ).

Mal 1:6; 2:10

Text (1:6)

6 בֶּן יִכְבֵּד אָב וְעַבֵּד אֲדָנָיו | וְאִם־אָב אָנִי כְבוֹדִי וְאִם־אֲדֹנִים אָנִי אֵיךְ מוֹרְאִי |
b a

אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת לְכֶם הִכְהַנְיִם בּוֹי שְׁמִי | וְאִמְרַתֶּם בְּמִה בּוֹינֵנו אֶת־שִׁמְךָ: |
d c

- v.6 “A son honors (his) father, and a servant his master,
 but if I am Father, where is my honor,
 and if I am Master, where is my respect?”
 says the Lord of Hosts to you priests despising my name.
 But you say; “How have we despised your name?”

Text (2:10-11)

10 הֲלוֹא אָב אֶחָד לְכַלְנוּ | הֲלוֹא אֵל אֶחָד בְּרַאנוּ |
b a

מְדוּעַ נִבְגַּד אִישׁ בְּאָחִיו | לְחַלֵּל בְּרִית אֲבֹתֵינוּ: |
d c

11 בְּגֵדָה יְהוּדָה | וְתוֹעֵבָה נַעֲשֶׂתָה בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל וּבִירוּשָׁלַם |
b a

כִּי חָלַל יְהוּדָה קִדְשׁ יְהוָה אֱשֶׁר אָהָב | וּבָעַל בְּתוּלָא נָכַר:^d

10. Is there not one Father for us all? Did not one God create us?
Why do we deal treacherously—a man with his brother—
to profane the covenant of our fathers?
11. Judah has dealt treacherously,
and (the) abhorrence being done in Israel (is) also (being done) in Jerusalem,
For Judah profanes the sanctuary of the Lord, which He loves
And he marries the daughter of a foreign god.

The textual traditions are in general agreement concerning 1:6, but a number of changes are seen in 2:10-11. First the LXX transposes 10a and 10b, then instead of asking why brothers deal treacherously together (10c), it asks: τί ὅτι ἐγκατελείπετε ἕκαστος τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ—“Why does each one abandon his brother?” then continues (10d) with τοῦ βεβηλώσαι τὴν διαθήκην τῶν πατέρων ὑμῶν (“to profane the covenant of our fathers”). This seems to be an interpretation of the treachery (in 10c) based on references to divorce later in the passage. The only organic change in vs. 11 is found in the Qumran fragment 4QXII^a, which has בַּיִת (house) instead of בַּת (daughter).¹

Linguistic Analysis

Mal 1:6 begins with two parallel statements (son honors father, and a servant his master in vs. 6a), equating son and servant, father and master. The word order (subject, verb, direct object) draws attention to the son and the servant, and the honor that they give. In vs. 6b, two further parallel statements emphasize God as Father and Master.² To

¹Russell Fuller, “Text-Critical Problems in Malachi 2:10-16,” *JBL* 110, no. 1 (Spring 1991): 51. Fuller considers this a scribal error.

²Father-son, master-servant metaphors are used in the language of ANE treaty-related texts. Steven L. McKenzie and Howard N. Wallace, “Covenant Themes in Malachi,” *CBQ* 45

heighten the dramatic contrast, at the end of 6c attention is directed to the hearers in a triple-emphatic series of statements—“to you,” “the priests,” “the ones despising my name.” The final colon (vs. 6d) comes as an ironic twist, in a surreal manner, from someone not in tune with reality—“but you say; ‘How have we despised your name?’” The bland tone of this question is in marked contrast to the emphasis seen in the preceding clauses, and echos the blasé irresponsibility seen by the people in Jer 2-3.

In 2:10a and 10b there are two further parallel statements. Because of the repetition of words between them, the unique words are highlighted: אב “Father” and אל “God” are paired, and so are לְכֻלָּנוּ “all of us” and בְּרָאָנוּ “created us.” Because of the synonymous parallelism between אֱלֹהִים אֶחָד (one God) and אָב אֶחָד (one father), God is seen as the father of “all of us,” and the one who “created us.” The word בָּרָא (create) is unique to 2:10 in the Haggai-Zecharia-Malachi corpus, appearing only in the rest of the “Twelve” (prophets) in Amos 4:13. It is a term which highlights both God’s position as Creator and the uniqueness of the whole of Creation.¹ These affirmations become the launching pad for a series of accusations that parallel 1:6.

The people (through the priests) are challenged to obey (in Mal 1) to highlight the contrast between God’s nature and human nature. Obedience is said to be the “primary

(1983): 557. René Vuilleumier seems to think that in these parallels the fatherhood of God is manifested as His sovereignty in contradistinction to the New Testament perspective which manifests God’s fatherhood in love. Samuel Amsler, André LaCocque, and René Vuilleumier, *Aggée, Zacharie, Malachie*, Commentaire de l’Ancien Testament Xlc, ed. A. de Pury (Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1988), 228.

¹Andrew E. Hill, *Malachi: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. AB, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1998), 225.

demand of God on His people”—He surely desires their love, but first demands their respect,¹ which is only to be expected in a covenant relationship. Although no specific covenant is referred to in vss. 2-5 and 6-14, the language “clearly shows that a covenant relationship is presumed,” with the concept of God’s “love” for His covenant people being the issue at stake.² The irony is that 1:11-12 contrasts the reverence with which the “heathen” nations approach God, with the way the priests (and by extension the people) quibble and complain, and treat God with “indifference and open contempt.”³

Literary Context

The book of Malachi contains six disputes, each with three main constituents: assertion, objection, and response,⁴ reported by a narrator who introduces the speakers

¹C. Richard Wells. “The Subtle Crises of Secularism: Preaching the Burden of Israel.” *CTR* 2, no. 1 (1987): 48.

²McKenzie and Wallace. *Covenant Themes in Malachi*, 555. “Love” and “hate” describe the polarities of the treaty arrangement, so that a suzerain king would ensure treaties with nations he “loved” but not with those he “hated.” W. L. Moran. “The Ancient Near Eastern Background of the Love of God in Deuteronomy,” *CBQ* 25 (1963): 82, quoted in *ibid*.

³C. C. Torrey. “The Prophecy of ‘Malachi’,” *JBL* 17, no. 1 (1898): 2-3. Vs. 11 is translated in the present rather than future, although a minority position is “intended by the LXX,” and adopted by Theodore of Mopsuestia, and more recently by (among others) Hitzig, Köhler, Baudissin, Kuenen, Cheyne, Smend, Wellhausen, and Baethgen. *Ibid.*, 7-8. Richard D. Blake notes that although “Israel hates Esau, but what proof is there that YHWH abhors Edom forever?” The irony is that although Israel is loved, he renounces God. Richard D. Blake. “The Rhetoric of Malachi” (Ph.D. diss., Union Theological Seminary, 1988), 128-129.

⁴Ernst Wendland. “Linear and Concentric Patterns in Malachi,” *BT* 36, no. 1 (Jan. 1985): 112. The six questions are found in 1:2; 1:6b; 2:10b; 2:17a and 2:17b; 3:7b and 3:8b; 3:13a. Each comes with a response, and is usually preceded by a statement about God.

- A. “I have loved you.” (1:2a)
- B. “If I am a father, where is the honor due me?” (1:6)
- C. “Have we not all one father?” (2:10)
- D. An indirect statement that God is wearied by words (2:17)
- E. “Surely, I, the Lord, do not change.” (3:6)

and their speeches.¹ These “mitigated commands” identify the text as “hortatory,” a type of behavioral discourse with an orientation towards the future, and components of problem, command, motivation, and authority.² It may also be labeled “oracular prose,” a “combination of prosaic and rhetorical features approaching poetic discourse but distinctive of prophetic style”—“Malachi” uses his own unique style of writing with “considerable artistic proficiency,” quite unrepresentative of Hebrew poetry.³ Whether the book is seen as a “judgment speech against the nation,” a “covenant lawsuit,” or a collection of “disputation speeches,” it appears that its purpose is to answer every objection of the listeners so that they may be resigned to the divine decision.⁴

The fatherhood of God is featured in Malachi in two places—1:6 and 2:10. Mal

F. Another indirect statement about God being defied by words (3:13). James A. Fischer, “Notes on the Literary Form and Message of Malachi.” *CBQ* 34 (1972): 316-317. The six disputational oracles are: 1:2-5; 1:6-2:9; 2:10-16; 2:17-3:5; 3:6-12; and 3:13-21 [4:3]. Hill, *Malachi*, 41. Gordon P. Hugenberger takes the work of Wendland a step further, and shows that the concentric pattern of each dispute is also found in the book as a whole, with the first and sixth, second and fifth, and third and fourth disputations being in parallel. Gordon P. Hugenberger, *Marriage as a Covenant: Biblical Law and Ethics as Developed from Malachi*, Biblical Studies Library (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 24-25.

¹Blake, *Rhetoric of Malachi*, 80. The question-and-answer format of Malachi has no real parallel in the Hebrew Scriptures. Roddy Braun, “Malachi—A Catechism for Times of Disappointment,” *CTM* 4 (Oct. 1977): 299.

²E. Ray Clendenen, “The Structure of Malachi: A Textlinguistic Study.” *CTR* 2, no. 1 (1987): 6-7. Based on the assumption of the book being a hortatory discourse, the book can be divided up into three chiastic “movements” by observing the hortatory structures of problem, command, and motivation. *Ibid.*, 7.

³Hill, *Malachi*, 25-26. Ernst Wendland had previously spoken of “considerable artistic proficiency,” as evidenced by its parallelism, chiasm, simile/metaphor, synecdoche and metonymy, rhetorical question, antithesis, graphic diction, verbal shifts, etc. Wendland, *Linear and Concentric Patterns in Malachi*, 108-111.

⁴Hill, *Malachi*, 34.

1:6 is found within a chiasm that centers on a parallelism between the governor and God, first questioning whether the governor would be willing to favorably accept (literally “lift up your face”) second-rate treatment by the priests. God, whose good graces (יָנַח) are being sought, may be no more inclined to accept it either. The chiasm looks like this:

- A Honor is due God’s name: “my name” (vs. 6)
- B The priests’ sin: “my altar” + “food” + “sacrifice” defective offerings (7-8a)
- C Result = no mercy: “governor” + “lift up your face” (8b)
- C¹ Result = no mercy: “God” + “lift up your faces” (9)
- B¹ The priests’ sin defective offerings: “my altar” + “food offering” (10)
- A¹ Honor is due God’s name: “my name” (11)¹

God’s fatherhood is therefore being applied here as a reality check. If the governor would not tolerate such depreciating allegiance, why would the Father-God be any less interested in it? Fathers generally know when their children are attempting to conceal their childish wrongs.

The other Father-God passage is in 2:10, and it too falls within a chiasm:

- A Ideal Situation = unity: “one God” + “one Father”
- General sin = “infidelity” (10)
- B Indictment/specific sin = intermarriage:
 - “daughter of a foreign god” + “infidelity” (11)
 - C Verdict: exclusion, rejection of “food offering” (12)
 - C¹ Verdict: rejection of “food offering” (13)
- B¹ Indictment/specific sin = divorce:
 - “wife of covenant” + “infidelity” (14)
- A¹ Ideal situation = unity: “one . . . one”
- General sin = “infidelity” (15)²

¹Wendland. *Linear and Concentric Patterns in Malachi*, 116.

²Ibid. Martin A. Shields sees a similar chiastic structure, albeit abbreviated. Martin A. Shields, “Syncretism and Divorce in Malachi 2,10-16,” *ZAW* 111, no. 1 (1999): 68.

- A “Do we not all have one father?” (2:10)
- B “Did not one God create us?” (2:10)
- B¹ Faithlessness through syncretism (2:11-12)

The contextual flow seen here is similar to the context of 1:6. In chap. 2 the first nine verses show how the covenant is related to the personal behavior of the priests,¹ but from 10-16 the people are addressed.² Two different themes are intertwined in this latter pericope: the question of divorce (10-11a and 13-16—which both follow the same poetic rhythm), and the matter of mixed marriages (11b-12—written in prose).³ Vs. 11 is a fuller explanation of vs. 10, and reveals how the priests have shown faithlessness.

The question is asked in 10c, “why does a man deal treacherously with his brother?”⁴ (I have maintained the temporal vantage-point of 10a and 10b here.) The question is unpacked a little in 10d to explain the results of the complicity—the action of treachery (בגד—treachery, whatever it may be) causes the covenant of “our fathers” to be חלל (defiled, profaned 2:11).⁵ The mention of “fathers” keeps the presence of the Father-

A¹ Faithlessness through divorce (2:13-16). Ibid., 71. This is argued on the basis of whether 2:16 is to be understood as literal marriage-divorce, or a metaphor of syncretistic worship practices. The pericope is introduced in 2:10 with the faithlessness of Judah, 2:11-12 describes faithlessness through syncretistic worship, and 2:13-16 faithlessness through divorce; i.e., the figurative interpretation finds its best support in 11-12 and the literal appears well grounded in 13-16. Ibid., 68.

¹Compare Deut 33 in which the covenant appears to be with all Israel, not just the priests. McKenzie and Wallace, *Covenant Themes in Malachi*, 550.

²Walter C. Kaiser, “Divorce in Malachi 2:10-16,” *CTR* 2, no. 1 (1987): 74.

³Amsler, LaCocque, and Vuilleumier, *Aggée, Zacharie, Malachie*, 237. Note that Judah is feminine in 11a. and masculine in 11b.

⁴According to the context, this is to be understood in terms of two brothers working together in treachery rather than one brother being treacherous against another.

⁵Julia M. O’Brien, *Priest and Levite in Malachi*, SBL Dissertation Series 121, ed. David L. Petersen (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990), 62-67. O’Brien omits counting בגד in vs. 16, contra McKenzie and Wallace, *Covenant Themes in Malachi*, 552; and Kaiser, *Divorce in Malachi*, 75.

God active in what is happening here. The related keyword **בגד** (“acting treacherously against another,” typically used to express unfaithfulness in established relationships—it appears five times in 2:10-16—vss. 10, 11, 14, 15, and 16) is repeated in vs. 11a with a description of what Judah is doing. In a parallel statement, the synonym **תועבה** (abomination, vs. 11b) shows that Jerusalem is now no better than Israel used to be. The treachery opens up a little more in vs. 11c by explaining **חלל** (profane) in terms of Judah’s profaning the sanctuary (**קדש יהוה** literally the “holy of the Lord”), emphasizing that God “loves” it. The pericope is climaxed in vs. 11d and the treachery is now “fully” revealed. Judah has **בָּעַל בַּת־אֱלֹהִים נָכַר**, usually translated “married the daughter of a foreign god.” This cryptic statement is frustrating both for its brevity and what it takes for granted.

The verb **בעל** which can be translated “marry” can also mean to “be in authority over,” and may be a wordplay on Baal, so marriage may not be intended here at all.¹ The use of the word **בת** “daughter” may also be metaphoric as it is sometimes used to denote “a people.”² However, Hugenberger argues, quite convincingly, that the covenant spoken of here is marriage,³ and that Malachi is describing a situation where marriage has been so

¹Graham S. Ogden, “The Use of Figurative Language in Malachi 2.10-16.” *Bible Translator* 39, no. 2 (Apr. 1988): 226. Covering the altar with tears (vs. 13) is hardly a cause for judgment unless there is reference here to some hidden cultic activity. *Ibid.*, 227.

²The concept of a “daughter” signifying a people is attested to at least 61 times in Hebrew Scripture: Isa 1:8; 10:30, 32; 16:1; 22:4; 23:10, 12; 37:22; 47:1, 5; 52:2; Jer 4:11, 31; 6:2, 23, 26; 8:11, 19, 21, 22; 9:1, 7; 14:17; 46:11, 19, 24; 48:18; 50:42; 51:33; Lam 1:6, 15; 2:1, 2, 4, 8, 10, 11, 13, 15; 2:18; 3:48; 4:3, 6, 10, 21, 22; Ezek 16:45; 27:6; Mic 4:8, 10, 13, 14 [5:1]; Zeph 3:10, 14; Zech 2:6, 10; 9:9; Ps 9:15 [14]; 45:11 [10]; 137:8; and 2 Kgs 19:21.

³Hugenberger, *Marriage as Covenant*, 165-167.

profaned that it has affected the people's relationship with God,¹ to the extent of polluting the cultic sacrifices. Fischer simply affirms that the basic message of the book is to inform what God is like, and the father metaphor is key for that purpose.²

It is significant then that the word מָדוּעַ (“why?”) in 2:10 marks the midpoint of the entire book according to BHS numbering.³ It seems that the Father God is at a loss to explain the faithlessness of His children. No wonder Kaiser calls Mal 2:10-16 “one of the most important and one of the most difficult pericopes in the book of Malachi.”⁴

Historical Setting

Hill places the book during the time of Darius I (521-486 B.C.E.),⁵ and probably after 515 (when the exiles had returned, and the temple was rebuilt—3:1), and most likely between 475-460 with the presence of a governor (1:8) when Persian domination was solidly established in Asia.⁶ However, the main socio religious issues dealt with in the book do not really help to establish those dates.

The first of these is whether the terms “priest” and “son of Levi” are synonymous

¹Ibid., 342-343.

²Fischer, *Notes on the Literary Form and Message of Malachi*, 320.

³Blake, *The Rhetoric of Malachi*, 205.

⁴Kaiser, *Divorce in Malachi*, 73.

⁵Hill, *Malachi*, 51. Darius set out to regain Persian control of Egypt, and faced little opposition (519/518 B.C.E.), evidently because of his reverence of the Apis bull. In a subsequent visit to Egypt, Darius constructed a temple to Amon at Hibis (497-496 B.C.E.) and sponsored another temple, this time for Horus at Edfu. He would have passed through Israel on the way. Ibid., 53-55.

⁶Vuilleumier, *Malachie*, 224.

or in tension.¹ O'Brien suggests that the *rib* pattern of the book "militates against a sociological demarcation" between כֹּהֵן (priest) and לֵוִי (Levite), making it less likely a source for dating the book.² The other issue regards divorce. The classic interpretation of 2:10-16 (on divorce and marrying foreign women) popularized by Jerome "fails to meet the requirements of the text."³ The LXX and Syriac versions use general terms for idolatrous worship instead of divorce, so that the sanctuary is profaned by the encroachment of some foreign cult in Israel. "Judah, the faithless husband, has betrayed the wife of his youth, the covenant religion, by espousing the daughter of a foreign god, i.e. a foreign cult." These statements are a telling rebuke of unfaithfulness to the Father God, but were by no means unique to the time of Malachi.⁴ Therefore there is no good reason to suggest a different date from the one inherent in the book itself, about 400 BCE.

¹O'Brien, *Priest and Levite in Malachi*, 26. Malachi uses the terms similarly. *Ibid.*, 48. Malachi's diatribe is not against the priesthood as such, but against priests who have become unfaithful by misrepresenting God's name. Vuilleumier, *Malachie*, 228.

²O'Brien, *Priest and Levite in Malachi*, 84.

³Torrey, *Prophecy of 'Malachi'*, 4-5.

⁴*Ibid.*, 9-10. Ogden argues that Malachi's use of divorce is a figurative way to address the failure of the priests to live by the demands of the priestly code. Ogden, *Use of Figurative Language*, 223. The keywords כֹּהֵן and לֵוִי suggest the main concern is priestly unfaithfulness. *Ibid.*, 224. Harrison argues that the marriage to the daughter of a foreign god, being in the singular, is more likely to be referring to religious alliance with a foreign deity, possibly through the social celebration of a wedding as in the situation at Baal-peor. Harrison, *Covenant Unfaithfulness*, 70-71. Beth Glazier-McDonald argues that instead of marriage vs. syncretism facing each other off, it is better to see this issue as one where both came into play, with marriage leading to syncretism. Beth Glazier-McDonald, "Intermarriage, Divorce, and the *Bat- 'Ei Nēkār*," *JBL* 106, no.4 (Dec. 1987): 609-610. O'Brien argues that שֵׁלַח is referring to idolatry rather than divorce. O'Brien, *Priest and Levite in Malachi*, 67-69, 122. But if it does not apply to literal women then it may have the connotation of dismissing from priestly service, which God is loathe to do here. Ogden, *Use of Figurative Language*, 229.

Conclusion

Of the Father-God passages, the two texts in Malachi really stand apart. However, although they do not share the common vocabulary seen among the other passages, they do share a common technique of comparing the faithfulness of God to the faithlessness of His children. The main issue that attracts Malachi's attention is the act of treachery that is rupturing the covenant between God and His people. Scholars will continue to argue over whether this is divorce per se, or whether it is some complicity among the priests to introduce some syncretistic practice among the returned exiles, or whether it is a combination of the two with some sort of ritualistic marriage that fosters a value system akin to that of the idolatrous practices so severely denounced by preceding generations of prophets.

Another significant factor present in these Malachi references is the allusion to the covenant of the fathers. In light of the previous Father-God passages, this could refer either to the Davidic covenant or the Sinai covenant. Because there is no overt mention of the kingly line, it is more likely that it is the Sinai covenant that is being referred to, linking this passage with the one in Deut 32.

Conclusion

The subject of God's fatherhood is not an afterthought in Hebrew Scripture, evidenced by the prominent positions given to the passages that contain them. Note the superlative descriptions which commentators give to many of the biblical Father-God passages: Albright opines that the Song of Moses is one of the most impressive religious

poems in the entire Hebrew Scriptures.¹ Kruse suggests that there is hardly any prophecy in the Old Testament that has had so many repercussions in biblical literature as the oracle Nathan gave to King David.² Gordon thinks that 2 Sam 7 is not only an ideological summit of 'Deuteronomistic History' but also of the OT as a whole.³ Dahood observes that Ps 68 is widely admitted as textually and exegetically the most difficult and obscure of the psalms.⁴ Weiser notes that Ps 103 is "one of the finest blossoms on the tree of biblical faith."⁵ McConville reports that Jer 31:19 is said to be "among the most poignant" in the book of Jeremiah,⁶ and Kaiser calls Mal 2:10-16 "one of the most important and one of the most difficult pericopes in the book of Malachi."⁷ Added to these, 1 Chr 17 comes as a climax to the book to which the genealogical foundation leads.

God's fatherhood is introduced (at least to public religious life) in a public assembly called to "proclaim the name of the Lord" (Deut 32:3)—a phrase echoing the answer given when Moses asked God to show His face (Exod 33:18-20). In the resulting theophany God gives specific characteristics to describe himself (34:5-7). These descriptions appear later in the Song of Moses, and in other Father-God passages

¹Albright, *Some Remarks on the Song of Moses in Deuteronomy* 32, 339.

²Kruse, *David's Covenant*, 139.

³Gordon, *1 & 2 Samuel*, 235. See also Anderson, *2 Samuel*, 112.

⁴Dahood, *Psalms II*, 133.

⁵Weiser, *The Psalms*, 657.

⁶Brueggemann, *To Pluck Up*, 43.

⁷Kaiser, *Divorce in Malachi*, 73.

(especially Ps 103) with the following keywords/thoughts: **תַּחֲנוּן** (motherly yearning) (grace) **אֶרֶךְ** (slow to anger—also refers to [eagle] pinions!) **חֶסֶד** (faithfulness), and **אֱמֶת** (truth), forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, not clearing the guilty, but visiting the iniquity of the parents upon the children to the third and the fourth generations. The word for “yearning” (from the root **תַּחַן**) is especially interesting in that it includes qualities that, humanly speaking, belong to the mother.

Significant because it is the first extended portrayal of God as Father, the linguistic backdrop to the Song of Moses is painted in the subtle color of Creation theology. It commences with calling heaven and earth to attention—an echo of the ten times in Creation when God spoke, and a theme seen in other Father-God passages.¹ Creation themes become a backdrop for the Father-God panorama. The foreground is dominated by Exodus and the covenant. A contrast is drawn between the Father-God of covenant faithfulness, who initiated (at Creation) and established (during the Exodus) a relationship with His people, and the people who are described as “foolish” and “unwise” (Deut 32:6) for their ingratitude and rejection, and their insistence in worshipping “worthless idols” (vs. 21). There is a tension between the fickleness of humanity and the abiding faithfulness of God that is witnessed right up to the time of Malachi. However, although reference to God’s fatherhood in the Song of Moses is cast in the context of a Hittite suzerainty treaty, the alliance described is more in terms of relational closeness than legal bonds. God deals

¹Echoed by the use of certain keywords in the Nathan-vision corpus (**בָּנָה** [build], **בָּן** [establish], heaven and earth [1 Chr 29:11], plus Pss 68:8; 89:6-19[5-18]; Prov 3:19-20; Isa 64:8-9; and Mal 2:10.

with the situation as a father, gently but firmly guiding His errant children, not as a conquering king wiping out all opposition.

