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Theophany and *Chaoskampf*: The Interpretation of Theophanic Imagery in the Baal Epic, Isaiah,
and the Twelve

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List of Abbreviations

AB	Anchor Bible
ABD	<i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i> , ed. David Noel Freedman (6 vols; New York: Doubleday, 1992)
ALASP	Abhandlungen zur Literatur Alt-Syrien-Palästina und Mesopotamiens
AnBib	Analecta Biblica
ANE	ancient Near East(ern)
ANEP	<i>Ancient Near East in Pictures Relating to the Old Testament</i> , ed. James B. Pritchard (2d ed. Princeton, NJ: Princeton, 1969)
ANET	<i>Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament</i> , ed. James B. Pritchard (3d ed; Princeton, NJ: Princeton, 1969)
AOAT	Alter Orient und Altes Testament
BA	<i>Biblical Archaeologist</i>
BDB	<i>The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon</i> , ed. Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles Briggs (2d ed.; Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 1996)
BETL	Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium
BH	Biblical Hebrew
BHS	<i>Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia</i> , ed. K. Ellinger and W. Rudolph (4d ed.; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1990)
Bib	<i>Biblica</i>
BibInt	<i>Biblical Interpretation</i>
BibOr	Biblica et Orientalia
BJSUC	Biblical and Judaic Studies from the University of California, San Diego
BSac	<i>Bibliotheca Sacra</i>
BS	Biblical Seminar
BST	Bible Speaks Today
BT	<i>Bible Translator</i>
BUVSAWL	Berichte über die Verhandlungen der sächsischen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Leipzig
BZ	<i>Biblische Zeitschrift</i>
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft

CAD	<i>The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago</i> , Erica Reiner and John Anthony Brinkman, eds. (21 Vols.; Chicago: Oriental Institute, 1956-)
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CBQMS	Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series
CML	<i>Canaanite Myths and Legends</i> , ed. J. C. L. Gibson (2d ed.; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1977)
ConBOT	Coniectanea biblica: Old Testament series
COS	<i>The Context of Scripture</i> , ed. William Hallo (3 vols.; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1997-2002)
CR:BS	<i>Currents in Research: Biblical Studies</i>
CTM	<i>Concordia Theological Monthly</i>
CTQ	<i>Concordia Theological Quarterly</i>
DUL	<i>A Dictionary of the Ugaritic Language in the Alphabetic Tradition</i> , Gregorio del Olmo Lete and J. Sanmartin (trans. Wilfred G. E. Watson; 2 vols.; HOS 1/67; Brill: Leiden, 2003)
ExAud	<i>Ex Auditu</i>
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
GKC	<i>Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar</i> , ed. Emil Friedrich Kautzsch (2d English ed.; trans. Arthur Cowley; Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1960)
HB	Hebrew Bible
HBM	Hebrew Bible Monographs
HdO	Handbuch der Orientalistik
HOS	Handbook of Oriental Studies
HSM	Harvard Semitic Monographs
HUCA	<i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i>
Int	<i>Interpretation</i>
IRT	Issues in Religion and Theology
ITC	International Theological Commentary
JAAR	<i>Journal of the American Academy of Religion</i>
JANES	<i>Journal of the American Near Eastern Society</i>
JAOS	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JETS	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>

<i>JNWSL</i>	<i>Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages</i>
JSNTSupp	Journal for the Study of the New Testament: Supplement Series
<i>JSOT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
JSOTSupp	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament: Supplement Series
<i>KTU</i>	<i>The Cuneiform Alphabetic Texts from Ugarit, Ras Ibn Hani, and Other Places (KTU: Second, Enlarged Edition)</i> , ed M. Dietrich, O. Loretz, and J. Sanmartín (ALASP 8; Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1995)
KTU	(Roman) used for textual references
LXX	<i>Septuaginta</i> , ed. Alfred Rahlfs (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1979)
NCBC	New Century Bible Commentary
NIBC	New International Bible Commentary
NICOT	New International Commentary on the Old Testament
<i>NIDOTTE</i>	<i>New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis</i>
<i>NZStH</i>	<i>Neue Zeitschrift für systematische Theologie</i>
OBT	Overtures to Biblical Theology
<i>Or</i>	<i>Orientalia</i>
OT	Old Testament
OTL	Old Testament Library
<i>RB</i>	<i>Revue Biblique</i>
<i>RQ</i>	<i>Restoration Quarterly</i>
<i>RTU</i>	<i>Religious Texts from Ugarit</i> , Nicolas Wyatt (2d ed.; BS 53; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002)
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBLSymS	Society of Biblical Literature Symposium Series
SBLWAW	Society of Biblical Literature Writings from the Ancient World
SBT	Studies in Biblical Theology
<i>SEL</i>	<i>Studi epigrafici e linguistici</i>
<i>SJOT</i>	<i>Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament</i>
SOTBT	Studies in Old Testament Biblical Theology
SSN	Studia semitica neerlandica
TBC	Torch Bible Commentaries
<i>TZ</i>	<i>Theologische Zeitschrift</i>
<i>TB</i>	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>
<i>VT</i>	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>

VTSupp	Supplements to Vetus Testamentum
UBL	Ugaritisch-Biblische Literatur
UCOP	University of Cambridge Oriental Publications
<i>UF</i>	<i>Ugarit-Forschungen</i>
WC	Westminster Commentaries
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WMANT	Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
WOC	<i>An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax</i> , Bruce Waltke and M. O'Connor (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990)
YNER	Yale Near Eastern Researches
ZAW	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>

Table of Contents

Declaration	ii
Acknowledgments	iii
List of Abbreviations	iv
Chapter 1. Introduction: Metaphor and Myth as Competing Frameworks for Interpreting Theophanic Imagery	1
Preliminary Considerations	1
Myth and Metaphor: Competing Schemata for Interpreting Poetic Theophanic Imagery	4
The Nature of Myth	4
The Chaoskampf Myth	11
Myth and Metaphor	14
An Example from Isa 19.1, 5-6	29
Some Qualifications	33
The Use of Ugaritic Material in this Project	35
Ritual and Theophanic Imagery	36
Survey of Previous Scholarship	39
Limitations, Outline, and Method of this Project	54
Chapter 2. Thunder and Theophany in the Baal Epic	57
Theophanic Imagery in the Ancient Near East	57
Introduction to the Baal Epic	62
Analysis of Texts Relating to Theophany in the Baal Epic	64
Summary and Conclusions	80
Chapter 3. Theophany and <i>Chaoskampf</i> in the Book of Isaiah	82
Yahweh Alone Exalted on the Day (2:6-22)	82
Yahweh and the Weapons of his Wrath (13.2-13)	88
“Before his Elders, Glory!” (24.21-23)	92
“With his Sharp, Great and Strong Sword” (26.20-27.1)	96
“I Will Distress Ariel” (29.1-8)	99
Yahweh Will Shatter Assyria (30.27-33)	103

The Blind Will See the Glory of Yahweh (35.1-10; 40.1-11; 52.7-12)	107
Yahweh Sets Out as a Warrior (42.13-17)	114
A Redeemer Will Come to Zion (59.15b-20)	116
“Behold, Yahweh will Come in Fire” (66.15-17)	121
Conclusion	124
Chapter 4. Theophany and <i>Chaoskampf</i> in the Book of the Twelve	126
Yahweh will Roar from Zion (Joel 4.15-17)	126
“From Zion Yahweh Roars” (Amos 1.2)	131
“His Wrath Is Poured Out Like Fire” (Nahum 1:2-8)	136
“You Set Out for the Salvation of your People” (Habakkuk 3.3-15)	140
“He Will Advance in the Storms of the South” (Zechariah 9:13-17)	154
Yahweh Will Fight on the Mount of Olives (Zechariah 14.3-5)	159
Chapter 5. Metaphor and Myth in Theophany: Borderline Cases	164
“By my Rebuke, I Dry Up the Sea” (Isa 50.1-3)	165
“O, That You Would Tear the Heavens” (Isa 63.19-64.2)	167
“Now I Will Arise” (Isa 33.1-16)	169
Who Is This, Coming from Edom? (63.1-6)	171
“Woe to the Tumult of Many Nations” (Isa 17.12-14)	175
Yahweh Will Descend to Fight on Zion (Isa 31.4-5, 8-9)	178
“He Will Tread on the High Places of the Earth” (Micah 1.3-4)	182
Conclusion	184
Chapter 6: Summary of the Argument and Conclusions	185
Bibliography	191

Chapter 1

Metaphor and Myth as Competing Frameworks for Interpreting Theophanic Imagery

Preliminary Considerations

This dissertation concerns the interpretation of theophanic imagery in the Prophets. In essence, my argument is that the imagery which attends and describes theophany in the poetic books of the Hebrew Bible is mythic and not metaphorical—that it should be interpreted in relation to the *Chaoskampf* myth, as Yahweh defeats chaos and restores order, rather than being understood as a metaphorical comparison with natural phenomena. In arguing this way, however, I am taking a new approach to theophanic imagery, for such imagery has almost uniformly been understood in Old Testament scholarship as metaphor. Before examining in detail this traditional and more widespread approach to theophanic imagery and the alternative to it which I wish to suggest, however, it will be helpful to state at the outset two foundations upon which my argument rests and the specific texts which will be enlisted to support it.

First, theophany is a complex and variegated theme in the Hebrew Bible and takes on different characteristics in different genres. It has often been noted that theophanies in the Pentateuch and Former Prophets emphasize divine speech, while divine warfare is emphasized in poetic theophanies.¹ While this generalization is basically valid, much more can be said; one might, for instance, make further distinctions between dream theophanies and theophany in the cult.² Prophetic call accounts are, furthermore, intrinsically related in form to theophanies to the patriarchs and Moses.³ The bulk of theophanies in poetic contexts, however, centrally concern the appearance of Yahweh on the human scene in order to do battle and the earth-shaking aftershocks to his appearance; time after time in these bodies of literature, Yahweh descends or appears in order to fight his enemies—with the earth shaking and his enemies fleeing in terror as a result.

A second foundation to this project is that the essential characteristics of poetic theophanies of appearance and aftershock are best understood in relation to the ANE myth of the

¹ See, for instance, Jörg Jeremias, *Theophanie: die Geschichte einer alttestamentlichen Gattung* (WMANT 10; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1965), 2; Samuel Terrien, *The Elusive Presence* (reprint; Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2000), 69; Terence Fretheim, *The Suffering of God: An Old Testament Perspective* (OBT; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 80.

² See the further distinctions of Victor Matthews, "Theophanies Cultic and Cosmic: 'Prepare to Meet Thy God!'," in *Israel's Apostasy and Restoration* (ed. Avraham Gileadi; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988), 307-17, and George Savran, *Encountering the Divine: Theophany in Biblical Narrative* (JSOTSupp 420; London: T&T Clark, 2005), 1-2, 6.

³ Terrien, *Elusive Presence*, 236, 248; Fretheim, *Suffering of God*, 151.

Chaoskampf, wherein the divine warrior defeats chaos and renews his reign over creation from his temple. While this is stated provisionally as an assumption here, it will be shown in the discussion of specific passages later in this project that the basic progression from divine victory over chaos and evil to renewed divine reign from the temple is apparent time after time in poetic theophanies.

Indeed, the binding of theophany and the divine defeat of chaos is so widespread in Hebrew poetry that any occurrence of a theophany in a poetic context without such conflict leaps out by contrast; on my reckoning, the only passage describing divine appearance in prophetic literature which does not also portray Yahweh engaging in battle and renewing his reign on the earth is Isa 4.2-6 (excepting, of course, the call accounts of Isa 6, Jer 1, and Ezek 1). A similar proportion between theophany and divine warfare against chaos is evident in the Psalms, many of which draw Yahweh's appearance together with his victory in battle and renewal of his reign (Pss 18, 24, 29, 46, 65, 68, 76, 77, 80, 83, 94, 97, 99, 104, 114, 144; but note, as exceptions, Pss 50, 67, and 85).⁴ It is furthermore significant that, when Yahweh finally enters the wisdom debate in Job 38-41, he speaks from within the storm (38.1) about defeating the monsters Leviathan and Behemoth. To draw such a connection between theophany and *Chaoskampf* in poetic contexts is, of course, not to blur the distinctions between these two themes, as if they had no independent existence from each other in these bodies of literature. To state the relation between these two themes more clearly, we may note how there are many scattered brief references to the victory over chaos, and a few in which chaos is defeated with cosmic effect but without an explicit reference to Yahweh's direct appearance (e.g., Ps 74, Isa 51.9-11, Ezek 32.1-8). On the other hand, there are also a few theophanies without any explicit defeat of chaos. It is in addition to these combinations that we find the very frequent joining of theophany and *Chaoskampf* in Hebrew poetry. In light of these considerations, one could legitimately describe theophany in the Psalms and Prophets as the visible and direct appearance of Yahweh as he defeats the powers of chaos.

Given the complex nature of theophany as a theme in the Hebrew Bible and its particular characteristics in poetic contexts, the specific texts which will be examined in this dissertation may be delineated in the following way. Following this introductory first chapter, chapter two will scrutinize the Baal Epic's handling of these themes, especially with regard to the window episode in KTU 1.4 VII. The third chapter will deal with the book of Isaiah,

⁴ Theophany is described in the psalms in a variety of ways, of course; for instance, there are a number of clipped references to cultic divine presence without any mention of divine battle (e.g., Ps 63.3, 89.16). But the interrelation between the two in the above listed psalms is still as frequent as it is striking.

discussing Isa 2.10-21; 13.1-13; 24.21-23; 26.20-27.1; 29.1-8; 30.23-33; 35.1-10 (together with 40:1-11 and 52.7-10); 42.14-17; 59:15b-19; and 66:15-17. Chapter four of the present work will turn to the Book of the Twelve, examining Joel 4.15-18; Amos 1:2; Nahum 1:1-8; Habakkuk 3.3-15; and Zechariah 9:14-17 and 14.3-5. A fifth chapter will discuss those passages which, for one reason or another, do not quite fit the usual pattern of the theophanic defeat of chaos, even while showing its basic characteristics (Isa 17.12-14, 31.4-9, 33.1-16, 50.1-3, 63.1-6, 63.19-64.2 and Mic 1.3-4).

It will immediately be noted, of course, that Jeremiah and Ezekiel are not included for discussion. There are several reasons for this: the *Chaoskampf* seems to have had less influence in the book of Jeremiah as a whole (the only passages describing theophanic divine battle are found in 10.13 and 25.30-31); and Ezekiel—a book which is, in any case, mostly in prophetic prose—depicts the theophanic defeat of chaos only possibly at 38.17-23. Given the relatively infrequent occurrence of these themes as opposed to the book of Isaiah and of the Twelve, it seemed best to concentrate on these two areas of the prophetic corpus. It should, however, be noted here that the goal is not to discuss every last hint of theophany in these books;⁵ to do so would unhelpfully elongate the project and is not strictly necessary to the argument. For the same reason, of course, this project is limited to prophetic literature, even though the approach taken in this project could easily be applied to the Psalms.

Having given some justification for the limitations of this project, it may seem strange to immediately widen the area of focus by including the Ugaritic Baal Epic. To exclude Ugaritic literature from a discussion of this sort, however, would be an inexcusable fault, for the profound similarity in thought and expression between Ugaritic and OT literature, especially with regard to the themes under examination in this project, is invaluable in the interpretation of the latter. As will be seen below, the Baal epic contains a theophany which is most instructive for biblical Divine Warrior theophanies; indeed, it was not until sustained attention had been given to the Baal Epic that I was able to formulate the exact course which this project would take. For these reasons, the particular combination of the Baal Epic, Isaiah, and the Book of the Twelve (from among several other possible combinations of OT and other ANE literature) should result in a profitable study.

In light of these introductory comments, we may give more detailed attention to the exact problem which will be addressed in this project and the way in which it will advance. This dissertation will trace the use and meaning of theophanic imagery as Yahweh battles the forces of chaos; the tight relation between these two themes suggests that poetic theophany may be

⁵ Note such hints in (for instance) Isa 9.18-19 or 11.4, or Zech 2.14-17.

interpreted according to how it reinforces or concentrates or specifies the nature of the divine defeat of chaos. This way of interpreting theophanic imagery is, however, only one among other possibilities; that theophanic imagery should be taken as a metaphorical way of portraying Yahweh's power is a popular competitor to the approach taken here. As a result, we may illuminate the larger context which informs the argument of this dissertation by scrutinizing in detail these two frameworks for interpreting theophanic imagery. It is to this task that we now turn.

Myth and Metaphor: Competing Schemata for Interpreting Poetic Theophanic Imagery

Since the argument of this dissertation is that the *Chaoskampf* myth is the key to interpreting theophanic imagery, the nature of myth and of the *Chaoskampf* myth in particular need to be clarified. It will be helpful to then set beside this a discussion of the nature of metaphor and a hermeneutical strategy proper to it, as well as showing the ways in which theophanic imagery has been understood metaphorically. This will provide the clearest context from which to expose the weaknesses of metaphorical explanations of theophanic imagery, as well as providing a framework by which to interpret theophanic imagery as mythic symbols. Two smaller but relevant side issues which arise from this discussion are the relation of theophanic imagery to ritual temple worship and the nature of the comparison between Ugaritic and OT materials which will be made in this thesis. This chapter will close with a discussion of the limitations under which this project operates and the exact way in which the biblical texts will be analyzed. Discussion of all these issues will provide an introduction and orientation for the analysis of individual theophanic passages in later chapters of this dissertation.

The Nature of Myth

In discussing the nature of myth, it is important to emphasize from the outset that it is impossible to be comprehensive either with regard to the vast subject of myth as a worldwide phenomenon or the voluminous scholarship attendant to it.⁶ As G. S. Kirk has written, “[t]here is no one definition of myth, no Platonic form of a myth against which all actual instances can be measured.”⁷ Fortunately, however, this may not be a liability, since there are several introductions to the modern study of myth (especially in relation to biblical studies) which have

⁶ As noted by Robert Oden, “Myth and Mythology,” *ABD* 4: 954, and Mircea Eliade, *Myth and Reality* (New York: Harper, 1963), 5.

⁷ *Myth, Its Meaning and Functions in Ancient and Other Cultures* (London: Cambridge, 1971), 7.

already been made,⁸ as well as several summaries of the various definitions of “myth” which have been proposed at one time or another in the context of biblical studies⁹ or in a more general framework.¹⁰ The present discussion may thus proceed with the benefit these summaries without repeating their results. In addition to relying on such summaries, James Barr’s comment that the lack of any comprehensive understanding of the nature and function of myth in a worldwide context need not hinder focused study of particular myths may be kept in mind; according to Barr, beginning the study of myth from example, without aiming at universally valid conclusions, is an acceptable approach.¹¹ Indeed, such an approach may even be beneficial, as Neil Forsyth notes with regard to his own exploration of the combat myth: “Like any definitions [*sic*], those adopted here will pose difficulties in the particular case, but we shall find interesting reasons where our definitions prove inadequate. It is best to begin with a tolerably clear set of terms.”¹²

In full recognition, then, that the immense size of the subject requires caution, but that it is no less approachable for being so vast, the following four central tendencies of ANE myth may be laid out, together with some hermeneutical implications arising from them.¹³ First, it should be strongly denied at the outset that ANE myth is intrinsically unhistorical or only about the personification of the natural realm or the cycle of seasons—or, worse yet, that myth is

⁸ Pride of place should probably here be given to J. W. Rogerson, *Myth in Old Testament Interpretation* (BZAW 134; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1974), especially 175-78, but see also Werner Schmidt, “Mythos im Alten Testament,” *EvTh* 27 (1967): 237-54; Claus Petersen, *Mythos im Alten Testament* (BZAW 157; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1982), 1-33; Bernard Batto, *Slaying the Dragon* (Louisville: Westminster, 1992), 4-10; T. Oden, “Myth and Mythology,” *ABD* 4: 946-60, and (more from the perspective of NT studies) Thomas Fawcett, *Hebrew Myth and Christian Gospel* (London: SCM, 1973), 1-49.

⁹ Oden “Myth,” 949-55. See also the twelve meanings given to “myth” in relation to OT studies in Rogerson, *Myth in Old Testament Interpretation*, 175-78; see further G. B. Caird, *The Language and Imagery of the Bible*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 220-23, and Nicolas Wyatt, “The Mythic Mind,” *SJOT* 15 (2001): 8-11, 27-32.

¹⁰ See Percy Cohen, “Theories of Myth,” *Man* 4 (1969): 338.