God's fatherhood is quite unlike the father-gods of the ANE in at least one important regard. Nowhere in the biblical account is there a hint of humans becoming gods, unlike the pharaohs, for example, that became gods on their ascension to the throne. There are a number of places that spell out at length that once a human always a human, as seen in the lengths taken to outline Solomon's genealogy. God would raise up a "son," not by His own procreative powers (as seen in the sexual procreative acts of the ANE father-gods), but through David's act of procreation (2 Sam 7:14). Solomon then became a son by "adoption," or in other words, his relationship with God is a spiritual, not physical, one, yet profoundly affecting every area of the new king's life. This forms the pattern for the Father-son relationship with all His children.

The Father nurtures His children to the place where they may live life responsibly and accountably, like a young eagle that must learn to fly. He nurtures by building and establishing: a name (2 Sam 7:9), and a dynasty (vs. 16) for David, and a throne for Solomon (vs. 13). He assures their long-term viability (1 Chr 17:14), sometimes seen in re-establishing His scattered people (Jer 31:7-9). He promises to "plant" His people so that they may have a place free from the oppression of wicked men (2 Sam 7:10), and maintain their social/political stability (1 Chr 22:12-13). David is confident in asking God to establish the hearts of His people toward the Father to ensure continuing loyalty (1 Chr 29:18-19), but if they fail God assures them that their sins have been forgiven and removed to the remotest extremes (Ps 103:11-12), and their sickness healed (vs. 3).

The theme of the Father-God judging is made prominent in the passages dealt with in Psalms and Proverbs. In Ps 68 He ascends to His throne (vs. 19[18]) from where He deals out the just deserts to the oppressors of His people (vss. 2-3[1-2]; 13[12]; 15-19[14-18]; 24[23]; 31[30]); He shows himself triumphant over the forces of evil—and to the mind of someone from the ANE, the forces of the underworld (Ps 68:3[2]); and He restores the prosperity of His people (vss. 4-13[3-12]; 20[19]; 23[22]; 36[35]).

The Father-God's judicial acts take place from the throne, which is described in terms of righteousness, justice, mercy, and truth (Ps 89:15[14]), and it is established in Heaven for those who keep His covenant (Ps 103:18-19). This means He not only deals with oppressors of His people, but with their rebellion against the divine order as well. He declares He will punish His sons if they forsake His laws and judgments, statutes and commandments (vss. 31-33[30-32]). The idea of God rebuking His children is explained in terms of showing them favor (Prov 3:11-12)—to prevent their ultimate self-destruction. The “son” is admonished not to forget the father's commands (vs. 1) nor to despise the discipline of the Lord, because God lovingly corrects His children. As “the potter,” He is given the right to continue to mold and shape human destiny to bring out the best work of art from the lump of “clay” (Isa 64:8).

This system of accountability is backed up by God's memory,¹ which serves not merely to bring His children to account, but rather functions as a guarantee for covenant continuity and stability. He remembers that “we are dust” (Ps 103:14), and He remembers the Exodus (Isa 64:11) when humans forget. This becomes a long-term reality check,

¹God “remembers” in Ps 103:14; Isa 64:11; Jer 2:2; and 31:20.

effective in situations such as when “unfaithful Judah” (Jer 3:4-5) used her pious pretense of loyalty to manipulate God’s bounty, while at the same time pursuing the hunt for lovers, and covering her “promiscuity” with the hypocrisy of her religious professions.

Therefore, God’s fatherhood is not something forced upon the unwilling. The “child” of God was given the right of veto. The prospect of divine discipline remained for the one choosing to turn aside, should he or she opt to reject the **חֻקֵי** (statutes) and **מִשְׁפָּטִים** (judgments) that God had given Moses. Initially these decrees were given as a token of parental love (Prov 3:12), and the bond between humanity and God was made sure by virtue of God’s faithfulness (**חֶסֶד**), even if there were times when the human part of the agreement broke down. It is clear that the human is free to break away from the arrangement, even though a number of Bible writers outline both the warnings and the results of pursuing such a course (e.g., Ps 89:47-51[46-50]).

After repeated attempts at breaking free from the Father’s yearnings for them, the people time and again end up in hopeless despair, rendering the fatherhood of God even more poignant to them. The “not-yet” stance of Isaiah means that sometimes the Father may appear frustratingly silent, when He should be, to human eyes, down here rattling a few mountains (Isa 63:19[64:1]). Perhaps the reason He does not is because He has a more gentle approach. He leads the most vulnerable, along the most accessible and gentle roads (Jer 31:9)—like a father with a fumbling child—at a pace that may make the Bible writers impatient.

However, what counts in the end is the exuberance expressed by the people for their Father-God—shining above their despair. Ps 68 expresses a hymn of praise for the

Father who has jurisdiction over every realm, and old and young celebrate together in the streets (Jer 31:13). What is pictured here is a relationship that at times shows incredible intimacy—experienced on an individual level, and celebrated corporately—between the Father-God and His people. Even though many of the passages in this study are based on the Davidic covenant, it appears the common people took this personally, and applied its benefits to themselves. They saw God as their Father, and trusted in His care for them.

Even though the human race may have deserted every covenant that God has made with them, He still remains their father because He created them in the first place. He can never cease to be their father.¹ The implication of His אֱמֻנָה (faithfulness), continuing on into eternity (לְעֵלָם), is that the Father-God restores the realm of Creation— people and land—to its pristine condition in His last act of victory (Jer 31:10-14).

This is the Father the Hebrew Scriptures describe.

¹However, in the ANE this relationship could be broken after a duly appointed public ceremony, in which the father said, “you are not my son.” Weinfeld, *Patterns in Prophetic Literature*, 188. There is no record of God saying this in Scripture.

CHAPTER III

A BIBLICAL THEOLOGY OF FATHERHOOD

The concept of God's fatherhood is very ancient,¹ very widespread,² and by implication, very rich. Any understanding of the fatherhood of God that neglects this rich past is therefore severely compromised. The early biblical concept of the paternity of God not only carries the sense of the origin of all things, but the creation of national existence—held together in covenant with the father—and beyond that, a relationship of nurturing and intimate paternal love that God has towards His children, which continues on into future ages. This includes all the divine acts accomplished on behalf of God's children—encompassing Creation in the ancient past, covenant in the present, and eschatological hope for the future.

This chapter explores some of the nuances of God's fatherhood in those various contexts—in the divine activities of Creation and covenant and in eschatological

¹As evidenced in theophoric names, e.g., Joab ("YHWH is a father"), and Abijah ("My father is YHWH"). "There can be no doubt that the ultimate origin of the 'father' names is to be traced back to the patriarchal, seminomadic society of the Semites in the second and third millenniums." Wright, *Terminology of OT Religion*, 409-410.

²W. Marchel observes that the naming of divinity as "Father" was found not just throughout the Semitic world, but through the entire world. W. Marchel, *Abba, Pere!: La Prière du Christ et des Chrétiens*, *Analecta Biblica, Investigationes Scientifacae in Res Biblicas* 19 (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1963), 33. Marchel continues by saying that God as "Father" is present in the religious texts, prayers, hymns, and names of the "primitives" of all continents of the earth, and calls it a universal and human phenomenon. *Ibid.*

hope—and how they impact on the understanding of who the Father-God is, through metaphors and descriptors of His being. It also deals with how God’s fatherhood informs dialogue on the nature of human existence, both in human relationship to God, and by exploring some of the implications of God’s fatherhood for human fatherhood.

By way of corollary, the choice of terminology of God as Father needs to be understood for the role that God plays in the Father-God references, rather than being interpreted in accordance with modern debates on gender,¹ for when God liberates His people from bondage and allots them their inheritance, He is “acting like a father.”² Therefore it appears that this metaphor was chosen by the Bible writers to best describe their experience of God’s protection and care.

What the Fatherhood of God Teaches About God

Historically, there have been four principal hypotheses to explain the origin of ancient peoples’ ascribing fatherhood to their deities: totemism, ancestor cult, bloodlines,

¹See for example, Daly, who postulates: “The symbol of the father God, spawned in the human imagination and sustained as plausible by patriarchy” is simply a tool of oppression and domination. Daly, *Beyond God the Father*, 13. Erhard S. Gerstenberger sums up the debate by observing: “Male and female feminist thinkers never tire of denouncing the close amalgamation of the still dominant patriarchal systems with the theological superstructure of a single, male, almighty Father-God.” Erhard S. Gerstenberger, *Yahweh the Patriarch: Ancient Images of God and Feminist Theology*, trans. Frederick J. Gaiser (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), viii.

²Trygve N. D. Mettinger, *In Search of God: The Meaning and Message of the Everlasting Names*, trans. Frederick H. Cryer (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 206. “That God is like a father does not mean that God is like a man. The only thing that is exclusively male about being a father is the ability to sire a child.” but the point in the biblical narratives is not physical descent from God, but hope in God. Ohler, *Bible Looks at Fathers*, 205.

and metaphor.¹ Totemism is the belief that a tribe mysteriously descended from a plant or animal that later became anthropomorphized and deified, and was in evidence among all Semites including the Arab tribes.² Today this concept is considered peripheral, together with the idea of the ancestral cult spawning the idea of God's fatherhood.³ "Bloodline," a position taken by those opposing totemism, suggests that the idea of God's fatherhood arose when the Semites were nomads, first thinking they had consanguinity with the gods, their primitive "pagan" belief gradually evolving into a spiritual one.⁴

When the matter of God's fatherhood is considered from an exegetical approach, another perspective may be seen, in the context of Creation, covenant (both from the Exodus and with David), and to a lesser extent, eschatology. Although it is difficult to clearly demarcate these themes as they are at times inextricably intertwined, at least an overview is in order to better understand their contribution.

In Creation

The picture of the Father-God given in the Scriptures is quite distinct from that of the ANE, both in His relationship to the natural realm and to humanity. The former may be seen in His prominence over the created realm, in His universality, and His dominion over life and death, while the latter is seen in the sociopolitical domain, and over human

¹Marchel, *Abba, Père!* 9.

²See W. Robertson Smith, *Kinship and Marriage in Early Arabia*, new ed., ed. Stanley A. Cook (Oosterhout, Holland: Anthropological Publications, 1966), 240-241.

³Marchel, *Abba, Père!* 11.

⁴*Ibid.*, 12.

affairs. These combine to give legitimacy to God's fatherhood—based in the first instance on His creatorship.

Distinct from Creation

The Father-God shows His immediate distinction from the gods of the ANE when Creation accounts are compared. Instead of rising up in self-awareness in the primeval ocean (as in, for example, Egyptian mythology), He knowingly broke up the depths (Prov 3:20) and dry land appeared, showing His ascendancy over the raging sea, Ps 89:10[9]). Instead of being differentiated from a sacred mountain, He created the “holy” mountains (Ps 89:13 [12])—then warned of the folly of expecting salvation from hills and mountains (Jer 3:23). His standing over the mountains is seen when He approached Sinai—the earth quaked, the heavens dropped rain, and Mt. Sinai quaked in His presence (Ps 68:9[8]).

Relationship with Humanity

Another aspect of the Father-God's relationship to the created realm is His relationship to humanity. In contradistinction to other Creation accounts from the ANE, God's relationship with His people is immanent and intimate. Consider, for example, the Creation of humans in the Sumerian tradition: They are created from a mixture of the remains of the slain god *Geshtu-e* and clay, for the purpose of relieving the Igigi (working-class gods) who complain of being overworked. Humankind is created solely for the purpose of providing the gods' food, drink, shelter, and leisure-time.¹

The Egyptians believed that humanity came into existence through Atum's tears of

¹Kramer, *Sumerian Theology and Ethics*, 56.

joy after being reunited with his lost children, Shu and Tefnut. In this account, the “birth” of the human race is neither planned for, nor anticipated, but is incidental to the main action.¹ It is not clear what happened from the legends of Ugarit, as there is no extant account of human Creation from them to date.

The contrast seen in the Genesis account is quite remarkable. Umberto Cassuto distinguishes between the divine names in the Creation accounts of Gen 1 and 2, emphasizing the universal *Elōhim* in chap. 1, and the personal YHWH in chap. 2.² In Gen 1, there is forethought (“Let us make man”), design (“in our image”), dignity (“let them rule,” Gen 1:26, 27), blessing (vs. 28), provision (food provided, vs. 29), and satisfied approval (“God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was exceedingly good,” vs. 31). In Gen 2 there is something even more remarkable—the implied picture of God stooping over the form of Adam to sculpt him from clay, then His careful construction (בנה) of Eve. Not only is this a picture of purpose (as opposed to the Egyptian implication of the accident of human creation), but it suggests an intimate association between human and Creator not seen in the manipulative control of the Igigi over humanity in the Sumerian-Akkadian paradigm.

¹Wilson, *ANET*. 8.

²Umberto Cassuto, *The Documentary Hypothesis and the Composition of the Pentateuch: Eight Lectures*, trans. Israel Abrahams (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1983), 15-41. Cassuto draws attention to the literary tradition of the use of the divine names, and outlines the rules governing their use. YHWH is used to describe God’s specifics, especially His ethical character, His majesty and glory and His relationship with the simple faith of His chosen people, as opposed to *Elōhim*, that conveyed the idea of a more abstract and Transcendental Being who exists outside and above the physical universe, the Creator, Ruler of nature, and Source of life, and One connected to all people universally. *Ibid.*, 31-32.

In Isaiah's use of the three figures of father, potter, and craftsman, he shows that the Father-God establishes ties (in an inclusio that uses אֲנִי וְאַתֶּם, "all of us," or "we all," Isa 64:6-7[7-8]) based on relationship (father), sovereignty (potter), and care (work of your hands).¹ As well as being made by Him in the first place, the people acknowledge that God, as their Father, still has the right to shape and form their destinies, for "we are all the work of your hand" (64:7[8]), "we are all your people" (vs. 8[9]), because "all that is in heaven and in earth is yours" (1 Chr 29:11).

Universal Fatherhood

Creation establishes not only the Father-God's primacy but also His universality—He is recognized as a Father for all time and for all Creation. Not only is "all that is in heaven and in earth" His (Ps 103:11)—making His realm universal (vss. 11-12)—but because He is "blessed forever" (lit. "from eternity to eternity," 1 Chr 29:10), His fatherhood also extends into the future. As the One triumphant over the forces of evil (symbolized by smoke being driven away, Ps 68:3-4[2-3]), the fatherhood of God assumes an eschatological dimension. In other words, there is no time or place in which He is unable to be Father to His children. He is always there for them, and nothing— from either the natural or supernatural realm—is able to separate Him from them.

The Father-God's distinction from, and control over, the natural realm extends to the sociopolitical sphere as seen in the *šām* motif (from the vision of Nathan—"I will make your name great," 2 Sam 7:9). This is a phraseological link to the traditions of Abraham,

¹Motyer, *Prophecy of Isaiah*, 521.

and is later developed in the covenant texts of Gen 15 and 17. The promise given to Abraham (Deut 11:24) is repeated to the Israelite tribes and to Joshua (Josh 1:3): “every place (אֶרֶץ) on which the sole of your foot shall tread shall be yours; your territory shall be from the wilderness to Lebanon, and from the river, the River Euphrates, to the Western Sea.”¹

God’s relationship to the land and its people is already in evidence in primeval time—before the patriarchs, before the borders of the nations were established, and before He had allocated the number and identity of the nations.² When He divided up the nations among the sons of Adam (the “inheritance to the nations” [Deut 32:8-9]) establishing the boundaries for seventy nations,³ all nations could claim God as their Father. Being Creator and universal Father, it was His prerogative to give the gift of land to His people (vss. 13, 14).⁴

However, the land of David’s kingdom was linked in a special way to God’s kingdom.⁵ Michael Wyschogrod encapsulates it succinctly when he says:

¹Carlson, *David, the Chosen King*, 115. This was fulfilled through David (see 2 Sam 7:10). *Ibid.*, 116.

²See Deut 32:8-9; Geller, *Dynamics of Parallel Verse*, 44-45. Luyten suggests this is a unique theme found nowhere else in the Psalms or Deuteronomy, but seen in Sir 17:17; 24:7-8; 1QM 17:5ff; Targ Jerush I and later apocalypses. Luyten, *Primeval and Eschatological Overtones*, 342-343. Cf. Ps 68:7[6].

³The same number of family members that accompanied Jacob to Egypt. Deut 32:8. Gen 10 (esp. vs. 25); 2 Sam 7:10; 1 Chr 17:9; and 28:7.

⁴J. A. Thompson, *Deuteronomy: An Introduction and Commentary*, TOTC, ed. D. J. Wiseman (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1974), 299.

⁵The Scriptures often refer to God as king, but rarely mention His kingdom specifically; however, in Chronicles the kingdom of God is directly linked to the Davidic kingdom. Selman, /

It is also true that a father loves all his children, so that they all know of and feel the love they receive, recognizing that to substitute an impartial judge for a loving father would eliminate the preference for the specially favored but would also deprive all of them of a father. The mystery of Israel's election thus turns out to be the guarantee of the fatherhood of God toward all peoples, elect and nonelect, Jew and gentile.¹

Credentials for Divine Fatherhood

A further impact of Creation on God's fatherhood is to legitimize it. In Ps 89, for example, the language of Creation is echoed in the words: create,² man,³ live,⁴ immortality,⁵ death,⁶ and soul,⁷ and because God is seen as powerful enough to defeat the primeval chaos monster Rahab⁸ (vs. 11[10]); found (יָסַד) the heavens and earth and their fullness (vs. 12[11]); establish His throne on a foundation (מְנוּחָיו) of righteousness (צְדָקָה),

Chronicles. 180. "More explicitly and emphatically than anywhere else in the Old Testament tradition, the writer understands the Israelite kingdom of David and Solomon to be the concretized form of Yahweh's kingdom." Brian E. Kelly, *Retribution and Eschatology in Chronicles*. JSOTSS 211, ed. David J. A. Clines and Philip R. Davies (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 156.

¹Michael Wyschogrod, *The Body of Faith: God in the People Israel* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1983), 65.

²Create (בָּרָא) north and south (vs. 13[12]): see vs. 13[12], cf. Gen 2:4. "Heaven and earth" and "north and south" are two example of hendiadys.

³See vs. 48[47] cf. Gen 2:7, etc.

⁴See vs. 49[48]: Gen 2:7.

⁵See vs. 37[36]: Gen 3:2, etc.

⁶See vs. 49[48]: Gen 2:17, etc.

⁷See vs. 49[48]: Gen 2:7. See also Goulder, *Psalms of the Sons of Korah*, 236.

⁸The reference to the ANE mythology of the primeval chaos monster serves well to highlight the contrasts between the two worldviews of Israel and her neighbors, especially as it impacts on the ensuing father-son covenant—temporal vs. spatial, conditional/obligatory vs. unconditional/promissory covenant. Malamat, *Mari Prophecy*, 79, 82.

justice (משפט), mercy (חסד), and truth (אמת, vs. 15[14]); then, on that basis, He is well able to choose (בחר vs. 20[19]), anoint (vs. 21[20]), establish (בין), and strengthen His people (vs. 22[21]), beat down their foes (vs. 24[23]), ensure faithfulness (אמונה) and mercy (חסד vs. 25[24]), and keep covenant (ובְרִית) with them forever (לְעוֹלָם vs. 29[28]). Both the legitimacy and the capability for God to be Father arise from His being Creator.

In Covenant

The fatherhood of God also may be seen in His actions to establish and maintain covenant relationship with His people, both by “redemptive acts in history and in the personal experience of His saints.”¹ These include His demonstrations of power and strength, and the way He disciplines His children. The nature of the Father-child relationship that God enjoys with humans is one based on covenant, and rules out any correspondence with the ANE notion of father-god progenitorship. The covenant motif is seen when God establishes the people at the Exodus, divides the inheritance of the nations (Deut 32:8-9, echoing Gen 10), finds them in the desert (vs. 10), leads them (vs. 12), and causes them to ride on the heights (vs. 13). Covenant is also seen with the promise of a perpetual Davidic dynasty.

According to Marchel, not only is the idea of covenant more ancient than divine paternity in the ANE, but it rests on a different notion—that of a union based entirely on a

¹N. H. Parker. “Psalm 103: God Is Love: He Will Have Mercy and Abundantly Pardon.” *CJT* 1, no. 3 (1955): 192.

voluntary and gratuitous act—the adoption of Israel by God.¹ It is certainly true that covenant motifs are very old, and that father-son terminology is obviously intrusive into a scene otherwise dominated by the master-servant motif. As Wright observes, the concept becomes common only during the period of greatest Canaanite influence on Israelite literature, the Ras Shamra period.² The dependence of a vassal on his overlord was frequently expressed in terms of “sonship” or “fatherhood”³ and their relationship, described in terms of “love,” bound the parties of a covenant whether they were equals, or a sovereign and vassal.⁴ Therefore, because of the “gratuitous election” upon which the

¹Marchel, *Abba, Père!* 40-41. “En somme, la paternité de Dieu et la filiation d’Israël, fondées sur l’élection gratuite, nous apparaissent comme *une explication ultérieure de l’Alliance*, et donc comme l’expression de la relation mutuelle d’appartenance exprimant l’union intime et religieuse entre Israël et son Dieu. C’est là l’origine et la fondement du titre de «Père» dans l’A.T.” Ibid.

²Wright, *Terminology of O. T. Religion*, 408-409. In the second millennium there were two periods of intense international diplomatic activity: the First International Period (the Mari period—the 19th to the 18th centuries BC), and the Second International Period (the Amarna Period—15th to 13th centuries BC). Evidence of the first is found at Mari, Shemshara, Tell al-Rimah, and level VII of Alalakh. The second (sometimes referred to as “the Club of the Great Powers,” which included the Egyptian, Hittite, and Hurrian empires) has been documented by finds at Boghazkoy (capital of Hatti), el-Amarna in Egypt, Ras Shamra (Ugaritic empire) and from Alakh level IV. See Hayim Tadmor, “Treaty and Oath in the Ancient Near East: A Historian’s Approach,” in *Humanizing America’s Iconic Book*, SBL Centennial Addresses 1980, ed. Gene M. Tucker and Douglass A. Knight (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1982), 129-130.

³Ili-Ištar, a Mesopotamian ruler writing to his “father,” Zimri-Lim, declared, “I, I am as thy servant and never shall a ‘sheik’ (*sugaqum*) of mine let go the hem of the garment of my ‘father’ (i.e., break the treaty of vassalage). I, I am a faithful son of this land.” J. M. Munn-Rankin, “Diplomacy in Western Asia in the Early Second Millennium B.C.,” *Iraq* 18 (Spring 1956): 80. Munn-Rankin observes that for kings who were equals, they were described as brothers in their treaties. Ibid., 76.

⁴Moran, *Love of God in Deuteronomy*, 78-79. “Love” was also a description of the loyalty of a king’s subjects, being used in the second millennium B.C.E. as well as into the first. It is said of David, for example, that “all Israel and Judah loved [him],” i.e., both north and south were attached to him. Ibid., 81.

covenant between God and David was based, it would be as likely for the Father-God to break the “covenant” of day and night, as it would be for Him to reject the descendants of Jacob and David (Jer 33:23-26.)

However, note the interplay between Creation and Covenant (and the monarchy). Just as the Father acquired (קנה), made (עשה), and established (בין, Deut 32:6) His people, so too did He establish (בין) the throne of Solomon. While it is true that the covenant required certain obligations of faith and sanctity¹ (concepts also well-known in the ancient world), the connection seen between בין and Creation broadens the scope of the covenant, suggesting that the bonds between God and His people existed not just in covenant at the time of Solomon, or at the Exodus, but at Creation as well. This significant point was also recognized at a later time, when the people realized they could no longer draw on God’s help and support on the basis of a broken covenant, but reminded Him He was still their father on the basis of Creation (Isa 64:8[9]).

Historic Deeds

A number of specific activities of God are introduced in the Father-God passages—regular or repeated actions that form a transition between His qualities and His historic deeds²: He made (עשה) his people, established (בין) them, and did great (גדל) things on their behalf with His mighty power (הגבורה).

The Song of Moses introduces the idea of the Father-God making His children.

¹Marchel. *Abba. Père!* 52.

²See vss. 6, 9, 10, 13, 14. Gunkel. *Introduction to Psalms*, 35.

“Is He not your father?” “Is He not the one who made you?” (Deut 32:6). This relationship between עשה (make) and בון (establish) is also a motif found in the Nathan-vision passages. The Father-God establishes (בון) the throne and kingdom of David forever,¹ and does the same for Solomon.² God’s fatherhood is observed in His action of “raising up,” and “establishing” both His people Israel and the kingdom of Solomon.