¹¹ “The Meaning of ‘Mythology’ in Relation to the Old Testament,” *VT* 9 (1959): 2; see further Claus Westermann, “Die Gliederung der Mythen,” in *Mythos im Alten Testament und seiner Umwelt* (ed. Armin Lange, et. al.; BZAW 278; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1999), 214.

¹² *The Old Enemy: Satan and the Combat Myth* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University, 1987), 8.

¹³ The formulation of these four central dimensions to ANE myth is drawn from my reading of the Hebrew Bible and Ugaritic texts, the *ANET* and *COS* volumes, as well as from modern scholarship on myth in relation to the Bible, in particular Forsyth, *The Old Enemy*, 8; Eliade, *Myth and Reality*; Brevard Childs, *Myth and Reality in the Old Testament* (2nd ed.; SBT 27; London: SCM, 1962), 18, 29-30; Schmidt, “Mythos;” Batto, *Slaying the Dragon*, 11; Barr, “Myth,” 5; Petersen, *Mythos*, 1-55; Norman Cohn, *Cosmos, Chaos, and the World to Come* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993), 3; Jon Levenson, *Sinai and Zion* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985), 102-3; Westermann, “Gliederung;” as well as the larger arc of Wyatt’s argument in *Myths of Power: A Study of Royal Myth and Ideology in Ugaritic and Biblical Tradition* (UBL 13; Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1996). It is remarkable how many scholars, even while admitting the difficulties of defining myth, still give definitions which are similar in terms of foundational, constitutional primeval events symbolically narrated.

primitive, unscientific, or intrinsically false. All of these points will be demonstrated in the discussion of the Baal epic below and find salutary emphasis in recent scholarship. Rogerson, for instance, concludes that one cannot draw an absolute distinction between ancient and modern thought—that it is not possible to speak of a “primitive mentality” in absolute distinction from a modern one.¹⁴ From a slightly different angle, Bertil Albrektson’s *History and the Gods*¹⁵ is an important work because of its skilful attack on the once nearly ubiquitous assumption that myth is intrinsically opposed to history. In a similar vein, Wyatt has discussed how, when ANE authors made points of contact between mythic narratives and historical events, they did not intend to cancel the historicity of the latter; rather, myth provided larger structuring patterns within which to understand historical events.¹⁶ It should also be stated that myth should not be identified with one particular literary genre; as Fawcett has pointed out, just as prayer can take many forms, so can myth.¹⁷

Second, ANE myth tends to describe archetypal relations between the divine and human or natural realms which create order and establish human life in all its aspects.¹⁸ This naturally leads to the universal, cosmic perspective which a myth often takes on as it attempts to account for and structure all of reality. At the same time, however, the primeval patterns of myth usually have to do with those issues which deeply and immediately concern human life (life and death, drought and fecundity, human culture, etc.).¹⁹ It is also worth emphasizing that, more than a general relationship or a matter of cause-and-effect (in which a god simply acts directly in the world), mythic events and actions in the divine realm are archetypal, so that they are formally

¹⁴ *Myth in Old Testament Interpretation*, 180.

¹⁵ *History and the Gods: An Essay on the Idea of Historical Events as Divine Manifestations in the Ancient Near East and in Israel* (ConBOT 1; Gleerup: Lund, 1967). Rudolf Smend complements this by writing how “both Israel and the ancient Near East conceive of divine activity in history in largely compatible categories” (“Tradition and History: A Complex Relation,” in *Tradition and Theology in the Old Testament* [ed. Douglas Knight; London: SPCK, 1977], 50, with further bibliography on this in note 7). See further the supportive comments of J. J. M. Roberts, “Myth Versus History: A Relaying of the Comparative Foundations,” *CBQ* 58 (1976): 1-13, and the helpful examples from Paul Fitzpatrick, *The Disarmament of God: Ezekiel 38-39 in its Mythic Context* (CBQMS 37; Washington, DC: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 2004), 64-68, as well as Schmidt, “Mythos,” 238; Roland Clements, *God and Temple* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1965), 3; H. W. F. Saggs, *The Encounter with the Divine in Mesopotamia and Israel* (London: Athlone, 1978), 89-90.

¹⁶ *Myths of Power*, 415-423.

¹⁷ *Hebrew Myth*, 36; cf. Wyatt’s handling of the issue of genre and myth in “The Mythic Mind,” 31.

¹⁸ This idea is put forward in discussions of ANE myth with great frequency; see, e.g., Childs, *Myth and Reality*, 29; Rogerson, *Myth*, 188; Hans-Peter Müller, “Mythos als Elementarform religiöser Rede im Alten Orient und im Alten Testament: Zur Theorie der Biblischen Theologie,” *NZStTh* 37 (1995): 6-7; Westermann, “Gliederung,” 214.

¹⁹ Schmidt, “Mythos,” 239.

analogous to their smaller repetitions in the human realm.²⁰ As a result, significant human activity is often modeled after these patterns.²¹

From a slightly different perspective, myth may be said continually to reach back for that sacred, primeval time when each thing took on the nature which it now has.²² From this perspective, at least, myth and ritual are similar in that ritual re-actualizes and effectively repeats these primordial relations—it re-injects into the present that primordial, sacred time, bringing worshippers into contact with the divine, victorious energy which originally shaped the world.²³ In this way, liturgy has a restorative and renewing function within the larger polarity of cosmic order and chaos.²⁴ In stressing the link between primeval action in the divine realm and its parallels and continued ritual expression in the human realm, however, it should be noted that, important as the primeval past is in myth, mythic divine action was imagined to take place not only at the foundation of the cosmos, but was also expected to be re-actualized and break in again within historical time. Furthermore, it can be projected on to the future, so that the order which primeval divine action brings about is imagined in a fully consummated state “on that day.”²⁵

Third, the paradigmatic nature of myth, rather than implying that myths are reproduced statically or inflexibly, instead encourages the opposite. Example after example shows that the paradigmatic nature of myth in and of itself allows for and even promotes all kinds of creative re-application. The reason why this is the case has (at least in part) to do with the way myth structures and interprets the world, for, in order to make good on the “world-ordering” function which myth can accomplish, it must be able to handle new problems which an individual or community might face. The varied situations in which myths are told call, in other words, for varied re-tellings. As Wyatt has written, “[a]t every juncture, and within the life of individual communities . . . the myth is as it were a symbolic reservoir, on which the community will draw

²⁰ Wyatt, *Myths of Power*, 120, 399.

²¹ See, e.g., Eliade, *Myth and Reality*, 6, 11.

²² Eliade has, in particular, emphasized this (*Myth and Reality*, 14, 18, 20).

²³ Anderson, *Creation Versus Chaos* (New York: Association, 1967), 22, 28, and Eliade, *Myth and Reality*, 13.

²⁴ Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), xxvi; Eliade, *Myth and Reality*, 30-33; Nicolas Wyatt, *Space and Time in the Religious Life of the Ancient Near East* (BS 85; Sheffield: Sheffield, 2001), 39, 64, 184, 269-71.

²⁵ This point is often made; see, e.g., Fitzpatrick, *Disarmament*, 59. An undue emphasis on Urzeit as the exclusive arena of mythic divine action can lead to problems. For instance, even though Claus Petersen eventually claims that the passage is mythic, he surprisingly regards the mythic status of the cleaving of Rahab in Isa 51.9-11—a signal example of myth in the OT—as problematic only because it refers (among other things) to the historical Exodus (*Mythos*, 38).

for a wide range of needs.”²⁶ As will be seen, this is particularly evident in the uses to which the *Chaoskampf* or Divine Warrior theme is put in OT poetry.

Fourth, myth takes on a level of profundity which takes it beyond simple, discursive meaning. Part of the difficulty in formulating workable definitions of myth and a model for interpreting it arises from the way in which myth concerns itself with trajectories of human experience which are “too deep for words”—trajectories so profound that it is difficult to state directly what is meant. Rather than dealing directly with clearly defined or abstract concepts, myth presents us with a symbolic narrative.²⁷

Myth’s depth is important for the present discussion because it dovetails with the re-applicability of myth in a way which has important hermeneutical implications. These two characteristics of myth are related because they feed into one another: just because it reaches so deeply, a myth can re-expressed with seemingly endless variation. This, in turn, has implications for the way in which one interprets ANE myth. One such implication of the link between myth’s profundity and flexibility is that, as one examines the scattered examples of the varied applications of the *Chaoskampf* (or any other) myth in various ANE texts, it is possible to construct a hypothetical entity—“the myth itself”—which one never actually encounters, but which provides a heuristically useful touchstone from which to approach different applications of a myth. Wyatt has given a lucid discussion of this point. While rightly conceding that the original, central myth never presents itself for inspection, but is rather “hidden” behind many applications of it in different contexts, Wyatt argues that the meaning of the myth can be derived from these later transformations.²⁸ According to Wyatt, interpreting the myth in this way does not necessarily expose the hypothetical entity of the central myth itself, for the myth lying behind the secondary accretions cannot, in a strict sense, be analyzed; its meaning is intrinsic to

²⁶ Nicolas Wyatt, “Arms and the King: The Earliest Allusions to the *Chaoskampf* Motif and Their Implications for the Interpretation of the Ugaritic and Biblical Traditions,” in *Und Mose schrieb dieses Lied auf...: Studien zum Alten Testament und zum Alten Orient* (ed. M. Dietrich, et. al.; AOAT 250; Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1998), 862.

²⁷ Wyatt, *Myths of Power*, 406, and Avery Dulles, “Symbol, Myth, and the Biblical Revelation,” *TS* 27 (1966): 11. C. S. Lewis, although not speaking of Semitic myths, has expressed this point with such clarity that an extended quote from his introduction to George MacDonald’s *Lilith* (Tring: Lion, 1986) is justified:

[Myth] is in some ways more akin to music than to poetry or at least to most poetry. It goes beyond the expressions of things we have already felt. It arouses in us sensations we have never had before, never anticipated having, as though we had broken out of our normal mode of consciousness and ‘possessed joys not promised to our birth.’ It gets under our skin, hits us at a level deeper than our thoughts or even our passions . . . and . . . shocks us more fully awake than we are for most of our lives (ix-xi).

²⁸ *Myths of Power*, 123.

itself.²⁹ (I take this to be a different expression of the same idea I have expressed above in speaking of how myth is “too” deep for words.) While “the myth itself” is subject to discussion only as a set of formal properties or structures in a plot, the secondary applications are easier to interpret because they (by definition) refer to the world in some particular way.³⁰ Meaning in myth arises, in other words, from specific applications of it; while narratives about the cosmos may be “too deep” to be restated in direct conceptual form without essential loss, any one narrative about a particular struggle between order and chaos in a specific context will be easier to interpret.

In addition to helping us, in a general sense, to understand the myth as a whole and its various applications, positing a relationship between the hypothetical entity of “the myth itself” and its various instantiations is helpful because it can illuminate clipped or enigmatic references to the myth (as are sometimes found in the Hebrew Bible). It is, at least in principle, legitimate to use the picture of the entire myth as a background from which to interpret brief or allusive references to it; different applications of a myth can illuminate shorter ones even when no one example of the myth is identical with any other. As Wyatt writes, “[e]very mythological passage will have its ‘penumbra’ of ideas which remain unexpressed, but which nevertheless accompany the text as undercurrent.”³¹ Reference to this penumbra (developed by attention to other, by definition different applications) is helpful in interpretation.

A second hermeneutical issue which arises in the analysis of myth and its “depth” concerns the nature of the symbolism which it uses, for the exact way in which symbols are supposed to relate to their extra-textual referents is something of a contentious issue in this area of study. On the one hand, it is sometimes claimed that mythic symbols represent directly and without remainder the realities they are meant to convey; on the other hand, a sharp separation between symbol and reality in myth is sometimes maintained. A representative of the first position is Mary Wakeman, who writes that the “distinction that we try to make between the sea as a symbol and Yam as the name of a mythological monster would have been incomprehensible to the myth-makers. . . . [T]he correlation was immediate and complete.”³² According to this line of thinking, myth-participants thought immediately and unreflectively in symbols.

On the other hand, other scholars have insisted that myth makers were aware of their own symbols as such, and did not participate in their narratives uncritically.³³ This latter view is

²⁹ Wyatt, *Myths of Power*, 117.

³⁰ *Myths of Power*, 126, 160-61; cf. the same approach in Doty, *Mythography*, 16, Westermann, “Gliederung,” 215, Doty, *Mythography*, 20, and Eliade, *Myth and Reality*, 141, 146.

³¹ *Myths of Power*, 60. Exactly the same strategy is discussed in Fishbane’s *Biblical Myth*, 21-22.

³² Wakeman, *Monster*, 104.

³³ Fawcett, *Hebrew Myth and Christian Gospel*, 40; Kirk, *Myth: Its Meaning and Function*, 246.

sometimes taken to an extreme; for instance, McKenzie has argued that mythic symbols give form to a completely transcendent reality which is otherwise totally unknowable. On McKenzie's reading, there is no inherent connection between the symbol and the reality to which it points; all that is gained is an "intuition," "a fleeting grasp" of an unknown reality.³⁴

An immediate objection to McKenzie's line of thinking, however, arises from the typological dimension of myth, wherein actions and events in the divine realm are repeated on earth in a formally analogous way. This speaks against placing the realities behind mythic symbols at a level too far removed from those symbols. The ideological edge with which ANE myths were often fashioned counts as another reason against this understanding: if there is no inherent connection between symbol and reality, what practical significance could the kingship of the divine victor in the *Chaoskampf* myth have had for ancient societies?

On the other hand, attributing a simplistic identification of symbol and reality to ANE myth is open to equally damaging objections. The cosmic dimensions within which mythic actions take place speaks against such a view; the way in which Yahweh's theophanies in the OT do not fully disclose the divine person (e.g., Ps 18:12, and the convoluted expression of Ezek 1.26) is also relevant at this point inasmuch as it implies that mythic symbols were not intended to capture totally and without remainder that to which they point. It seems best to say that the intention of ANE myth was to portray transcendent reality accurately but not exhaustively. If the divine was not absolutely transcendent and beyond human knowledge, neither was it totally reducible to human thought and language. It is important to distinguish, of course, our own modern understanding of mythic symbols from that of ancient peoples, since they doubtless participated in a more direct way in symbolic narratives from which we are distanced. As a result, it is probably easier and more natural for modern readers to differentiate between a symbol in ancient texts and the reality to which it intends to point. It would thus be misleading to project our own ability to distinguish between symbol and reality onto ancient peoples (as McKenzie, quoted above, does). Nevertheless, Wakeman's claims about simplistic identification are not convincing.

There is, of course, far more that could be said on this subject; but within the limitations of this project, the above emphases on myth as a symbolic narrative about archetypal relations between the divine and human realms concerning order and chaos will have to suffice. As will be seen below, this understanding of myth and its hermeneutical implications will be highly significant for the interpretation of Ugaritic and OT theophanic texts.

³⁴ *Myths and Realities*, 188-96; see the same argument in Dulles, "Symbol," 4-5.

The Chaoskampf Myth

If the understanding of the nature of ANE myth informing this project is tolerably clear, the *Chaoskampf* theme may be expounded. Given the relatively clear nature of the *Chaoskampf* myth and the amount of attention which has already been given to it, however, less discussion will be required on this than on myth in general.³⁵ The definition of the *Chaoskampf* theme which informs this project is *a divine battle with and defeat of chaos issuing in effective rule over and blessing for the cosmos, centered in the divine palace on the cosmic mountain*. Some explication of this definition is in order.

First, the nature of the chaos which is defeated may be clarified in two ways: in cosmic terms, chaos is uncreation; in moral terms, it is often identified with evil. Chaos transgresses the order of creation and that of moral laws. These two dimensions are, of course, related; as Jon Levenson writes, “God is . . . directed against the forces that oppose him and his acts of creation—the forces of disorder, injustice, affliction and chaos, which are, in the Israelite worldview, one.”³⁶ Ben Ollenburger has similarly argued that “creation texts in the Hebrew Bible are concerned primarily with questions of order, with the nature of that order, its preservation and its quality, including its moral quality.”³⁷ This dual aspect of cosmic and moral disorder further implies that the divine defeat of chaos applies as naturally to acts of creation, wherein chaos is overcome and cosmicized, as it does to later battles, wherein the chaos threatening creation is overcome and the structure of creation maintained.³⁸

These comments on the dual cosmic and moral dimensions of chaos do require some qualification, however, especially with regard to the Divine Warrior who defeats it, for chaotic and cosmic powers can sometimes take on ambiguous relationships. As one example of this ambiguity, Timothy Beal has noted how chaos is fecund: in the *Enuma Elish*, for instance,

³⁵ The literature on the *Chaoskampf* is voluminous, but some of the more important works include: John Day, *God's Conflict with the Dragon and the Sea: Echoes of a Canaanite Myth in the Old Testament* (UCOP 35, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), and Wyatt, *Myths of Power*; see also the helpful discussion of Bernhard Anderson, “The Slaying of the Fleeing, Twisting Serpent: Isaiah 27:1 in Context,” in *Uncovering Ancient Stones*, ed. Lewis Hopfe (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1994), 3-15. Thomas Podella, “Der ‘Chaoskampfmythos’ im Alten Testament: Eine Problemanzeige,” in *Mesopotamien-Ugaritica-Biblica* (ed. M. Dietrich and O. Loretz; AOAT 23; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1993), 302, breaks with the basic continuity in explication of the *Chaoskampf* in the above works by relegating the divine battle to the role of explicating or confirming the sovereignty of the divine King who is already ruling from his temple; in his view, it is the temple which is central to this theme. However, in agreement with most scholarship on this subject, the battle against chaos should be awarded a central place in this thematic complex as the necessary precursor to the inception of divine rule.

³⁶ *Creation*, xix.

³⁷ “Isaiah’s Creation Theology,” *ExAud* 3 (1987): 54.

³⁸ Podella, “Der ‘Chaoskampfmythos’,” 287-88.

Tiamat gives birth to gods, and also provides the raw material for the world.³⁹ Furthermore, the divine warrior can take on chaotic or monstrous characteristics in the defeat of chaos; Beal notes in this regard Anat's violent nature and the fact that Yahweh can roar, just as chaos does.⁴⁰ The Divine Warrior is, in some ways, a destructive figure.

Despite these occasional ambiguities, however, it is important to emphasize that the interrelationship between chaos and ordered creation makes it clear that the most common symbol for chaos, the sea, is quite appropriate, given its unchanging, undifferentiated, and unorganizable nature. This deeper suitability and harmony in imagery with regard to the sea is further seen in the relation of the defeat of chaos and ANE cosmology, a relation helpfully explored by Wyatt. As Wyatt explains, the conception of the earth as a flat plane surrounded on all sides by water (and originally, before creation, submerged under water) fits perfectly with the image of a divine warrior beating back the chaotic waters beyond the borders of dry land and firmament in order to form a space within which human life is possible.⁴¹ This is an insight of great importance which will be developed further below. It is also important to state that chaos can be imagined in different forms: while it often takes the form of storming waters, we sometimes find pictured the dragon in the sea, and sometimes reference only to the dragon. On the other hand, the desert, as the opposite of the paradisiacal cosmic mountain, can also express a chaotic state. But these differences do not point to a different cosmological reality.⁴²

As for the actual battle with chaos, few generalizations can be made, since different incarnations of chaos are defeated in different ways. Even the biblical examples of this theme show great diversity: the sea and/or its monsters can be soothed (שָׁבַח, Ps 65.8, 89.10), crushed (פָּרַר, שָׁבַר, רָצַץ, Ps 74.13-14; דָּכָא, 89.11), scattered (פִּזַּר, Ps 89.11), cut and pierced (חָצַב) and חָלַל, Isa 51.9), dried up (חָרַב, Isa 51.10), rebuked (נָעַר, Ps 104.7), confined within boundaries (נָבְוֹל־שָׁמַתָּ), Ps 104.9; cf. Jere 5.22), put under guard (מִשְׁמָרָה, Job 7.12), or shut behind doors (בְּדַלְתַּיִם, Job 38.8).⁴³ The fearful reaction to Yahweh's appearance in battle shows the same constancy expressed in highly flexible ways, whether this reaction is described

³⁹ *Religion and Its Monsters* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 13-22.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* See further Samuel Loewenstamm, "The Trembling of Nature during the Theophany," in *Comparative Studies in Biblical and Ancient Oriental Literatures* (ed. Kurt Bergerhof, et. al.; AOAT 204; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Kevelaer, 1980), 181.

⁴¹ *Myths of Power*, 19-115.