He is called Solomon (שלמה), for God promised to give him peace (שלווה) and tranquility in his time. The keywords, rest (נוח) and peace (שלווה 1 Chr 22:9-10), are in parallel to the son who is to be born as a man of rest (מנוחה)—God would cause him to have rest (*hifil* of נוח). This reveals the Father-God as one who values peace and life itself. He considers life so important that He disqualified David from building a house of worship because he was so actively involved with death (1 Chr 22:8; 28:3).

Another activity of the Father-God is in doing great (גדל) things, which is often associated with “making” a name. In a song of praise, David says about God, “You are great” (גדל, 2 Sam 7:22), and “You do great (גדולה) and spectacular things” (vs. 23), and later, “You have done all this greatness (גדולה) to make all these great things (גדולה) known” (1 Chr 17:19), in so doing, making a great (גדל) name (vs. 19). And again, “Yours, O Lord, is the greatness (גדולה), the power (הגבורה), and the glory” (1 Chr 29:11) “in your hand is power (הגבורה)” (vs. 12; Ps 89:14[13]; Isa 63:15). It is important to observe the context of these demonstrations of power and strength. The greatness seen

¹2 Sam 7:16, 26; 1 Chr 17:24; 28:7; and Ps 89:38[37].

²2 Sam 7:12, 13; 1 Chr 17:11-12, 14; 22:10; and 28:7.

and appreciated by humans in their daily experience, originates and is made available by the Father-God. It is not in the subjection of His people, but in their release—not in their destruction but in their establishment—that the Father-God does great things.

Descriptors of the Father-God

As well as the actions of Creation and Covenant, certain descriptors also add to the picture of the Father-God. Two metaphors (the Rock and the eagle), introduced in the Song of Moses (and seen throughout the Father-God passages), add powerfully to that picture. Then there is a group of descriptors of the nature of His fatherhood. These include such terms as justice (מִשְׁפָּט), faithful/ness (אֱמוּנָה), truth (אֱמֶת), righteous (צְדִיק), upright (יָשָׁר), kindness (חֶסֶד), pity (רַחֵם), and love (אַהֲבָה).

The Rock

The Rock metaphor is usually understood as a symbol of divine strength, but the nuances added by the Father-God passages are threefold: divine righteousness, spiritual parentage and nurture, and religious uniqueness vis-a-vis other gods.¹ That God as Father is linked to such imagery is significant, and may be an indication of a parting of the ways with the creeds of surrounding nations. The unusual contrast between the obvious fertility/virility symbol of a bull, seen so often in the ANE, and the nonsensuous Rock

¹Michael P. Knowles, "The Rock, His Way Is Perfect: Unusual Imageries for God in Deuteronomy 32," *V7* 39, no. 3 (1989): 316. The introduction of the idea of Israel suckling from its God (the Rock, vs. 13) is certainly not new in the ANE, but is found nowhere else in Scripture. Knowles, *Ibid.*, 318. Cf. the goddesses Asherah and Anat who were called the "wet nurses of the gods" (ANET, 146; CTA 15.ii.21-28) and the sister goddesses Isis and Nephthys fulfilling a similar function in the Theban pantheon.

distances the biblical description of God's fatherhood from the notion that the Father-God is the great progenitor who physically engenders all Creation, including humankind.

The first appearance of צור (the Rock)¹ in Deut 32:4 describes God's perfect works and just ways. In subsequent occurrences, *the Rock* "fathers" the people of Israel (vs. 18) and provides them food (abundant garden produce, vs. 13), "breast-feeding" (ניק) them with honey and oil—making the Father-God the source of the fruitfulness of the land, and the bountiful provider for His people. The nurture thus described is reflected in the later use of חנן (yearn) showing the "motherly" aspects of God's fatherhood (e.g., Ps 103:4, 8, 13).

The "Rock" appellation for God is used in twenty other places throughout the Scriptures, and remains popular over a "considerable period of time" as evidenced in its use in Samuel, Isaiah, Psalms, and possibly Habakkuk.² Despite this, the people reject and desert *the Rock* (vs. 15); so God gives them over to the gods (rock) of other nations (vs. 30).³ It is interesting to note that the foreign gods are collectively called "rock," and are

¹Knowles. *The Rock*, 307.

²Ibid., 321. When use of the appellation צור is seen in other parts of Scripture, it refers to יהוה nine times, (2 Sam 22:47; Pss 18:47; 28:1; 95:1; 144:1; Isa 26:4; 30:29; 51:1; and Hab 1:12), to El twice, (Pss 18:3; and 89:27), and to Elohim nine times (1 Sam 2:2; 2 Sam 22:32; Pss 18:32; 62:8; 73:26; 78:35; 94:22; Isa 17:10; cf. Isa 44:8). Ibid., 308.

³Although rocks are recognized as providing shelter from a desert storm or from blazing sun. Pss 18:2; 31:2; 61:2-3; 71:3; Isa 32:2. Raymond Brown, *The Message of Deuteronomy: Not by Bread Alone*. The Bible Speaks Today, ed. J. A. Motyer (Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 294. Here in the song, the Rock not only shelters, but also threatens Israel with judgment (32:23-25). Indeed she had already experienced the judgment of Israel's one true Rock (32:15-18, 37) but the same Rock would ultimately vindicate and have compassion on the people (32:36). Dennis, T. Olson, *Deuteronomy and the Death of Moses: A Theological Reading*. Overtures to Biblical Theology, ed. Christopher R. Seitz (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), 140.

despised for their divine impotence (vs. 31), and for their lack of accessibility when needed (vs. 37).¹ Because Israel had applied the rock metaphor to foreign gods and had taken refuge in them,² the people were now being told to flee for help to the gods of their own making (implying their inferiority), and by way of contrast, to show the “ideological supremacy, even exclusivity” of Israel’s *Rock*.

The connection between progenitor gods and a mountain or rock becomes an important theme in the ANE. In the ANE context, *הַר* (mountain) and *צוּר* (crag or mountain) are frequent Amorite names of the second millennium, and generally became synonyms for “god” in Syria and Anatolia.³ In Ugaritic literature they are connected with El and his dwelling, and Baal’s Zaphon, a deified mountain and the setting of his frequent banqueting—both El and Baal were considered progenitors of life (cf. Deut 32:6).⁴ In Assyrian, the god Bel is called “great mountain”⁵ where there is an apparent association between the fertility of the mountain and the theme of storm theophany.

It is not surprising then to see *צוּר* as a synonym of God in early Hebrew literature, as it was a common concept at the time. The Song of Moses employs this theme as a polemic against the gods of other nations, contrasting the nurturing fatherhood of the God of Israel with the remoteness (vs. 37), self-indulgence (vs. 38), and even bitterness (vss.

¹Brown. *Deuteronomy*, 294-295. See also Tigay. *JPS Commentary*, 300.

²Knowles. *The Rock, His Work Is Perfect*, 316.

³Ibid., 314-315.

⁴Ibid., 317-318.

⁵Reider. *Holy Scriptures*, 299.

31-33) of the foreign father-gods. The fatherhood passage in Ps 89 adds more to the picture of God's fatherhood in the context of the Rock metaphor, when it speaks of God's long-term commitment to the line of David (vs. 29). Some commentators suggest that "the Rock of His salvation" (Deut 32:15; Ps 89:27[26]) and "the Rock that begot you" (Deut 32:18) combine the salvific function with that of the Life-giver, thus blending various aspects of the Canaanite deities and showing God's superiority over them.¹

The eagle

Another striking symbol of God's fatherhood is the eagle, and its use is in the context of a parent fluttering (רָחַף) over its young. This is a graphic representation of the nurture the Father-God provides His children. It is seen both at Creation and Exodus—first in the "Spirit" hovering (רָחַף)² over the primeval depths (Gen 1:2), then in leading His people through the wilderness of the Exodus by hovering over them (רָחַף) and carrying them on His "wings" (Deut 32:10-12).

The eagle is known for the way it cares for its young, especially in teaching them to fly.³ Peter C. Craigie notes that the picture of an eagle swooping down to recover its

¹For example, Knowles, *The Rock, His Way Is Perfect*, 317-318.

²"The verb רָחַף, attached to God's breath-wind-spirit (*ruah*) elsewhere describes an eagle fluttering over its young and so might have a connotation of parturition as well as rapid back and forth movement." Robert Alter, *Genesis: Translation and Commentary* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1996), 3. The verb occurs in Gen 1:2; Deut 32:11; and Jer 23:9.

³Brown, *Message of Deuteronomy*, 298. Von Rad notes that the Hebrew word נָשָׂא can designate either eagle or vulture (see Exod 19:4). Gerhard Von Rad, *Deuteronomy: A Commentary*, Old Testament Library, trans. Dorothea Barton (London: SCM, 1966), 152. Tigay points out that the verb used to describe the action of the parent eagle (רָחַף, the *hifil* form of רָחַף) means "to protect" in its present context. Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, 304. Victor P. Hamilton observes

young in their first faltering attempts at flight, is the picture given of God casting His people from their security to the fierce wilderness, yet remaining beneath them to support them for the ordeal, then gradually teaching them to fly on their own,¹ or as described in Isaiah (63:9) He bears (נָטַל) and carries (נָשָׂא) them. This implies a relationship between God (as the primary caregiver) and His people in which God allows for their growth. Benjamin Uffenheimer points out that the “eagles’ wings” metaphor originated in ancient Israelite epic tradition, and symbolizes God’s paternal care, “in other words, the intimate relationship between God and His people, which transcends any formal, legal definition or restriction.”² It is, therefore, not a relationship of manipulative control, nor of “growing fat” on the sweat of His subjects (as implied of the Canaanite gods in Deut 32:38). Rather it describes nurturing intimacy, and is a picture of an eagle flying high over rocky terrain, an eagle that had once been a fledgling under the tutelage of a skilled and caring parent—an eagle whose youthfulness has been renewed by the abundant provision of its parent (Ps 103:5).

This same picture is presented in the Creation account. Just as the eagle hovers (רָחַף) over its young (Deut 32:11), so did the Spirit of God hover (רָחַף) over the surface

that the Ugaritic form of the verb רָחַף (*rhp*) is always associated with eagles. Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1-17*, NICOT, ed. R. K. Harrison (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 115.

¹Peter C. Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, NICOT, ed. R. K. Harrison (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 381. See also Reider, *Deuteronomy*, 303.

²Benjamin Uffenheimer, *Early Prophecy in Israel*, Publications of the Hebrew Foundation for Biblical Research in the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1999), 141.

of the waters (Gen 1:2).¹ The same brooding, nurturing action is being described—one at the formation of the world at Creation, and the other at the formation of the people of God during the Exodus. The action of the “eagle” at Creation, acting as a parent, strengthens the relationship between the eagle motif and Creation. The link between Creation and Exodus is further strengthened in the description of the building of the Exodus sanctuary—where again the “Spirit of God” is active (Exod 31:3).² This is quite different from the ANE concept of the sexual activity of the gods at Creation that brought things into being. The Scriptural perspective still contains the idea of God’s fatherhood at Creation, but portrays it to be of a different nature, showing more of a parental concern for offspring rather than genetically linking divinity to the created realm.

Divine qualities

The third group of descriptors of God’s fatherhood is His divine qualities. Justice (משפט) encompasses all His transactions with humanity—all His ways are justice (Deut 32:4), and His hand “grasps justice” (משפט) as a sword to “provide atonement for His land and His people” (vss. 42-43). His throne is established on justice (משפט), and in Ps 103:6, He provides justice for “all who are oppressed” (vs. 6).

Associated with justice is faithfulness or trustworthiness (אמונה)—God is described as a God of truth (אמונה, Deut 32:4). The theme is most common in Ps 89,

¹Alter suggests the verb יָרָד may have the connotation of “parturition or nurture, as well as rapid back and forth movement.” Alter, *Genesis*, 3.

²John Sailhamer, *Genesis Unbound: A Provocative New Look at the Creation Account* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 1996), 112.

where it occurs seven times in which God's faithfulness is established in the heavens (vs. 3[2]), surrounds Him (vs. 9[8]) in the assembly of His people (vss. 2[1], 6[5]), and remains with King David (vs. 25[24]), unfailingly (vs. 34[33]), according to God's promise (vs. 50[49]).

Next comes truth. The root **אָמַן** (truth), when it occurs in this simpler form, speaks of God's words being true (2 Sam 7:28). When it is associated with **חֶסֶד** (covenant love) it is a quality that "goes before him" (Ps 89:15[14]), and is encouraged as an intimate part of human life as well (Prov 3:3), because that is the way they were made (Jer 2:21). When it is encouraged, the people will live in peace and equity (Mal 2:6).

The characteristic of God most commonly referred to among the "Father" passages is **חֶסֶד**, "covenant love," "kindness," or "faithfulness" which He swore to David (Ps 89:50[49]) and which He promised would never be taken from Solomon,¹ because He is slow to anger and abounding in **חֶסֶד** (Ps 103:8, 11). This covenant loyalty lasts forever,² goes before Him (vs. 15[14]), "crowns" His people (Ps 103:4), and draws them to God (Jer 31:3). It is a quality that needs to be valued by humans (Prov 3:3), and spoken of by them (Isa 63:7), and is remembered by God in them (Jer 2:2).

The Father-God is also described as righteous (**צַדִּיק**), and upright (**יָשָׁר**, Deut 32:4). Along with justice, His throne is established on righteousness (**צַדִּיק**, Ps 89:15[14]). This introduces the idea of equitable accountability—God, as Father, provides the ultimate

¹2 Sam 7:15; 1 Chr 17:13; Pss 89:25[24], 29[28]; 34[33].

²Pss 89 3[2]; 103:17.

court of appeal for His bickering children. He therefore tests a person for, and has pleasure in, their uprightness (יָשָׁר, 1 Chr 29:17). He blesses the home of the just person (צַדִּיק, Prov 3:33), straightens (יָשָׁר) their way (Prov 3:6), gives secret counsel (vs. 32), and encourages them (יָשָׁר) to rejoice in His presence (Ps 68:4[3]). This reflects the understanding of a Father-God who relates to persons as individuals, and vice versa, rather than a god who just relates to kings or people-groups as a corporate whole.

The two closely related synonyms רַחֵם (pity, the yearning of a mother) and אָהַב (love) also describe qualities of the Father-God. Marchel observes that it is the quality of love that distinguishes God's fatherhood, in large part, from the ANE view.¹ God crowns a person's life both with חֶסֶד and רַחֵם (Ps 103:4), and is slow to anger because of these two qualities (vs. 8), and because the yearning (רַחֵם) He has towards His people (vs. 13; Isa 63:7, 15). Because of God's "proactive" parenting style, His love (אָהַב) corrects His children (Prov 3:12). His fatherly love (אָהַב) is everlasting (Jer 31:3), even if it is not recognized (Mal 1:2), or is abused (2:11).

The People's Response

The Father-God's actions on behalf of His people stand in stark contrast to the people's incongruous response. In Deut 32:15, Jeshurun (Israel) "abandoned the God who made him, and treated the Rock of His salvation contemptuously." The "God who

¹Marchel, *Abba, Père!* 49. He notices that fatherhood in the ANE may signify domination and unlimited control, but in the OT it more often expresses goodness and love (Deut 32:6; Jer 3:4, 19; 31:9), or in relationship with the king (2 Sam 7:14; Ps 89:27), or simply that because of His goodness and love he is compared to a father (Ps 103:13; Prov 3:11, 12), or named explicitly as such (Ps 68:6).

made him” and the “Rock of His salvation” are equated in parallelism here, showing the intimate connection that exists between Creation and “salvation.” Note also that the concept of being made contains more than simply being brought into existence—it may allude to future security as well, and is illustrated by further uses of the word עָשָׂה (to make) in connection with the Father-God. Instead of David’s building a house for God, God declares that He will make (עָשָׂה) a house (therefore a future) for David (2 Sam 7:11). The Father-God prefers to be proactive in building nations and dynasties, rather than expecting people to build monuments to Him. God is the one who makes (עָשָׂה) a great name for the king (vs. 9; 1 Chr 17:8), to which David responds in a thanksgiving hymn about the great name God had made (עָשָׂה) for Himself in the Exodus (vs. 23). Compare this to the human attempts at making (עָשָׂה) gods (Jer 2:28), who only last as long as the people who make them, and are nowhere to be found when it really matters, “in the time of trouble” (Deut 32:37).

Discipline

Inevitably the question is raised concerning the use of divine power in the discipline of the Father-God’s children. An apparent discord is struck, for example, when the contrast is drawn between the parallel passages in 2 Sam 7:14 (“I will chasten him”) and 1 Chr 17:13 (“I will not turn aside my faithfulness from him”). In the first, the sense of justice and accountability is emphasized, while in the second, God’s covenant faithfulness and forbearance is. How is this contrast to be understood in light of God’s fatherhood?

Nature of the Father-God's discipline

The concept of God's fatherly discipline may be better understood by comparing a number of related words and expressions: the root יָכַח (reprove), the שֵׁבֶט אֲנָשִׁים (the rod of men), and the נִנְעָה בְּנֵי אָדָם¹ (the blows of the sons of humanity) in 2 Sam 7:14. The clarification of the intent behind the expression וְהִכַּחֲתִיו (then I will reprove him) is also crucial in understanding the nature of God's fatherhood. Similarly the instruments used for the reproof process (whatever that process is) must also be understood.

The root יָכַח appears 59 times in 55 verses,² with at least 33 of these carrying the sense of reproof or rebuking. All uses of the word are in the context of deciding between a perceived right or wrong, where a verdict is needed. So although יָכַח is translated as "reprove" or "rebuke" in about half of its occurrences, the sense that seems to predominate is that of accountability (of the "son") and an evaluative process to ensure it. Prov 3:12 brings out a further aspect—that "whom the Lord loves He corrects" (יָכַח). The LXX uses ἐλέγχω (to show someone their fault or error) consistent with the idea of evaluation and personal accountability.³

¹The two phrases are hapax legomena, and the verb they qualify becomes significant by association.

²Gen 20:16; 21:25; 24:14; 24:44; 31:37; 31:42; Lev 19:17; 2 Sam 7:14; 2 Kg 19:4; 1 Chr 12:18; 16:21; Job 5:17; 6:25, 26; 9:33; 13:3, 10, 15; 15:3; 16:21; 19:5; 22:4; 23:7; 32:12; 33:19; 40:2; Pss 6:2; 38:2; 50:8, 21; 94:10; 105:14; 141:5; Prov 3:12; 9:7, 8; 15:12; 19:25; 24:25; 25:12; 28:23; 30:6; Isa 1:18; 2:4; 11:3, 4; 29:21; 37:4; Jer 2:19; Ezek 3:26; Hos 4:4; Amos 5:10; Mic 4:3; 6:2; and 1:12.

³T. R. P. Dhorme confirms this with his definition for עוֹה with the *hifil* having the meaning of "d'être coupable." T. R. P. Dhorme, *Les livres de Samuel* (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1909), 329.

Mode of discipline

The expression **שֶׁבֶט אֲנָשִׁים**, “the rod of men” (LXX $\rho\acute{\alpha}\beta\delta\omega\ \acute{\alpha}\nu\delta\rho\omega\iota$), is used only in 2 Sam 7:14. The question remains whether it was a recognized colloquialism, and if so, what does it signify? Does it imply a “good” whipping, or does it correspond more to the idea of correction, education, and encouragement? Samuel Rolles Driver suggests that **יִכַח** (chasten) refers to “punishments such as all men incur when they sin, and from which the seed of David will not be exempted.”¹ Leonhard Rost qualifies this by adding that despite severe punishment, God would never permit His mercy to depart from the house of David.²

Similarly the parallel expression **נִנְעֵי בְנֵי אָדָם** (lit. the blows of the sons of man, rendered in the LXX as $\acute{\alpha}\phi\alpha\tau\iota\varsigma\ \sigma\iota\tau\omega\iota\ \acute{\alpha}\nu\theta\rho\omega\pi\omega\iota$ —“the touch of the sons of men”) occurs only in 2 Sam 7:14, and its meaning also needs to be understood in the context of when it was written. The question remains whether the qualifiers of **שֶׁבֶט** (rod) and **נִנְעֵי** (blows) are used in a subjective or objective sense, i.e., is the “rod of men” something that is generally used by “men,” or is it something used against them? Similarly, are the “blows of humanity” describing what people do, or what happens to them? In other words, is God being prescriptive or descriptive when He is talking of the consequences of

¹Samuel Rolles Driver, *Notes on the Hebrew Text and the Topography of the Books of Samuel: With an Introduction on Hebrew Palaeography and the Ancient Versions and Facsimiles of Inscriptions and Maps* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1913), 276; following Keil and Delitzsch who explain that it is “not with moderate punishment . . . but with such punishments as are inflicted upon all men who go astray, and from which even the seed of David is not to be excepted.” Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 346.

²Rost, *Succession to the Throne of David*, 49.

perversity? The use of the root **נָחַם** (reprove) in Jer 2:19 suggests the answer may rest with the latter option—“your own wickedness will correct (**נָחַם**) you.”

Sarna attempts to clarify the subject of discipline when he states: “It should be noted that the Hebrew root that underlies the word rendered ‘discipline’ refers primarily to religious and moral instruction, rarely to the development of the intellectual faculties.”¹ Therefore, it would appear that the intent of the phrase is to point to intended organic change in the behavior of the people of God.

Educative role of discipline

The term also recalls the statement “the one whom the Lord loves, He corrects,” “like a father” (Prov 3:12). Whybray notes that this verse is “the only passage in Proverbs which attempts an explanation of the apparent failure of God to give the expected reward to those who faithfully serve him.”² However, the language of Prov 1-9 is associated with the process of acquiring wisdom through the exercise of parental discipline—the son

¹Nahum M. Sarna, *On the Book of Psalms: Exploring the Prayers of Ancient Israel* (New York: Schocken, 1993), 201. The motive clause (vs. 12) in using the language of 2 Sam 7:14 affirms that the Father-God’s discipline is characteristically benevolent and an expression of love. McKane, *Proverbs*, 294.

²Whybray, *Proverbs*, 64. Delitzsch says similarly when he declares that just as God should not be forgotten in days of prosperity, nor should He be in days of adversity; Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary*, 90. Prov 3:12 also proves to be “a necessary corrective” for the mistaken notion that prosperity always accompanies piety, which some may derive from the previous verses. Scott, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes*, 47. This is an issue grappled with by the prophets (Jer 20:7-8; Hab 1:3), the psalmists (37:1ff.; 73:12-14) and the Wisdom writers (Job 9:22-24; 10:1-3; Eccl 9:2). See also Hos 6:1; Ps 94:12-13; and Job 5:17 for other biblical references to divine discipline.

becomes wise as he submits himself to the wisdom and discipline of the father.¹ This may imply corporal punishment as in Prov 19:18; 23:13, but Whybray argues that in this context discipline is not necessarily the result of wrongdoing, but is part of the educational process, and a sign of the father's love.² Boström observes that when מוֹסֵר (instruction), תּוֹכַחַת (reproof), and יָכַח (reprove) occur elsewhere in the book it is in the context of the educational activity of teacher or parent.³

Punishment without rejection

Chastening may be part of God's "fatherly" discipline, but any punishment is said to be transitory and not the norm in relationship interaction,⁴ unlike the outcome experienced by Saul and his house.⁵ It appears to be a case of fatherly care that punishes the transgressions of a son without rejecting him.⁶

This demand for obedience is also found in suzerainty treaties of the ANE.⁷ In the Akkadian texts, curses are directed at the failure of any future king of the dynasty to

¹William McKane. *I & II Samuel: Introduction and Commentary*. Torch Bible Commentaries. ed. John Marsh and Alan Richardson (London: SCM, 1963). 215. Carlson affirms that this is an idiom typical of the Proverbs. Carlson, *David, the Chosen King*. 124.

²Whybray. *Proverbs*. 64.

³Boström. *God of the Sages*. 223.

⁴Compare Isa 28:1 that speaks of God's punishment as a "strange act."

⁵Anderson. *2 Samuel*. 122. That this has importance as a function in the future. see Julius Wellhausen, *Der Text der Bücher Samuelis* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht. 1871). 172.

⁶Rost. *Succession to the Throne of David*. 50.

⁷Ackroyd. *Second Book of Samuel*. 79.

follow treaty stipulations: “May they overthrow his sovereignty. May they tear out the foundations of his royal throne. May they terminate his royal line. . . . May they destroy his name (and) his seed from the land.”¹

The father-son relationship of chastisement-protection is the same as that enjoyed by the people as a whole (Deut 1:31; 8:5; 14:1f), placing 2 Sam 7 in line with the description of the chosen king in Deut 17:14-20.² Note that God’s paternal sovereignty is described in terms of righteousness and justice, faithfulness and truth (Ps 89:15[14]), His throne administering justice on behalf of His people. Note also Ps 103, where the acts of God are mentioned in quick succession: He forgives, vs. 3; heals, vs. 3, redeems, vs. 4, crowns, vs. 4, and renews youth, vs. 5.³ Or as Parker expresses it:

The major premise in this psalm [103] is that God is like a father. He forgives and redeems his erring people. He is not an arbitrary, relentless administrator of justice meting out to men the precise retribution appropriate to their misdeeds. His judgment seat is a mercy seat where those who fear him are dealt with in loving kindness. He makes himself known by redemptive acts in history and in the personal experience of his saints.⁴

¹A.0.87.1 col. 8, lines 74-78, in Laato, *ANE Royal Ideology*, 252.

²Carlson, *David, the Chosen King*, 125.

³Anderson, *The Book of Psalms*, 2:713-714. Note that the parallelism between forgiveness and healing indicates that healing is the outward sign of forgiveness, just as disease and calamity are sometimes taken as the result of sin. Is there a similar parallelism between redeeming and crowning? Note also the eagle symbolism.

⁴Parker, *Psalms 103*, 192. This forms a corrective to the view described by Gunkel of the words of mercy and fatherly tenderness being “all the more sweeter” in comparison to the “flashes and peals of thunder,” and Yahweh hurling “himself into battle with a dreadful war-cry” sweeping away “whole generations of men in his anger!” See Gunkel, *Psalms 103*, 213.

Intimacy and Care

The description of a disciplined people returning from their diaspora is telling in this regard, with God coaxing the refugees back along a well-watered and level road (31:8-9) that is accessible enough for the most vulnerable of society—the blind, lame, pregnant, and those giving birth. He does not enforce their safety, but stands before them coaxing them along the path to restoration. This is consistent with the observations of Ps 103 in which the Father-God forgives, heals, redeems, crowns, and renews youthfulness (vss. 3-5). Therefore the covenant promises and demands become central constituents of the Israel-YHWH son-father relationship, being pivotal also to the concept of the relationship between YHWH and the Davidic line.¹

More than this, the Father-God's individual care is illustrated by, and is seen in contrast to, the almost exclusive ANE understanding of the fatherhood of the gods as being a corporate arrangement. The use of various titles for their divinities, like *Ba'al* (Lord), *Melek* (King), *'Adon* (Master), and *Mare'* (Lord), indicates that the people of the ANE recognized their relationship to their gods as servants, subjects, or vassals. However, the name *Ro'eh* (Shepherd) adds a "personal dimension to the association between deity and people," but it does not necessarily follow that a one-to-one relationship between deity and an individual is implied.² Every major city favored not one but several deities, and there was either official or unofficial recognition of many of the

¹Gerald Cooke. "The Israelite King as Son of God," *ZAW* 73 (1961): 225.

²Daniel I. Block. *The Gods of the Nations: Studies in Ancient Near Eastern National Theology*, 2nd ed., ETSS, ed. David W. Baker (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 61.

deities of other nations; however, those relationships did not express a one-to-one relationship.¹

On the other hand, the fact that people from outside the national group were welcomed as worshipers of a God who claimed exclusive worship suggests not only the universality of Israel's God, but the possibility of an individual to form a relationship with Him.² This is in contrast to the view popularized by Joachim Jeremias that, in the Old Testament, the only exception to God's fatherhood being exclusively a corporate one was on the few occasions when the king was said to have a personal relationship with Him.³ Jeremias suggests that there are only a few ancient references to the "title 'Father,'" but then the references become scarce; then he bravely asserts: "One looks in vain for God to be addressed as Father anywhere in the Psalter, or in any other prayer in the Old Testament."⁴

¹Ibid., 74.

²Ibid., 75.

³Jeremias, *Prayers of Jesus*, 21.

⁴Ibid., 24. He does this on the basis of differentiating between אָבִי (a statement) and אֲבִי (a vocative), suggesting that the non-vocative אָבִי is not as intimate as אֲבִי. See, for example, *ibid.*, 22-24, 57-65. He is sure that the word 'Abbā', which Jesus used exclusively as His address for God, is something "quite new, absolutely new." Joachim Jeremias, *The Lord's Prayer*, trans. John Reumann, Biblical Series, ed. John Reumann, no. 8 (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1964), 19. However, Joseph A. Grassi sees parallels between Mark 14:32-42 and Gen 22, and concludes that 'Abbā' is the address of a devoted and obedient son, and is used in both contexts when the LXX is used in the comparison. Joseph A. Grassi, "Abba, Father (Mark 14:36): Another Approach," *JAAR* 50, no. 3 (1982): 450. Robin D. Mattison suggests that Jeremias is more confident than is reasonable. Robin D. Mattison, "God/Father: Tradition and Interpretation," *RR* 42, no. 3 (Spring 1989): 191. "It appears that the evidence is being forced to fit the theory." Allen Mawhinney, "God as Father: Two Popular Theories Reconsidered," *JETS* 31, no. 2 (June 1988): 183. And Jeremias is said to press his arguments "harder than they ought to be pressed." James Barr, "'Abbā Isn't Daddy,'" *JTS* 39 (1988): 46. Willem VanGemeren counters Jeremias by affirming

Jeremias's assertion that the relationship between God and His people in the Old Testament was a personification or a collective description, and carries much the same significance as found in the collective expression "Our father,"¹ is simply unsupported by the biblical text. The Song of Moses describes God breast-feeding His children with the finest of food (including honey and olive oil, Deut 32:13-14), and likens God's fatherhood to an eagle that takes up the young in its wings and carries (אָנֵן) them, bringing them closer to himself.² The fact that Israel is described as a child rather than a vassal in the Song of Moses gives strong indication that this is not just a collective relationship.

The use of the keyword אָנֵן that implies the yearning of a mother, which commences even before the birth of a child, defines God's fatherhood relationship as something more than an impersonal collectiveness.³ In contrast to the ANE concept of the father-god engendering all Creation, God's fatherhood is defined by His qualities and His acts, not least of which is the implied description of the Creation of Adam and Eve, in close and intimate workmanship, giving Him the basis of an intimate knowledge of

that what Jesus did was nothing new, but was a restoration of the OT teachings of the love of YHWH, who related to His people as a father. Willem VanGemeren, "'Abbā' in the Old Testament?" *JETS* 31, no. 4 (Dec. 1988): 397. This is confirmed by Mary Rose D'Angelo who states that Jesus uses the title "Father" for God "with rather than against the stream of Jewish piety." Mary Rose D'Angelo, "Abba and 'Father': Imperial Theology and the Jesus Traditions," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 111, no. 4 (1992): 613. In conclusion, James Barr asserts that building a theology on one word must prove a failure; James Barr, "'Abba, Father' and the Familiarity of Jesus' Speech," *Theology* 91 (May 1988): 179.

¹Jeremias, *The Prayers of Jesus*, 21, n. 36.

²VanGemeren notes the fatherly intimacy of the action of a father lifting up his child to carry her. VanGemeren, *'Abbā' in the Old Testament?* 393.

³Ibid., 394.

humanity. In Ps 103:14, with the emphatic and conclusive statement *יָדַע* *בְּיָהוָה*, “He himself intimately knows,” there is no question of a personal acquaintance that moves beyond some tribal or national grouping. It is further seen in the address of the king to his son that he should “not forget” the correction he would receive from the Father-God who loved him (Prov 3:12).

It is understandable then for James Barr to affirm that building a theology on one word must prove a failure.¹ When Jeremias claims that “no Jew would have dared to address God in this manner” (i.e., *abba*, “the tender, filial address to a father”) he is simply mistaken.² Although there are no explicit statements that recount a human being addressing God as “Father,” the evidence points strongly in that direction, and the evidences of such a close and intimate relationship are seen across the spectrum of the Hebrew Scriptures.

At the Eschaton

Not only is the fatherhood of God apparent in His relationship to Creation, and in His covenantal activities, but it is also manifest at the *eschaton*. The account of the kings of the Davidic line clearly shows that the divine ideals were far from the norm. Even in the later part of David’s own reign, there is a marked discrepancy between the crises in his own household and the promises of 2 Sam 7.³ Yet despite this, there is an expectation of

¹Barr, ‘*Abba, Father*,’ 179.

²See Jeremias, *The Lord’s Prayer*, 19-20.

³Philip E. Satterthwaite, “David in the Books of Samuel: A Messianic Expectation?” in *The Lord’s Anointed: Interpretation of Old Testament Messianic Texts*, ed. Philip E.

messianic hope—a glorious future, made possible by the judgment and deliverance of YHWH.¹ Just as David may be seen as “the messianic prototype” in 2 Sam 7,² the father-son relationship between God and Solomon becomes a prototype of God’s “judging and saving activity with regard to the Davidic dynasty” that “takes on the character of a covenant formula”³ as well as becoming a sign of hope for the future.

Despite the “chastisement” heaped upon the kings (2 Sam 7:14; cf. 1 Chr 17:13), there is never any thought of God’s abandoning them—was not His discipline given as a Father to the one whom He loves (Prov 3:12)? The focus therefore moves beyond the immediate seed of David to the Messianic figure, and it would be inappropriate to apply discipline to such a one.⁴ In the public mind the Messianic figure must have become a

Satterthwaite, Richard S. Hess, and Gordon J. Wenham (Carlisle, England: Paternoster, 1995), 56, 59.

¹Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *The Messiah in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 15. Kaiser outlines seven provisions included in God’s promise for David’s dynasty: (1) “I will make your name great” (2 Sam 7:9; cf. Gen 12:2); (2) “I will provide a place for my people Israel and will plant them” (2 Sam 7:10; cf. Gen 15:18; Deut 11:24-25; Josh 1:4-5); (3) “I will give you rest from all your enemies” (2 Sam 7:11; cf. Deut 12:9; Josh 21:44-45; Ps 95:11); (4) “I will raise up your offspring [seed] to succeed you” (2 Sam 7:12; cf. Gen 17:7-10, 19); (5) David’s seed will “build a house for [God’s] Name” (2 Sam 7:13; 1 Kgs 8:18-20; 1 Chr 28:6, 7); (6) “I will be [your seed’s] father, and he will be my son” (2 Sam 7:14; cf. Exod 4:22-23; Ps 89: 26-27); and (7) David’s dynasty, kingdom, and authority will endure forever (2 Sam 7:16). *Ibid.*, 79. Brian E Kelly suggests that while Chronicles is not overtly messianic, elements of messianism are there. Brian E. Kelly, “Messianic Elements in the Chronicler’s Work,” in *The Lord’s Anointed: Interpretation of Old Testament Messianic Texts*, ed. Philip E. Satterthwaite, Richard S. Hess, and Gordon J. Wenham (Carlisle, England: Paternoster, 1995): 258; also Williamson, *Eschatology in Chronicles* 154. Williamson opines that although there is no overt messianic hope in Chronicles, at least there is evidence of a “realized or inaugurated eschatology.” *Ibid.*

²Kaiser, *Messiah in the O.T.*, 17.

³Kruse, *David’s Covenant*, 156.

⁴Kelly, *Retribution and Eschatology in Chronicles*, 159. The fact that the concept of chastisement is omitted in Chronicles may be due to its immediate historic context, in the midst of

symbol of hope that the apparently failed Davidic line could never have provided, either during the exile, or its aftermath.¹

If human monarchs failed in their obligation to their people to provide justice and accountability, then the Father-God would ultimately provide it. It was His **חֶסֶד** (covenant faithfulness) that first exalted David to the throne (Ps 89:28-29[27-28]), and it would be His faithfulness that would always sustain His people. This covenant faithfulness is seen in its eschatological setting in the chiasmic structure of Ps 68 discussed in chapter 2. The second part of the structure includes: smoke driven away, wax melts, wicked perish, righteous rejoice at the presence of God **מִפְנֵי אֱלֹהִים** (vss. 3-4[2-3]), and is paralleled by: earth shook, heavens dropped, Sinai moved—**מִפְנֵי אֱלֹהִים**—at the presence of God (vs. 9[8]). Although speaking in the first instance about the theophany at Sinai, these concepts

“divine chastisement.” For the range of other options in explaining the omission of chastisement from 1 Chr 17:13 see *ibid.*, 159-165.

¹Rost, *Succession to the Throne of David*, 49. A midrash on this chapter found in a Qumran fragment (4Q Florilegium) dating to the first century B.C.E. says this about vs. 14:

10. [“and the Lord de]clares to you that He will build you a House. And I shall raise up your seed after you and I shall establish the throne of his kingdom
11. [forev]er. I will be to him as a father, and he will be to me as a son”: He is “the Shoot of David” who will stand with the Interpreter of the Thora who
12. [will rise] in Zi[on at the En]d of Days as it is written: “And I will raise up the Booth of David which has fallen”. That is “the Booth of
13. David which has fall[en], w]ho will stand to save Israel.

This would support the idea of a Messianic hope at least in the immediate pre-Christian period. See Devorah Dimant, “4QFlorilegium and the Idea of the Community as Temple,” in *Hellenica et Judaica: Hommage à Valentin Nikiprowetzky* l’z. ed. A. Caquot, M. Hadas-Lebel and J. Riaud (Leuven: Éditions Peeters, 1986), 171; Peter R. Ackroyd, *The Second Book of Samuel*, Cambridge Bible Series, ed. P. R. Ackroyd, A. R. C. Leaney, J. W. Packer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 79; Daniel R. Schwartz, “The Messianic Departure From Judah (4Q Patriarchal Blessings),” *TZ* 37 (Sept.-Oct. 1981): 264-266. 4Q Florilegium was named and first published by J. M. Allegro, “Further Messianic References in Qumran Literature,” *JBL* 75 (1956): 176-177.

are reminiscent of eschatological scenes, especially in light of the ANE understanding of smoke as it relates to death.¹ Here is a reference to even death being deprived of its power over God's children. Therefore God's fatherhood stretches from the Creation of all things, through a history of His dealing with humanity in covenant, right up to the time of the eschaton, when the "unsatisfactory present" would be replaced by "a glorious future to be inaugurated by a coming descendant of David."²

What the Fatherhood of God Teaches about Humanity

The nature of the Fatherhood of God casts light on the nature of humanity in at least two ways. First, there are a number of themes that relate to humans as "sons," and then there are a number of ways in which the Fatherhood of God impacts on humans as fathers. Of the former, there are at least four major theological themes in the Father-God literature that contribute to the understanding of human beings living in the natural world: the election-covenant of Israel, the spiritual nature of "sonship," their negative reaction to God, and messianic hope.

¹One of the duties of a "faithful" son was to rescue his father's "smoke" from the underworld. See, for example, 4. CAT 1.17. I. 27-28, in Parker, *Ugaritic Narrative Poetry*, 53; 4. CAT 1.17. II 1-2, in *ibid.*, 55. The spirit of the dead was thought to ascend up in the smoke of a domestic fire before ending up in the realm of the dead.

²Satterthwaite, *David in the Books of Samuel: A Messianic Expectation?*, 65.

Humans as “Sons”

Election-Covenant

Although the father-son relationship is often seen in the Scriptures in the context of vassal servanthood, it is sometimes expressed literally.¹ These two options are not mutually exclusive but may be seen as complementary—treaty and adoption.² This transaction may be observed in some of the so-called “anointment” and installment oracles in the Psalms, which typically include an allusion to the king’s filial relationship to YHWH by adoption, the promise of an everlasting dynasty (because of a covenant with the “progenitor”), the promise of sovereignty over the nations, and an allusion to the great name in store for the king.³

Therefore, the initiator of the relationship is God, and His act of choosing makes it possible. For example, when God chooses (בחר)⁴ Solomon to be His son, a new

¹F. Charles Fensham, “Father and Son as Terminology for Treaty and Covenant,” in *Near Eastern Studies in Honor of William Foxwell Albright*, ed. Hans Goedicke (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1971), 130. See also Kim, *Psalms 89: Its Biblical-Theological Contribution*, 183.

²Kim, *Psalms 89: Its Biblical-Theological Contribution*, 181-183. See Lipinski, *Le Poème Royal*, 58-66, for a summary of ANE texts that refer to the vassal-suzerainty relationship in terms of fatherhood. Malamat refers to one ANE example, and compares it with God’s relationship with Solomon. The major distinction between Adad’s fatherhood of Zimri-Lim and that of God and Solomon was that Adad described his fatherhood using the word *paḥalli* “testicles” (cf. the euphemistic English terms “loins” or “thighs”), while God simply declared His fatherhood: “I will be His father,” “he will be my son.” Malamat, *Mari Prophecy*, 71.

³Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel’s Worship I*, 63. See 2 Kgs 23:31; 23:34; 2 Sam 12:24 for examples of kings who took a new “regal name” at their anointing as a symbol of close relation to God and promise of happiness and honor for him and his people. Note that the mention of the name of God in vs. 25 leads in to the titles that God gives David in vs. 27. See Lipinski, *Poème Royal*, 57.

⁴In the Hebrew Scriptures the verb occurs frequently with YHWH as its subject, and its object can be Israel (e.g., Deut 4:37), the site which Yahweh will choose for His name (e.g., Deut

relationship is formed, and Solomon assumes a new identity and a new role¹—he becomes a son of God (without losing his relationship to his biological father), and the one responsible for instituting the cultus in Jerusalem. As Dirksen observes: “God’s choice of Solomon as king and temple builder presupposes God’s election of David as the king who prepared for the building of the temple and the institution of its cultus.”²

“I shall be his father and he shall be my son” may be an adoption formula, but this is a “divine adoption,” not a legal transaction. Therefore it is “expressed in the most intimate terms possible: Solomon become God’s son, God his father.”³ Because of its connection with God, Solomon’s kingship is said to be everlasting, yet the “maintenance of the covenant depends upon the continued faithfulness of the Davidic house.”⁴ However, the Father-son bond “transcends even that of covenant: it goes beyond the voluntary, contractual status of a mere agreement between two parties and has become the necessary and inescapable tie as between members of the same family. It is a relationship that is irrevocable; the loyalty within it is unconditional.”⁵

Note the sequence of actions described in Ps 89 in the adoption process: choose

31:11), the Levites (e.g., Deut 18:5; 21:5), or the king (e.g., Deut 17:15). See Horst Seebass, “אֱלֹהִים.” *TDOT*, 2:87.

¹The Chronicler refers to God’s choice (election) of Solomon at least twice in David’s second speech (1 Chr 28:6, 10) and also at the beginning of the third (1 Chr 29:1).

²Dirksen, *Why Was David Disqualified as Temple Builder?* 55.

³Johnstone, *1 and 2 Chronicles*, 277.

⁴*Ibid.*

⁵*Ibid.*, 205-206.

(בָּחַר vs. 20[19]), anoint (vs. 21[20]), establish (בָּנִי), and strengthen His people (vs. 22[21]), beat down their foes (vs. 24[23]), ensure faithfulness (אֲמִינָה) and mercy (חַסֵּד vs. 25[24]), and keep covenant (וּבְרִית) with them forever (לְעוֹלָם vs. 29[28]). Also note the comprehensiveness of the action—it is not just a simple legitimization ceremony, but a lasting arrangement that ensures an extraordinary quality of life for the adoptee.

Cooke suggests that the acts of YHWH—election and covenant—are the basis of sonship.¹ Georges Auzou proposes that David is declared son of God in the sense of election, or adoption, not by natural means, hence avoiding the danger of declaring the king's divinity.² David's "election" is an isolated incident, for a specific purpose, and after David, no other biblical writer speaks of the election of any other king.³

Related to Solomon's sonship is the act of building the temple. The idea of building a house for God⁴ is in turn intimately related to establishing someone's lineage⁵ or

¹Cooke. *The Israelite King as Son of God*, 217.

²Auzou. *La Danse Devant l'Arche*, 290.

³Roddy Braun. "Solomon, the Chosen Temple Builder: The Significance of 1 Chronicles 22, 28, and 29 for the Theology of Chronicles." *JBL* 95 (1976): 589.

⁴Found in both 1 Chr 22:10 and 28:6 and mentioned a total of eleven times in the Hebrew Scriptures: 2 Sam 7:13; 1 Kgs 5:5; 8:19; 1 Chr 17:12; 22:110; 28:6, 10; 2 Chr 6:9; 36:23; Ezra 1:2; and Hag 1:8. The first eight of these refer to Solomon, the next two to Cyrus, and the last to the people of Haggai's time.

⁵Rachel and Leah were credited with building the house of Israel (Ruth 4:11). God promised to build Samuel a "sure house" (1 Sam 2:35). God promised to build David's house. In refusing a temple, God was also avoiding a comparison with the Canaanite sanctuaries, keeping alive the Sinai traditions embodied by the curtained tabernacle. The significance of this for the fatherhood of God is that God was also drawing a distinction between His relationship with David in contradistinction to other views in the ANE. See Auzou, *La Danse Devant l'Arche*, 285-286.

prosperity, e.g., 2 Sam 7:27.¹ The covenant spoken of in the vision of Nathan² is primarily concerned with the promise of a perpetual dynasty, whereas in Chronicles the relationship has a “more comprehensive significance” undergirding Israel’s identity as God’s covenant people, incorporating the earlier expressions of the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants.

Like circumcision to the covenant with Abraham (Gen 17), so temple building is the act of human obedience by which God’s covenant is accepted and confirmed.³ There is sometimes something tangible and obvious to mark the relationship between the Father-God and His people.

“Sonship” a Spiritual Relationship

As Anderson reports, the concept of God as father is an ancient one, found throughout the ANE, and emphasizes not physical, but social relationships. In the Scriptures this is noted, for example, in Ps 103 where the father-son relationship is maintained by obedience⁴—on the understanding that in a relationship between humans

¹See Ps 127:1. (Unless the Lord builds a house, the work is in vain); also, the wise woman builds her house. Prov 14:1; and it is by wisdom that a house is built. Prov 24:3.) In Deut 25:9 a man is cursed if he does not “build the house” of his dead brother by marrying his widow. Hence the provision for the foreign female in Malachi. Despite the possible misconstrued anti-Yahwistic misapprehension felt by the prophet’s audience, and by most commentators on the text, it must be remembered that foreign-born wives and their children have their place in Israel. Blake, *The Rhetoric of Malachi*, 332-333.

²2 Sam 7:12-16, 28-29; see also 1 Kgs 8:25-26.

³Selman, *1 Chronicles*, 179.

⁴Anderson, *Book of Psalms*, 2:715.

and Father-God, human activity is recognized as God-initiated.¹ When David prays that God would give Solomon not just a prosperous reign, but **שִׂכֵּל** (wisdom) and **בִּינָה** (understanding) to keep the **תּוֹרָה** (Torah) of God (1 Chr 29:2), it is on the understanding that the Father-God would provide these qualities.

When God declared that Solomon was to be His son, there was no thought of any son-deification or physical descent from God, as was the custom in Egypt, rather a unique relationship based on the concepts of adoption, covenant, royal grant,² and Creation. This is seen clearly in Ps 2:7 (an installment oracle),³ where the temporal “today” indicates the “symbolic nature of Yahweh’s adoption of the king.”⁴ It is also seen in the conscious attempts of the Bible writers (especially in Chronicles) to preserve the king’s relationship with his forefathers.

There is an unmistakable genealogical buildup to David (in 1 Chronicles) whose lineage could be traced back to Adam, therefore to Creation. Solomon is introduced as one of David’s sons (1 Chr 17:11), coming from his own organs (2 Sam 7:12), and his birth is described using the verb **יָלַד** (beget, 1 Chr 22:9), emphasizing his earthly origins. However, his relationship in regard to his Father-God is expressed using **הָיָה** (be/become)

¹David Novak observes that the relationship—at its most basic level—between humanity and God the Creator is essentially negative. “It only consists of prohibitions that function as divine limitations of human illusions of self-sufficiency and autonomous authority.” See David Novak, *The Election of Israel: The Idea of the Chosen People* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 119.

²A. A. Anderson, *2 Samuel*, WBC 11, ed. John D. Watts (Dallas: Word, 1989), 122.

³See Weiser, *Psalms*, 113.