⁴² RTU 145, note 124; *Myths of Power*, 75-76. A helpful discussion of the interrelationship between the different symbols for chaos, the sea and the dragon, is found in Petersen, *Mythos*, 139-41. Petersen argues that Rahab, Tannin and Leviathan are identified with each other in the Hebrew Bible, and that the sea and the dragon are sometimes practically identical (such as in Ps 74.13) and sometimes merely closely related.

⁴³ Mark Smith, *The Early History of God: Yahweh and the Other Deities in Ancient Israel* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1990), 52, and 49-55 more generally, as well as the similar survey in Michael Fishbane, *Biblical Myth and Rabbinic Mythmaking* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 206.

according to shaking and trembling (רעש, געש, and רגז, Ps 18.8; cf. Ps 77.19, 97.4; Isa 13.13, 24.18-20; Joel 2.10; Hab 3.10; רעד, Ps 104.32; חלץ, Job 9.6; רפף, Job 26.11; נוע, Isa 19.1), skipping about (רקד, Ps 29.6), writhing (חיל, Isa 13.8, Hab 3.10), melting (מוג, Ps 46.7; מוס, Ps 68.3), fleeing (נוס, Ps 144.5; cf. נדר and נפץ in Isa 33.3), hiding (טמן, Isa 2.10), amazement (תמה, Isa 13.8, Job 26.11), being shattered (חתת, Isa 30.31), falling (נפל, Isa 31.8), mourning and languishing (אבל and יבש, Amos 1.2) or being still (רדם, Ps 76.7).⁴⁴

Such diversity does not, however, imply carelessness on the part of ancient Israelite poets in their expression of the defeat of chaos. Quite the opposite! Mary Wakeman's work, *God's Battle with the Monster*, although somewhat opaque in expression, is helpful in this regard because she investigates the particular significance of the different ways in which the chaos monster is defeated.⁴⁵ Note especially in this case how Marduk, in the Enuma Elish, splits Tiamat in half as the first act of creation, thus founding the heavens and earth; Baal, for his part, shatters Yam and then scatters him, thus nullifying his power over the already-created earth. In other words, the variations to which the defeat of chaos is subject and the consequences of each are significant and contextually appropriate; as discussed above, we see the basic idea of the defeat of chaos given repeated transformations and specific applications.

Despite the consistently victorious conclusion to this battle, however, Ben Ollenburger has noted that the defeat of chaos almost never involves total destruction of that chaos, but rather implies that chaos is "disarmed and confined" (perhaps inevitably to break out again).⁴⁶ Nevertheless, despite the resilient nature of chaos, the immediate result of the defeat of chaos is usually the acknowledgment of the divine warrior as king and the inception or renewal of his rule; the language of kingship surrounds the defeat of chaos in the Enuma Elish, the Baal Epic, and the OT.⁴⁷

But the divine king always rules over and blesses his dominion from his palace/temple on the cosmic mountain. In the cosmological geography of myth, this mountain reaches up into heaven and (by its roots) down into the underworld.⁴⁸ Inasmuch as it joins both realms, it is the center or fulcrum of the cosmos—indeed, of reality itself.⁴⁹ To quote Levenson: "the center (or navel or axis or fulcrum) is not a point in space at all, but the point in relation to which all space

⁴⁴ See Loewenstamm, "Trembling," 175-76.

⁴⁵ *God's Battle with the Monster* (Leiden: Brill, 1973).

⁴⁶ "Creation Theology," 54.

⁴⁷ John C. L. Gibson, "The Kingship of Yahweh against its Canaanite Background," in *Ugarit and the Bible*, ed. George Brooke, et. al. (UBL 11; Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1994), 111.

⁴⁸ Theodore Hiebert, "Theophany in the OT," *ABD* 6:506; Fawcett, *Hebrew Myth*, 240; Wyatt, *Myths of Power*, 31.

⁴⁹ Levenson, *Sinai and Zion*, 115, 122.

attains individualization and meaning.”⁵⁰ The absolute security of this mountain follows naturally from its location, as does its suitability for the place of divine rule.⁵¹ As a result, the rule from this cosmic center of the divine warrior who has defeated chaos cannot help but issue in blessed and fecund harmony in the world; what chaos would destroy, the divine warrior-king nourishes. The cosmic mountain of the divine king thus has natural links to political security and right rule in such a way that the human king repeats the victories of the Divine Warrior; political enemies can, furthermore, easily be identified with cosmic chaos.⁵² It is also easy to see how human temples would have been enjoyed as the earthly counterpart to the divine throne room and the earthly site of divine rule. Indeed, temple architecture and images symbolize and thus render effective the order-producing divine presence by virtue of their correspondence. As Levenson writes, “the Temple is the epitome of the world, a concentrated form of its essence, a miniature of the cosmos,” so that the “earthly Temple is the world *in nuce*; the world is the Temple *in extenso*.”⁵³ Again, it is apparent that a harmony arises amongst the different characters, locations, and junctures in plot of the *Chaoskampf* narrative in relation to the cosmic mountain.

We may close our discussion of the *Chaoskampf* theme by noting that the defeat of chaos can sometimes (but not always) occur in a theophany in the human world. As argued above, this overlap between theophany and *Chaoskampf* is particularly pronounced in the Psalms and Prophets.

Myth and Metaphor

The argument of this dissertation is that the *Chaoskampf* myth provides the best explanation for the use of poetic theophanic imagery, as over against the most pervasive explanation of this imagery as metaphor. Now that the nature and interpretation of myth are (hopefully) clear, we may turn to the subject of metaphor. This will clarify why explanations of poetic theophanic imagery as metaphor are less satisfying than setting such imagery in the larger context of the myth of the Divine Warrior. While it should be emphasized that the division between mythic symbol and metaphor is not absolute, drawing such a distinction is both valid and important for properly interpreting theophanic language.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 139.

⁵¹ Richard Clifford, *The Cosmic Mountain in Canaan and the Old Testament* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972), 3, as well as Levenson, *Sinai and Zion*, 111, and Ronald Clements, *God and Temple* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1965), 2-3.

⁵² Hiebert, “Theophany,” 506.

⁵³ *Sinai and Zion*, 138, 141; see also Clifford, *Cosmic Mountain*, 6; Clements, *God and Temple*, 2.

A convenient starting point for understanding metaphor in relation to the study of the Hebrew Bible and ancient Semitic texts is found in Marjo Korpel's work, *A Rift in the Clouds: Ugaritic and Hebrew Descriptions of the Divine*.⁵⁴ Korpel gives an extensive bibliography of studies of metaphor,⁵⁵ summarizes different definitions of metaphor given from Aristotle onwards, and discusses some of the recent major works on the subject.⁵⁶ Drawing on Korpel's discussion, and in full recognition of the great nuance which analyses of metaphor can take on, we may cut to the heart of metaphor (so to speak!) by defining it not as mere literary ornamentation or the substitution of one thing for another, but as a kind of literary artifice whereby two things are brought together in an illuminating and surprising way, so that one thing is described in terms of another. Metaphor generates meaning not through substitution but through the interaction or intercourse of thought between the object under discussion and the object to which it is compared. In other words, the relation which the literary artifice of metaphor brings about forces the reader to make connections between two objects and their networks of associations in such a way that exposes some new dimension of the object under discussion.⁵⁷ Thus, the not infrequent prophetic charge of whoredom in prophetic literature forces the reader to draw some connection between the complex of associations surrounding "Israel" and "a whore"; various connections can be considered until a suitable candidate (or candidates) is found. Once the connection is made, an entirely new avenue of thought and expression is opened—indeed, reality itself can be redescribed. In Nelson Goodman's striking formulation, a metaphor "might be regarded as a calculated category-mistake—or rather as a happy and revitalizing, if bigamous, second marriage."⁵⁸ Paul Ricoeur has also pointed out the radical "is" and "is not" nature of metaphor, showing that it is exactly because they draw together dissimilar entities into a relationship of comparison that metaphors are so powerful.⁵⁹

It should be emphasized that metaphors can be influential for long periods of time and

⁵⁴ Marjo Korpel, *A Rift in the Clouds: Ugaritic and Hebrew Descriptions of the Divine* (UBL 8; Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1990).

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 35.

⁵⁶ Korpel, *Rift*, 4-83. Some of the more important works this regard are I. A. Richards, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1936); Max Black, *Models and Metaphors: Studies in Language and Philosophy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1962); and Paul Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor* (trans. Robert Czerny, et. al.; London: Routledge & Keegan Paul, 1978); see further the nuanced discussion of Janet Martin Soskice, *Metaphor and Religious Language* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985), 15, 38-51.

⁵⁷ See Korpel, *Rift*, 41-42, and Carol Newsome, "A Maker of Metaphors—Ezekiel's Oracles against Tyre," *Int* 38 (1984), 152.

⁵⁸ *Languages of Art: An Approach to a Theory of Symbols*, reprint (Indiana: Hackett, 1985), 73, quoted by Henri Blocher, "Biblical Metaphors and the Doctrine of Atonement," *JETS* 47 (2004): 635.

⁵⁹ Ricoeur, *Rule of Metaphor*, 7.

over entire societies; they are also open-ended, capable of yielding new insights upon further examination. Metaphors are often shocking, but not always easy to decipher; sometimes a great deal of background knowledge is required to make the right connection(s).⁶⁰ It would, furthermore, be unwise to underestimate the power of metaphors to affect our thinking and perception at the deepest levels: it is not too much to say that a great deal of how one views reality is structured according to systems of metaphors.⁶¹

As stated above, it is claimed with great frequency in biblical scholarship that poetic theophanic imagery is a metaphorical way of emphasizing divine power; in fact, I am aware of only a handful of authors who argue unambiguously for the fully mythic status of OT depictions of theophanic divine conflict, in explicit contrast to the metaphorical.⁶² Metaphor is simply the dominant category invoked when scholars turn to the imagery describing the appearance of the Divine Warrior and his battle with chaos—but it is precisely this claim which the present project disputes. There are, however, different contexts within which such claims to the metaphorical status of theophanic imagery are made. A three-fold distinction is helpful at this point with regard to claims to metaphoricality in discussing Divine Warrior theophanies; this distinction will also show at what level the counter-argument of the present project is to be registered. (The following citations are only representative in nature, for the claim for metaphorical status to theophanic imagery is so widespread that it is impossible to be comprehensive.)

First, many scholars in the field of Hebrew-Ugaritic studies are sharply aware of the cosmic and mythical dimensions of Hebrew thought—dimensions whose vitality is undiminished by their transference from the ANE to Yahwistic faith—but who still make reference to metaphor when speaking of the raging waters or the monsters dwelling therein, the thunder and lightning by which they are defeated, and the cosmic shaking and fear which result from the conflict. For instance, J. C. L. Gibson writes that the monsters Behemoth and Leviathan, the conflict against whom Yahweh describes at the end of the book of Job, “become metaphors” for the “evil than [*sic*] can plague individual lives.”⁶³ Another example of this tendency may be found in the work of Mark Smith, who occasionally makes reference to the category of metaphor in explaining the inner workings of the *Chaoskampf*. Thus, in discussing

⁶⁰ Korpel, *Rift*, 77.

⁶¹ As argued by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980).

⁶² See Barr, “Myth,” 5; McKenzie, *Myths and Realities* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1963), 186; Norman Habel, “He Who Stretches out the Heavens,” *CBQ* 34 (1972): 418; John Gray, *The Biblical Doctrine of the Reign of God* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1979), 8; Podella, “Der ‘Chaoskampfmythos’,” 318-19; as well as Wyatt, *Myths of Power*.

⁶³ “Kingship of Yahweh,” 107.

the occasional mixture of sun and storm imagery and the OT (such as in Ps 50.1-3 or Ezek 43.1-5), Smith concludes that this mixture implies that Yahweh cannot be identified with any single natural phenomenon: “Yahweh is equated metaphorically with natural phenomena, but also has power over and transcends” them.⁶⁴ Discussing the implications of the *Chaoskampf* for royal ideology in another location, he (quite rightly) notes that the victories of the Divine Warrior are paralleled in the human realm by the human king, but then claims that “the metaphorical granting of divine power to the human king in the language of the West Semitic conflict myth of Baal and Yam” also occurs.⁶⁵ However, it is to be questioned whether the relationship between Yahweh and the phenomena constituting his theophany, or the relationship between divine and human royal power, is one of metaphor.

Another example of the sporadic reference to metaphor in otherwise deeply insightful work on Ugaritic myth occurs in Dennis Pardee’s translation of the Baal Epic, when he quotes approvingly from Korpel’s work, *A Rift in the Clouds*, in his discussion of the window episode in the Baal Epic, averring that Ugaritians self-consciously thought in metaphors in describing the divine dwelling place.⁶⁶ The same could be said for Alberto Green, who, speaking of the broad continuity in conceptions of the storm god from Sumerian to second-millennium Mesopotamian contexts, writes that the “Storm-god was metaphorically conceptualized as the thundercloud personified;”⁶⁷ Green also thinks of the opening of the window in Baal’s palace as “metaphorical for opening in the clouds, permitting rain to fall.”⁶⁸ Similarly, Jon Levenson makes passing reference to metaphor in describing the phenomena constituting the Sinai theophany (without further explaining what the thunder and fire are metaphors for),⁶⁹ as does Benedikt Otzen, who speaks of the thunder of the storm god as a metaphor in discussing the traditional elements (drawn from Israel’s West Semitic background) of theophanic warfare against cosmic chaos.⁷⁰

Also within this category belongs Paul Hanson’s *The Dawn of Apocalyptic*, which moves, in a single page, from speaking of the use of mythic elements in Isa 40-55 to speaking of the metaphorical use of myth in these chapters, a use which was changed to “harsh literalism” in Isa 56-66.⁷¹ Bernhard Anderson, too, lays out with great clarity the themes of divine kingship won through cosmic conflict with chaos in the Enthronement Psalms, but begins his discussion

⁶⁴ *Early History*, 117.

⁶⁵ “Mythology and Myth-making in Ugaritic and Israelite Literatures,” in *Ugarit and the Bible* (ed. George Brooke, et. al.; UBL 11; Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1994), 310.

⁶⁶ “The Ba’lu Myth,” *COS* 1.86:262, note 184.

⁶⁷ *The Storm-God in the Ancient Near East* (BJSUC 8; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2003), 72.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 194.

⁶⁹ *Sinai and Zion*, 15.

⁷⁰ *Myths in the Old Testament* (London: SCM, 1980), 80.

⁷¹ *The Dawn of Apocalyptic* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975), 27.

by noting their rootedness in “mythopoetic” symbolism (see below for more discussion of this term).⁷² He also speaks of the “metaphor” of the storm in Ps 29, Amos 1.2, and Job 38.⁷³ Walter Brueggemann, in a similar way, speaks of how the “kingship of Yahweh resolved the enduring battle between the life-giving creation-order and the restless, surging destructiveness of chaos,” but then claims that the “dominant metaphor” for chaos in the OT is “the mighty waters, which surge out of control” and threaten to destroy life.⁷⁴ Finally, Jörg Jeremias, who obviously thinks of these themes as operating in a fully mythic sense,⁷⁵ claims (without argument) that the lightning which Yahweh wields in the storm in Zech 9.14 is only metaphor for power, not an actual weapon.⁷⁶

While I think the category of metaphor is unhelpful for interpreting poetic theophanic imagery, the present argument stands not so much in opposition to these works as much as it counts as a refinement of the terminology used and an advance in research (in dependence on them) with regard to the inner harmony of the imagery describing Divine Warrior theophanies in relation to the *Chaoskampf* as a myth.

A second context within which recourse is made to the concept of metaphor in the discussion of theophanic divine battle occurs in works which contain ambiguities as to whether the OT texts containing these themes use them in a way which is fully mythic or not. A frequent terminological distinction is made in these discussions between “mythopoetic” and “mythopoeic” texts, the former using mythic themes in an uninhibited, direct, and fully functional way, the latter in only an allusive or figurative manner, as powerful but empty imagery.⁷⁷ Thus, Jeffrey Niehaus, in *God at Sinai*, flatly states that the pattern of divine conflict and resulting blessed rule in the examples of the *Chaoskampf* in the Hebrew Bible is “not mythopoetic,” but then speaks of the reference to Yahweh’s defeat of Leviathan in Isa 27.1 as mythopoeic.⁷⁸ Why Niehaus should relegate this outstanding use of myth in the OT to merely spectacular imagery is not entirely clear; Niehaus goes on to speak of how mythopoeic texts use “elements of myth to portray the *magnalia Dei* among humans,”⁷⁹ but why Yahweh’s actions among humans should be described in only mythopoeic imagery is unclear to me. John Day, although arguing in an extremely insightful way in *God’s Conflict with the Dragon and the Sea*

⁷² *Contours of Old Testament Theology* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1999), 211.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 45.

⁷⁴ *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997), 656-57.

⁷⁵ See *Theophanie*, 13, 28, 90-97.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 60.

⁷⁷ See Batto, *Slaying*, 12, and Fitzpatrick, *Disarmament*, 55-56, for definition and application of this term.

⁷⁸ *God at Sinai*, 184.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

for a fully mythic understanding of the *Chaoskampf* motif in some parts of the Hebrew Bible, also gives a somewhat ambiguous account of the issue of myth and metaphor in the OT, arguing that, while myth was always understood literally by syncretists in ancient Israel, monotheists would sometimes have taken it metaphorically and sometimes literally.⁸⁰ (Day does not discuss further under what circumstances an ancient monotheist would have seen a mythic biblical text as literal truth or mere metaphor.) The same ambiguity occurs in the work of Caird, who writes that myth is used metaphorically in the Bible, but then does a good job of interpreting mythic imagery in relation to cosmic reality (e.g., he says that Job 26 uses mythic ideas as symbols “of eternal truth”).⁸¹

On the other hand, Werner Schmidt’s introductory discussion of the poetic rendering of theophany and *Chaoskampf* argues for the transference of mythic themes from ANE gods to Yahweh in the defeat of chaos in a way which preserves their vitality.⁸² He closes his discussion, however, by strangely claiming that the expression of the myth in Isa 27.1 as an expectation of future action is accomplished in such a way that it “give[s] up its hold on reality” and the “stage properties of the myth appear now only as a symbol for particular historical kingdoms.”⁸³ Similarly, uses of the *Chaoskampf* in individual psalms (Schmidt cites Pss 18 and 144 as examples) drain, according to his argument, the cosmic context of the theme, so that it “becomes a mere image.”⁸⁴ Regardless of the legitimacy of these qualifications on the reality of myth in the OT (which I think, in any case, to be dubious), these comments introduce an element of ambiguity into his discussion as to whether or not the *Chaoskampf* is myth or metaphor in the Hebrew Bible.

Similar ambiguities obtain in Bernard Batto’s discussion of this subject. While admitting that some of the “most graphic” references to the combat myth are found in Hebrew poetry, Batto explains the focus in his work *Slaying the Dragon: Mythmaking in Biblical Tradition* on myth in non-poetic genres as due to the possibility that depictions of the combat myth in OT poetry “might be regarded merely as instances of poetic license or merely literary metaphors.” Rather than allowing for such a dismissal of mythic themes, Batto wishes to present his audience with “real mythmaking, myth that is ‘believed,’ rather than with myth used primarily for artistic effect.”⁸⁵ In stating, however, that he is concerned with the mythopoeism of non-poetic genres, rather than the mythopoeticism of poetic genres, it is not clear whether

⁸⁰ *God's Conflict*, 188-89.

⁸¹ *Language and Imagery*, 219-27.

⁸² *The Faith of the Old Testament: A History* (trans. John Sturdy; Oxford: Blackwell, 1983), 163-70.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 169.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 170.

⁸⁵ *Slaying the Dragon*, 172-73.

Batto considers the putatively mythopoetic nature of the *Chaoskampf* in the Psalms and other poetic genres to be only a prejudice of the reader, or whether Batto actually agrees with such an opinion. Indeed, Batto states that “such a distinction between metaphor and myth” in poetic genres “is for the most part not justified,”⁸⁶ apparently implying that poetic depictions of the *Chaoskampf* can be either. Batto does not discuss further why descriptions of Yahweh’s theophanic defeat of chaos in poetry should be regarded only as spectacular imagery.

The same charge could be raised against Gerhard von Rad, who argues tenaciously that ANE mythic themes show up as metaphor in the Hebrew Bible because Israel’s historical orientation excludes mythic thought,⁸⁷ but who also occasionally admits that mythological thinking does not totally exclude the historical⁸⁸ and makes reference to the use of mythic themes in Isa 17 and Hab 3.⁸⁹ The same sort of problem may also obtain in the work of Frank Moore Cross, who writes, on the one hand, of the unrestrained plundering of mythic themes in apocalyptic and their more “attenuated” use in royal psalms and prophetic oracles,⁹⁰ and on the other hand, of how “Israel’s austere historical consciousness” could “attenuate” or “break” the patterns which originally birthed such themes.⁹¹ Indeed, the very title of Cross’ work draws a distinction between myth and Hebrew literature—a distinction which results in uncertainty about whether or not Yahweh’s defeat of chaos counts as a full-fledged myth in Cross’ account of these themes.⁹²

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ *Old Testament Theology* (trans. D. G. M. Stalker; 2 vols.; London: SCM, 1975), 1:23-24, 27, 47, 139, 154, 308; 2:110.

⁸⁸ e.g., *ibid.*, 2:111.

⁸⁹ *ibid.*, vol 2:191, 156, respectively. The definition of myth given above hopefully exposes such claims as false dichotomies.

⁹⁰ *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic* (Harvard, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973), 83, note 10, and 138.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 138.

⁹² Something of the same problem is found in Otto Kaiser’s *Die mythische Bedeutung des Meeres in Ägypten, Ugarit und Israel* (BZAW 78; Berlin: Alfred Töpelmann, 1959), 159-60. Despite the fact that Kaiser thinks that the *Chaoskampf* describes a real victory in the Hebrew Bible, he stumbles over the same problem by arguing that poetic claims to Yahweh’s victory over chaos in the Bible derive from a context within which foreign influence on Israelite faith needed to be combated. With the production of the official documents of the Yahwistic and Priestly sources, however, Israelite understanding of creation and history was transformed, because these documents imagined a qualitative difference between Creator and creature which allowed for a rational understanding of the world and history. This transformation led (according to Kaiser) to a renovation of the *Chaoskampf*, so that it expressed Yahweh’s intervention for his people’s sake in past, present, and future need. Kaiser’s seasonal interpretation of Ugaritic myth doubtless influences his analysis at this point in an unhelpful way, leading to his imposition of a break in the use of the *Chaoskampf* in different parts of the OT, for ANE peoples easily imagined the divine defeat of chaos and renewal of rule to happen in historical time. Although no ambiguity obtains in Kaiser’s discussion as to whether or not the divine defeat of chaos is fully actualized in OT poetry, the similarity of his mistake to those of von Rad and Cross shows the dangers of dichotomizing myth and history.

A similar ambiguity obtains in a recent article by Claus Westermann, “Die Gliederung der Mythen,”⁹³ but for a different reason. Westermann isolates myth to the genre of narrative, understanding myth to consist of originally oral, short, family narratives about events taking place in the primal past, when the boundaries between the divine and human realms were still fluid and the world still in the process of being shaped.⁹⁴ This leads, however, to some disclarity on the status of mythic themes in poetic genres. On the one hand, Westermann claims that, while mythic themes in Job, the Psalms, and the Prophets serve to intensify or enhance the force of the text by means of poetic comparison, this in no way implies a devaluation (“Abwertung”) of such themes, so that the *Chaoskampf* in, for instance, Ps 77 would be recognized as such and still retain something of its power. On the other hand, however, he later claims that poetic mythic themes “gehören nicht zu den eigentlichen Mythen” because they are transferred from their original context in narrative.⁹⁵ They rather function for dramatic and emotional effect in poetic comparisons.⁹⁶ But these qualifications leave the status of mythic elements in poetry in Westermann’s thought somewhat vague.

This second, more ambiguous category within scholarly discussions of biblical texts describing divine warfare with chaos differs from the first listed above in that the first involves only clipped references to the “metaphors” of thunder and lightning, raging waters and earthquake in the *Chaoskampf*, while this second category exposes the (perhaps inevitable) ambiguity in this explanation. All of the authors listed above show strong awareness of the meaning and function of the themes of divine rule and theophanic warfare in the Hebrew Bible, and the present project is indebted to them all. But there is uncertainty in the works listed in the second category as to whether theophanic imagery is meant to evoke mythic themes of divine warfare and rule in a direct way or merely to highlight Yahweh’s power through impressive images. The trajectory of the present project stands in somewhat sharper contrast to these works than those listed in the first category above, since it argues that poetic depictions of the theophanic defeat of chaos unambiguously function as far more than stirring metaphors.

Metaphorical explanations of theophanic imagery are found in a third context, in scholarship which sharply contrast the first two categories listed above by explicitly claiming that theophany and *Chaoskampf* are drained of all mythic value and occur in the Hebrew Bible

⁹³ “Die Gliederung der Mythen,” in *Mythos im Alten Testament und seiner Umwelt* (ed. Armin Lange, et. al.; BZAW 278; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1999), 212-32.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 212-14.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 228.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 229-31.

as empty images, in distinction from their use in ANE literature. Michael Fishbane has aptly summarized this line of argument (an argument with which Fishbane disagrees):

[O]n the argument that an essential variable of ancient Near Eastern paganism is the origin of the gods in a cosmic *plenum*, from which substance they emerge as differentiated personalities, but upon whose elemental character they are necessarily and inherently dependent, the figure of a singular God with a transcendent will, who is (apparently) distinct from the natural world to which He gave created form, is of a fundamentally different sort. . . . Accordingly, it is presumed that any hints of myth as recognizable from the ancient Near East . . . can only be harmless vestiges of a figurative (or metaphorical) sort—and thus neither true or living myth.⁹⁷

Fishbane elsewhere deftly writes of how exponents of this view “triumphantly survey the rubble of mythology at the base of Sinai, and presume that only golden calves could be made from these leftovers.”⁹⁸ According to this line of reasoning, the use of the imagery of the *Chaoskampf* in the Hebrew Bible functions in a manner similar to that in William Cowper’s famous hymn:

God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform
He plants his footsteps in the sea
And rides upon the storm.

These lines are not meant to speak of Yahweh’s defeat of chaos, but are meant as powerful imagery in an allusive or general sense as part of an exhortation to trust God: note how Cowper applies the image of storm clouds by speaking of the clouds which fearful saints dread as being “big with mercy,” which “shall break in blessings on your head;” the image then changes in the fifth verse to that of a flower (“the bud may have a bitter taste/But sweet will be the flower”). This is not cosmic imagery but free metaphor—and in precisely this way, it is argued, should the Bible’s use of mythic imagery be understood.⁹⁹ Obviously, the present project stands in sharp opposition to this.

⁹⁷ *Biblical Myth*, 5. Fishbane cites various exponents of this view in notes 19-22; see also 31-32 and references there.

⁹⁸ *The Exegetical Imagination* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 86-87. Exactly the same account of the issue is given by Lawrence Boadt, “Mythological Themes and the Unity of Ezekiel,” in *Literary Structures and Rhetorical Strategies in the Hebrew Bible* (ed. L. J. de Regt, et. al.; Assen, The Netherlands: Van Gorcum, 1996), 217; as well as Knierim, “Cosmos and History,” in *The Task of Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 176.

⁹⁹ Again, without in any way being comprehensive, this position is advocated in George Ernst Wright, *The Old Testament Against Its Environment* (SBT 2, London: SCM, 1955), 27; Stephen Brown, *Image and Truth: Studies in the Imagery of the Bible* (Rome: Catholic Book Agency, 1955), 66-72, 75; Walther

My dissatisfaction with this explanation of poetic theophanic imagery is already obvious, but, before giving reasons in favor of a mythical understanding of this imagery, it should be acknowledged that it is not difficult to understand why biblical scholars would have claimed it to be metaphor. Such a handling of this imagery in the Bible has a long history in

Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament* (trans. J. A. Baker; London: SCM, 1961), 2:18; Artur Weiser, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (trans. Dorothea Barton; London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1961), 58-59; Larry Toombs, "Formation of Myth Patterns in the Old Testament," *JBR* 29 (1961), 109; Otto Eissfeldt, *The Old Testament: An Introduction* (trans. Peter Ackroyd; Oxford: Blackwell, 1965), 35; Dulles, "Symbol," 17; Meir Weiss, "The Origin of the 'Day of the Lord'—Reconsidered," *HUCA* 37 (1966): 34, 35, 51; J. Kenneth Kuntz, *The Self-Revelation of God* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1967), 214; Ralph Klein, "The Day of Yahweh," *CTM* 39 (1968): 517-25; Roland K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (London: Tyndale, 1970), 369; James Crenshaw, "W^cdōrēk 'al-bāmōtē 'āreš," *CBQ* 34 (1972): 39-53, especially 52; William Doty, *Mythography: The Study of Myths and Rituals* (Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1986), 21; Dennis McCarthy, "'Creation' Motifs in Ancient Hebrew Poetry," in *Creation in the Old Testament*, ed. Bernhard Anderson (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 80; Ronald Youngblood, "A Holistic Typology of Prophecy and Apocalyptic," in *Israel's Apostasy and Restoration* (ed. Avraham Gileadi; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988), 218; Charles Sherlock, *The God who Fights: The War Tradition in Holy Scripture* (RSCT 6; Edwin Mellen: Lewiston, NY, 1993), 143, 153; Gary Long, "Dead or Alive? Literality and God-Metaphors in the Hebrew Bible," *JAAR* 62 (1994): 509-37; John Hartley, "g'r," *NIDOTTE* 1: 885; Manfred Dreytza, "sūpā," *NIDOTTE* 3:237-38; Thomas Yoder Neufeld, 'Put on the Armor of God: The Divine Warrior from Isaiah to Ephesians' (JSNTSupp 140; Sheffield: Sheffield, 1997), 35; Bill Arnold and Bryan Beyer, *Encountering the Old Testament: A Christian Survey* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1998), 66, 159.

Two recent and particularly thorough and forcefully argued statements on mythopoeticism in the Hebrew Bible are found in David Tsumura, *Creation and Destruction: A Reappraisal of the Chaoskampf Theory in the Old Testament* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns), 143-95, and Rebecca Watson, *Chaos Uncreated: A Reassessment of the Theme of 'Chaos' in the Hebrew Bible* (BZAW 341; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2005). Both are discussed in detail later in this chapter.

For works on Isaiah, in addition to the commentaries listed below on Isa 19, see John Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 1-39* (NICOT; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986), 490-91, 567, and *ibid.*, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40-66* (NICOT; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), 341, note 46. See the same claims in J. Alec Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993), 237; Claus Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66* (trans. D. M. G. Stalker, OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1969), 250; Yehoshua Gitay, *Isaiah and his Audience* (SSN 30; Assen: Van Gorcum, 1991), 84; George Knight, *Isaiah 40-55: Servant Theology* (ITC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 12; Marc Brettler, "Incompatible Metaphors for YHWH in Isaiah 40-66," *JSOT* 78 (1998): 97-120; John Sawyer, "Radical Images of Yahweh in Isaiah 63," in *Among the Prophets*, ed. Philip Davies and David Clines (JSOT 144; Sheffield: Sheffield, 1993), 82; John Ferrie, Jr., "Singing in the Rain: A Meteorological Image in Isaiah 42:10-12," in *Imagery and Imagination in Biblical Literature* (ed. Lawrence Boadt and Mark Smith; CBQ Monograph Series 32; Washington, D. C.: Catholic Biblical Association, 2001), 96-98, 104. For scholarship on the Book of the Twelve, see, for example, James Mays, *Amos* (OTL; London: SCM, 1969), 22; Hans Walter Wolff, *Joel and Amos* (trans. Waldemar Janzen, et. al.; Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1997), 118-19; Douglas Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah* (WBC 31; Waco, TX: Word, 1987), 250, 270, 300; J. Alberto Soggin, *The Prophet Amos* (London: SCM, 1980), 30; Walter Maier, *The Book of Nahum* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1959), 163; Maria Selzes, *Habakkuk and Zephaniah: Wrath and Mercy* (trans. George Knight; ITC; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), 49; Wilhelm Rudolph, *Haggai—Sacharha 1-8—Sacharha 9-14—Maleachi* (KAT XIII 4; Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Mohn, 1976), 244, note 19; James Nogalski, *Redactional Processes in the Book of the Twelve* (BZAW 218; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1993), 162, 168, 226.

Jewish and Christian traditions of interpretation,¹⁰⁰ and it is natural for modern readers still working with theological assumptions which accept the Bible as true in some strong sense to take such cosmological statements as metaphor, since we now know that the earth is not flat, for example, and that it is not founded on pillars (Job 9.6).¹⁰¹ Furthermore, it is clear that language of thunder and lightning, fire and earthquake cannot be taken literally; for many commentators, however, this leaves the category of metaphor as the only other option. The profound way in which the Hebrew Bible rebels against its cultural environment (even while borrowing from it to an equally profound degree), together with its unique innovations (such as the aniconic tradition), also make it easier to understand why scholars would attribute a different intention behind the same themes and imagery. The fact that the Bible's presentation of mythic themes differs from ANE literature by (for instance) not narrating events which occur almost exclusively in the divine realm and frequently giving only brief references to ideas found in continuous narratives elsewhere in the ANE also makes the mythopoetic approach easier to understand.¹⁰²

But perhaps the dominant cause behind the mythopoetic interpretation of theophanic imagery is simpler: it is simply difficult for modern readers and scholars, given our own cultural location and history, to think cosmically, for our heritage from the modern and now post-modern periods is one in which the center does not hold. T. S. Eliot expresses this condition perfectly when he writes of how "fragments are shored up against my ruins."¹⁰³ Earlier in his famous poem, Eliot asks:

What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow
Out of this stony rubbish? Son of man,
You cannot say, or guess, for you know only
a heap of broken images, where the sun beats,
and the dead trees gives no shelter, the cricket no relief,
and the dry tone no sound of water.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁰ See Fishbane, *Biblical Myth*, 8-9, and *Exegetical Imagination*, 29-32; Lawrence Boadt, "Mythological Themes," 216.

¹⁰¹ In the last chapter of this dissertation, I try to lay a foundation for continued theological reflection which would understand the Bible to be true in a strong sense, without denying any reality to its use of myth.

¹⁰² Mark Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism: Israel's Polytheistic Background and the Ugaritic Texts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 174-75; Fishbane, *Exegetical Imagination*, 102; Wyatt, *Myths of Power*, 3.

¹⁰³ T. S. Eliot, *The Waste Land and Other Poems* (reprint; Faber and Faber: London, 1985), line 430.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.* The (nearly cosmic) desolation described in this poem is, of course, quite appropriate in relation to the fecundity which the divine defeat of chaos often produces.

Despite these considerations, however, at least three reasons prevent a metaphorical understanding of mythic (and especially theophanic) imagery in the Hebrew Bible. First, metaphor is unsuitable as a means to make sense out of theophanic imagery because it tends towards simplistic exegetical conclusions. This is seen in two ways. First, inasmuch as a metaphor involves a comparison employed for the sake of speaking in new and striking ways about some other entity, it must be asked what this other entity is which is aimed at in these putatively metaphorical passages and why thunder and lightning, fire and earthquake were deemed suitable for comparison with this entity by ancient authors. The most frequent answer given to this question in the works listed above is that theophanic imagery refers to divine power¹⁰⁵—that theophanic imagery is a metaphorical way of expressing that Yahweh is powerful as he acts to save his people. This claim is questionable, however, for one wonders if such varied, involved and complex imagery, scattered liberally throughout OT poetry and found in many different contexts to many different ends, is intended only as a rhetorical or metaphorical embellishment of Yahweh's power. Note particularly in this regard the book of Nahum, which begins with an explicit statement concerning Yahweh's power (וַיִּגְדַּל-כֹּחַ, v. 3, *q're*) before launching into a description of Yahweh's theophanic appearance in judgment (vv. 3-8). If Nahum merely meant to communicate that Yahweh is powerful, one wonders why he uses such complicated imagery to underline the point which he has already explicitly made.

The blandness of metaphorical interpretations of theophanic imagery is seen from a second perspective. It was noted above that metaphor opens up new possibilities for understanding not just the subject under discussion, but one's entire view of the world; in describing one thing in terms of another, an opportunity to redescribe reality is given. As a result, when interpreting a metaphor, it is proper to ask what new possibilities for thought and expression are created by this literary invention. How might the world look different after accepting this metaphor? Such questions are appropriate even for biblical metaphors: note how the comparison of Israel with Yahweh's (unfaithful) wife allows Ezekiel to re-interpret Israel's entire history (see Ezek 16 and 23), re-shaping (or, rather, destroying!) Israelite self-understanding through a single image. A smaller example of this dimension of metaphor is found in Ps 85:11, where we are given the striking image that "righteousness and peace kiss" (צֶדֶק וְשָׁלוֹם נִשְׁקָו). Although it is not entirely clear what this beautiful image means, it immediately suggests a variety of connotations about sweetness and intimacy which might

¹⁰⁵ It would be tiresome to reference all the works listed above on this count; as a representative, see rather Jeremias, *Theophanie*, 163-64, who ends his programmatic work on this note.

characterize the nature of Yahweh's restoration of the land. Metaphor is, in other words, productive and creative.

When one puts these sorts of questions to theophanic passages, however, difficulties arise, for it is not clear what new dimensions of thought and expression the comparison of divine power with thunder and lightning produce. What is the precise correlation between the complex of associations surrounding storm imagery which are meant to be connected with certain aspects of divine power, and how does this correlation give the reader an opportunity to see Yahweh's power in a totally new way? What exactly is it about thunder and lightning that is productive and creative for our understanding of Yahweh? Why would they have been selected, out of so many possible images? The only possible candidate might be the intensity of divine power—that storm imagery is invoked to imply the concentration and force of divine power. But, again, it is not clear what new avenues of thought a comparison like this opens up; and it is, again, improbable that such extended and widespread descriptions of theophany are intended only to emphasize the intensity of divine power. In other words, metaphor as a means to interpreting theophany produces insipid and anticlimactic exegetical results, allowing us to say almost nothing about the inner complexity of this imagery. It fizzles when it should explode.

A second argument against the mythopoetic interpretation of theophanic imagery is found in the location of passages describing Yahweh's war-like appearance within texts relating to the most desperate tragedies and profound hopes of the Hebrew Bible, such as the destruction of the temple, the exile and return, and Yahweh's final judgment and restoration of all the earth. Is it plausible that the agonized cry of a text like Ps 74 (wherein it is asked why, if Yahweh so easily defeated the Sea and Leviathan in the primordial past, he does not similarly smash the enemies who have razed his temple) uses only figures of speech to lament Israel's destruction? As Michael Fishbane has written, "the pathos of the appeals" that Yahweh renew in the present his past acts of salvation renders it improbable that they are metaphorical in nature, "since such an assumption would empty the prayers of the very claims upon which they depend."¹⁰⁶ The request of Ps 74 does not depend on a comparison between some other divine action and the defeat of an putatively imaginary sea monster, but rather begs that, just as chaos was defeated at creation, it be defeated again. "Why would the psalmist depict a victory he believed never happened if his manifest purpose is to solicit divine help on that very basis?"¹⁰⁷

A third reason against a mythopoetic interpretation of mythic imagery is found in the profound connections in thought and expression between OT depictions of theophany and

¹⁰⁶ *Biblical Myth*, 49; see further 64.

¹⁰⁷ Fishbane, *Exegetical Imagination*, 92.

Chaoskampf and ANE myth, for these connections render it improbable that identical language and imagery would be used as myth in Ugaritic texts and only as metaphor in biblical passages. At the very least, if this language were only intended metaphorically, one would expect this to be signaled more clearly to ancient audiences which would probably otherwise have happily understood them as myth. As will be explored in the next chapter, theophanic imagery is remarkably constant throughout ANE and OT literature, even though it is also highly flexible, and can be reshaped in recognizable but creative ways. (It may be provisionally noted here that this simultaneous constancy and flexibility of these images fits perfectly with the endlessly applicable dimension of myth explored above, wherein one basic myth is given many different formulations.) Furthermore, as is well known, Ps 74.12-14 and Isa 27.1 almost directly quote a series of lines from the Baal Epic concerning the defeat of Leviathan. Such profound similarity in imagery and expression puts the burden of proof on those who maintain that the use of standard ANE theophanic images in the OT has a different intention behind it.

If the above arguments against understanding theophany as metaphor—that it tends towards bland interpretations, that it destroys the foundation upon which the texts depend for their claims, and that it cannot explain the use of identical imagery in ANE myth—are valid, then the consequences of understanding theophanic imagery as mythic symbol, as opposed to metaphor, may be presented. As noted above, although a metaphor can become a distinctly complex and long-lived entity, it is essentially a literary invention, a certain way of talking, which depends only on the author's ingenuity for its shape and could be changed without any necessary loss in meaning. One could, for instance, just as easily say that one's love is a flower, a tree, an ocean, a house, a book, or whatever, as long as one can make good upon the comparison. This is not to say that a metaphor is totally disconnected from reality, for metaphors can shape how we view the world by exposing real connections and similarities. But metaphor is essentially arbitrary and inventive.