⁴James L. Crenshaw, *The Psalms: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 78.

or בָּחַר (choose, cf. Ps 2:7). “There is no notion of actual generation. Yahweh adopts the new king.”¹ The Chronicler emphasizes that the king is human in both his relationship to God and in his status among men.² To ensure that distinction, Auzou affirms: “le roi d’Israël n’est aucunement une incarnation de la divinité ni un élu surhumain, il est le premier « élu » de Yahvé, le premier des « serviteurs de Dieu », l’ « oint » unique et par là le « fils » de Dieu en un sens singulier.”³

It was the anointing that lifted the king above the ordinary people and brought him into a special relationship with God by adoption.⁴ However, it would also bring the king “more firmly within the constraints of Yahweh’s fatherly discipline.”⁵

Endemic Human Ingratitude

The rebellious activity of the people in the aftermath of the Exodus is referred to in

¹deVries, *1 and 2 Chronicles*, 157.

²Japhet, *Ideology of the Book of Chronicles*, 415–417. Japhet also notes that to determine if there is a deification process, it is necessary to evaluate the ceremony involved, and the closest to this would be the anointing of a new king. In examining the three instances recorded in the Scriptures of the inauguration of David, Solomon, and Joash, we observe that David’s anointing (1 Chr 11:3; 2 Sam 5:3) is followed by three days of eating, drinking, and rejoicing (1 Chr 12:24–41 [23–40]). It is similar for Solomon (1 Chr 29:21–23), and the description includes mass participation, eating and drinking, and great rejoicing. For Joash (2 Kgs 11:12–14; 2 Chr 23:11–13) after the act of coronation, the giving of the testimony, a great shout from the people, and a great celebration led by the temple singers and musicians. In none of these instances is there any sign of sacral or ritual elements—the celebration has nothing to do with ritual. *Ibid.* 413–415.

³Auzou, *La Danse Devant l’Arche*, 291.

⁴Anderson, *The Book of Psalms*, 2:641–642. For a summary of the Scandinavian School (who promoted the idea of the anointing ceremony inducting the king as a god—Ps 2:7 is seen as key in this) and its opponents see Kim, *Psalms 89: Its Biblical-Theological Contribution*, 180–181. It seems that this idea has faded away in recent scholarship.

⁵Gordon, *1 & 2 Samuel*, 239; McKane, *1 & II Samuel*, 215.

Ps 89,¹ with the impression that it was not too long after the Exodus that things started going awry, with tension points developing to threaten the very existence of the covenant the fathers made with God. Jeremiah describes the tension between Israel's fickleness and God's resilient fidelity in the face of that fickleness,² at the same time offering the assurance that God's anger does not last forever—unlike the persistence of the people to maintain their rebellion.³ The fathers Abraham and Israel no longer count in such crises (Isa 63:16), and the people's pious talk of calling God "Father" only adds to their hypocrisy and infidelity,⁴ becoming manipulative for the purpose of material and social advantage.

In the "Song of Moses," the "foolish and unwise" people are compared to the Father who "acquired," "made," and "established" them (Deut 32:6). The comparison of Father-God's continual patience and tolerance and the people's stubborn rebellion and apathy makes obvious the contrast between them. The distinction is made between human impermanence and God's permanence (Ps 103:15-19), and God knows human limitation because "He remembers (זָכַר) that we are dust" (vs. 14). David addresses the disparity by asking "who am I and my people?" (Chr 29:14)—"we are aliens and pilgrims before you" (vs. 15).

Later, in the time of Malachi, the people were criticized for treachery to their

¹Motyer, *Prophecy of Isaiah*, 513-515.

²Brueggemann, *To Pluck Up*, 44-45.

³Freedman and Rosenberg, *Jeremiah: Hebrew Text and English Translation*, 19.

⁴Kidner, *Message of Jeremiah*, 35-36. See Harrison, *Jeremiah*, 67.

Father-God for playing on their relationship with Him. They had no qualms about offering Him second-rate dues, in contrast to their precise contributions according to the governor's requirements (Mal 1:7-8). This spiritual treachery bore fruit among them with brother judging brother (1:2-3), the implication being that God will again judge between brothers for their treachery so that God's name will again be "great" among "the nations" (1:11). A further implication is that the "heathen" of those other nations are better at revering God than His own children. The three biblical covenants specifically mentioned in the book of Malachi¹ strongly contend that one cannot render love and respect to God without loving and respecting a brother. This has profound repercussions for the covenant God has with His people. Perfidy towards humanity is infidelity towards God and compromises the relationship with Him.²

Humans as Fathers: What the Fatherhood of God Teaches about Human Fatherhood

The portrayal of the nature of God's fatherhood may provide several clues for the meaning of human fatherhood. It seems that the metaphor has been used for people in antiquity who could appreciate its significance, but in more modern times many of these

¹The covenants of Levi (2:8, based on Num 25:11-13), of the fathers (2:10—in Deut 4:31; 7:12-14; 8:18 it is the "patriarchal covenant," but in Jer 34:13 and 2 Kgs 17:15 it refers to the Sinai/Horeb covenant), and of marriage (2:14, cf. Deut 24:1-4). There are possibly others. McKenzie and Wallace, "Covenant Themes in Malachi," 549-553. Harrison suggests that at least two occasions contain the possible context for this covenant: Exod 32:7-24 where the zeal of the Levites was praised and "set apart" (vs. 29) when they put 3,000 of their own countrymen to the sword after the golden-calf incident; and Deut 33:8-11 which records Moses' blessing of the tribe of Levi before his death. George W. Harrison, "Covenant Unfaithfulness in Malachi 2:1-16," *CTR* 2, no. 1 (1987): 63-64.

²Vuilleumier, *Malachie*, 238.

principles seem to have been forgotten. Is it possible to glean insights of fatherhood from the ancients for the modern father? The following themes are offered as suggestions.

Life and Hope

First, the father provides life and hope for his children. Not only does life start in the act of proCreation, but the father's life (and that of the mother—see Gen 30:1) is given meaning as it is continued in the life of the child (Gen 15:2f.).¹ The passion for Solomon to pass on to his son the principles of life in order to enjoy a long and prosperous future (Prov 3) is an illustration of this. In this discourse the son is encouraged to fear God and to obey Him, and to depart from evil (vs. 7). A relationship with God—spoken of as wisdom—is portrayed as being superior to materialistic gain (vs. 15). This passing on of the faith and accumulated wisdom of generations is intended to prevent the inevitable destruction of the next generation, and may be aided by the use of ritual or family tradition. (In the context of the fatherhood of God, this last aspect is seen in the autumnal feast of booths.) Tradition, or a memory of the past, becomes important as a reality check for the present and a safeguard for the future—just as God “remembers (זָכַר) that we are dust” (Ps 103:14)—a father needs to help his own children know their limitations. But here lies the limitation of earthly fathers—they are finite, and their jurisdiction is limited to only a relatively short time. However during that time it is necessary for him to be consistent, remembering the Divine Father's eternal consistency.

¹Kruse, *David's Covenant*. 153-154.

Additionally, just as the Father-God's compassion is unconditional,¹ so too must be the earthly father's.

A Safe Place

Another aspect of fathering is seen in the need for God to "appoint a place" for His people, and to "plant" them where they would be free from the oppression of the "sons of wickedness" (2 Sam 7:10). After creating Adam and Eve He warned them to stay away from a certain spot in the garden (Gen 2:16-17). Fatherhood therefore involves providing a safe place for children, ensuring they are free from the molestation of evil people. The father will do all in his power to strengthen "the hand"² of his child against evil,³ in the first instance by explaining the problem of suffering, and addressing how to relate to it.⁴

Space for Growth

This leads to the role of the father in providing space (and opportunity) for his children to grow to maturity and independence. When God declared that He would create the human being, He first created living space for them, and made available "green plants for food"⁵—He provided "living space" for His children so that they could grow to

¹John B. Rogers. "Jeremiah 31:7-14." *Interpretation* 42, no. 3 (July 1988): 283.

²The hand of God was there to strengthen David's hand against evil, which was an ANE royal ideology inferring that the king was to be the son of divinity. Girard, *Psalmes Redécouverts II*, 480.

³See Ps 89:22-23[21-22]. 26-28[25-27].

⁴Murphy, *Proverbs*, 21; Fox, *Proverbs*, 153.

⁵Ohler, *The Bible Looks at Fathers*, 208.

independence.¹ And just as God is depicted as a parent eagle stirring up its nest, and leading its young through the wilderness (presumably a picture of a parent eagle teaching its young to fly), the father is to ensure that his children will be able to travel through the “wilderness” as individuals in their own right. This places a fine line between providing safety and security, and providing challenge and even risk to ensure the healthy maturity of his children and to avoid producing an overprotected child ill-equipped to face life on his/her own.

Identity

Part of a person’s identity in the ANE was his or her father, hence in the story of Doeg slaying the priests (1 Sam 21:7; 22:18-22), he is simply introduced as Doeg the Edomite, essentially “a fatherless man.” But David is introduced as the “son of Jesse” (1 Sam 16:18).² The Father who offers identity to the fatherless, legal protection to widows, a sense of belonging to the estranged, and an economic future to the released prisoner therefore provides another important role to the earthly father. Identity is not only important in the ANE, but is a necessary function of modern existence too, and it is up to the father to provide that identity for his children—an identity that provides for the basic needs of his family—legal protection, a sense of belonging, and financial security. There is even a hint here that the father (with his family perhaps) will be involved in assisting the disenfranchised around him in those three matters as well.

¹Ibid., 176.

²Ibid., 46.

Discipline

Then there is the matter of discipline (יִצְחָ), prominent in 2 Sam 7:14 and also featured in Prov 3:12. In the former, the Father's discipline is explained as a part of His חֶסֶד (covenant faithfulness, or grace), while in Prov 3:12 the motivation is love (אַהֲבָה). The Father-God corrects or reproves His favorite son—the ones He loves. As in the case of Solomon and his son, there is no thought here of dread about the possibility of God's bringing disciplinary action, nor is there a distrust of His motives. The simple matter-of-fact statement given by the father to his son is that any discipline administered by God is evidence of His fatherly love for the one being disciplined, with the promise to the obedient king of sharing God's wisdom—described in the chapter as His creative powers—in the progress and prosperity of the realm.

“Covenant Faithfulness”

Undergirding all the above is the need to maintain continuing transgenerational contact with the Father-God. In its most obvious form, this may be achieved in the contemplative moments snatched midstream in the process of daily existence (cf. Deut 6:6-7). In less obvious ways it may involve the need to protect a child from his/her persistence for a present whim that could jeopardize not only his/her future well-being, but that of the entire family. From David's perspective, this protection would be guaranteed by asking God to establish (כִּוֵּן) the intent of the hearts of the people toward their Divine Father (1 Chr 29:18-19). Only He could ensure that the people would maintain a “loyal heart” (vs. 19) forever (vs. 18)—manifested in their allegiance to the Torah. In other

words, the efforts of a father to train his children must include a firm moral foundation undergirded by not just a respect for the earthly parent, but an appreciation of the Divine Father's love and **חֶסֶד** (faithfulness, grace).

Intimacy and Care

Finally, the basic presupposition for the above concepts is the aspect of the Father-God's passion for fathering seen initially in the choice of divine name in the context of the "Father" passages¹—in the majority of cases it is YHWH who is Father. The remarkable picture of YHWH stooping over the form of Adam to sculpt him from clay and then His careful construction (**בְּנָה**) of Eve has already been noted. This imminent, intimate, and passionate fatherhood-style is depicted in poetic language as breast-feeding them (Deut 32:13) as He cares and provides for the needs of His children. In this most intimate way of nourishing a child the poet of the Song of Moses graphically portrays God as the primary care-giver—a metaphor extended in the same chapter by the added symbolism of an eagle nurturing the growth and development of its young.

How God's intimate parenting style impacts human fatherhood is significant—showing fatherhood to be passionate about the healthy outcome of children. The process is not characterized by stern overbearing despotism—to the contrary it showcases a dad who enjoys being in the company of his children, and who plays a major part in their maturation through each of their developmental stages.

¹There are only three texts that use either **אֱלֹהִים** (*Elōhīm*, Ps 68:6[5]), or **אֱל** (*El*, Ps 89:27[26] and Mal 2:10), with the majority utilizing the intimate name for God—YHWH.

Conclusion

A comparison of the Creation accounts of the ANE nations vis-à-vis that of Israel is most telling in the determination of organic difference between the various theologies of divine fatherhood in the region. Aside from the obvious difference of sexual vs. non-sexual origins, God is pictured, as opposed to the manipulative or accidental origins of humanity in the Sumero-Akkadian or Egyptian accounts, as showing forethought, design, dignity, blessing, provision, and satisfied approval (Gen 1) and stooping over to form Adam, then to construct Eve (Gen 2).

That God's fatherhood is linked to Creation means He is recognized as a Father for all time and for all Creation, so that no one people have exclusive rights on Him. This universality is also recognized in the fact that there is no time or place in which He is unable to be Father to His children. He is always there for them, and nothing—from either the natural or supernatural realm—is able to separate Him from them. This again is in contrast to the impotence, remoteness, inaccessibility, self-indulgence, and bitterness (Deut 32:31-38) of the gods of the ANE.

In His fatherhood, God is seen as the primary care-giver of His people. His relationship with them is not a relationship of manipulative control, nor of "growing fat" on the sweat of His subjects (as implied of the Canaanite gods in Deut 32:38). Rather it describes a nurturing intimacy that promotes the growth of children in every way. Sometimes this may involve a process of equitable accountability, where God, as Father, provides the ultimate court of appeal for His bickering children, and sometimes this means their encouragement, correction, or education. But above all, His parenting style may be

best described in terms of the two closely related synonyms אָהַב (pity, the yearning of a mother) and אָהַב (love).

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Summary

Father-gods in the ANE

Sumer-Akkad

The Sumerians enjoyed a relationship with five father-gods: An, god of the heavens, supreme ruler, source of fertility and prosperity, and of the wisdom of the sages; Enlil, his son, god of the air who freed up the stalled creation process (hindered by the locked embrace of heaven and earth), facilitating all political order, and all pastoral, cultic, and royal activity, and who eventually became head of the pantheon to replace his father; Enki, the storm god, brother of Enlil and third in rank in the pantheon, given the responsibility of completing the creation process from the sketchy plans of Enlil his brother, known for his procreative powers (just as his father An copulated with the earth to ensure her great fertility, so did Enki copulate with the Tigris-Euphrates to ensure plentiful irrigation and harvest—both were called “bull” for their sexual prowess), and important for his role in providing social order; Nanna, the moon god, known for his role in judging the land; and Utu, the sun god, and father of humanity, appreciated for his care over them. The fact that each Sumerian had a personal god, viewed as a parent-figure,¹

¹Jacobsen. *Treasures of Darkness*, 158. This is opposed to the usual god-human relationship, that of master-slave. Ibid.

suggests that the relationship with the father-gods was not a personally satisfying one, but was considered a necessity to ensure abundant harvests, fertile herds, and social harmony. This is despite the perception of Enlil as a “friendly, fatherly deity who watches over the safety and well-being of all humans, particularly the inhabitants of Sumer.”¹ The personal needs were met by the personal gods who provided for initial existence at the act of conception, subsequently acting as provider, protector, and intercessor, and expecting at the same time, honor and obedience²—understood from a Sumerian perspective, where the father was respected, but the mother was feared.³

The Akkadians (in the extant literature) do not talk often of father-gods, and the concept is found only in the *Enuma Elish*. Here is described the account of Apsu and Tiamat,⁴ the original parents of the Akkadian pantheon. Father Apsu becomes annoyed at the noise of all the children (deities) surrounding him, and he decides to kill them. His plan is discovered, and he is killed before he can execute his wishes. In retaliation, mother Tiamat becomes the ogre, and begins to kill off the gods (her own children) in revenge. Marduk emerges as the hero and leading deity of the pantheon, when he dispatches her, splitting open her body, and creating heavens and earth from its two halves. The creation of humanity follows, facilitated by the death of another god whose blood is mixed with

¹Kramer, *History Begins at Sumer*. 89.

²Jacobsen, *Treasures of Darkness*. 158.

³Kramer, *Poetry of Sumer*. 68.

⁴Cf. Enki, third in rank in the Sumerian pantheon, who dwelt in his temple, the *Abzu*. Abzu is linguistically the same as *Apsu*—both Enki and Apsu were gods of the reserves of fresh water.

clay. Amidst all this violence, the leading god is identified as the father of the gods, and recognized as the progenitor-creator, the judge,¹ the one presiding over the council of the gods, and the source of wisdom.²

Egypt

The Egyptians recognized five father-gods. They were Nun (or Ptah), Rē^c (or Ra, originally known as Atum), Shu, Geb, and Osiris. At first, Rē^c was the prime deity of the pantheon, popular as the Bull of the Heliopolitan *Ennead*, therefore the one responsible for the fertility of field and herd. However, he was unpopular with the people at times because of his “oppression” (presumably his oppressive noon-day heat), and he punished them by allowing his daughter Hathor (as Sekhmet the lioness) to destroy many of them. The slaughter stopped when Rē^c stepped in to maintain cosmic balance, but the aging god decided he should separate the realm of the gods from humans, so he separated the heavens from the earth.

However, he later became very popular in Thebes, especially as the youthful (pre-noon) Rē^c-Harakte. He was appreciated for his “sweetness” and love by the common people. Screeching baboons, the Horizon-Dwellers, the Ones in the southern sky, the Ones in the northern sky, and the Ennead were all said to adore him and kiss the ground before him.³ He was particularly appreciated, though, for his role in the afterlife. He

¹II.2; Scheil. *Fragments de la Légend du Dieu Zū*, 14; *ANET*, 111.

²VII.81; Langdon. *Babylonian Epic of Creation*, 201.

³Spell 1544.2-3; Allen. *Book of the Dead*, 19.

made resurrection possible (by providing a ladder up to the realm of the gods), he sent messengers to accompany the dead pharaoh from the earth to the realm of the gods, and he was the provider in the afterlife.

But it was Osiris that was most adored, and he became the central figure in the religion of ancient Egypt.¹ His cultus celebrated life and fertility rather than death, which is how the other father-gods of Egypt were appreciated. The Osiris myth also engendered strong family loyalties and devotion,² and his festivals and processions were popular with the common people. Therefore, the Egyptian father-gods were appreciated most for their role in creation (emphasizing their sexual prowess), and in the resurrection of humans from the dead.

Ugarit

The Ugaritic pantheon was presided over by El, whose fatherhood was seen in the context of being both creator and king. El did not physically conceive all the gods; he crafted some out of clay as well, yet he is still referred to as “father of the gods,” and is the only god in the Ugaritic pantheon spoken of as “father” in relation to both gods and humanity. As “father of man” he provides progeny for his earthly subjects and sufficient resources to maintain them, as seen in both the Kirta and Aqhat epics. He is appreciated as being kind and merciful (his name *Ltpn*, means mercy, one of his major attributes).³

¹Budge. *Osiris* 1. xi.

²Griffiths. *Plutarch's de Iside et Osiride*. 344-345: ANET. 12-13.

³nt.pl. ix:III:21. in Gordon. *Ugaritic Literature*. 25.

The story of Kirta also demonstrates a two-way relationship between the father-god and his children, with the importance of filial duties being highlighted, implying that there are a number of advantages to the god for having a virtuous “son.” However, other stories illustrate apparent ineptitude, when, for example, Yamm and Nahar demand Baal from the assembly of gods, and the apparently weak father accedes to their demands. Mot (death) swallows Baal, and it seems that all El can do is to display helpless despair. Similarly, on two separate occasions, ‘Anat threatens to bloody El’s head, first for refusing Baal’s request for a house, and then for unwillingness to grant her permission to seek vengeance against earthling Aqhat for refusing to give her a bow that she covets from him.

Divine fatherhood is here demonstrated to be somewhat pliant in the hands of demanding children, rather than harsh and vindictive as sometimes portrayed. But there may be another aspect to this question. It could be that we see here an example of power transition from the older god to the younger, and El’s delay before manifesting his divine prerogative may demonstrate the principle of his deliberate and measured response to the premature demands of his children. When Baal asked for a house, he may have in fact been asking for the kingdom, and El was not yet ready to hand over his monarchy to Baal. This principle is illustrated in the Kirta epic, when Kirta gives an ancient curse to his son for presuming that it is time for the younger to replace the elder—“May Horon crack, my son, May Horon crack your head.”¹

Finally, the figure of Bull-El also illustrates the fatherhood of El. Not only was

¹3. CAT 1.14. VI. 54- 58. in Parker, *Ugaritic Narrative Poetry*, trans. Edward L. Greenstein, 42.

Bull-El appealed to when a sin offering was made—it was said to be carried to “the father of the gods”¹—but also as “Bull-El” he was the “Creator-of-Beings” (an obvious fertility symbol), providing future prosperity for human dynasties, connecting El to the hope and the fortunes of his human subjects. His “Bull” nature became the guarantee for future generations to keep family dynasties alive.

However, the same metaphor contains the aspect of judgment with a statement by the “luminary of the gods, Shapsh,” to Athtar, a deity who attempted to displace Baal: “He will shatter the sceptre of your rule!”² This provides checks and balances for when a human or divine subject oversteps the bounds. Therefore Bull-El is recognized as being progenitor, king, savior, and judge.

Father-God in the Old Testament

Of the eighteen explicit references to the Father-God in the Hebrew Scriptures, five of them refer to David and his dynasty, and the remainder speak of a relationship between God and Israel. One of these references is in the Song of Moses, five in the vision of Nathan corpus, four within the hymnic and wisdom literature, and eight within the prophets.

¹Gordon, *Ugaritic Literature*. Text 107.2:15-19. 109.

²KTU 1.2 iii 15-17. in Wyatt, *Religious Texts from Ugarit*, 52; KTU 1.6 vi 26-29 in Wiggins, *Shapsh, Lamp of the Gods*, 336.

The Song of Moses

The Song of Moses follows the pattern of a Hittite suzerainty treaty, as also observed in the book of Deuteronomy,¹ coming in the last part of the arrangement that ensures covenant continuity. The poem commences with a universal appeal, with heavens and earth (i.e., all in heaven and all on earth—all Creation) being asked to pay attention. There is an implied note of disbelief that people could be so foolish as to ignore or even reject their Father, in comparison to His complete trustworthiness (as implied by the Rock symbol).

Instead of God being the Suzerain Lord as in the rest of the book of Deuteronomy, and Israel His vassal people, in chap. 32 the relationship is that of a parent and child. Two metaphors are used to describe the Father-God and His relationship with His people—the Rock and the eagle. The Rock gives them abundant garden produce, “breast-feeding” (יִנֵּק) them with honey from rock and oil from the “flinty” Rock (a suggestion of plenty despite apparent prevailing adversity), leading them to “ride on the heights of the earth.” The eagle hovering (רָחַף) over its young (possibly a reflection from the Creation story which describes the action of the spirit hovering [מְרַחֵף] over the waters, Gen 1.3), and bearing them up on its pinions, is symbolic of how the Father-God carried His people while they were in the desert (Exod 19:4). But more than that, just as an eagle teaches its

¹Sanders, *Provenance of Deuteronomy* 32, 12-13; Nigosian, *Song of Moses*, 12-13; Labuschagne, *Song of Moses*, 94-98. Although some have previously thought of this Song as a “Covenant Lawsuit” or *rib*, George Mendenhall (for example) now considers the term inappropriate. See Mendenhall, “Samuel’s ‘Broken Rib,’” 70. See also de Roche, *Yahweh’s Rib Against Israel*, 574; and Daniels, *Is There a »Prophetic Lawsuit« Genre?* 360.

young to fly, “God is father in order to assist Israel to a life of responsibility for itself.”¹

This is a very different way of picturing fertility from the ANE “bull.”

The Father-God’s actions seem to clarify the “making” and “establishing” first mentioned in vs. 6. He is the Father who establishes—in His making He acquires, and in His acquiring, He makes—paralleling Creation and Exodus. Because He is the universal Father, He gives “inheritance to the nations” (Deut 32:8-9), as the ANE human father would divide the inheritance among his sons, ensuring a future for all of his children. As Father, He is seen as trustworthy, all-providing, nurturing, covenanting long-term, and universal—largely on the basis of Creation.

The Vision of Nathan

There are a number of parallel passages in Samuel-Kings and Chronicles² in which there is reference to the Vision of Nathan, court prophet in the time of David. The issue primarily is whether or not David will build a temple—a natural desire for an ANE king after successful military campaigns³—but the outcome is an answer from God that because he is a man of blood, he may not build (1 Chr 28:3). Furthermore, God declares that He will build a house (dynasty and kingdom) that will last forever. This act of

¹Ohler, *The Bible Looks at Fathers*, 186. “God wishes for responsible sons and daughters who ‘fly’ in their own strength, hence God bringing Israel to Sinai, the place of the Law.” Ibid., 214.

²See Graham, Hoglund, and McKenzie, *Chronicles as Historian*, 232-233.