By way of contrast to the inventive nature of metaphorical symbols, however, the symbols which myth employs function within a much more profound cosmic structure—and they inhere in and reinforce this structure in intentional, non-arbitrary ways. These symbols are, furthermore, not ways of speaking about or drawing a comparison with some other entity (Baal is not, for instance, compared to a thunderstorm); such symbols are rather attempts to express the basic structure of the universe and the events which have constituted it. In other words, all metaphors are symbols, but not all symbols are metaphors. Both Paul Ricoeur and Michael Fishbane have written helpfully on this point. Ricoeur imagines different sorts of symbols to occupy a spectrum, with simile as a relatively weak way of speaking of one thing in terms of

something else, metaphor as a stronger way of doing this, but with mythic symbols counting as a deeper form of symbolism, since they inhere in the structure of the cosmos in a deeper way.¹⁰⁸ Fishbane, for his part, contrasts the private, invented, unconstrained construction of metaphors as over against cosmic symbols, noting that most modern poetry falls in the former category, while “[o]nly rarely will a strong poet release images that appear to arise from the very ground of being.”¹⁰⁹

The cosmology and basic plot structures of ANE myth (and especially the *Chaoskampf* myth) thus provide a suitable context for interpreting theophanic imagery, which may be explained according to the ways in which it reinforces or complements the larger mythic theme of the battle with cosmic and historical chaos. While a metaphorical approach provides only the most superficial claims about these texts, treating theophanic imagery as fully functioning myth allows us to explore with far greater nuance why storm imagery, fire, and earthquakes attend theophany, for such an approach exposes such descriptions as organically related to different aspects of the various dimensions of the *Chaoskampf* motif. Rather than arbitrary invention (however powerful), theophanic imagery is consonant with other ideas about cosmic order, the divine world and its warriors, and their activity in the human realm; rather than a comparison which generates its meanings through an interplay between similarity and dissimilarity, mythic symbols are entirely at home within their larger cosmic structure. In other words, phenomena from nature gain their significance in myth in terms of the narrative about the relations of the two realms and the establishment of order, not in terms of a comparison. As a result, the goal in interpreting OT theophanies will be to trace the ways in which the images of divine appearance and aftershock reinforce the divine defeat of chaos—as the ancient myth of the defeat of chaos is given ever new expression. We will thus be looking for the exact way in which the theophany is expressed and what contribution the theophany makes to the larger advance of the text. That divine power is in view in poetic theophanies is not completely wrong. But attention must be given to the particular ways in which this divine power is deployed in the defeat of chaos, the (re)creation of order, and the exercise of divine rule from the temple—in other words, to the myth of the *Chaoskampf* and its nearly endless variation in expression and application.

¹⁰⁸ *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning* (Fort Worth, TX: Texas Christian University Press, 1976), 57-69. Ricoeur’s term for what I call “mythic symbol” above is simply “symbol,” but he distinguishes it from metaphor in exactly the way done above.

¹⁰⁹ *Exegetical Imagination*, 103. Fishbane recommends the Hebrew poet Ḥayim Nahman Bialik as an example of a writer whose images reach beyond the metaphorical to the symbolic; T. S. Eliot could also be recommended on this score.

Although this point will be given fuller explication in the second chapter of this dissertation, it will be helpful to note at this juncture that, just as the sea, which is beaten back and contained in creation, is an entirely suitable symbol for chaos, the same coherence in imagery also applies to the fact that it is often the storm god in this myth who defeats the raging waters and nourishes life on the earth, since it is with the same weapons—thunder and lightning—that the storm god both defeats the cosmic Sea and nourishes the earth. If the raging waters had their way, they would flood the earth and human life would be totally wiped out, but the storm god and Divine Warrior beats back Sea with the same weapons by which he will render the earth a fertile and paradisiacal place for the humans who live there, i.e., by making it rain. Because of this victory, the divine warrior is hailed as king and ruler over the world which he has saved. A rich, harmonious order in the cosmic and natural realm is the central theme—and the images or symbols used in this narrative cohere with each other in mutually supporting ways to express this.

An Example from Isa 19.1, 5-6

Before proceeding further, it will be helpful to pause and present an example of the above distinction between mythopoetic and mythopoeic understandings of theophany. The oracle against Egypt in Isa 19.1-15 is ideal in this regard due to its brevity and the way in which it sharply exposes the strengths and weakness of these two approaches to theophanic battle. Three verses are particularly relevant:

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1) Behold, Yahweh is riding on a swift cloud,
he comes to Egypt. | וּבָא מִצְרַיִם קָלַעַב עַל-יְהוָה רֹכֵב |
| The worthless images of Egypt shake before him,
the heart of (every) Egyptian melts within him. | וְנָעוּ אֱלִילֵי מִצְרַיִם מִפְּנֵי
וַלְכָב מִצְרַיִם יָמָס בְּקִרְבּוֹ |
| 5) The waters dry up from the sea, and
the river is desolate ¹¹⁰ and dry; | וְנִשְׁתּוֹמְמוּ מַיִם מֵהַיָּם וַיִּבֶשׁ
וַיִּבֶשׁ הַיָּרֵךְ וַיִּבֶשׁ הַיָּרֵךְ |
| 6) the canals stink, the rivers of Egypt's
Nile diminish and are desolate. | וְהָאֲזַנִּיחוּ נְהָרוֹת וְהִלְלוּ וַיִּחַרְבוּ יְאֵרֵי מִצְרַיִם |

The oracle against Egypt in vv. 1-15 divides neatly into three sections, addressing the failure of Egyptian religious counsel before incipient civil war and foreign rule (vv. 1-4), the

¹¹⁰ As Wyatt notes, חָרַב can here mean “be dry” or “be desolate” (RTU 68, note 150); I have chosen the latter option, although either is justified.

desolation of the Egyptian economy (vv. 5-10), and the total failure of Egyptian religion and wisdom in light of this disaster (vv. 11-15). Yahweh appears theophanically in the very first verse, riding on a swift cloud to Egypt. The manifestation of his presence to the Egyptians has two effects: Egyptian idols tremble and Egyptian hearts melt (v. 1), and the waters of the Nile dry up (vv. 5-6).

It was mentioned above that metaphorical interpretations of theophany have enjoyed a long pedigree in the history of interpretation. This is true here. Rabbinical commentators generally take v. 1 to mean that the divine decree against Egypt will be swiftly executed: Rashi comments that this verse implies that Yahweh is “quickly sending a swift sound of the decree of his word to punish Egypt,” taking the MT’s קל not as “swift” but as referring to a sound¹¹¹ (קל מהרה גזירת דברו ליפרע ממצרים ממהר לשלוח), Kimchi writes that this verse “is a figurative expression, concerning the great swiftness of the divine decree against them” (דרך משל לרוב מהירות הגזירה עליהם), while Ibn Ezra similarly understands the verse to contain “a hint that the decrees are swiftly coming” (רמז לגזירות הבאות מהרה).¹¹² On these readings, the swiftness of the execution of Yahweh’s judgment is compared to a quickly moving cloud. John Calvin, for his part, explains the image of Yahweh riding on a cloud in relation to Egyptian over-confidence in military strength, understanding the verse to imply that Yahweh “will easily make a descent upon them, and neither walls nor bulwarks shall hinder his progress.”¹¹³

In a similar way, modern commentators have understood the image of a swift cloud to “describe the swift spread of panic and confusion” in Egypt under divine judgment,¹¹⁴ to imply Yahweh’s sovereignty over nature,¹¹⁵ or to speak of divine judgment in only a general sense.¹¹⁶ Kissane understands the height at which the swift cloud flies to be the central factor in

¹¹¹ See Marcus Jastrow, *A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Bavli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature* (New York: Judaica, 1971), 1371.

¹¹² Quotations are taken from Menahem Cohen, ed., *Mikra’ot Gedolot HaKeter: Isaiah* (Jerusalem: Keter, 1996).

¹¹³ *Commentary on the Prophet Isaiah* (trans. William Pringle; 4 vols.; Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1851), 2:49. In fairness to these pre-modern commentators, it should be noted that the Rabbis are often quite sensitive to mythic themes in the Hebrew Bible (see Fishbane’s *Biblical Myth and Rabbinic Mythmaking*), while Calvin and other pre-modern Protestant commentators, viewing these texts through the lens of the NT, often interpret them in suitable ways (Calvin thus understands Isa 27.1, for example, in relation to angels [particularly fallen ones], an interpretation fitting nicely with the relationship between the Divine Council and divine warfare).

¹¹⁴ John Mauchline, *Isaiah 1-39* (TBC; London: SCM, 1962), 157.

¹¹⁵ Oswalt, *Isaiah 1-39*, 367, and Barry Webb, *The Message of Isaiah* (BST; Leicester: IVP, 1996), 95.

¹¹⁶ John Goldingay, *Isaiah* (NIBC 13; Carlisle: Paternoster, 2001), 117-18, Edward Young, *The Book of Isaiah* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969), 2: 14.

interpretation, cross-referencing Yahweh's defeat of the powers on high in Isa 24.21.¹¹⁷ Clements, for his part, while acknowledging the ANE background to the storm deity riding on his cloud-chariot, categorically asserts that v. 1 contains a metaphor which indirectly speaks of how Yahweh is about to take action against Egypt.¹¹⁸ Walter Brueggemann notes the mythic background of the image, but then approvingly quotes Calvin's metaphorical interpretation.¹¹⁹ David Stacey similarly mishandles the Ugaritic evidence by noting it and then claiming that storm imagery in both bodies of literature implies merely the "unpredictable and uncontrollable power" of the deity.¹²⁰ Hans Wildberger and Jörg Jeremias, both of whom handle this passage in a much more satisfactory way, note the contextually suitable variations given to the standard themes of divine appearance and turmoil in nature—according to which the goal of Yahweh's coming is explicitly stated, instead of his simply coming from the south, and the expected turmoil in nature is expressed in the shaking of the Egyptians—as well as the ANE background to these themes. Neither, however, pursues to the fullest possible degree the relation among these images in the way which attention to this background allows, for both fail to link the divine appearance of v. 1 and the reaction in vv. 5-6.¹²¹ Even Oswald Loretz, whose familiarity with Ugaritic myth leads him to emphasize the fully-functioning use of mythic ideas in the image of Yahweh as the cloud-rider, fails to draw a connection between Yahweh's appearance and the drying up of the waters in vv. 5-6.¹²² Finally, Childs and Seitz do not discuss the image of v. 1.¹²³

While the different ways in which these commentators have tried to tease out the meaning of the image of Isa 19.1 according to ideas of swiftness or height are understandable, it should be noted that it is not entirely clear in what way a cloud counts as a striking and productive comparison with the divine decree of judgment. Why would a cloud be chosen for the role of something swift, from among other possibilities? Even more damaging to this

¹¹⁷ Edward Kissane, *The Book of Isaiah* (Dublin: Brown and Nulan, 1941), 1: 215.

¹¹⁸ Ronald Clements, *Isaiah 1-39* (NCBC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 167.

¹¹⁹ *Isaiah* (2 vols.; WBC; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1998), 1:157.

¹²⁰ *Isaiah, Chapters 1-39* (London: Epworth, 1993), 120; S. H. Widyapranawa similarly writes, noting the mythological background of the image, that it shows the swiftness of Yahweh's actions (*The Lord is Savior: Faith in National Crisis; A Commentary on the book of Isaiah 1-39* [ITC; Grand Rapids, MI: ITC, 1990], 108).

¹²¹ *Jesaja 13-27* (BKAT 10; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1978), 709-10, and Jeremias, *Theophanie*, 17. See further Otto Kaiser, *Isaiah 13-39: A Commentary* (trans. R. A. Wilson; London: SCM, 1974), 100-102, and Arthur Herbert, *The Book of the Prophet Isaiah* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 121, for similar comments.

¹²² "Der ugaritische Topos *b'l rkb* und die "Sprache Kanaans" in Jes 19,1-25," *UF* 19 (1987): 101, 104-5, 108, 110-11.

¹²³ Childs, *Isaiah* (OTL; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 143; Seitz, *Isaiah 1-39* (Interpretation; Louisville: John Knox, 1998), 149-65.

approach is the tension between the network of associations surrounding the concept “cloud” and one of the affects of Yahweh’s judgment against Egypt, namely, that the Nile dries up. Why would Yahweh’s riding on a cloud cause dryness, when a cloud would lead us to expect revivifying rain? The failure to note the connection between Yahweh’s approach and the drying up of the sea in v. 5 counts as another significant vulnerability of these readings of the passage; indeed, many commentators go out of their way to state that the way in which the desiccation of vv. 5-6 comes about is not explained in the text. As will be seen, however, this is not the case.

By way of contrast to the incongruities which most attempts to explain Yahweh’s swift cloud in Isa 19.1 produce, attention to the *Chaoskampf* myth quite neatly shows the internal harmony of the passage—especially attention to the most extensive West Semitic example of the *Chaoskampf*, the Baal Epic, wherein Baal defeats Prince Sea, Judge River (note the same collocation in v. 5), thus nullifying Sea’s power over the earth.¹²⁴ From this perspective, it is easy to understand why Yahweh’s approach on a cloud would cause the sea and rivers to dry up, for it draws upon the mythic image of Baal riding on a storm-cloud and defeating Sea. But note further how, instead of defeating cosmic chaos, the general reference to sea and river in v. 5 is followed by specific reference to the rivers of Egypt and the ruin which this desiccation will produce in the Egyptian economy. It is just this difference which gives a clue to how these themes are being used in this oracle against a foreign nation, for, just as Yahweh’s judgment of the nations often involves economic desolation, his drying up of the waters from the storm-cloud destroys the Egyptian economy.

The same is true of the reaction of trembling before Yahweh’s theophany in this passage. As Wildberger and Jeremias have already noted (but only in a cursory way), the nearly ubiquitous reaction of trembling before Yahweh’s presence is here applied to the אֱלִילֵי מִצְרַיִם, while the melting which sometimes accompanies a theophany (מָסַס, see Ps 68.3, 97.5; Mic 1.4) occurs within each Egyptian (בְּקִרְבּוֹ). This trembling and melting finds immediate expression as divinely instigated civil war (v. 2) leads to (or causes) an emptying of spirit (or perhaps “intelligence”) and frustration of counsel within each Egyptian (בְּקִרְבּוֹ, v. 3), as well as futile inquiry after הָאֱלִילִים (v. 3; this is developed further in vv. 11-15). We thus see that common reactions to divine presence are given expression appropriate to their context (an oracle against a foreign nation) as the *Chaoskampf* is applied in a new situation. It is also apparent that the images expressing this divine victory cohere from within this mythic narrative and not as metaphors. The variation from the basic myth—the river Nile is dried up instead of the cosmic ocean—does not reduce the myth to metaphor, but rather suggests its continued re-application as

¹²⁴ I am indebted to Wyatt RTU 68, note 150, for this point.

myth in a new context. It also shows the internal coherence amongst the images presented to the reader in this passage, an aspect of this text which has been missed by most commentators.

Some Qualifications

Now that the differences between metaphorical and mythical interpretation of theophanic imagery and an example of both in relation to a specific passage have been presented, two important qualifications should be made. First, lest it seem that I have artificially bolstered my own argument by too harshly attacking those modern scholars who even use the word “metaphor” in discussing poetic depictions of divine combat, it should be admitted that the term is sometimes used in a way which simply means “symbolic” (or, less felicitously, simply a “substitute”). Since I also argue that theophanic imagery is symbolic, the use of the term “metaphor” in this less precise sense is correspondingly less vulnerable to the criticisms enumerated above. However, this less precise use of the term is not to be recommended; and even those who do speak of the symbolic quality of theophanies do not locate these symbols within larger ANE mythic themes. There is, in other words, more than a disagreement in terminology here.

Second, although a clear distinction between myth and metaphor is valid, myth and metaphor can take on a variety of different relations; an absolute distinction between them is not always possible. This varied relation can, for example, be seen in how myth can inform what metaphors occur to authors to use: note how the representative at Jerusalem complains in one of the El-Amarna letters that he has “become like a ship in the midst of the sea” because of the ‘Apiru attacks.¹²⁵ The image of the chaotic sea is not far in the background. Specifically with regard to the OT, a myth may be transformed into a metaphor, such as in the presentation of Yahweh’s “wife” in Ezek 16 and 23 not as a divine consort, but as the city of Jerusalem.¹²⁶ On the other hand, a metaphor can become so deeply entrenched from constant use over a period of time that it approaches the status of a symbol (or becomes a dead metaphor); John Donne’s statement that “no man is an island” (drawing together “man” and “island” as a surprising way to say something new about the former) is a good example of this in a context closer to home. Finally, it is sometimes claimed that myth is only quantitatively different from metaphor—that the two operate in the same way, but on a different scale, so that a conglomeration or large-scale

¹²⁵ See *ANET* 489 for a translation; the quotation is from letter 288. My attention was drawn to this text by Forsyth, *Old Enemy*, 46.

¹²⁶ Smith makes this insightful point in “Mythology and Myth-making,” 340.

pattern of metaphors can count as myth.¹²⁷ While I would not want simply to reject this claim, it is, in my view, probably better to set a qualitative (but not absolute) distinction between myth and metaphor, rather than a merely quantitative one. The freedom allowed for in the creation of metaphor and the constraint informing mythic cosmic symbol encourages such a distinction, as do the different ways in which the symbols function, for, while it is the interplay between similarity and dissimilarity in comparison which is essential for metaphor, mythic symbols, which are not intended as comparisons, are entirely at home in their cosmic structure.

The most significant potential ambiguity in the relation between metaphor and mythic symbol for this project lies in the use of metaphors on a smaller scale within mythic texts; about one fourth of OT poetic theophanic texts contain similes or metaphors used in this way.¹²⁸ Although the use of metaphors and similes in individual verses of longer theophanic descriptions could not be said to negate the symbolic quality of the whole (since ANE myth also regularly contains metaphor as well), their presence does pose an interesting problem for the approach of this project; at the very least, it confirms the qualifications made above concerning the lack of any absolute boundary between the metaphorical and mythic use of symbols. Although each of the texts listed above will need to be taken on a case-by-case basis, two means of interpreting them may be suggested here. First, as noted above, a certain metaphor might be chosen (consciously or not) against a larger mythic background; as will be argued below, this is certainly true of the comparison to Yahweh as a warrior in Isa 42.13. If this appears to be the case, then the image will need to be understood in relation to its larger mythic context. On the other hand, the comparison of the roaring nations to chaff in Isa 17.13 does not suggest any larger mythic context (chaff does not occupy the same privileged place as storm imagery in the *Chaoskampf*); as a result, in a text like this, the metaphor will need to be treated as a pure invention, and the intended goal of the comparison will need to be explored. Thus, with regard to Isa 17.13, the insubstantiality of the roaring nations will be noted as part of the exegesis. As

¹²⁷ See, e.g., Thomas Fawcett, *The Symbolic Language of Religion* (London: SCM, 1970), 102; Philip Wheelwright, *Metaphor and Reality* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1962), 131; Wyatt, *Myths of Power*, 120.

¹²⁸ In the Psalms, see Ps 68.3 (enemies like wax), 83.14 (enemies like chaff, with Yahweh's pursuit like fire), 97.5 (mountains melt like wax), 114.4 (mountains skip like lambs). For Isaiah, see Isa 17.13 (enemies pursued like chaff), 29.5 (enemies like chaff), 29.7 (enemies like a dream), 31.4-5 (Yahweh fighting like a lion and a bird), 42.13 (Yahweh like a warrior), 64.1 (Yahweh's appearance like fire), 66.15 (Yahweh's appearance like a storm). Elsewhere in the prophets, note Joel 2.5 (Yahweh's army like fire); Mic 1.4 (mountains like wax and water); Nah 1.6 (divine anger like fire); and Zech 9.14 (Yahweh's arrows flash like lightning). It is interesting to note that the same similes (wax, fire) seem to come up. This use of simile is not limited to mythic texts in the Hebrew Bible: in the Baal Epic, the weapon with which Baal defeats Yam speeds "like an eagle" (see KTU 1.2 IV 13-14), and Mot and Baal fight like oxen and serpents (KTU 1.6 VI 17-19).

will be seen in the following chapters of this project, most OT theophanic texts fit neatly into the category of “mythic symbol,” even when employing metaphors on a smaller scale; but there will be a few which do not fit so neatly (see, e.g., the discussion of Isa 31.4-9 in the fifth chapter of this project).

The Use of Ugaritic Material in this Project

Two ancillary issues raised by the above discussion may now be briefly addressed: the nature of the comparison made in this project between Ugaritic literature and the OT and the role of ritual in theophanic imagery. The first of these issues is important because Ugaritic literature is often called upon to settle a larger debate about the history of the development of Israelite religion. On the one hand, it is sometimes claimed that the defining characteristic of early Israel was its distinctiveness from the religion of its neighbors, a distinctiveness demanded by Yahweh’s exclusive covenant;¹²⁹ on the other hand, some scholars seek to show a complete conformity between pre-exilic Israelite religion and its West Semitic environment, turning to Ugaritic literature to reconstruct what Israelite religion would have looked like before (post-) exilic redactors re-shaped the OT into its present form.¹³⁰

The profound difficulties of this subject have not been eased by the polemical nature of many studies of it. Mark Smith gives an excellent discussion of the unbalanced history of Hebrew-Ugaritic studies, noting how biblical scholars often portrayed Ugaritic material in a slanted way, assuming (for instance) a simplistic distinction between myth and history or the moral or cultural inferiority of Ugaritians.¹³¹ Habel’s surprising claim that Yahweh is never really portrayed as a storm god in the OT—according to Habel, whenever Yahweh appears to take on the characteristics of a storm god, this is only and always meant as a polemic against Baal¹³²—is, at least in a general way, one example of this trend. Whether this explanation is sufficient for all OT storm theophanies is, of course, highly questionable. On the other hand, studies which seek to address this imbalance can underestimate the extent to which the OT

¹²⁹ See, e.g., Norman Habel, *Yahweh Versus Baal: The Conflict of Religious Cultures* (New York: Bookman, 1962).

¹³⁰ See, as representatives of this approach, Gregorio del Olmo Lete, “Approaching a Description of the Canaanite Religion of Ancient Israel: Methodological Issues,” in *Ugarit and the Bible* (ed. George Brooke, et. al.; UBL 11; Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1994), 259-273, as well as the larger arc of Wyatt’s argument in *Myths of Power*, esp. 330-38, and Mark Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism: Israel’s Polytheistic Background and the Ugaritic Texts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000). Further bibliography and a more nuanced statement of the issue may be found in Rainer Albertz, *A History of Israelite Religion in the Old Testament Period* (2 vols.; trans. John Bowden; OTL; Louisville: Westminster, 1994), 1:61-62.

¹³¹ *Origins*, 12-13, 21.

¹³² *Yahweh Versus Baal*, 80, 81, 87.

rebels against its environment in truly unique ways; they can also fail to account for all the evidence. The Deuteronomistic History—with its accounts of periods of exclusive Yahwism in pre-exilic Israelite religion—is sometimes dismissed as a well-intended post-exilic fabrication in these sorts of arguments.¹³³ Although the ideological edge of this body of literature cannot be denied, a dismissal of it as intentionally historically false is equally questionable. Walter Brueggemann has shown an admirable flexibility on this issue, writing that different biblical texts were written “in different interpretative contexts where the faith of Israel is variously understood to be under threat and in need of purgation, or where that faith can be open to impingement by other influences that may modify it,” such that “the articulation of YHWH happened not in a vacuum but always in a context of other gods from whom Israel often borrowed and against whom Israel often polemicized.”¹³⁴

It is in light of this simultaneous capacity of OT texts to borrow and to rebel that Ugaritic texts are brought into conversation with OT prophetic texts. While the argument made above concerning the fully mythic status of theophanic imagery in the OT might lead the reader to suppose that the present project belongs in the school of thought represented by del Olmo Lete and Wyatt, this is not the case. I do not think that the distinctiveness of the OT can be located in the supposed metaphorization of myth, but I do not, on the other hand, take the fully mythic nature of poetic theophanic texts to imply that they are simply one more variation on ancient Semitic culture and religion. I make reference to the Baal Epic as (at least in part) the best extra-biblical witness to a common stock of tradition about the divine defeat of chaos. But this investigation is not undertaken in the service of a larger theory about the development of Israelite religion and its relation to its environment. The goal is simply to expose a pattern of thought which is profoundly entrenched both in the Baal Epic and in OT poetry.

Ritual and Theophanic Imagery

The second ancillary issue which must at least be mentioned is the relation of ritual and theophanic imagery. It is necessary to raise this issue because it is sometimes claimed that theophanic imagery arose out of temple worship in such a way that the latter was the cause of the former. This is an especially popular approach to theophanic imagery among adherents of the “myth and ritual” school, an approach to myth which posits an intrinsic (if potentially varying) relationship between myth and ritual. According to this school of thought, myth and ritual are

¹³³ See, for instance, Wyatt, *Myths of Power*, 337; del Olmo Lete, “Approaching a Description,” 264.

¹³⁴ *Reverberations of Faith: A Theological Handbook of the Old Testament* (Louisville: Westminster, 2002), 16.

semantically equivalent, so that myth counts as the spoken part of what ritual enacts.¹³⁵ Thus, in Mowinckel's hypothesis of Israel's yearly Enthronement Festival, in which Israel ritually renews Yahweh's victorious rule with all its blessings,¹³⁶ poetic theophanies in the Psalms are taken to be the text of a ritual which was enacted as a major part of the festival.¹³⁷ Theophanic images of fire, smoke, and thunder thus developed out of various elements in temple worship (such as incense smoke or trumpet blasts). A similar line of thinking is offered by R. Clements, who argues that covenant renewal ceremonies ritually enacted theophany, an enactment which was subsequently interjected into the narratives of Exodus.¹³⁸ If this were true, of course, the proper way to interpret theophanic imagery would be to try to connect each image to some part of temple ritual; although poetic theophany still might have to do with the defeat of chaos, it could not be separated (according to this sort of argument) from the accompanying ritual.¹³⁹ The same sort of approach is sometimes also taken towards prophetic texts, wherein such texts, although not directly used in ritual worship, are thought to be so closely founded upon a yearly Enthronement Festival that they must be interpreted in light of it.¹⁴⁰

In response, it should be admitted that the arguments of Mowinckel and his followers are not without some cogency, that temple and theophany are often closely related, and that ritual worship probably did act, to some extent, as an incubator for theological ideas and traditions in Israel.¹⁴¹ Nevertheless, the indissoluble link posited between ritual and worship is

¹³⁵ The literature on this subject is massive, but the anthology edited by Robert Segal, *The Myth and Ritual Theory: An Anthology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998) traces the genesis and development of the theory (especially through the work of Smith, Frazer, Harrison, and Hooke; see 1-13). See further Theodore Gaster, *Thespis* (2d ed.; New York: Gordian, 1975); Benedikt Otzen, et. al., *Myths in the Old Testament* (London: SCM, 1980); Gray, *Reign of God*; Hans-Peter Müller, "Die kultische Darstellung der Theophanie," *VT* 14 (1964): 183-91.

¹³⁶ See *The Psalms in Israel's Worship* (trans. D. R. Ap-Thomas; 2 vols.; Oxford: Blackwell, 1962), 1:18-19. Further proponents of such a festival include John Day, *God's Conflict with the Dragon and the Sea*, 20-21, 36, and Ben Ollenburger, *Zion: The City of the Great King* (JSOT 41; Sheffield: Sheffield, 1987), 24-33.

¹³⁷ Mowinckel, *Psalms*, 142.

¹³⁸ *God and Temple*, 21-22. Of course, Clements' position, something closer to a "salvation-historical" school of thought, is different from the myth-and-ritual school; while both agree that theophanic imagery developed out of ritual, they disagree on exactly what ritual that was (see further Terrien, *Elusive Presence*, 9-21). For present purposes, however, the two may be brought together.

¹³⁹ As is, in fact, argued by Artur Weiser, *The Psalms* (trans. Herbert Hartwell; OTL; London: SCM, 1962), and Aage Bentzen, *King and Messiah* (London: Lutterworth, 1955), 16-17, 23, 27.

¹⁴⁰ For this claim concerning prophetic descriptions of the Day of Yahweh, see Mowinckel *Psalms*, 189-92; for Isa 40-55, see John Eaton, *Festal Drama in Deutero-Isaiah* (London: SPCK, 1979), 4, 116-17; as well as Otzen, et. al., *Myths in the Old Testament*, 96-98, and John Gray, "The Kingship of God in the Psalms and Prophets," *VT* 11 (1961): 14. Many other sources could be cited here.

¹⁴¹ Cf. Miller's statement that holy war traditions were carried over into the monarchy through the cultus (*The Divine Warrior in Early Israel* [HSM 5; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973], 135).

not valid, since these two entities evince a variety of relationships. Tacit acknowledgment of this more complex relationship between ritual and myth may even be made by Mowinckel's followers, as one finds admissions concerning the lack of explicit evidence for the theory which is promptly followed by assertions that it is nevertheless "probable" or "plausible."¹⁴² Not even the celebrated example of the reading of the Enuma Elish during the Babylonian Akitu festival can help their case, for, as J. Fontenrose has shown, the reading of the Enuma Elish formed only one part of a much more complex series of rituals; furthermore, the rituals surrounding the text did not correspond exactly to the plot of the myth, nor was the myth an interpretation of the rituals.¹⁴³ Moreover, Allan Petersen has demonstrated how, from Mowinckel's approach, a ritual background can be claimed for any OT text showing any mythic dimension, and gives an amusingly illuminating "proof" that Gen 1 is the script for a ritual on the basis of certain mythic elements in it (so that a cultic representative would light a torch as it was read, "Let there be light").¹⁴⁴

In any case, the supposition of an intrinsic connection between myth and ritual is plausible but unprovable. Especially with regard to theophanic imagery, the exclusive connection of theophanic imagery and temple worship does not explain why it would occur to Israelites or other Semitic peoples to describe divine appearance as attended by thunder, lightning, earthquake and fire in the first place. As a result, no attempt is made in this project to look "behind" the text to what worship may have accompanied its use. Rather, the issue of the temple and theophany will be dealt with under the larger heading of the manner of Yahweh's appearance on the human scene, for, although Yahweh often appears in his temple, sometimes he leaves his divine abode in order to appear in glory (e.g., Pss 18 and 104); and some theophanic texts bear no explicit relation to the temple (e.g., Isa 19:1). The temple may thus play a role in Yahweh's appearance, but its role should be analyzed not in terms of the putative relationship between temple ritual and theophanic description, but as one intentional and context-specific element in the various transformations of the defeat of chaos.

John Day collects a variety of evidence in favor of Mowinckel's position, noting, for example, and Zech 14.16-19 and the LXX heading to Ps. 29 (*God's Conflict*, 18-21).

¹⁴² See, for instance, Otzen, et. al., *Myths in the Old Testament*, 58-59.

¹⁴³ See Joseph Fontenrose, *Python* (Berkeley: University of California, 1959), 436-46, and idem, *Ritual Theory of Myth* (Folklore Studies 18; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966), 51. Even Segal, in his laudatory anthology of the myth-and-ritual school, admits that "[t]here has been no formal rejoinder to Fontenrose" (*Myth and Ritual Theory*, 428) on this matter. For a precise description of the rituals surrounding the reading of the Enuma Elish on the fourth day of the festival, see J. A. Black, "The New Year Ceremonies in Ancient Babylon: 'Taking Bel by the Hand' and a Cultic Picnic," *Religion* 11 (1981): 39-59.

¹⁴⁴ Allan Petersen, *The Royal God: Enthronement Festivals in Ancient Israel and Ugarit?* (JSOTSupp 259; Sheffield: Sheffield, 1998), 30-31.

Survey of Previous Scholarship

It is appropriate at this point to survey previous scholarship on Divine Warrior theophanies, beginning with two works which stand in direct contrast to the present project, and then turning to three works which are closer in orientation but still distinct from the argument given here.

The first work to be considered which stands in opposition to the argument of this project is David Tsumura's *Creation and Destruction: A Re-Appraisal of the Chaoskampf Theory in the Old Testament*.¹⁴⁵ Tsumura begins his discussion of the *Chaoskampf* in poetic texts by contending that similarities between depictions of divine battle in the OT and Ugaritic literature are entirely fragmentary, in that such similarities appear between "fragments of Ugaritic myths" and groups of words or phrases in Hebrew poetry; there is "no evidence," writes Tsumura, of the transference of an entire myth from the ANE to the Bible at the level of "sentences or discourses."¹⁴⁶ Tsumura then applies this contention to four texts often associated with the *Chaoskampf*, Pss 18, 29, 46, and Hab 3, arguing that the phrases most often cited as evidence of the divine defeat of chaos do not have the same meaning as their ANE counterparts. Even before turning to his discussion of these texts, however, an objection must be raised, for, as has been argued above and as will be shown in Chapter Two of this dissertation, the Baal Epic displays the full dimensions of the *Chaoskampf* as the divine King defeats chaos, founds his temple, and consummates his blessed and orderly rule over the earth; furthermore, these different dimensions of divine rule appear, in full aspect, in OT poetic texts. Against Tsumura, then, it should be maintained that the *Chaoskampf* as a complete discourse does appear repeatedly in the OT.

This questionable starting point leads to various problems in Tsumura's exposition of individual poetic texts. For instance, Tsumura correctly notes that Ps 18 combines elements of sea, storm and death in describing the attack on the Davidic King, but argues that this combination distinguishes it from the Baal Epic, since the latter (according to Tsumura) "clearly" distinguishes between Baal's conflict with Yam and Mot, the former conflict occurring between the storm-god and the sea-god and the latter between Baal as a "god of life" and Mot as a god of death; the fact that the latter occurs after the building of Baal's palace is also enlisted by Tsumura as evidence that the two conflicts should be disassociated.¹⁴⁷ The putative gap between Baal's different conflicts is further widened, according to Tsumura, by the fact that Baal storms

¹⁴⁵ *Creation and Destruction: A Re-Appraisal of the Chaoskampf Theory in the Old Testament* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2005).

¹⁴⁶ *Creation and Destruction*, 148-49.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 149-50.

against human enemies in KTU 1.4 VII, but that the conflict with Yam does not involve any storm imagery.¹⁴⁸ As a result, Tsumura concludes that Ps 18.7-15 does not compare Yahweh with the storm-god Baal, but metaphorically describes the magnificence Yahweh's theophany.¹⁴⁹

This line of argument is, however, vulnerable on several counts. The transformative nature of myth implies that different aspects from common ANE traditions could be combined in new ways in Hebrew poetry without being reduced to metaphor. Beyond this, however, there is strong evidence (despite the fragmentary state of the Baal Epic) that Baal's different conflicts with Yam, Mot, and in the human realm are united under the theme of his struggle for kingship.¹⁵⁰ This is substantiated by the fact that KTU 1.1-1.2 involves an abortive attempt to build Yam a palace, a prerogative which falls to Baal in KTU 1.3-1.4 after he takes up his eternal kingship (KTU 1.2 IV 10) by defeating Yam, by the fact that Baal thunders against his human enemies from his newly completed palace in KTU 1.4 VII, and by the fact that he then immediately challenges Mot over the issue of who rules in the earth and among the gods (KTU 1.4 VII 42-52). The interconnections between Baal's different conflicts thus makes their slightly different combination in Ps 18 far less surprising than Tsumura suggests.

Similar problems hamper the rest of Tsumura's argument. With regard to Ps 29, for instance, his discussion is limited to only one verse (v. 10). It should readily admitted that his reading of the verse is ingenious; he understands לְמַבּוּיֹל not to refer to Yahweh's rule over the hostile waters, but to refer to his rule from "before the flood," i.e., "from time immemorial."¹⁵¹ Furthermore, the uncertain etymology of the term and its occurrence only elsewhere in the OT in Gen 6-11 (a narrative which does not show Yahweh fighting) does perhaps make the common understanding that Yahweh is ruling over a defeated chaos enemy in this verse less certain. However, discussion of only one word is slim basis for concluding that the psalm as a whole uses storm imagery as metaphor.¹⁵² One wonders how many elements from ANE narratives of divine battle and rule, such as the tangible radiance of the divine king before the divine council in the sanctuary and the shaking of nature before the thunder and lightning of the Divine Warrior, can occur in a piece of Hebrew poetry before it is finally admitted that their use is more than merely figurative. Tsumura's discussion of the raging waters in Ps 46 essentially involves denying any presence of creation motifs in this psalm, a common way of establishing the divine

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 150.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ As argued by Mark Smith, "Interpreting the Baal Cycle," *UF* 18 (1986), 313-339, and summarized in the next chapter of this project. It will also be argued that there is evidence that Baal's combat with Yam does involve storm weaponry.

¹⁵¹ *Creation and Destruction*, 155.

¹⁵² Ibid., 155.

defeat of chaos in the poem;¹⁵³ but the absence of creation themes does not imply the absence of the *Chaoskampf* motif. His interpretation of different lines in Hab 3.3-15 often cited elsewhere as evidence of divine conflict with chaos, while often highly insightful, is similarly unconvincing. Hab 3.8 is, for example, claimed as metaphor on the remarkably slim basis that the grammatical forms of the words for the waters and Yahweh's chariots do not exactly correspond to the descriptions given for Baal's cloud-chariot and the watery enemies against which he fights;¹⁵⁴ his discussion of vv. 9 and 13b basically involves justifiable critiques of overly speculative emendations without cancelling the possibility that Yahweh really is engaging in battle in these verses.¹⁵⁵

In short, Tsumura's barring of the *Chaoskampf* from Hebrew poetry is premature.¹⁵⁶ The perspective with which he approaches the issue is vulnerable in that it ignores the *Chaoskampf* as an extended mythic discourse, as well as the transformative capacity of myth. As a result, the differences in grammatical form or meaning between different phrases in ANE (and especially Ugaritic) texts and Hebrew poetry do not legitimately yield the conclusion for which he argues. It is also surprising that only four texts from the Hebrew Bible are discussed. Nor is the reader told why Hebrew poets would resort to metaphorical comparison when describing the reign and salvific action of Yahweh (often in desperate circumstances). In the end, Tsumura's final assertion that the language of divine conflict metaphorically expresses Yahweh's defeat of historical and spiritual enemies¹⁵⁷ should probably be emended to allowing for a Yahwistic version of this myth.

A second work which stands in direct contrast to the argument of the present project is Rebecca Watson's *Chaos Uncreated: A Reassessment of the Theme of 'Chaos' in the Hebrew Bible*.¹⁵⁸ Watson's argument is different from Tsumura's in that she does not apply the category of metaphor without qualification to passages describing divine warfare; while she sometimes makes reference to metaphor, she also, at times, allows for the functioning of mythic themes in these texts. Her aim is rather to break up the bond which much OT scholarship has perceived between the themes of chaos, combat, and creation, denying that the presence of one of these is legitimate grounds for assuming the presence of the other two (an assumption which, as she

¹⁵³ Ibid., 163.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 165-67.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 168-79.

¹⁵⁶ I would not at all want to apply this criticism to his discussion of Hebrew prose; his examination of Gen 1-2, with which the bulk of his work is concerned, is very insightful and cogently argued.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 194.

¹⁵⁸ *Chaos Uncreated: A Reassessment of the Theme of 'Chaos' in the Hebrew Bible* (BZAW 341; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2005).

documents, is not infrequently made). Beyond this, however, she remains unconvinced that any references to cosmic chaos are made in the OT texts, and often denies that any combat takes place as well. Following her discussion on a few of the many texts she analyzes will help to show why these conclusions are drawn.

Watson focuses her discussion of Ps 29 on vv. 3 (referring to the מַיִם רַבִּים) and 10 (with its reference to לַמַּבּוּל), the phrases most often understood to describe the opponent against which Yahweh fights in this poem.¹⁵⁹ The latter verse is taken by Watson to denote the waters above the firmament, but she argues that it is never used in the context of divine conflict in the Hebrew Bible, and denies that any extra-biblical parallels may be furnished on this score.¹⁶⁰ As a result, she understands מַבּוּל, in relation to the thunderstorm imagery in the poem, to refer to the provision of rain; the cultic context of worship (according to Watson) supports this, for the temple is often depicted as a source of fertility.¹⁶¹ The waters of v. 3 are then interpreted along the same lines. Any idea that the “many waters” against which Yahweh thunders count as a cosmic enemy (as most interpreters argue) is discounted because of the “obvious circularity” of any assumption of Canaanite influence (an assumption which Watson thinks most interpreters of this psalm make) and because the exact phrase מַיִם רַבִּים never, according to Watson, takes on cosmic dimensions or is associated with sea monsters which must be defeated.¹⁶² As a result, Watson takes the central theme of this psalm to be a theophanic manifestation of Yahweh’s power in the thunderstorm which blesses his people—but without any mention of fleeing waters, resistance to divine rule, or disturbances in the structure of the cosmos or among the nations, “there is no basis for discerning an allusion to ‘cosmic’ conflict here.”¹⁶³ Nor, indeed, does cosmic chaos appear in this poem.