³Gordon, *1 & 2 Samuel*, 236. See also ANET, 66-69. In *Enuma Eliš*, after Marduk defeats Tiamat, he sets out to build a temple (Esharra IV. 141-146), and after slaying Kingu, he builds Esagila (VI.50-68), establishing a pattern of success in war, followed by temple-building. See also Hurowitz, *I Have Built You an Exalted House*, 93.

“raising up” or “establishing” is focused on David’s son Solomon, whom God declares now to be His son. In the earlier account in 2 Sam 7, the promise to establish Solomon’s throne (vs. 13) is contingent on his not committing iniquity (vs. 14), yet God’s covenant faithfulness (חֶסֶד) would always remain with the king (vs. 15). In the parallel account in 1 Chr 17, the iniquity-discipline clause is omitted, and in its place there is a long contextual buildup reminding Solomon that his origins are very earthly, as his genealogy can be traced back to Creation (chaps. 1-9). Only after this lineage is established is Solomon called the son of God.

In Chronicles, the emphasis seems to be moving more towards promise and hope rather than the faithful cooperation of the king with the will of God. It may be because of the postexilic perspective, while the bitter aftertaste of Babylonian captivity is still with them. However, the play on words paralleling Solomon’s name (שְׁלֹמֹה) and peace (שָׁלוֹם) in chap. 22:9-10 is linked to wisdom (שִׂכְלָה), understanding (בִּינָה), and the law of God (תּוֹרָה) in vs. 12, and to “properly observing” the statutes and judgments given to Moses (vs. 13). Therefore the promotion of a positive lifestyle as opposed to committing iniquity is still there as an important component of the Father-son relationship. As all the various Nathan-vision passages are compared, it is interesting to note the repetition of certain phrases (see table 1 above), but it is also important to note what each of the chapters highlights in their accounts. In 2 Sam 7:14, it is the word יָכַח “chasten” that becomes the point of focus; in 1 Chr 17:13 it is God’s faithfulness (חֶסֶד); in 1 Chr 22:9 it is peace (שָׁלוֹם) and serenity (וַשְׁקֵט); and in 1 Chr 28:7 (repeated in chap. 29:19) it is

commandments (מצוות) and judgments (דְּמוֹתֵי) —each of these highlights the main characteristic of the relationship spoken of in the various accounts, and each becomes relevant to the context in which it is given.

The need remained, as alluded to in Deut 32, for God to “appoint a place” for His people, and “plant” them where they would be free of oppression from the “sons of wickedness” (2 Sam 7:10). As a Father, God’s faithfulness (חֶסֶד) would ensure it, and David’s prayer for God to establish (בִּי) the intent of the hearts of the people toward God (1 Chr 29:18-19), and for the king to maintain a “loyal heart” (vs. 19) forever (vs. 18)—manifested in their allegiance to the Torah—was a hope that was maintained throughout. More than that, the Father-son relationship between God and Solomon becomes the sign of future hope, and as eternity is mentioned in each instance, it would suggest that even if Solomon failed, God’s covenant with His people would still stand עַד-עוֹלָם—forever. Therefore, God’s fatherhood is seen, in this context, in terms of divine choice—election—yet it is a two-way relationship, one that is nurturing, intimate, and based on חֶסֶד, God’s covenant faithfulness.

Hymnic and Wisdom Literature

Ps 68 is divided into three parts, with the action taking place around three mountains—Sinai, Bashan, and Zion.¹ The first part of the Psalm (vss. 2-11[1-10]), a chiasmic structure with “Father” at the center, is a powerful picture of God riding a chariot up to Sinai, while smoke is driven away, wax melts, wicked perish, righteous rejoice (vss.

¹Fokkelman in a private communication with Robert Alter. cited in Alter. *Psalms*. 256.

3-4[2-3]) and earth shakes, heavens drop, and Sinai moves at His presence (vs. 9[8]). Enemies being driven away like smoke reflects the Ugaritic concept of death,¹ so the “great rejoicing” (vss. 4-5[3-4]) was an acknowledgment of God as Father defeating the powers of evil and the underworld.

The intensity builds in the Psalm with God riding a chariot through the desert plains to meet His people at Sinai, then before the second mountain He is among untold thousands of chariots at Mt. Bashan (vs. 18[17]), while in the third section he rides through the heavens to get to His sanctuary on Mt. Zion (vs. 25[24]). The depicted meeting of God with His people at each mountain becomes more magnificent than the one preceding it, and shows Him to be in control over ever-widening aspects of Creation.

The main thing that emerges from the Psalm, relative to God’s fatherhood, is the description of God as the Father who offers identity to the fatherless, legal protection to widows,² a sense of belonging to the estranged, and an economic future to the released prisoner. Although not explicitly stated, the impression given here is an individual relationship enjoyed between the people and their Father-God, especially the downcast among the people, a concern for society’s vulnerable that is unprecedented in ANE literature. God leads the prisoners out (אֲנִי, vs. 7[6]), leads (אֲנִי) His people through the

¹One of the duties of a “faithful” son was to rescue his father’s “smoke” from the underworld, e.g., 4. CAT 1.17. I. 27-28, in Parker, *Ugaritic Narrative Poetry*, 53. The “life” of the dead was depicted as departing through the nostrils “like a breath,” “like a sneeze,” or “like smoke” before going to the realm of the dead. See 5. CAT 1.18. IV. 24-26, 36-37 Ibid., 66.

²Compare the story of the “Protests of the Eloquent Peasant,” in *ANET*, 408, in which the chief magistrate in the story is called “father of orphan,” “husband of the widow,” by the peasant (from the early 21st century B.C.E.). See also Le Peau, *Psalm 68*, 86.

desert (vs. 8[7]), and acts as judge (יָדֵן) to restore legal rights,¹ because He is “Father.”

Ps 89 depicts the fatherhood of God from the perspective of the Davidic covenant, but there is a contrast between the first half of the Psalm, extolling the relationship, and the second, in which the psalmist laments at its apparent demise. Using stronger language than the accounts of the Nathan oracle,² the Psalm builds on a foundation of power in defeating the mighty monster (Rahab) of the primeval sea. His subsequent “deeds of righteousness” and victorious help for His people. So here again we see Creation and Exodus linked as a rationale for covenant.

In the lament that follows, God has apparently cast off His anointed, and the covenant appears to have been laid aside, hence the concluding query, “How long?” The Psalm ends without any apparent resolution. To heighten the tension, a number of significant word pairs are repeated throughout the Psalm³ that emphasize covenant. Further, the anger (vs. 39[38]), lack of support in battle (vs. 44[43]), the throne being cast to the ground (vs. 45[44]), and the taunts and mocking of the enemy (vs. 51[50]), plus the implied rebellion (vss. 31-33 [30-32]) and idolatry (reference to Mt. Tabor and Hermon)⁴

¹Anderson, *The Book of Psalms*, 1:519-520. See also UT, 2 Aqht.v:7-8. *ydn dn almnt ytpi tpt ytm*. “He judges the case of the widow, defends the cause of the fatherless.” referring to El. The protection of widows and orphans was one of the specific tasks of the ideal king. See also Dahood, *Psalms II*, 136. Rashi applies the term “orphans” to Israel, based on Lam 5:3, “we have become orphans, fatherless.” and Lam 1:1 that says of Israel, “She became like a widow.” Gruber, *Rashi’s Commentary on Psalms 1-89*, 300-301.

²Goulder, *Psalms of the Sons of Korah*, 230.

³חֶסֶד (faithfulness) with אָרָם (arise), אֱמוּנָה (fidelity), and בְּרִית (covenant), with שָׁבַע (to swear); בָּנָה (to build); כִּוֵּן (to establish); and עוֹלָם (eternity).

⁴Goulder, *Psalms of the Sons of Korah*, 220-229.

of the people, show the friction points between them and God leading to potential covenant disintegration. One possible resolution to this tension is the Psalm's chiasmic structure, bound by the parallel phrases at opening and conclusion, "kindness of the Lord, forever" **חַסְדֵי יְהוָה עוֹלָם** vs. 2[1], and "blessed is the Lord, forever" **בְּרוּךְ יְהוָה לְעוֹלָם** vs. 53[52], and climaxed at its center by "you are my Father" **אַתָּה אָבִי** vs. 27[26]. It is only by the fact that God is Father that the covenantal promises given to David have any hope of being fulfilled for his descendants.

The grand themes found in Ps 103 give five main points elucidating the fatherhood of God. The first is included in a pair of hendiadys "heavens" and "earth" (vs. 11) and "east" and "west" (vs. 12), that not only imply the Father's enthronement over the realm of Creation, but His ability to remove human sin to the utmost borders of that Creation. Second, the Father's **חֶסֶד** (covenant faithfulness), a keyword in the Psalm, and parallels the boundlessness of His realm. The third elucidation is the term **רַחֲמִים** (compassion), which seems to imply the very "gut" of God being twisted with anxiety for His children; which is related to the memory of God—He remembers (**זָכַר**) that "we are dust," He knows human limitations, and is sympathetic to the cry of His people. Finally, just because God claims to be our Father does not imply that humans become gods in the process. His fatherhood is balanced against human origin from the dust of the earth, and distances itself from any notion of innate or even bestowed divinity for human "children."

Finally, Prov 3 provides a fascinating possibility for a king-prince father-son dialogue plucked from the dynastic protocols to ensure long-term perpetuation of the Davidic covenant. This becomes an anthropomorphism of the divine-human relationship.

A number of keywords appear in the chapter that are found throughout the Nathan-oracle corpus, the most significant of which is probably נָחַם (reprove). Here in this chapter is revealed a possible background glimpse into the attempts to maintain the dynasty, as the king explains the expectations of the covenant to his heir. Using the vehicle of wisdom teachings—which gives a twofold representation of practical piety, “Fear God and depart from evil”¹—God’s creative power is promised to the obedient “son.” The gaining of wisdom (vss. 14-15) is “clearly superior to any material gain that precious objects could achieve,”² and failure to heed it would result in personal and national disaster. However, as vs. 6 clearly points out, discipline administered by God is evidence of His fatherly love for the one being disciplined, and is upheld by the promise that the wisdom of God is available to the one cherishing the father-child relationship God offers.

The Prophets

The Isaianic tension anticipating the “not yet”³ is especially poignant in the section that deals with the fatherhood of God. In a context of tension, opposition, world-wide redemption, and Sabbath rest, the drama flows back and forth between the Exodus and the present woes of the people of God. It is structured like Ps 89, with the first section extolling God’s fatherhood, and the second part lamenting the apparent alienation between the divine parent and His children. The father-son relationship that the people enjoyed

¹Delitzsch. *Biblical Commentary*. 88; compare Prov 16:6; Ps 34:10, 15; and Job 28:28.

²Murphy. *Proverbs*. 22.

³Motyer. *Prophecy of Isaiah*. 512.

during the Exodus—the “eagle” carrying them, being led through the divided waters and desert waste, seeing the quaking mountain at God’s presence—all this is recounted, and more. But now there is silence. What of the special relationship now?

However, the people perceive that there is an organic difference between their memory of the acts of God, and the exploits of their forefathers (specifically Abraham and Israel). The fatherhood of God is more significant to them than the fatherhood of their patriarchs, mainly on the basis of God’s eternity. Yet there still seems to be a cry of despair. “If only” God would do something now—split the heavens and shake a mountain or two (63:19[64:1]).

Restoring confidence in the Father-God begins by moving away from Covenant language and refocusing on Creation language. There is no point in appealing to a broken covenant (and the people freely admit their guilt), nor is there any hope in their famous ancestors (63:16), but there is hope in appealing to God as their Maker (64:6[8])—on the basis of His yearnings (צַדִּיק) for them (63:15). Here begins a restoration of hope amidst hopelessness, together with a measure of submission and acceptance of the will of God—“we are the clay, and you are our potter.” As well as making them in the first place, they are acknowledging that God, as their Father, still has the right to shape and form their destinies, for “we are all the work of your hand” (64:7[8]), “we are all your people” (vs. 8[9].)

In Jeremiah (chap. 3), God’s people are likened to a brazen woman ambushing travelers to find lovers.¹ Because of Judah’s “promiscuity,” the pious talk of calling God

¹Brueggemann. *To Pluck Up*. 42.

“Father” only adds to the hypocrisy and infidelity,¹ especially when it is said that Judah committed adultery with trees and stones (a reference to the symbolism of the fertility cult of the Canaanites). She had made gods for herself and had “prostituted” herself with them to the extent that reconciliation with God seems impossible. The pious pretense of loyalty to her “Father” while maintaining her “promiscuous” lifestyle, as seen in chap. 3, is contrasted to God standing by as a protective Father to keep His “virgin” daughters from being preyed upon by the “sons,” yet the irony is that the daughters are going out and preying upon the sons (3:2).

In chap. 31 (found within the Book of Consolation—chaps. 30-33), explicit references to the Exodus suggest that the people are about to go through another exodus,² and the “child” that the Father-God carefully nurtures is “Virgin Israel” (31:4, 21)³—the brazen adulteress of chap. 3 has had a “rebirth.” (It is also interesting to note that the metaphors are sometimes switched, with “father” and “husband” being alternated, and similarly “son” and “daughter.”) The people’s return from their second “exodus” is telling, with God coaxing the refugees back along a well-watered and level road (31:8-9) that is

¹Kidner, *Message of Jeremiah*, 35-36.

²Compare vs. 2, which refers to wandering in the desert (בַּמִּדְבָּר, Exod 14:11; 15:22; 16:32; 19:2); vs. 9, where it is said that God will in the future lead the people beside flowing brooks, cf. Marah and Elim (Exod 15:22-27), where again water will flow from the rock at Meribah (Exod 17:1-7); vs. 32, where God makes a covenant with the fathers of Israel at the time of the Exodus; vs. 32, God takes the people by the hand and leads them from Egypt (יָצֵאתָ, cf. 31:16 that uses the same term for the future return from Babylon). Van der Wal, *Themes from Exodus in Jeremiah 30-31*, 560-561.

³Achtemeier notes the occasions where Israel is called God’s son: Exod 4:22-23; Deut 8:5; Isa 1:2; Jer 31:20; and Hos 11:1.

accessible enough for the most vulnerable of society—the blind, lame, pregnant, and those giving birth. The imperatives of rejoicing and restoration (31:4-5) contrast with the despair of His rebellious children. The impossibility of reconciliation (3:1-5) is contrasted with the impossibility of breaking the intimate bonds that tie the Father to His children—זָכַר אֶזְכְּרֵנּוּ (He surely remembers them), הִמְנוּ מֵעַי לוֹ (His gut churns for them), and יָחַם אֶרְחָמֵנוּ (He desperately yearns for His children).

The disputes outlined in Malachi include one that centers on God’s fatherhood, but what stands out from these dialogues is the broken covenant and its effects. The significant effects in this context are the ruptured relationships on both a horizontal and vertical level. It seems that a total disregard of God (1:13) and the profaning of the sanctuary (1:12), have resulted in social fragmentation, even anarchy (2:8), as brother conspires with brother (2:10) and marriages have been desolated (2:11). Hence the significant placement of the word why? (מַדּוּעַ) in 2:10 which marks the midpoint of the entire book according to BHS numbering.¹ It seems that the Father-God is at a loss to explain the faithlessness of His children. The reverence with which the “heathen” nations approach God is contrasted with the way the priests (and by extension the people) quibble and complain, and treat God with “indifference and open contempt” (1:11-12).²

¹Blake, *The Rhetoric of Malachi*, 205.

²Torrey, *Prophecy of 'Malachi'*, 2-3.

Conclusions

The approach taken in this dissertation to the fatherhood of God has been theocentric, as opposed to describing God from a human perspective. The picture of the Father-God given in the Scriptures is quite distinct from that of the ANE, both in His relationship to the natural realm and to humanity. Although there may be similarities between God as Father and the father-gods of the ANE (creative, salvific, kind, compassionate, merciful, etc.), His characteristics have been more widely developed and impact more on humanity with the added element of intimate and individual attention. The Father-God motif is consistent throughout the canon, and although, at times, certain features appear to be more prominent (i.e., Covenant and Creation), none is discarded outright. The main attributes of God's fatherhood may be listed as follows.

1. *Creative*. The Father-God of the Scriptures is distinct from Creation, and rather than arising from the primeval sea, or coming from the primeval mountain, He made the sea and the mountains. Both the legitimacy of and the capability for God's fatherhood arise from His being Creator.

2. *Personal and Loving*. In contradistinction to other creation accounts from the ANE, God's relationship with His people is immanent and intimate. He carefully planned and effected the creation of humanity with satisfied approval.

3. *Universal*. He is recognized as a Father for all time and for all Creation, and nothing—from either the natural or supernatural realm—is able to separate Him from them.

4. *Covenantal*. The nature of the Father-child relationship that God enjoys with

humans is one based on covenant, and is seen when God establishes the people at the Exodus and divides the inheritance of the nations (Deut 32:8-9, cf. Gen 10), and is seen in the promise of a perpetual Davidic dynasty.

5. *Powerful*. The Father-God made (עָשָׂה) His people, established (כִּוְּן) them, and did great (גָּדֹל) things on their behalf with His mighty power (הַגְּבוּרָה). The greatness seen and appreciated by humans is not in their subjection, but in their release—not in their destruction but in their establishment.

6. *Salvific*. The “Rock” metaphor shows God as Father to be an abundant and intimate nurturer, as well as Savior, and is a striking contrast to the ANE “Bull” concept. It seems to be employed specifically as a polemic against prevailing ANE ideas.

7. *Nurturing*. The “Eagle” metaphor connects both Creation (with the use of יָרָא) and the Exodus and implies a relationship between God (as the primary caregiver) and His people in which God allows for, and encourages, their growth.

8. *Vindicating*. If human monarchs fail in their obligation to their people to provide justice and accountability, then the Father-God will ultimately provide it, when the “unsatisfactory present” will be replaced by “a glorious future to be inaugurated by a coming descendant of David.”

9. *Just and Merciful*. Keywords that describe God as Father include: justice (מִשְׁפָּט), trustworthiness (אֱמוּנָה), truth (אֱמֶת), covenant love, kindness, or faithfulness (חֶסֶד), righteous (צַדִּיק), upright (יָשָׁר), pity—the yearning of a mother (רַחֵם), and love (אֲהַב).

10. *Educational*. When God disciplines His children, it is to redeem, and is a sign of the Father's love. In the context of wisdom tradition, a son becomes wise as he submits himself to the wisdom and discipline of the father.

11. *Proactive*. When Solomon was declared to be a son of God, he did not lose his relationship with his biological father, and he was assigned the responsibility of building the temple in Jerusalem. This became to him a sign of the covenant, much as circumcision was to Abraham.

12. *Relational*. "Sonship" with God emphasizes spiritual and social relationships, not physical ones.

13. *Humanitarian*. Human ingratitude and infidelity to the Father-God (endemic ever since the relationship was first described) has resulted in fragmented human relationships. Therefore, perfidy towards humanity is in effect infidelity towards God and compromises the relationship with Him. One cannot render love and respect to God without loving and respecting a brother or sister.

Implications

The basic implication of this dissertation is that it challenges common misconceptions about the fatherhood of God. Rather than reading back into the metaphor dysfunctional accounts from Greek and Roman mythology, or personal experiences of paternal dysfunction, the Hebrew Scriptures have been allowed to speak for themselves, thus providing a corrective view.

This position is by no means simplistic, and is full of Eastern paradox and tension,

the most outstanding example being between intimacy and correction. It is difficult for the Western mind to accept that correction can come from the hand of a loving parent, or that love and correction are inseparably linked. Therefore, God's fatherhood must be understood in terms of what we find in Scripture, rather than trying to interpret it through the lenses of limited, socially-conditioned, human experience.

Therefore, the fatherhood of God provides a corrective for human fatherhood too. Based on the truism that we become what we behold, it makes more sense to encourage human fatherhood to model after the divine pattern of fatherhood, which provides human fathers with a positive and strategic pattern to follow.

The basic undergirding rationale of God's fatherhood is His passion for His children. The intimate concern and tireless energy He expends in His fathering role is in marked contrast to the largely self-serving detachment of the ANE father-gods, and provide a basis for His rolemodel for human fatherhood.¹ Some of the various possibilities of these dynamics are listed as follows:

1. The father provides life and hope for his children. This not only provides roots, but a future, and is best done in the context of unconditional love (חסד).
2. The father provides a "place" for his children, and "plants" them where they can be free of oppression from the "sons of wickedness" (2 Sam 7:10). This includes strengthening the hand of his children against evil, and teaching them how to relate to it.

¹This has also been recognized by Richard J. Foster, who observes: "It may help all of us to remember that we are to receive our understanding of how human fathers are supposed to function by learning what God is like, not the other way around." Richard J. Foster, *Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home* (San Francisco: Harper, 1992), 131.

3. The father provides space (and opportunity) for his children to grow to maturity and independence.
4. The father not only gives his children their identity, but he helps his children to assist the disadvantaged and disenfranchised to find theirs too.
5. The father corrects the child he loves—to ensure its successful future.
6. The father trains his children, giving them a firm moral foundation undergirded by not just a respect for the earthly parent, but an appreciation of the Divine Father's love and **חסד** (faithfulness, grace).

Recommendations for Further Study

A number of potential studies arise from this research:

1. What ANE nuances are the Western mind missing in the relationship between the lesser gods/commoners and the father gods of the ANE (for example, the episodes of the supposed weakness of El, especially in his daughter's supposedly outwitting him)?
2. In what ways would a study of the Father-God passages where **אב** is implied impact upon the present study? (For example, Gen 1; 5; Exod 4; Ps 2.)
3. In the interrelatedness between the figures of father-husband, father-son, and husband-bride, what is the context of each chosen metaphor, and what determines their choice?
4. In light of the above findings, to what extent are the teachings of the NT a crystallization of OT theology, rather than being something completely new?

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Achtemeier, Elizabeth. *The Community and Message: A Theological Commentary*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing, 1982.
- Ackroyd, Peter R. *The Second Book of Samuel*. Cambridge Bible Series. Edited by P. R. Ackroyd, A. R. C. Leaney, and J. W. Packer. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977.
- Ahlström, G. W. *Psalms 89: Eine Liturgie aus dem Ritual des leidenden Königs*. Translated by Hans-Karl Hacker and Rudolf Zeitler. Lund: Gleerups, 1959.
- Aitken, Kenneth T. *Proverbs*. The Daily Study Bible. Edited by John C. L. Gibson. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1968.
- Albright, W. F. "A Catalogue of Early Hebrew Lyric Poems." *Hebrew Union College Annual* 23, part 1 (1950-1951): 1-39.
- _____. "Some Remarks on the Song of Moses in Deuteronomy 32." In *Essays in Honour of Millar Burrows*, ed. Martin Noth, 339-346. Leiden: Brill, 1959.
- Allegro, J. M. "Further Messianic References in Qumran Literature." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 75 (1956): 176-177.
- Allen, Leslie C. *Psalms 101-150*. Word Bible Commentary, vol. 21. Edited by David A. Hubbard and Glenn W. Barker. Waco, TX: Word, 1983.
- Allen, Thomas George. *The Book of the Dead or, Going Forth by Day: Ideas of the Ancient Egyptian Concerning the Hereafter as Expressed in Their Own Terms*. The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilization, no. 37. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974.
- Alter, Robert. *Genesis: Translation and Commentary*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1996.
- _____. "Psalms." In *The Literary Guide to the Bible*, ed. Robert Alter and Frank Kermode, 244-262. Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 1987.

- Amsler, Samuel, André LaCocque, and René Vuilleumier. *Aggée, Zacharie, Malachie*. Commentaire de l'Ancien Testament, vol. 11c. Edited by A. de Pury, Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1988.
- Anderson, A. A. *The Book of Psalms*. 2 vols. New Century Bible Commentary. Edited by Ronald E. Clements. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981.
- _____. *2 Samuel*. Word Bible Commentary, vol. 11. Edited by John D. Watts. Dallas: Word, 1989.
- Auzou, Georges. *La Danse Devant l'Arche: Étude du Livre de Samuel*. Connaissance de la Bible no. 6. Paris: Éditions de l'Orient, 1968.
- Baldwin, Joyce G. *1 and 2 Samuel: An Introduction and Commentary*. Tyndale Old Testament Commentary. Edited by D. J. Wiseman. Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1988.
- Barr, James. "'Abba, Father' and the Familiarity of Jesus' Speech." *Theology* 91 (May 1988): 173-179.
- _____. "'Abbā Isn't Daddy." *Journal of Theological Studies* 39 (1988): 28-47.
- Barucq, André. *Le Livre des Proverbes*. Paris: Gabalda, 1964.
- Blake, Richard D. "The Rhetoric of Malachi." Ph.D. diss., Union Theological Seminary, 1988.
- Blekkink, Evert J. *The Fatherhood of God: Considered from Six Inter-Related Standpoints*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1942.
- Block, Daniel I. *The Gods of the Nations: Studies in Ancient Near Eastern National Theology*. 2nd ed. Evangelical Theological Society Studies. Edited by David W. Baker. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000.
- Boda, M. J. "Ideal Sonship in Ugarit." *Ugarit-Forschungen* 25 (1993): 9-24.
- Boström, Lennart. *The God of the Sages: The Portrayal of God in the Book of Proverbs*. Coniectanea Biblica Old Testament Series, no. 29. Edited by Tryggve N. D. Mettinger and Magnus Y. Ottosson. Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell, 1990.
- Bousset, Wilhelm D. *Jesu Predigt in ihrem Gegensatz zum Judentum: Ein religionsgeschichtlicher Vergleich*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1892.

- Braun, Roddy. *1 Chronicles*. Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 14. Edited by John D. Watts. Waco: Word, 1986.
- _____. "Malachi—A Catechism for Times of Disappointment." *Currents in Theology and Mission* 4 (Oct. 1977): 297-303.
- _____. "Solomon, the Chosen Temple Builder: The Significance of 1 Chronicles 22, 28, and 29 for the Theology of Chronicles." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 95 (1976): 581-590.
- Bright, John. *Jeremiah: Introduction, Translation, and Notes*. Anchor Bible, vol. 21. New York: Doubleday, 1965.
- Bromiley, G. W. "God." *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*. 3rd ed. Edited by G. W. Bromiley. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979-88. 2:493-503.
- Brown, Raymond. *The Message of Deuteronomy: Not by Bread Alone*. The Bible Speaks Today. Edited by J. A. Motyer. Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 1993.
- Brueggemann, Walter. *Isaiah 40-66*. Westminster Bible Companion. Edited by Patrick D. Miller and David L. Bartlett. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1998.
- _____. *To Build, To Plant: A Commentary on Jeremiah 26-52*. International Theological Commentary. Edited by Fredrick Carlson Holmgren and George A. F. Knight. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991.
- _____. *To Pluck Up, to Tear Down: A Commentary on the Book of Jeremiah 1-25*. International Theological Commentary. Edited by Fredrick Carlson Holmgren and George A. F. Knight. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988.
- Budge, E. A. Wallis. *Osiris and the Egyptian Religion of Resurrection: Illustrated After Drawings from Egyptian Papyri and Monuments*. 2 vols. London: P.L. Warner, 1911. Reprint, New York: University Books, 1961.
- Bultmann, Rudolf. *Primitive Christianity in its Contemporary Setting*. Translated by R. H. Fuller. New York: Meridian, 1956.
- Calvin, John. *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Vol. 1. Translated by John Allen. Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Christian Education, 1936.
- _____. *Tracts and Treatises on the Doctrine and Worship of the Church*. Vol. 2. Translated by Henry Beveridge. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1958.

- Candlish, Rob. S. *The Fatherhood of God: Being the First Course of the Cunningham Lectures*. Edinburgh: Adam and Charles Black, 1867.
- Carlson, R. A. *David the Chosen King: A Traditio-Historical Approach to the Second Book of Samuel*. Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell, 1964.
- Cassuto, Umberto. *The Documentary Hypothesis and the Composition of the Pentateuch: Eight Lectures*. Translated by Israel Abrahams. Jerusalem: Magnes, 1983.
- Cathcart, Kevin J. "Ilu, Yarihu and the One with the Two Horns and a Tail." In *Ugarit, Religion and Culture: Proceedings of the International Colloquium on Ugarit, Religion and Culture, Edinburgh, July 1994, Essays Presented in Honour of Professor John C.L. Gibson*. Ugaritisch-Biblische Literatur. Edited by N. Wyatt, W. G. E. Watson, and J. B. Lloyd, 1-8. Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1996.
- Clendenen, E. Ray. "The Structure of Malachi: A Textlinguistic Study." *Criswell Theological Review* 2, no. 1 (1987): 3-17.
- David Clines. "Yahweh and the God of Christian Theology." *Theology* 83 (Sept. 1980): 323-329.
- Coogan, Michael David. *Stories from Ancient Canaan*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1978.
- Cooke, Gerald. "The Israelite King as Son of God." *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 73 (1961): 202-225.
- Coote, Robert B. "Amos 1:11: RHMYW." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 90 (1971): 206-208.
- Crabtree, Harriet. *The Christian Life: Traditional Metaphors and Contemporary Theologies*. Harvard Dissertations in Religion 29. Edited by Margaret R. Miles and Bernadette J. Brooten. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991.
- Craigie, Peter C. *The Book of Deuteronomy*. New International Commentary on the Old Testament. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976.
- Crawford, Thomas J. Professor. *The Fatherhood of God: Considered in Its General and Special Aspects and Particularly in Relation to the Atonement, with a Review of Recent Speculations on the Subject, and a Reply to the Strictures of Dr. Candlish*. Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons, 1868.

- Crenshaw, James L. *The Psalms: An Introduction*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001.
- Cross, Frank Moore. *From Epic to Canon: History and Literature in Ancient Israel*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000.
- Curtis, Edward Lewis, and Albert Alonzo Madsen. *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Books of Chronicles*. International Critical Commentary. Edited by Charles Augustus Briggs, Samuel Rolles Driver, and Alfred Plummer. New York: Scribner, 1910.
- Dahood, Mitchel. *Psalms II: 51-100*. Anchor Bible, vol. 17. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1968.
- _____. *Psalms III: 101-150*. Anchor Bible, vol. 17a. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1970.
- Dalley, Stephanie. "Gilgamesh in the Arabian Nights." In *Gilgamesh: A Reader*, ed. John Maier, 214-233. Wauconda, IL: Bolchazy-Carducci, 1997.
- _____. *Myths from Mesopotamia: Creation, the Flood, Gilgamesh and Others*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989.
- Daly, Mary. *Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation*. Boston: Beacon, 1973.
- D'Angelo, Mary Rose. "Abba and 'Father': Imperial Theology and the Jesus Traditions." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 111, no. 4 (1992): 611-630.
- Daniels, Dwight R. "Is There a 'Prophetic Lawsuit' Genre?" *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 99 (1987): 339-360.
- Delitzsch, Franz. *Biblical Commentary on the Proverbs of Solomon*. Vol. 1. Translated by M. G. Easton. Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1874.
- de Moor, Johannes C. *An Anthology of Religious Texts from Ugarit*. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1987.
- de Roche, Michael. "Yahweh's Rîb Against Israel: A Reassessment of the So-Called 'Prophetic Lawsuit' in the Preexilic Prophets," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 102, no. 4 (1983): 563-574.
- de Vries, Simon J. *1 and 2 Chronicles*. The Forms of Old Testament Literature, no. 11. Edited by Rolf P. Knierim and Gene M. Tucker. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989.

- Dhorme, T. R. P. *Les livres de Samuel*. Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1909.
- Dimant, Devorah. "4QFlorilegium and the Idea of the Community as Temple." In *Hellenica et Judaica: Hommage à Valentin Nikiprowetzky I'z*, ed. A. Caquot, M. Hadas-Label, and J. Riaud, 165-189. Leuven: Éditions Peeters, 1986.
- Dion, Paul E. "A Meditation on the 'Ways' of the Lord." *Église et Théologie* 21 (1990): 13-21.
- Dirksen, Piet B. "Why Was David Disqualified as Temple Builder? The Meaning of 1 Chronicles 22.8." *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 70 (1996): 51-56.
- Doukhan, Jacques B. *The Genesis Creation Story*. Doctoral Dissertation Series 5. Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1982.
- Driver, Samuel Rolles. *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Deuteronomy*. The International Critical Commentary. Edited by Charles Augustus Briggs, Samuel Rolles Driver, and Alfred Plummer. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1895.
- _____. *Notes on the Hebrew Text and the Topography of the Books of Samuel: With an Introduction on Hebrew Palaeography and the Ancient Versions and Facsimiles of Inscriptions and Maps*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1913.
- Drouault, Henri Adrien. "The Canaanite Gods and Some Biblical Parallels in the Ras Shamra Tablets." M.A. thesis, Andrews University, 1952.
- Dumortier, Jean-Bernard. "Un Rituel d'Intronisation: Le Ps.LXXXIX 2-38." *Vetus Testamentum* 22 (1972): 176-196.
- Even-Shoshan, A., ed. *A New Concordance of the Old Testament: Using the Hebrew and Aramaic Text*. 2d ed. Jerusalem: Kiryat-Sefer, 1993.
- Faulkner, Raymond O., trans. *The Ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead*. Edited by Carol Andrews. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990.
- _____, trans. *The Ancient Egyptian Coffin Texts*, 3 vols. Edited by Raymond O. Faulkner. Warminster, England: Aris and Phillips, 1973.
- _____, trans. *The Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1969.
- Fensham, F. Charles. "Father and Son as Terminology for Treaty and Covenant." In *Near Eastern Studies in Honor of William Foxwell Albright*, ed. Hans Goedicke, 121-135. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1971.

- Finnestad, Ragnhild Bjerre. "Ptah, Creator of the Gods: Reconsideration of the Ptah Section of the Denkmal." *Numen* 23, no. 2 (1976): 81-113.
- Fischer, Irmtraud. *Wo ist Jahwe? Das Volksklagelied Jes 63,7-64,11 als Ausdruck des Ringens um eine gebrochene Beziehung*. Stuttgarter Biblische Beiträge 19. Edited by Hubert Frankemöle and Frank-Lothar Hossfeld. Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1989.
- Fischer, James A. "Notes on the Literary Form and Message of Malachi." *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 34 (1972): 315-320.
- Fishburn, Janet Forsythe. *The Fatherhood of God and the Victorian Family: The Social Gospel in America*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982.
- Foakes-Jackson, Frederick John, and Kirsopp Lake. *The Beginnings of Christianity: Part I, The Acts of the Apostles*. Vol. 1. London: MacMillan, 1942.
- Foster, Richard J. *Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home*. San Francisco: Harper, 1992.
- Fowler, Jeaneane D. *Theophoric Personal Names in Ancient Hebrew: A Comparative Study*. Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series, no. 49. Edited by David J. A. Clines and Philip R. Davies. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1988.
- Fox, Michael V. *Proverbs 1-9: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. Anchor Bible, vol. 18a. New York: Doubleday, 2000.
- Frankfort, Henri, H. Frankfort, John A. Wilson, and Thorkild Jacobsen. *Before Philosophy: The Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man*. Harmondsworth, England: Penguin, 1951.
- Freedman, H. *Jeremiah: Hebrew Text and English Translation with an Introduction and Commentary*. Revised by A. J. Rosenberg. Soncino Books of the Bible. Edited by A. Cohen. London: Soncino, 1985.
- Freud, Sigmund. *Moses and Monotheism*. Translated by Katherine Jones. International Psycho-Analytical Library, no. 33. London: Hogarth, 1951.
- Fuller, Russell. "Text-Critical Problems in Malachi 2:10-16." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 110, no. 1 (Spring 1991): 47-57.
- Geller, Stephen A. "The Dynamics of Parallel Verse: A Poetic Analysis of Deut 32:6-12." *Harvard Theological Review* 65, no. 1 (1982): 35-56.

- Gileadi, Avraham. *The Literary Message of Isaiah*. New York: Hebraeus, 1994.
- Girard, Marc. *Les Psaumes Redécouverts: De la structure au sens (51-100)*. Vol. 2. Chicoutimi, Quebec: Bellarmin, 1994.
- Gladden, Washington. *How Much is Left of the Old Doctrines? A Book for the People*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1899.
- Glazier-McDonald, Beth. "Intermarriage, Divorce, and the *Bat-'Ēl Nēkār*: Insights into Mal 2:10-16." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 106, no. 4 (Dec. 1987): 603-611.
- Gordon, Cyrus H. *Ugaritic Literature: A Comprehensive Translation of the Poetic and Prose Texts*. Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1949.
- Gordon, Robert P. *1 & 2 Samuel: A Commentary*. Exeter: Paternoster, 1986.
- Goulder, Michael. *The Prayers of David (Psalms 51-72): Studies in the Psalter, II*. Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series, no. 102. Edited by David J. A. Clines and Philip R. Davies. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990.
- _____. *The Psalms of the Sons of Korah*. Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series, no. 20. Edited by David J. A. Clines, Philip R. Davies, and David M. Gunn. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1982.
- Graham, M. Patrick, Kenneth G. Hoglund, and Steven L. McKenzie. *The Chronicler as Historian*. Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series, no. 238. Edited by David J. A. Clines, and Philip R. Davies. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997.
- Grassi, Joseph A. "Abba, Father (Mark 14:36): Another Approach." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 50, no. 3 (1982): 449-456.
- Greenstein, Edward L. "The God of Israel and the Gods of Canaan: How Different Were They?" In *Proceedings of the Twelfth World Congress of Jewish Studies*, Division A, The Bible and Its World. Jerusalem: World Union of Jewish Studies, 1999.
- Griffiths, J. Gwyn. *Plutarch's de Iside et Osiride: Edited with an Introduction Translation and Commentary*. Cambridge: University of Wales Press, 1970.

- Grintz, Jehoshua M. "'The Proverbs of Solomon,' Clarifications on the Question of the Relation between the Three Collections in the Book of Proverbs Attributed to Solomon." *Lešonēnu* 33 (1968): 243-269. Reprinted in David C. Snell, *Twice-Told Proverbs: And the Composition of the Book of Proverbs*, 88-114. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1993.
- Gruber, Mayer I. *Rashi's Commentary on Psalms 1-89 (Books I-III): With English Translation, Introduction and Notes*. South Florida Studies in the History of Judaism, no. 161. Edited by Jacob Neusner et al. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998.
- Guillaume, A. "A Note on Psalm LXVIII.5." *Journal of Theological Studies* 13 (Oct. 1962): 322-323.
- Gunkel, Hermann. "Psalm 103: An Interpretation." *Biblical World* 22 (Sept. 1903): 209-215.
- Gunkel, Hermann, and Joachim Begrich. *Introduction to Psalms: The Genres of the Religious Lyric of Israel*. Translated by James D. Nogalski. Mercer Library of Biblical Studies. Edited by Joseph Blenkinsop et al. Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1998.
- Haag, H. "יָגֵן." *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*. Edited by G. J. Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren. Translated by John T. Willis. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974-2001. 2:145-159.
- Halkes, Catherina. "The Themes of Protest in Feminist Theology against God the Father." In *God as Father?* ed. Johannes Baptist Metz, and Edward Schillebeeckx. Concilium: Religion in the Eighties 143, no. 3. Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1981.
- Hallo, William W. "Biblical History in Its Near Eastern Setting: The Contextual Approach." In *Scripture in Context: Essays on the Comparative Method*. Edited by Carl D. Williams, William W. Hallo, and John B. White, 1-26. Pittsburgh Theological Monograph Series, Scripture in Context, vol. 34, ed. Dikran Y. Hadadian. Pittsburgh: Pickwick Press, 1980.
- _____. "Individual Prayer in Sumerian: The Continuity of a Tradition." *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 88 (1968): 71-89.
- Hamerton-Kelly, Robert. *God the Father: Theology and Patriarchy in the Teaching of Jesus*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979.

- Hamilton, Victor P. *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1-17*. The New International Commentary on the Old Testament. Edited by R. K. Harrison. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990.
- Handy, Lowell K. *Among the Host of Heaven: The Syro-Palestinian Pantheon as Bureaucracy*. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1994.
- Hanson, Paul D. *The Dawn of Apocalyptic*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975.
- Harrison, George W. "Covenant Unfaithfulness in Malachi 2:1-16." *Criswell Theological Review* 2, no. 1 (1987): 63-72.
- Harrison, R. K. *Jeremiah and Lamentations: An Introduction and Commentary*. Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries. Edited by D. J. Wiseman. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1977.
- Harvey, J. *Le plaidoyer prophétique contre Israël après la rupture de l'alliance*. Scholasticat de l'Immaculée-Conception. Paris: Descalée de Brouwer, 1967.
Cited in Julia M. O'Brien. *Priest and Levite in Malachi*. SBL Dissertation Series. Edited by David L. Petersen, no. 121. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990.
- Heidel, Alexander. *The Babylonian Genesis: The Story of Creation*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1942.
- Hertzberg, W. W. *I & II Samuel: A Commentary*. Old Testament Library. Translated by John Bowden. London: SCM, 1964.
- Hill, Andrew E. *Malachi: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. Anchor Bible, vol. 25d. New York: Doubleday, 1998.
- Hill, Edmund. *The Trinity: Introduction, Translation and Notes*. The Works of Saint Augustine, a Translation for the 21st Century, Part I. Edited by John E. Rotelle. Vol. 5. Brooklyn: New City Press, 1991.
- Hobbs, T. R. "Jeremiah 3.1-5 and Deuteronomy 24 1-4." *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 86 (1974): 23-29.
- Holladay, William L. *The Architecture of Jeremiah 1-20*. London: Associated University Presses, 1976.
- _____. *Jeremiah: Spokesman out of Time*. Philadelphia: Pilgrim, 1974.

- Hornung, Erik. *Conceptions of God in Ancient Egypt: The One and the Many*. Translated by John Baines. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1982.
- Hugenberger, Gordon P. *Marriage as a Covenant: Biblical Law and Ethics as Developed from Malachi*. Biblical Studies Library. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998.
- Hurowitz, Victor. *I Have Built You an Exalted House: Temple Building in the Bible in Light of Mesopotamian and Northwest Semitic Writings*. Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 115. Edited by David J. A. Clines and Philip Davies. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992.
- Husser, Jean-M. "The Birth of a Hero: Form and Meaning of KTU I.17 i-ii." In *Ugarit, Religion and Culture: Proceedings of the International Colloquium on Ugarit, Religion and Culture, Edinburgh, July 1994*, ed. N. Wyatt, W. G. E. Watson, and J. B. Lloyd, 85-98. Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1996.
- Ions, Veronica. *Egyptian Mythology*. New York: Peter Bedrick, 1983.
- Jacobsen, Thorkild. *The Treasures of Darkness: A History of Mesopotamian Religion*. New Haven, MA: Yale University Press, 1976.
- Japhet, Sara. *The Ideology of the Book of Chronicles and its Place in Biblical Thought*. Beiträge zur Erforschung des Alten Testaments und des Antiken Judentums no. 9. Edited by Matthias Augustin and Michael Mach. Translated by Anna Barber. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1997.
- Jeremias, Joachim. *The Lord's Prayer*. Translated by John Reumann. Biblical Series no. 8. Edited by John Reumann. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1964.
- _____. *The Prayers of Jesus*. Translated by John Bowden. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978. Reprinted from *Abba: Studien zur neutestamentlichen Theologie und Zeitgeschichte*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1966.
- Johnstone, William. *1 and 2 Chronicles: Volume 1, 1 Chronicles 1-2, Chronicles 9, Israel's Place Among the Nations*. Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series no. 253. Edited by David J. A. Clines and Philip R. Davies. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997.
- Jones, Edgar. *Proverbs and Ecclesiastes: Introduction and Commentary*. London: SCM, 1961.
- Jouön, Paul. *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*. 2 vols. Translated and edited by T. Muraoka. Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1966.

Kaiser, Walter C., Jr. "Divorce in Malachi 2:10-16." *Criswell Theological Review* 2, no. 1 (1987):73-84.

_____. *The Messiah in the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995.

_____. *Toward an Exegetical Theology: Biblical Exegesis for Preaching and Teaching*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981.

Kapelrud, Arvid S. "The Relationship Between El and Baal in the Ras Shamra Texts." In *The Bible World: Essays in Honor of Cyrus H. Gordon*, ed. Gary Rendsburg, Ruth Adler, Milton Arfa, and Nathan H. Winter, 79-85. New York: KTAV, 1980.

Kautzsch, E., ed. *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*. Revised by A. E. Cowley. Oxford: Clarendon, 1909.

Keil, C. F. *The Books of the Chronicles*. Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament. Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1872.

_____. *The Prophecies of Jeremiah*. Commentary on the Old Testament. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956.

Kelly, Brian E. Messianic Elements in the Chronicler's Work. In *The Lord's Anointed: Interpretation of Old Testament Messianic Texts*, ed. Philip E. Satterthwaite, Richard S. Hess, and Gordon J. Wenham, 249-264. Carlisle, England: Paternoster, 1995.

_____. *Retribution and Eschatology in Chronicles*. Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series no. 211. Edited by David J. A. Clines and Philip R. Davies. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996.

Keown Gerald L., Pamela J. Scalise, and Thomas G. Smothers. *Jeremiah 26-52*. Word Biblical Commentary vol. 27. Dallas: Word, 1995.

Kidner, Derek. *The Message of Jeremiah: Against Wind and Tide*. The Bible Speaks Today. Edited by J. A. Motyer. Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1987.

Kim, Jungwoo. "Psalm 89: Its Biblical-Theological Contribution to the Presence of Law Within the Unconditional Covenant." Ph.D. diss., Westminster Theological Seminary, 1989.

King, Philip J. *Jeremiah: An Archaeological Companion*. Louisville, KY: Knox, 1993.

- Kline, Meredith G. *Treaty of the Great King: The Covenant Structure of Deuteronomy; Studies and Commentary*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963.
- Knight, George A. F. *Psalms*. 2 vols. Daily Study Bible. Edited by John C. L. Gibson. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1982-1983.
- _____. *The Song of Moses: A Theological Quarry*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995.
- Knowles, Michael P. "The Rock, His Way Is Perfect: Unusual Imageries for God in Deuteronomy 32." *Vetus Testamentum* 39, no. 3 (1989): 307-322.
- Korpel, Marjo Christina Annette. *A Rift in the Clouds: Ugaritic and Hebrew Descriptions of the Divine*. Ugaritisch-biblische Literatur no. 8. Munster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1990.
- Kramer, Samuel Noah. *History Begins at Sumer: Thirty-nine Firsts in Man's Recorded History*. Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 1981.
- _____. *From the Poetry of Sumer: Creation, Glorification, Adoration*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979.
- _____. *The Sacred Marriage Rite: Aspects of Faith, Myth, and Ritual in Ancient Sumer*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1969.
- _____. *The Sumerians: Their History, Culture, and Character*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963.
- _____. *Sumerian Mythology: A Study of Spiritual and Literary Achievement in the Third Millennium B.C.* Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 1972.
- _____. "Sumerian Theology and Ethics." *Harvard Theological Review* 49 (1956): 45-62.
- Kruse, Heinz. "David's Covenant." *Vetus Testamentum* 35 (1985): 139-164.
- Laato, Antti. "Second Samuel 7 and Ancient Near Eastern Royal Ideology." *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 59 (Apr. 1997): 244-269.
- Labuschagne, C. J. "The Song of Moses: Its Framework and Structure." In *De Fructu Oris Suri: Essays in Honour of Adrianus Van Selms*, ed. I. H. Eybers, F. C. Fensham, C. J. Labuschagne, W. C. Van Wyk, and A. H. Van Zyl, 85-98. Leiden: Brill, 1971.

- Lambert, Wilfred G. "Ancient Mesopotamian Gods: Superstition, Philosophy, Theology." *Revue de l'Histoire des Religions* 207 (Apr.-June 1990): 115-130.
- Lambert, W. G., and A. R. Millard. *Atra-ḥasīs: The Babylonian Story of the Flood*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1969.
- Langdon, Stephen. *The Babylonian Epic of Creation: Restored from the Recently Recovered Tablets of Aššur, Transcription Translation and Commentary*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1923.
- _____. *Sumerian Liturgical Texts*. Publications of the Babylonian Section. Vol. 10, no. 2. The University of Pennsylvania Museum. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1917.
- _____. *Sumerian Liturgies and Psalms*. Publications of the Babylonian Section. Vol. 10, no. 4. The University of Pennsylvania Museum. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1919.
- LaRondelle, Hans K. *Deliverance in the Psalms: Messages of Hope for Today*. Berrien Springs, MI: by the author, 1983.
- Lelièvre, André. *La Sagesse des Proverbs: Une Leçon de Tolérance*. Essais Bibliques 23. Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1993.
- LePeau, John Philip. "Psalm 68: An Exegetical and Theological Study." Ph.D. diss., University of Iowa, 1981.
- Lesko, Leonard H. *The Ancient Egyptian Book of Two Ways*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972.
- Lewy, J. "Les textes paléo-assyriens et l'Ancien Testament." *Revue de l'Histoire des Religions* 110 (1934): 29-65.
- L'Hereux, Conrad E. *Rank Among the Canaanite Gods: El, Ba'al, and the Repha'im*. Harvard Semitic Monographs, no. 21. Missoula, MO: Scholars Press, 1979.
- Lipinski, E. *Le Poème Royal du Psaume LXXXIX 1-5.20-38*. Paris: Gabalda, 1967.
- Lippmann, Walter. *Preface to Morals*. New York: Macmillan, 1929. Quoted in Harriet Crabtree. *The Christian Life: Traditional Metaphors and Contemporary Theologies*. Harvard Dissertations in Religion, no. 29. Edited by Margaret R. Miles and Bernadette J. Brooten. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991.