Watson’s care and precision in dealing with this psalm is certainly to be commended, but several objections must be registered. First, Watson presents an entirely naturalistic interpretation of the storm imagery of this psalm. She simply states that the thunderstorm imagery here has to do with “the provision of rain.”¹⁶⁴ This ignores, however, the larger significance of thunder and lightning as weapons in ANE narratives about storm-gods; the fact that Yahweh’s thunder in this poem makes the desert shake (v. 8), sounds in strength and glory

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 48.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 50. She quotes approvingly in this regard of an earlier article by Tsumura (“‘The Deluge’ (*mabbûl*) in Psalm 29:10,” *UF* 20 [1988], 351-55), an article which Tsumura incorporated in *Creation and Destruction*.

¹⁶¹ *Chaos Uncreated*, 51.

¹⁶² Ibid., 57, 59-63.

¹⁶³ Ibid., 64.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 51.

(v. 4), breaks the cedars (v. 5), and strikes with flames of fire (v. 7) makes the allusion to the warfare of the storm-god all the stronger, since all these images draw on standard ANE imagery of divine warfare.¹⁶⁵ Watson also draws a false dichotomy between the fertility emanating from the temple as the place of divine rule and the battle which precedes this and makes it possible; indeed, her claim that the “fresh water . . . as a source of life and blessing” which is associated with the temple “must be rigorously distinguished from any idea of conflict with the salt-water ocean” is overstated.¹⁶⁶

Watson’s dismissal of any cosmic significance to the “many waters” is similarly unimpressive. She turns to other uses of the phrase in the OT to support her reading of Ps 29.3, arguing, for instance, that Isa 17.12-13 involves nothing more than a comparison between the raging of the nations and the noise which the sea makes (assuming the point that needs to be proved), that the raging waters in Ps 93.3-4 represent merely “troublesome elements in nature,” and that there is no reason to assume an act of subjugation against the waters in Hab 3.15 (although, as will be argued below, there is great reason for so concluding).¹⁶⁷ It is furthermore not clear that the statement concerning Yahweh’s enthronement in v. 10 of Ps 29 should be understood entirely in terms of the provision of rain, as Watson claims; although fertility is doubtless one result of Yahweh’s rule,¹⁶⁸ the central subject of that verse concerns that rule itself, not its results. Watson’s imbalance with regard to v. 10 is, however, doubly infelicitous in light of her repeated insistence¹⁶⁹ that OT texts must be taken on their own terms, instead of allowing their ANE context to guide (or determine) their interpretation. It rather appears that the inner content of Yahweh’s enthronement is spelled out by means of the other motifs of the psalm, such as the worship of the divine council and the weapons of the Divine Warrior and their effects, consideration of which leads one naturally to consider their ANE context.

Turning to a few more of Watson’s examples will help to show the exact ways in which the present project diverges from Watson’s work and the reasons why it does so. Her discussion of Ps 74 (again, displaying a commendable attention to detail) is revealing in this regard. Watson understands (quite justifiably) the crucial middle section of the poem to refer essentially

¹⁶⁵ This standard imagery is discussed further in the next chapter.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 53. Ps 46.2-7 is an excellent example of the harmony between the defeat of the raging waters and the revivifying waters of the temple. Watson actually denies that any combat with the waters takes place in this psalm (*ibid.*, 136-37), but this ignores Yahweh’s roaring against the nations which rage and totter (v. 7), nations which are, through the repetition of *המה*, associated with the raging waters (v. 3).

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 59-61.

¹⁶⁸ As Watson herself notes, the language of blessing (*ברך*) and peace (*שָׁלוֹם*) in v. 11 is used elsewhere of rain; cf. Gen 49.25, Ezek 34.26, etc. (*ibid.*, 51, note 68).

¹⁶⁹ As on, e.g., *ibid.*, 57.

to the Exodus,¹⁷⁰ and she allows for the possibility of mythic combat in this text. When turning to the question of the content of this combat myth, however, Watson claims that “nothing of any significance can be determined” about its meaning or function in Israel—or even in Ugarit!¹⁷¹ She makes this claim because she considers the different references to the slaying of the dragon in the Baal Epic (specifically, by Anat in KTU 1.3 III 38-47 and by Mot in KTU 1.5 I 1-4) to be merely passing, clipped allusions to a larger story which the text assumes was well known and does not otherwise explicate for its audience.¹⁷² Watson thus hesitates to make any claim about the meaning of the slaying of the dragon by the Divine Warrior in the Baal Epic, but she interprets the same image in Ps 74, occurring, as it does, in a monotheistic system, as an expression of absolute power and dominion on Yahweh’s part.¹⁷³ As a result, “when the myth is adopted as a means of retelling the saving event of the Exodus and expounding Yahweh’s omnipotence,” it takes on “a radically different meaning than would have adhered in a Ugaritic [*sic*] context.”¹⁷⁴

Several vulnerabilities damage this line of reasoning. First, Watson’s assertion that the meaning of the slaying of the dragon in the Baal Epic is indecipherable fails to take account of the larger literary unity of the text.¹⁷⁵ Although they are relatively brief, the references to the slaying of the dragon are connected to the text’s central focus on divine kingship: consider how Anat’s almost tedious listing of the enemies she has destroyed is given before she learns of Baal’s intention to nourish fertility in the earth from the cosmic center, and it is precisely because Anat is mistaken, and no similar enemy now threatens Baal, that he can begin his rule in this way. The whole episode in which Anat misunderstands the reason why Baal has sent messengers to her, assuming that he is again under attack, is revealing, for it speaks to the constant struggles against cosmic enemies in which Baal must engage in order to assume his kingship and binds all of them together as part of his ascension to rule among the gods. Similarly, Mot’s claim that Baal’s defeat of the seven-headed dragon will avail him nothing in his struggle against Mot directly connects this past battle to Baal’s present struggle for kingship. The defeat of the dragon can thus be legitimately read as part of the larger conflict with chaos

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 159-66.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 167.

¹⁷² Ibid., 167.

¹⁷³ Ibid., 167-68.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 168.

¹⁷⁵ This claim is all the more strange since Watson cites elsewhere some extremely helpful expositions of the Baal Epic and the *Chaoskampf* in general, such as Smith, “Interpreting the Baal Epic,” Wyatt, *Myths of Power*, and Day, *God’s Conflict with the Dragon and the Sea*.

and establishment of divine rule.¹⁷⁶ This, in turn, leads to a more nuanced reading of the same theme in Ps 74.12-17, which expresses not just unhindered divine dominion but Yahweh's salvific defeat of every force which opposes his rule, as that rule was centered in his (now destroyed) temple and worked out among his people. Watson's conclusion that Ps 74 has given the image of the slaying of the dragon a radically different meaning is, as a result, grossly overstated. This is all the more vexing, however, since Watson introduces in her discussion of this psalm a conceptual apparatus which would allow for a more nuanced and illuminating comparison between the Baal Epic and an OT text like Psalm 74 (she draws a distinction, also operative in the present project, between a basic myth and its repeated re-application, attention to the latter yielding clues to its meaning).¹⁷⁷ But a lack of attention to the inner unity of the Baal Epic prevents her from utilizing this apparatus in her exposition.

Comparable blunders are made elsewhere in the book. For instance, in a manner similar to Tsumura's interpretation of Ps 18, Watson claims that the association of Sheol with the waters in Ps 18.5-6, 17 imparts to it an essentially different meaning from the Baal Epic because Baal's conflicts with Yam and Mot are distinguished in the latter text.¹⁷⁸ Any reference to chaos is also denied because the text associates the waters with the king's enemies and the underworld, not the world-surrounding, creation-resisting watery depths.¹⁷⁹ The unity among the conflicts which attend Baal's struggle for kingship, however, speaks against this, as does the fact that the two main struggles in the Baal Epic occur with Sea and Death. A similarly questionable approach is taken to Isa 27.1, concerning which Watson claims that Leviathan is not identified or even associated with the sea or chaos in Ugaritic myth or the Hebrew Bible; as above, she claims that all that can be said about the imagery of divine warfare is that it speaks to the supremacy of the deity.¹⁸⁰ According to Watson, Leviathan in this passage is a metaphor for suffering or political oppression or the embodiment of evil.¹⁸¹

This above summary in no way does justice to the full scope and detail of Watson's work. Nevertheless, the objections listed above against her reading of certain key texts suggest

¹⁷⁶ The intrinsic connection between the earlier defeat of the dragon and Baal's conflict with Yam and Mot is strengthened by the consideration that different accounts of the *Chaoskampf* often occur in two stages; Wyatt notes that this happens in the Scandinavian, Indian, Greek, and Mesopotamian accounts of divine battle (see Nicolas Wyatt, "A la recherche des Rephaïm perdus," paper read at the Biblical Seminar, New College, Edinburgh, January 27, 2006, pg. 18, updated from an earlier version printed in J.-M. Michaud, ed., *Le royaume d'Ougarit de la Crète à l'Euphrate: Nouveaux axes de recherche* (POLO; Sherbrooke, QC: Éditions GGC, 2006).

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 167.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 80.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 81, 83.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 330-31.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 331.

that her conclusion on this theme—that the waters are never associated with chaos in the Hebrew Bible and that Yahweh nowhere engages in combat in with them or with the dragon¹⁸²—must be rejected, for Watson takes themes which ancient texts naturally combine, separates and isolates them, and then makes only the most general and superficial claims with regard to their meaning. While many of her complaints against overly enthusiastic comparative studies between OT and Ugaritic literature are valid, Watson falls to the opposite extreme by overlooking the inner unity of the *Chaoskampf* myth as a vehicle for continually new expression. This neglect leads to entirely naturalistic interpretations of the imagery of the storm and the raging waters in divine battle, with inevitably superficial exegetical results, so that the imagery is understood to speak only of divine supremacy. As noted above, one cannot help but call attention to the disproportion of an interpretation which regards such involved and even convoluted imagery of storm, earthquake and fire, connected, as it is, to so many other central themes of the Hebrew Bible, and used so frequently in poetic genres, as only emphasizing divine power or supremacy. Furthermore, Watson's misstep also leads to an absolute division between the waters and the dragon or sea monster as a recipient of Yahweh's action, even though ancient texts regularly associate the two.¹⁸³ She states in this regard that chaos

is expressed in such variable terminology, in so many different types of context and genre, and is juxtaposed with such a vast array of motifs drawn from so many areas of life, that the validity of clustering together such material under a single unifying theme must be called into question.¹⁸⁴

Rather than calling it into question, however, it may be suggested that Watson has, in this statement, put her finger on exactly the way in which a myth functions as it “cosmicizes” and draws the bewildering phenomena of the world into an intelligible order. Rather than making such rigorous separations, in other words, it is preferable, in light of the transformative nature of myth, to allow each permutation to draw upon the fund of imagery in new ways.

At other points, however, Watson's argument is simply poorly made. She errs badly, for instance, in contending that the lack of any challenges issued by relatively equally-matched combatants, attempts by the monster to assault God or defend itself, and the lack of any genuinely open outcome to the battle, implies that no real combat occurs between Yahweh and

¹⁸² Ibid., 3, 4, 26, 369, 375.

¹⁸³ Ibid., 17-18, 29-30. This association is all the stronger if Wayne Pitard is correct in understanding the fragmentary text KTU 1.83 to portray Yam as a dragon-like monster in the sea (“The Binding of Yam: A New Edition of the Ugaritic Text KTU 1.83,” *JNES* 57 [1998]: 279). If this interpretation is correct, then, as Pitard notes, the association of the dragon and the sea, as in Ps 74.14, is not an Israelite invention (ibid., 280).

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 1.

chaos in the OT. While it is true that Yahweh does not engage his enemies in exactly the same way as Baal does his—Yahweh and the dragon do not, for instance, take turns goring and biting each other, as do Baal and Mot—the hacking, splitting, piercing, punishing, and roaring found throughout OT poetry (often accomplished by means of sword, bow and arrow, or mace) cannot but refer to genuine conflict in truly desperate situations. Watson’s own explanation of these texts as speaking only of “God’s forceful and destructive activity”¹⁸⁵ is insipid and hardly provides a better alternative. Watson also tends to argue in such a way as to imply that chaos is to be identified only with a hostile and resistant pre-creation force, so that, when she (often correctly) denies that any reference is made to the initial act of creation in any one text, any hints of chaos must therefore also be excluded. It is preferable, however, to juxtapose, on the one hand, the creative/redemptive action of the Divine Warrior and King, and on the other, all that resists and eludes his rule and warfare, whether before or after creation. In other words, understanding chaos and cosmos as mutually defining opposites does not mean every reference to chaos implies a reference to the act of creation, even if the action of the Divine Warrior is “creative” in the sense of re-establishing cosmic order. In short, inattention to the unity and re-applicative potential of the *Chaoskampf* myth leads Watson to separate and misinterpret elements which OT and ANE texts regularly and intentionally bring together.¹⁸⁶

Turning from monographs which argue against the claims made in this dissertation, some attention may be given to works closer in orientation to the argument made here, beginning with a programmatic work on theophany, Jörg Jeremias’ *Theophanie: Die Geschichte einer alttestamentlichen Gattung*,¹⁸⁷ a comprehensive form-critical study of poetic theophanic

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 375.

¹⁸⁶ Another reason for Watson’s unbalanced conclusions on this theme may be methodological, for she categorically asserts that “the occurrence of an image in two contexts cannot necessarily imply the same signification” (ibid., 3, note 7). If I understand her correctly, she assumes in this statement that the image of the defeated dragon in Ugaritic and OT texts, even though practically identical, cannot be assumed to mean the same thing in both contexts. Watson worries that, without this assumption, the individuality of different OT texts will be compromised in interpretation. In contrast to this, however, Michael Fishbane has convincingly argued that such an assumption may be made with perfect legitimacy. He writes that “a mythic topic (like the divine combat) known from a certain cultural sphere, like the ancient Near East, should be assumed to have the same literary effect or value” in different occurrences unless explicitly indicated otherwise, for, “following the principle of parsimony, one should start with the assumption that the topic conveys a similar content if it bears the same or similar imagery in the same or similar contexts” (*Biblical Myth and Rabbinic Mythmaking*, 17). It is, furthermore, attention to the transformation of these repeated images and their meaning which will allow for individual texts to speak in all their diversity.

¹⁸⁷ *Theophanie: Die Geschichte einer alttestamentlichen Gattung* (WMANT 10; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1965). Albrecht Scriba’s work, *Die Geschichte des Motivkomplexes Theophanie* (FRLANT 167; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1995) should also be mentioned here, and is used occasionally in the ensuing discussion. However, since Scriba approaches OT theophanies more with an aim to understanding NT “Christophanies,” his larger task leads him away from the concerns of this project.

descriptions. That theophany actually is a *Gattung*, in the qualified sense of this term, is the central claim of the book: according to Jeremias, there is a mutually influencing relationship between the regular events and particular needs in a community and the form and content of the community's texts, such that the two correspond to each other and either can be deduced from the other. This mutual interrelationship is true both in the earliest occurrences of the *Gattung* and its later manifestations.¹⁸⁸ Jeremias then notes what he perceives to be the erratic and artificial placement of theophanic descriptions in many OT texts.¹⁸⁹ Given that (according to Jeremias) many theophanies appear "out of place" in their present contexts, the three major sections of his book attempt, first, to find the oldest form of this *Gattung* and trace its development in the somewhat clumsy later insertion of material from this *Gattung* into foreign contexts; second, to inquire after the origin of this material; and third, to find the original life-setting for the *Gattung* of theophany.¹⁹⁰

The first section of Jeremias' book thus concerns the most primitive formulation of theophanic appearance. Jeremias thinks that this most primitive form is not contained in any one OT text, but must be reconstructed from similarities in the manifestly early texts Judg 5.4-5, Deut 33.2, Hab 3.3, and Ps 68.8-9; this reconstructed basic form speaks of Yahweh coming from the south, with the land shaking and the heavens raining.¹⁹¹ Theophany thus originally had to do, first, with Yahweh's coming, and second, with the effects of his coming on nature.¹⁹² The rest of the first part of Jeremias' work follows various developments of this basic form, which are divided into four categories: new content can be added, one or both parts can be expanded, Yahweh's coming can be spoken of independently of any turmoil in nature, or nature-turmoil can occur without Yahweh's coming.¹⁹³ Thus, an example of added content to a theophanic description (Jeremias' first category) can be found in Isa 19.1-15, wherein Yahweh comes to a

¹⁸⁸ Quoting from Albrecht Alt, *Die Ursprünge des israelitischen Rechts* (Leipzig: Hirzel, 1934), 11, and in agreement with Gunkel: "bestimmte Inhalt mit bestimmten Ausdrucksformen fest verbunden . . . schon in der Frühzeit volksmäßiger mündlicher Gestaltung und Überlieferung, vor aller Literatur, wesentlich zusammengehören, da sie den besonderen regelmäßigen Ereignissen und Bedürfnissen des Lebens entsprachen, aus denen die Gattungen je für sich erwachsen" (ibid., 3: "particular content is firmly tied with particular form . . . [so that] already at an early stage folklore-like and oral forms and traditions, above all literature, belonged together intrinsically, since they corresponded to the particular regular events and needs of life, from which the *Gattungen* themselves arose").

¹⁸⁹ See his examples on ibid., 3-5.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 6.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 7-11; Jeremias' reconstructed basic form is found on pg. 11.

¹⁹² Ibid., 12.

¹⁹³ Ibid., 15-72.

specific place (instead of, more generally, coming from the south), so that Egypt reacts (instead of the natural realm).¹⁹⁴

The second section, which searches after the origin of theophanic material, turns to ANE texts.¹⁹⁵ Surveying relevant ANE descriptions of divine appearance and battle, Jeremias concludes that the profound similarity in both ideas and expression between OT and ANE descriptions of turmoil in nature entails that this second essential dimension of theophany must have been borrowed by Israelite poets from outside their own culture. To the image of Yahweh coming from the south, however, Jeremias finds no ANE parallel.¹⁹⁶ But if this motif was not taken from the ANE, what is its origin? And what life-setting could be posited best to explain the mutual interdependence between communal needs and poetic form? Jeremias puts forward holy war, as typified by Judges 5, as an answer to such questions,¹⁹⁷ working by process of elimination through the major alternatives of forms tied to particular life-settings which contain theophanies (e.g., hymns, prophetic announcements of judgment, etc.).¹⁹⁸ According to Jeremias, a victory celebration after a battle in the pre-monarchic period is the most natural setting for the original form of theophanic description. Having posited this as the original life setting, Jeremias then works backwards, explaining the uses of theophany in other contexts after the *Gattung* was freed from its original life-setting.¹⁹⁹

While Jeremias' work in this area has certainly enjoyed wide influence, a few fundamental criticisms have repeatedly been leveled against it. Every critique of form criticism which more recent generations of OT scholarship have raised applies to Jeremias' argument. It is not certain, for instance, that a *Gattung* must have one (and only one) original form, or that this form is always brief.²⁰⁰ In addition, it is not even clear whether theophany qualifies as a *Gattung* in Jeremias' nuanced sense of that term; it may be more helpful to speak of theophany more generally as a theme or tradition.²⁰¹ Furthermore, Jeremias' reconstruction of the most primitive form of theophany and its original life-setting, while in no way implausible, gives rise to a variety of incongruities, for he argues the original form of this *Gattung* is not found in the

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 17.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 73-90.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 152-54.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., 144-46.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 123-43.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 147-48, 151-63. In particular, Jeremias argues that warfare became more of a secular affair under the monarchy, which helped to loosen theophany from its original mooring in tribal sacral warfare.

²⁰⁰ See the further criticisms of James Muilenburg, "Form Criticism and Beyond," *JBL* 88 (1969): 5, 9.

²⁰¹ Brevard Childs, *Isaiah and the Assyrian Crisis* (SBT 2/3; London: SCM, 1967), 49; Frank Schnutenhaus, "Das Kommen und Erscheinen Gottes im Alten Testament," *ZAW* 76 (1964): 1.