- Lisowsky, Gerhard. *Konkordanz zum Hebräischen Alten Testament*. Stuttgart: Württembergische Bibelanstalt, 1958.
- Long, Burke O. "The Stylistic Components of Jeremiah 3.1-5." *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 88 (1976): 386-390.
- Luther, Martin. Luther's Works. Vol. 11, *First Lectures on the Psalms II: Psalms 76-126*. Edited by Hilton C. Oswald. Translated by Herbert J. A. Bouman. Saint Louis: Concordia, 1976.
- _____. Luther's Works. Vol. 12, *Selected Psalms I*. Edited by Jaroslav Pelikan. Translated by L. W. Spitz Jr. Saint Louis: Concordia, 1955.
- _____. Luther's Works. Vol. 16, *Lectures on Isaiah: Chapters 1-39*. Edited by Jaroslav Pelikan. Translated by Herbert J. A. Bouman. Saint Louis: Concordia, 1969.
- Luyten, Jos. "Primeval and Eschatological Overtones in the Song of Moses (Dt 32,1-43)." In *Das Deuteronomium: Entstehung, Gestalt und Botschaft*. Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium. Edited by Norbert Lohfink, 341-347. Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1985.
- Malamat, A. "A Mari Prophecy and Nathan's Dynastic Oracle." In *Prophecy: Essays Presented to Georg Fohrer on his Sixty Fifth Birthday 6 September 1980*, ed. J. A. Emerton. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1980.
- Marchel, W. *Abba, Père!: La Prière du Christ et des Chrétiens*. Analecta Biblica, Investigationes Scientifcae in Res Biblicas 19. Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1963.
- Margalit, Baruch. *The Ugaritic Poem of AQHT: Text, Translation, Commentary*. Beihrft zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft, no. 182. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1989.
- Martin, James D. *Proverbs*. Old Testament Guides. Edited by R. N. Whybray. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995.
- Martin-Achard Robert. *Permanence de l'Ancien Teastament: Recherches d'exégèse et de Théologie*. Cahiers de la Revue de Théologie et de Philosophie 11. Geneva: Kundig, 1984.
- Mattison, Robin D. "God/Father: Tradition and Interpretation." *Reformed Review* 42, no. 3 (Spring 1989): 189-206.

- Mawhinney, Allen. "God as Father: Two Popular Theories Reconsidered." *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 31, no. 2 (June 1988): 181-190.
- McCarthy, Dennis J. "Covenant in the Old Testament: The Present State of Inquiry." *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 27 (July 1965): 217-240.
- McConville, J. Gordon. *Judgment and Promise: An Interpretation of the Book of Jeremiah*. Leicester: Apollos, 1993.
- _____. "Messianic Interpretation of the Old Testament in Modern Context." In *The Lord's Anointed: Interpretation of Old Testament Messianic Texts*. Edited by Philip E. Satterthwaite, Richard S. Hess, and Gordon J. Wenham, 1-18. Carlisle, England: Paternoster, 1995.
- McGovern, Thomas. "John Paul II on the Millennium and God as Father." *Homiletic and Pastoral Review* 99, no. 7 (Apr. 1999): 8-17.
- McKane, William. *I & II Samuel: Introduction and Commentary*. Torch Bible Commentaries. Edited by John Marsh, and Alan Richardson. London: SCM, 1963.
- _____. *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Jeremiah*. Vol. 2. Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1996.
- _____. *Proverbs: A New Approach*. Old Testament Library. Edited by Peter Ackroyd, James Barr, John Bright, and G. Ernest Wright. London: SCM, 1970.
- McKeating, Henry. *The Book of Jeremiah*. Epworth Commentaries. Edited by Ivor H. Jones. London: Epworth, 1999.
- McKenzie, Steven L., and Howard N. Wallace. "Covenant Themes in Malachi." *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 45 (1983): 549-563.
- Meinhold, Arndt. *Die Sprüche: Teil 1, Sprüche Kapitel 1-15*. Zürcher Bibelkommentare. Edited by Hans Heinrich Schmid, Siegfried Schulz, and Hans Weder. Zürich: Theologischer, 1991.
- Mendenhall, George E. "Samuel's 'Broken Rib': Deuteronomy 32." In *No Famine in the Land: Studies in Honor of John L. McKenzie*, ed. James W. Flanagan and Anita Weisbrod Robinson, 63-74. Missoula, MO: Scholars Press, 1975.
- Mercer, Samuel A. B. *The Pyramid Texts: In Translation and Commentary*. 4 vols. New York: Longmans Green, 1952.

- Mettinger, Tryggve N. D. *In Search of God: The Meaning and Message of the Everlasting Names*. Translated by Frederick H. Cryer. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988.
- Metz, Johannes Baptist, and Edward Schillebeeckx. *God as Father?* Translated by John Maxwell. *Concilium: Religion in the Eighties* 143, no. 3. Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1981.
- Meyers, Jacob M. *1 Chronicles: Introduction, Translation and Notes*. Anchor Bible, vol. 12. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1965.
- Miller, John W. "God as Father in the Bible and the Father Image in Several Contemporary Ancient Near Eastern Myths: A Comparison." *Studies in Religion. Sciences Religieuses* 14, no. 3 (1985): 347-354.
- Moltmann, Jürgen. "The Motherly Father. Is Trinitarian Patripassianism Replacing Theological Patriarchalism?" Translated by G. W. S. Knowles. In *God as Father?* Edited by Johannes Baptist Metz and Edward Schillebeeckx, 51-56. Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1981.
- Moore, Stephen D. "Gigantic God: Yahweh's Body." *JSOT* 70 (1996): 87-115.
- Moran, W. L. "The Ancient Near Eastern Background of the Love of God in Deuteronomy." *CBQ* 25 (1963): 77-87.
- _____. "Some Remarks on the Song of Moses." *Biblica* 43 (1962): 317-327.
- Morgenstern, Julian. "Isaiah 63.7-14." *Hebrew Union College Annual* 23 (part 1, 1950-1951): 185-203.
- Motyer, J. Alec. *The Prophecy of Isaiah: An Introduction and Commentary*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1993.
- Mowinckel, Sigmund Olaf Plytt. "'Die letzten Worte Davids', 2 Sam xxiii 1-7." *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 45 (1927): 30-58.
- _____. "Natanforjettelsen 2 Sam Kap.7." *Svensk Exegetisk Årsbok* 12 (1947): 220-229. Quoted in Heinz Kruse. "David's Covenant." *Vetus Testamentum* 35 (1985): 142.
- _____. *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*. Translated by D. R. Ap-Thomas. 2 vols. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1972. Reprint, Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992.

- Mullen, E. Theodore, Jr. *The Divine Council in Canaanite and Early Hebrew Literature*. Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1980.
- Müller, Achim. *Proverbien 1-9: Der Weisheit neue Kleider*. Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft no. 291. Edited by Otto Kaiser. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2000.
- Munn-Rankin, J. M. "Diplomacy in Western Asia in the Early Second Millennium B.C." *Iraq* 18 (Spring 1956): 68-110.
- Muñoz, Ronaldo. "God the Father." Translated by Robert R. Barr. In *Mysterium Liberationis: Fundamental Concepts of Liberation Theology*, ed. Ignacio Allacuria and Jon Sobrino, 404-419. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1993.
- Murphy, Roland E. *Proverbs*, Word Bible Commentary, vol. 22. Edited by John D. W. Watts. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998.
- Nicholson, Ernest W. *The Book of the Prophet Jeremiah Chapters 1-25*. The Cambridge Bible Commentary. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973.
- Nigosian, Solomon A. "The Song of Moses (DT 32): A Structural Analysis." *Ephemerides Theologica Lovanienses* 72, no. 1 (1996): 5-22.
- Novak, David. *The Election of Israel: The Idea of the Chosen People*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.
- Nunnally, W. E. "The Fatherhood of God at Qumran." Ph.D diss., Hebrew Union College, 1992.
- O'Brien, Julia M. *Priest and Levite in Malachi*. SBL Dissertation Series, no. 121. Edited by David L. Petersen. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990.
- Ogden, Graham S. "The Use of Figurative Language in Malachi 2.10-16." *Bible Translator* 39, no. 2 (Apr. 1988): 223-230.
- Ohler, Annemarie. *The Bible Looks at Fathers*. Translated by Omar Kaste. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1999.
- Oldenburg, U. *The Conflict Between El and Baal in Canaanite Religion*. Leiden: Brill, 1969. Quoted in N. Wyatt. "The Titles of the Ugaritic Storm God." *Ugarit-Forschungen* 24 (1992): 403.

- Olson, Dennis, T. *Deuteronomy and the Death of Moses: A Theological Reading. Overtures to Biblical Theology.* Edited by Christopher R. Seitz. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994.
- Oren, Eliezer D. "Migdol: A New Fortress on the Edge of the Eastern Nile Delta." *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 256 (Fall 1984): 7-44.
- Oswalt, John N. *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40-66.* New International Commentary on the Old Testament. Edited by Robert L. Hubbard. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998.
- Pailin, David A. *The Anthropological Character of Theology: Conditioning Theological Understanding.* New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990.
- Parker, N. H. "Psalm 103: God Is Love. He Will Have Mercy and Abundantly Pardon." *Canadian Journal of Theology* 1, no. 3 (1955): 191-196.
- Parker, Simon B. "The Historical Composition of KRT and the Cult of El." *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 89, no. 2 (1977): 161-175.
- _____, ed. *Ugaritic Narrative Poetry.* Translated by Mark S. Smith, Simon B. Parker, Edward L. Greenstein, Theodore J. Lewis, and David Marcus. Society of Biblical Literature 9. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997.
- Patterson, Robert M. "Repentance or Judgment: The Construction and Purpose of Jeremiah 2-6." *Expository Times* 95 (March 1985): 199-203.
- Payne, David F. *I & II Samuel.* The Daily Study Bible. Edited by John C. L. Gibson. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1982.
- Petersen, D. L., and M. Woodward. "Northwest Semitic Religion: A Study of Relational Structures." *Ugarit-Forschungen* 9 (1977): 233-248.
- Pope, M. H. *El in the Ugaritic Texts.* Leiden: Brill, 1955.
- _____. *Ugarit in Retrospect: 50 Years of Ugarit and Ugaritic.* Edited by Gordon D. Young. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1981.
- Pritchard, James B. *Ancient Near Eastern Texts: Relating to the Old Testament.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969.

- Radau, Hugo. "Miscellaneous Texts from the Temple Library of Nippur." In *Hilprecht Anniversary Volume: Studies in Assyriology and Archaeology*, 374-457. Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1909.
- Rawlinson, Henry. *The Cuneiform Inscriptions of Western Asia*, 5 vol.s. London: Harrison, 1861-1884.
- Reider, Joseph. *The Holy Scriptures: Deuteronomy with Commentary*. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1937.
- Ringgren, H. "עֲבָד." *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974-2001. 10:376-390, 392-395, 402-405.
- Rogers, John B. "Jeremiah 31:7-14." *Interpretation* 42, no. 3 (July 1988): 281-285.
- Rorty, Richard. "Postmodernist Bourgeois Liberalism." In *Postmodernism: A Reader*, ed. Thomas Docherty. New York: Columbia University, 1993.
- Rost, Leonhard. *The Succession to the Throne of David*. Translated by Michael D. Rutter and David M. Gunn. Historic Texts and Interpreters in Biblical Scholarship no. 1. Edited by J. W. Rogerson. Sheffield: Almond Press, 1982.
- Ruether, Rosemary Radford. "The Female Nature of God: A Problem in Contemporary Religious Life." In *God as Father?* Edited by Johannes Baptist Metz and Edward Schillebeeckx. Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1981.
- Sailhamer, John. *Genesis Unbound: A Provocative New Look at the Creation Account*. Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 1996.
- Sanders, Paul. *The Provenance of Deuteronomy 32*. Oudtestamentische Studiën. Edited by Johannes C. de Moor. Leiden: Brill, 1966.
- Sarna, Nahum M. *On the Book of Psalms: Exploring the Prayers of Ancient Israel*. New York: Schocken, 1993.
- Satterthwaite, Philip E. "David in the Books of Samuel: A Messianic Expectation?" In *The Lord's Anointed: Interpretation of Old Testament Messianic Texts*. Edited by Philip E. Satterthwaite, Richard S. Hess, and Gordon J. Wenham, 41-66. Carlisle, England: Paternoster, 1995.
- Sawyer, John F. A. *Isaiah: Volume 2*. The Daily Study Bible. Edited by John C. L. Gibson. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986.

- Schäfer, Rolf. *Die Poesie der Weisen: Dichotomie als Grundstruktur der Lehr- und Weisheitsgedichte in Proverbien 1-9*. Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament 77. Edited by Cilliers Breytenbach, Bernd Jankowski, Reinhard G. Kratz and Hermann Lichtenberger. Tübingen: Neukirchener, 1999.
- Scharbert, Josef. "Formgeschichte und Exegese von Ex 34,6f und seiner Parallelen." *Biblica* 38 (1957): 130-150.
- Scheil, V. "Fragments de la Légend du Dieu Zû." *Revue d'Assyriologie et D'Archéologie Orientale* 35, no. 1 (1938): 14-25.
- Schmuttermayr, Georg. "RHM—Eine lexikalische Studie." *Biblica* 51 (1970): 499-525.
- Schneider, Dieter. *Der Prophet Jesaja: 2. Teil Kapitel 40 bis 66*. Wuppertaler Studienbibel. Edited by Gerhard Maier and Adolf Pohl. Zürich: Brockhaus, 1990.
- Schwartz, Daniel R. "The Messianic Departure From Judah (4Q Patriarchal Blessings)." *Theologische Zeitschrift* 37 (Sept.-Oct. 1981): 264-266.
- Scott, R. B. Y. *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes*. Anchor Bible, vol. 18. New York: Doubleday, 1965.
- Selbie, William Boothby. *The Fatherhood of God*. New York: Scribners, 1936.
- Selman, Martin J. *1 Chronicles: An Introduction and Commentary*. Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries. Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994.
- Seybold, Klaus. *Introducing the Psalms*. Translated by R. Graeme Dunphy. Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1990.
- Shields, Martin A. "Syncretism and Divorce in Malachi 2,10-16." *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 111, no. 1 (1999): 68-86.
- Sjöberg, Åke W., and E. Bergmann. *The Collection of the Sumerian Temple Hymns*. Vol. 3. Texts from Cuneiform Sources. New York: J. J. Augustin, 1969.
- Skehan, Patrick W. "The Structure of the Song of Moses in Deuteronomy (Deut 32:1-43)." *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 13, no. 4 (Oct. 1951): 151-163.
- Slotki, I. W. *Isaiah: Hebrew Text and English Translation with an Introduction and Commentary*. Revised by A. J. Rosenberg. Soncino Books of the Bible. New York: Soncino Press, 1987.

- Smith, W. Robertson. *Kinship and Marriage in Early Arabia*. New Edition. Edited by Stanley A. Cook. Oosterhout, Holland: Anthropological Publications, 1966.
- Snell, David C. *Twice-Told Proverbs: And the Composition of the Book of Proverbs*. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1993.
- Sölle, Dorothee. "Paternalistic Religion as Experienced by Women." Translated by T. L. Westow. In *God as Father?* ed. Johannes Baptist Metz, and Edward Schillebeeckx. Concilium: Religion in the Eighties 143, no. 3. Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1981.
- Sperling, S. David. "Biblical *rhm* I and *rhm* II." *Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society* 19 (1989): 149-159.
- Steck, Odil Hannes. *Old Testament Exegesis: A Guide to the Methodology*. Translated by James D. Nogalski. SBL Resources for Biblical Study, no. 33. Edited by Marvin A. Sweney. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995.
- Stuart, Douglas. *Old Testament Exegesis: A Primer for Students and Pastors*. 2nd ed. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1984.
- Swidler, Arlene. "The Image of a Woman in a Father-Oriented Religion." In *God as Father?* Edited by Johannes Baptist Metz, and Edward Schillebeeckx. Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1981.
- Tadmor, Hayim. "Treaty and Oath in the Ancient Near East: A Historian's Approach." In *Humanizing America's Iconic Book*. Society of Biblical Literature Centennial Addresses 1980. Biblical Scholarship in North America, no. 6. Edited by Gene M. Tucker and Douglass A. Knight, 127-152. Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1982.
- Tate, Marvin E. *Psalms 51-100*. Word Bible Commentary. Dallas: Word Books, 1990.
- Thompson, J. A. *Deuteronomy: An Introduction and Commentary*. Tyndale Old Testament Commentary. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1974.
- Thompson, Marianne Meye. *The Promise of the Father: Jesus and God in the New Testament*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2000.
- Tigay, Jeffrey H. *Deuteronomy*. The Jewish Publication Society Torah Commentary. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1996.
- _____. *The Evolution of the Gilgamesh Epic*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982.

- Torrey, C. C. "The Prophecy of 'Malachi.'" *Journal of Biblical Literature* 17, no. 1 (1898): 1-15.
- Toy, Crawford H. *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Proverbs*. International Critical Commentary. Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1899.
- Tubb, Jonathan N. *Canaanites, Peoples of the Past*. London: British Museum Press, 1998.
- Turnau, Theodore A. III. "Speaking in a Broken Tongue: Postmodernism, Principled Pluralism, and the Rehabilitation of Public Moral Discourse." *Westminster Theological Journal* 56 (1994): 347.
- Uffenheimer, Benjamin. *Early Prophecy in Israel*. Publications of the Hebrew Foundation for Biblical Research in the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Jerusalem: Magnes, 1999.
- Unterman, Jeremiah. *From Repentance to Redemption: Jeremiah's Thought in Transition*. JSOT Supplement Series no. 54. Edited by David J. A. Clines and Philip R. Davies. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1987.
- van der Toorn, Karel. "Ilib and 'God of the Father.'" *Ugarit-Forschungen* 25 (1993): 379-387.
- Van der Wal, A. J. O. "Themes from Exodus in Jeremiah 30-31." In *Studies in the Book of Exodus: Redaction, Reception, Interpretation*, ed. Marc Vervenne, 559-566. Leuven: University Press, 1996.
- Van der Weiden, W. A.. *Le Livre des Proverbes: Notes Philologiques*. Biblica et Orientalia 23. Rome: Biblical Institute, 1970.
- VanGemenen, Willem. "'Abbā' in the Old Testament?" *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 31, no. 4 (Dec. 1988): 385-398.
- _____. *Psalms-Song of Songs*. The Expositor's Bible Commentary, vol. 5. Edited by Frank E. Gaebelein. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1991.
- Vernus, Pascal. *The Gods of Ancient Egypt*. Translated by Jane Marie Todd. New York: John Braziller, 1998.
- Von Rad, Gerhard. *Deuteronomy: A Commentary*. Old Testament Library. Translated by Dorothea Barton. London: SCM, 1966.

- _____. *Wisdom in Israel*. London: SCM, 1972.
- Waltke, Bruce K. and M. O'Connor. *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990.
- Watterson, Barbara. *The Gods of Ancient Egypt*. New York: Facts on File Publications, 1984.
- Watts, John D. W. "God the Father." *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*. 3rd ed. Edited by G. W. Bromiley. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979-88. 2:509-510.
- _____. *Isaiah 34-66*. Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 25. Waco: Word Books, 1987.
- Weinfeld, Moshe. "Ancient Near Eastern Patterns in Prophetic Literature." *Vetus Testamentum* 27 (1977): 178-195.
- Weiser, Artur. *The Psalms: A Commentary*. Translated by H. Hartnell. Old Testament Library. Edited by Peter Ackroyd et al. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962.
- Weiss, Meir. *The Bible From Within: The Method of Total Interpretation*. Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1984.
- Wells, C. Richard. "The Subtle Crises of Secularism: Preaching the Burden of Israel." *Criswell Theological Review* 2, no. 1 (1987): 39-61.
- Wendland, Ernst. "Linear and Concentric Patterns in Malachi." *Bible Translator* 36, no. 1 (Jan. 1985): 108-121.
- Wellhausen, Julius. *Der Text der Bücher Samuelis*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1871.
- Wernberg-Møller, P. "'Pleonastic' *Waw* in Classical Hebrew." *Journal of Semitic Studies* 3 (Oct. 1958): 321-326.
- Westenholz, Joan Goodnick. *Legends of the Kings of Akkade: The Texts*. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1997.
- Westermann, Claus. *The Praise of God in the Psalms*. Translated by Keith R. Crim. Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1961.

- Wevers, John William. *Notes on the Greek Text of Deuteronomy*. SBL Septuagint and Cognate Studies Series no. 39. Edited by Bernard A. Taylor. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995.
- Whybray, R. N. *Isaiah 40-66*. New Century Bible Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981.
- _____. *Proverbs*. New Century Bible Commentary. Grand Rapids: Marshall Pickering, 1994.
- _____. *Wisdom in Proverbs: The Concept of Wisdom in Proverbs 1-9*. Studies in Biblical Theology no. 45. Naperville, IL: Alec R. Allenson 1965.
- Widdicombe, Peter. *The Fatherhood of God from Origen to Athanasius*. Oxford Theological Monographs. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994.
- Wiggins, Steve A. *A Reassessment of 'Asherah': A Study According to the Textual Sources of the First Two Millennia B.C.E.* Alter Orient und Altes Testament, no. 235. Darmstadt: Neukirchener, 1993.
- _____. "Shapsh, Lamp of the Gods." In *Ugarit, Religion and Culture: Proceedings of the International Colloquium on Ugarit, Religion and Culture, Edinburgh, July 1994, Essays Presented in Honour of Professor John C. L. Gibson*, ed. N. Wyatt, W. G. E. Watson, and J. B. Lloyd, 327-350. Ugaritisch-Biblische Literatur. Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1996.
- Williamson, Hugh G. M. "Eschatology in Chronicles: Tyndale Old Testament Lecture, 1977." *Tyndale Bulletin* 28 (1977): 115-154.
- _____. "Isaiah 63,7-64,11. Exilic Lament or Post-Exilic Protest?" *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 102 (1990): 48-58.
- _____. "Laments at the Destroyed Temple: Excavating the Biblical Text Reveals Ancient Jewish Prayers." *Bible Review* 4, no. 6 (Aug. 1990): 12-17, 44.
- Willis, John T. *Isaiah*. Austin: Sweet, 1980.
- Willis, T. M. "A Rhetorical Analysis of Psalm 103." *Biblica* 72 (1991): 525-537.
- Wilson, John A. "Egypt." In *Before Philosophy: The Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man*. Edited by H. and H. A. Frankfort, John A. Wilson, and Thorkild Jacobsen. Harmondsworth, England: Penguin, 1951.

- Wonyong, Jung. *The Divine Father Concept in the Old Testament*. Seoul, Korea: Institute for Theological Research, Korean Sahmyook University, 1997.
- Wright, Charles H. H. *The Fatherhood of God and its Relation to the Person and Work of Christ, and the Operations of the Holy Spirit*. Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1867.
- Wright, George Ernest. "A Catalogue of Early Hebrew Lyric Poems." *Hebrew Union College Annual* 23 (1950-1951): 1-39.
- _____. "The Lawsuit of God: A Form-Critical Study of Deuteronomy 32." In *Israel's Prophetic Heritage: Essays in Honor of James Muilenburg*, ed. B. W. Anderson and W. Harrelson. New York: Harper, 1962.
- _____. "The Terminology of Old Testament Religion and Its Significance." *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 1 (Jan.-Oct. 1942): 404-414.
- Wyatt, Nicolas. "Quaternities in the Mythology of Ba'al." *Ugarit-Forschungen* 21 (1989): 451-459.
- _____. *Religious Texts from Ugarit: The Words of Ilmilku and His Colleagues*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998.
- _____. "The Titles of the Ugaritic Storm God." *Ugarit-Forschungen* 24 (1992): 403-424.
- Wyschogrod, Michael. *The Body of Faith: God in the People Israel*. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1983.
- Young, Edward J. *The Book of Isaiah: The English Text, with Introduction, Exposition and Notes*. Vol. 3. New International Commentary on the Old Testament. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972.
- Zimmern, Heinrich. *Sumerische Kultlieder aus altbabylonischer Zeit*. Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1912-1913.