OT and that it is found in its original context in only one place in the OT (i.e., Judg 5).²⁰² It is strange, in other words, that so important a theme as theophany in the OT is found, with only one exception, with the original unity between form and life-setting broken, and that the original form is not even preserved in the OT. Furthermore, Jeremias' reasons for suspecting that theophanic texts are foreign bodies in later poetic texts are not always very strong. For instance, while the three-clause lines of Ps 77.17-20 do appear to interrupt what would otherwise be two closely connected parallel lines (vv. 16 and 20), many other theophanies are organically rooted in their context; Ps 18.8-16, for instance, rather than being "strangely isolated" from the surrounding verses,²⁰³ fits quite nicely as Yahweh rebukes the watery forces of chaos and death (vv. 5-7) and saves his anointed king (vv. 17-25).

Despite these criticisms, Jeremias' work contains several foundational insights, foremost among which is his identification of the central dimensions of poetic theophany in divine appearance and its aftershock (although I define these dimensions more generally, not solely on the basis of those theophanic texts most probably of earliest origin, which speak of Yahweh's coming from the south). Furthermore, his method of positing a central, basic form as over against its later developments is heuristically useful, for it gives him a way to explain the different imagery which individual theophanic passages contain. In a similar way, the present work posits a basic form to the *Chaoskampf* myth and makes reference to it in order to discern the meaning of the particular expression given to any one manifestation of Yahweh to defeat chaos. However, if theophanic descriptions are more organically suited to their contexts than Jeremias' over-sensitivity to form-critical considerations allows, then an approach which gives greater emphasis to synchronic considerations may be better suited to the material. It should finally be noted that Jeremias' occasionally notes that the manner of Yahweh's appearance is stated in an OT text in a way which fits other aspects of the theophany (e.g., Yahweh's coming to punish the iniquity of the earth matches the earth not hiding its slain in Isa 26.21).²⁰⁴ While Jeremias' concerns lead him away from developing these considerations, they lie close to the impetus driving the present project.

A second work of foundational importance for the themes of theophany and divine warfare is Frank Moore Cross' now-classic work *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, which contains several chapters which consider the significance of Yahweh as a Divine Warrior and

²⁰² As pointed out by W. L. Moran, review of Jörg Jeremias, *Theophanie*, *Bib* 47 (1966): 98-99, and Paul Hanson, "Zechariah 9 and the Recapitulation of an Ancient Ritual Pattern," *JBL* 92 (1973): 52, note 45.

²⁰³ *Theophanie*, 4.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 19.

storm god in pre-monarchic and monarchic Israelite religion.²⁰⁵ Cross defines the *Chaoskampf* motif according to three central components: first, the combat and defeat of the Sea by the Divine Warrior; second, the construction of a temple on the divine mountain which has been won in battle; third, the manifestation of the eternal kingship of the Divine Warrior amidst the divine council.²⁰⁶ Cross further argues that certain kinds of imagery pertaining to theophany and divine warfare are appropriate to different stages of the *Chaoskampf*: images of desolation to the first, and of abundance to the second and third. In his own words, we see, on the one hand, “the march of the Divine Warrior to battle, bearing his terrible weapons, the thunderbolt and the winds,” as he “drives his fiery cloud-chariot against his enemy,” so that “[m]ountains shatter; the heavens collapse at his glance.” But the victorious return from battle to the newly-won temple shows all nature rejoicing before the Divine Warrior in abundance and fecundity, who, still bearing his weapons, is manifested in the storm.²⁰⁷ Cross further posits a ritual correlation with these two mythic patterns, such that the march to defeat chaos and victorious return to the temple was ritually enacted (in different forms) in Ugarit and Israel.²⁰⁸ He goes on to argue that this basic pattern was infused with other elements from Israelite religion and transformed in later periods; apocalyptic²⁰⁹ and the return to Zion in Isa 40-55 are enlisted as particularly striking examples of such transformations.²¹⁰

Cross’ account of these themes and their interrelations is of special interest for the present project, for he argues that there is an intrinsic and organic connection between the imagery attending theophany and the divine defeat of chaos—the very claim which is central to the present project. Cross’ understanding of the *Chaoskampf* is also virtually identical to the one informing the present work (although I do not think, as Cross argues, that the theophanic manifestation of the victorious Divine Warrior occurs frequently enough to count as an essential element in the *Chaoskampf*). So the present project is in agreement with Cross in two basic ways.

One cannot help but wonder, however, if too rigid an account of theophanic imagery has been given, for even the central texts which Cross enlists in formulating these original two patterns do not support it as easily as might first appear. Cross enlists a variety of Ugaritic texts from within and outside the Baal Epic which do not have any obvious connection to ritual, and

²⁰⁵ *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard, 1973), 91-194.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 93, 142.

²⁰⁷ Quotations from *ibid.*, 155-56; see more generally 148-63. See also Mark Smith’s summary of Cross’ ideas in Smith, *Early History*, 49.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 93, 140, 148.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 111.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 170-74.

then re-arranges them to reflect the two major parts of this putative myth-ritual (the procession to desolating battle and the return in abundant victory). According to Cross, the hymn to the enthroned Baal in KTU 101 reflects the second part of the ritual, as do different descriptions of the fecundity which Baal will bring which deities make in the Baal Epic both before and after the completion of his palace. On the other hand, the famous speech of Mot to Baal beginning KTU 1.5 (after Baal's palace has been built), which Cross takes to refer to the cosmic desolation resulting from Baal's battles, is understood to refer to the first part of this temple ceremony. This re-arrangement of narrative texts is, however, executed solely on the (unproved) hypothesis of a ritual correspondence to this basic myth. Even worse, however, Cross arguably misplaces the transition from protasis to apodosis in the speech of Mot in KTU 1.5 I 1-6: rather than saying that, when Baal smote Leviathan, the twisting serpent, the heavens burned and drooped, Mot should be understood to claim here that although Baal defeated Leviathan, the heavens will burn and droop when Mot devours Baal. (As is argued more fully in the second chapter of this dissertation, the fact that the skies really do burn and droop in drought, when Baal is dead, is a strong argument in favor of this interpretation.) If this reading of Mot's speech is correct, however, then a major text supporting the first part of Cross' two-part pattern is removed, so that there is less reason to think that cosmic imagery of desolation is related to the *Chaoskampf* in exactly the way which Cross suggests.

Many of Cross' biblical examples suffer from similar problems. While Isa 34-35 does certainly fit well with the idea of the Divine Warrior setting out for desolating conflict and returning in fecund celebration,²¹¹ the imagery of Ps 29 mostly involves desolation (conforming to the first part of Cross' scheme), while the context is that of worship given to the enthroned king in the divine council (conforming to the second part this scheme).²¹² The same is true of his use of Ps 97²¹³ (which combines imagery of desolation with the already enthroned King). His citation of Hab 3.5-12 does not help either,²¹⁴ since this passage does not even hint at the return of the Divine Warrior to the temple.

It appears, in other words, that a criticism leveled against Jeremias above—that few of the extant OT theophanic texts exactly fit the form of theophany which is privileged as central in the discussion—may apply to Cross' analysis of theophanic imagery as well. Much as there is to be learned from these works, it appears that theophanic imagery is more flexible than has been recognized, so that a different approach might be more promising. Consideration of an article by

²¹¹ Ibid., 150.

²¹² Ibid., 151-56.

²¹³ Ibid., 162.

²¹⁴ Ibid., 150.

Theodore Hiebert on OT theophanies in the *Anchor Bible Dictionary* will help to sketch what such an approach might look like, and will also throw into sharp relief the issues in play in this dissertation.²¹⁵

In introducing his subject, Hiebert states that, while the OT conceives of God as transcendent to the world, he can still appear in particular places (e.g., mountains, trees) and in natural and social forms (e.g., the thunderstorm, as a judge or warrior).²¹⁶ This forms the backbone for Hiebert's survey of the locations, forms and varied meanings in divine appearance throughout the OT. Most relevant for the present project is Hiebert's emphasis on the cosmic mountain as a unifying factor for the different modes and purposes of divine manifestation in the OT: "[i]t is on the mountain that the deity becomes manifest as the divine warrior in the phenomena of the thunderstorm, is enthroned as king of the cosmos and history, and issues decrees about the divine will and intentions for the . . . community."²¹⁷ Hiebert is by no means unaware of the mythic significance of this cosmic mountain, noting the ancient pattern (as exemplified in the Baal Epic and Enuma Elish) of the defeat of the chaotic waters by the Divine Warrior, who is then enthroned on this mountain, hailed as king, and nourishes creation with his rains. Just as in the ANE, Hiebert argues that Yahweh is the one

who appears at the cosmic mountain as the divine warrior in the thunderstorm to protect Israel from cosmic and historical threats to its security, who is manifest as ruler of the cosmos and history, and in that capacity discloses the divine will by issuing decrees, revealing plans, judging nations and people, granting requests, answering inquiries, and commissioning messengers. These modes of the theophany of Yahweh are closely related and unified by their location at the sacred mountain.²¹⁸

Hiebert shows great insight in working his way through widely varying OT theophanies from this perspective. In discussing the thunderstorm as one mode of theophany in the OT, however, he fails (in my opinion) fully to exploit his insights about the mythic pattern surrounding the cosmic mountain. While correctly noting that "the thunderstorm [in the OT] . . . is given expression in the same ancient Canaanite mythic pattern in which the sacred mountain functions as cosmic center,"²¹⁹ Hiebert explains the meaning of the thunderstorm not explicitly in relation to this mythic pattern, but in relation to the agricultural nature of Israelite society and the need for good harvests in order to sustain life. According to Hiebert, just as "[d]rought and

²¹⁵ Theodore Hiebert, "Theophany in the OT," *ABD* 6:505-11.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 505.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 506.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 509.

famine were constant threats,” the thunderstorm was the supreme manifestation of divine power both to sustain life and destroy it. Consonant with the simultaneously threatening and nourishing nature of the thunderstorm is (according to Hiebert) the defeat of Israel’s enemies by Yahweh by means of a storm theophany (actualizing the destructive aspect of the storm) and the nourishing of the earth for Israel’s benefit (actualizing its beneficent aspect). Ps 68.7-8 is listed as one example of this former aspect of the inner meaning of storm theophany and vv. 9-10 as an example of the latter nuance.²²⁰

Now, without minimizing the importance of the fertility of the land for ANE peoples, as well as the simultaneously ominous and hopeful nature of a thunderstorm in this context, Hiebert’s solely agricultural framework for explaining the significance of the storm as a prominent mode of theophany appears reductionistic, for it renders the ancient mythic pattern of divine battle against chaos and enthronement, a pattern so often associated with theophany in poetic contexts, superfluous. Why speak of battle and enthronement at all if the meaning of the thunderstorm may be understood solely in relation to its potentially devastating or nourishing effect on crops? By way of contrast, the argument made in this project is that the imagery describing war-like storm theophanies is intrinsically and organically related to the narrative pattern of the *Chaoskampf*, such that, just as the Divine Warrior/storm god defeats chaos by means of his thunder and lightning, so he nourishes the earth. But this line of thought will have to be left to the second chapter to be fully substantiated; it is sufficient here to note the many helpful insights which have been given in the works listed above and the ways in which the present project builds on them.²²¹

Limitations, Outline, and Method of this Project

This introductory chapter may conclude with a few words about the limitations imposed on this project, give an outline of the whole, and present the exact method which will be applied to the biblical texts examined herein.

²²⁰ Ibid., 509.

²²¹ Mention should also briefly be made of Jeffrey Niehaus’ work, *God at Sinai: Covenant and Theophany in the Bible and the Ancient Near East* (SOTBT 1; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995). As the title makes clear, Niehaus’ study investigates (with great dexterity) the various interrelationships between theophany and covenant. However, Niehaus’ argument that the Sinai theophany forms the one pattern by which all other OT theophanies must be understood impoverishes his results with regard to poetic theophanies, many of which contain no explicit references to Sinai; indeed, his discussion of these texts sometimes involves little more than specifying the phrases used to describe Yahweh’s presence and tying them to earlier OT uses. Much the same weakness hampers Kenneth Kuntz’s work *The Self-Revelation of God* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1967), which tries to read theophanies in all genres according to one form (centering in the speech of the deity to the individual and the human response).

It should first be noted that the notes supporting the different philological and exegetical decisions made in translating Ugaritic texts have been limited to the most important issues or to those most relevant to the particular focus of this project, and that the same procedure was followed in the text-critical notes of biblical texts. Attempting to list comprehensively every interpretative option would clog already complex footnotes, and other translations of Ugaritic literature and biblical commentaries already contain extensive discussions of this sort. In light of this, of course, none of the translations are offered dogmatically.

Second, this study will have a synchronic focus in two respects. First, no attempt will be made to write a “history” or trace the development of the theme of theophany. Such an attempt would almost certainly be inconclusive, for no uniform development is discernible in the use of these themes from earlier to later texts. The theme rather appears in OT literature already fully formed, with extensive and clipped Divine Warrior theophanies occurring in both early and late texts. In a similar vein, no attempt will be made to trace the pre-history of the texts in question. Although evidence of redaction in prophetic texts is widespread, the pervasive influence of these mythic themes on prophetic texts implies that one need not peer into their prehistory in order to glean material for an interesting discussion. The aim is to examine the text as we now have it.

With these limitations in mind, an outline of the project may be presented. The second chapter will summarize the Baal Epic and analyze specific texts in it with regard to Baal’s struggle against chaos and his theophany from his temple. This analysis of the most illuminating extra-biblical example of theophany and *Chaoskampf* will provide invaluable insights as the discussion turns toward biblical texts.

Chapters three through five will focus on prophetic texts. Each text will be given a translation and text-critical notes, which will lay a necessary foundation for understanding the precise expression given to theophanic imagery. Four questions will then be put to each text. First, what is the structure of the theophanic description? Attention to structure is important because, as with text-critical issues, it exposes the exact expression given to direct divine appearance and battle, whether fashioned as narrative or composed of large-scale parallelistic or chiastic patterns. Second, how is the *Chaoskampf* myth expressed? How is chaos described, with whom or what is it identified, and how is it defeated? Third, how is Yahweh’s direct appearance described, what reactions does it cause, and how are these reactions articulated? Attention to these details will illuminate the inner coherence between the exact expression given to divine appearance, aftershock, and the defeat of chaos and the organic connections among these themes in any one text.

The fourth question which will be put to individual texts concerns the contribution which the theophany makes to the larger advance of the prophetic book. This issue is crucial for the project, for the contribution of theophanic passages to the broader sweep of the text will show the way in which the *Chaoskampf* myth is being re-applied in new situations—and how individual expressions of theophany and the reaction to it buttress and nuance the re-application of the *Chaoskampf* myth. This last question also merges with the synchronic focus mentioned above, for the strategy will not be to interpret the ever-new application of the *Chaoskampf* in relation to a hypothetically reconstructed historical situation behind the text, but rather its application within the unfolding prophetic vision of Yahweh's action in history. As will be seen, the contribution of individual theophanic texts can sometimes stretch quite widely over the course of a book; as a result, it will often be helpful to take account of the large-scale shaping or redaction of a prophetic text in order to follow what contribution an individual example of Yahweh's theophanic intervention makes to the book as a whole.

After examining theophany and *Chaoskampf* in Isaiah and the Book of the Twelve, the fifth chapter of this project will discuss those theophanic texts which, for different reasons, do not fit easily into the categories developed above: either because they are heavily mixed with metaphor (Isa 17.12-14, 31.4-9; Mic 1.3-4), they lack a description of any reaction (Isa 63.1-6), the theophany receives only hints instead of a full description (Isa 33.1-16), or the description is given at one level of remove from the main line of the text (Isa 50.1-3, 63.10-64.2). The sixth and final chapter will summarize the argument of the first two chapters of this project and the results of chapters three through five.

It remains only to emphasize that the present project is a tentative first attempt to interpret poetic theophanic imagery. It is made in full recognition of the complexities of the subject and in conscious dependence on previous scholarly work on this subject, even when disagreements are registered.

Chapter 2

Thunder and Theophany in the Baal Epic

The purpose of this chapter is to investigate the narrative and thematic context and significance of Baal's theophany in the storm from his temple in the Ugaritic Baal cycle. Since the significance of theophany in the Baal Epic can be discerned only by placing it within the larger context of the epic as a whole, an introductory discussion concerning the shape and central subject of the text will first be given, followed by a more detailed analysis of texts which specifically relate to Baal's theophany. Before turning to the Baal Epic itself, however, it will be worth presenting a brief survey of the imagery attending theophanic warfare elsewhere in the ANE. Despite the fact that several excellent summaries of Mesopotamian, Hittite, and Egyptian conceptions of theophanic divine warfare already exist,¹ the fact that the theophany described in the Baal Epic includes only one aspect from the complex and manifold descriptions of war-like divine appearance implies that a brief survey of relevant ANE texts will help to show the broad homogeneity of theophanic descriptions throughout the ANE, against which OT descriptions of the same must be interpreted, better than exclusive attention to the Baal Epic would.

Theophanic Imagery in the Ancient Near East

Third millennium Sumerian hymns show that the homogeneity in theophanic description, description which consistently refers to thunder, lightning, fire, and earthquake, is in evidence from the very earliest texts of the ancient Near East.² A hymn to Inanna hails her as "Loud Thundering Storm," who pours her rain over all the earth: "You make the heavens tremble and the earth quake. . . . You flash like lightning over the highlands, you throw your firebrands across the earth. Your deafening command, whistling like the South Wind, splits

¹ I have found most helpful on this score Jörg Jeremias, *Theophanie: Die Geschichte einer alttestamentlichen Gattung* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1965), 73-89; Moshe Weinfeld, "'Rider of the Clouds' and 'Gatherer of the Clouds,'" *JANES* 5 (1973): 421-25; Jeffrey Niehaus, *God at Sinai: Covenant and Theophany in the Bible and Ancient Near East* (SOTBT; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 81-141, especially 126-36; Nicolas Wyatt, "Arms and the King: The Earliest Allusions to the Chaoskampf Motif and their Implications for the Interpretation of the Ugaritic and Biblical Traditions," in *Und Mose schrieb dieses Lied auf: Studien zum Alten Testament und zum Alten Orient* (AOAT 250; Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1998), 834-47; idem, *Space and Time in the Religious Life of the Near East* (BS 85; Sheffield: Sheffield, 2001), 95-113; Alberto Green, *The Storm-God in the Ancient Near East* (BJSUC 8; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2003), 15-84.

² In addition to the following examples, see those listed by Wyatt, "Earliest Allusions," 834-37, as well as Niehaus, *God at Sinai*, 13.

apart great mountains.”³ Ishkur, too, sometimes appears “as a warrior driving his thundering chariot across the skies,” causing rain as his chariot is “drawn by seven storms” while “his vizier, ‘lightning,’ walked before it;” when manifested in this way, the god’s “sheen lies over the land ‘like a cloth.’”⁴ The same god is elsewhere praised as the one who, in the storm, makes the earth tremble and the mountains to be afraid: “At his thundering (over) the sea (and) covering the land with ra<dance>, great (hail)stones rain.”⁵ Enlil is pictured in a nearly identical way.⁶

Such visible splendor in divine battle is also found in full degree in later Mesopotamian myth. The much-discussed Enuma Elish gives an extended example of these themes.⁷ The plot of this poem is well known: Marduk, the divine warrior, defeats Tiamat, the threatening watery depths, in battle; he then constructs the cosmos out of Tiamat’s corpse and is hailed as king in his palace/temple by the divine assembly. Two aspects of Marduk’s victory and exaltation are of particular significance for the present project—in addition, of course, to its status as a significant East Semitic example of the *Chaoskampf*.⁸ First, the extended description of Marduk’s weapons in his fight with cosmic chaos includes thunderbolts, storm-winds, raging fire (with which he covers his body), the deluge, his chariot, as well as his accompanying warriors and radiant aura (IV 35-38). It is also noteworthy that part of Marduk’s official recognition as king in the divine assembly includes his presentation before the other gods while bearing his weapons and with his “awe-inspiring tiara” (V 94). The awesome radiance of the warrior storm-god is thus part-and-parcel both of his weaponry and of his recognition as king. Second, in distinct contrast to his establishing the split corpse of Tiamat as the earth and the firmament (blocking out the endless waters beyond) and setting up other deities as the moon and stars in regular orbit, the text states that, as one part of his ordering of chaos in creation, Marduk assigns for himself the task of

³ Diane Wolkstein and Samuel Kramer, *Inanna, Queen of Heaven and Earth: Her Stories and Hymns from Ancient Sumer* (London: Rider, 1984), 95. See also the text discussed by William Hallo and J. J. A. van Dijk, *The Exaltation of Inanna* (YNER 3; New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1968), 17, 31, for a similar description involving luminescence, thunder, storm, and cosmic shaking.

⁴ Thorkild Jacobsen, *Treasures of Darkness* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1976), 135.

⁵ Quoted by David Tsumura, *Creation and Destruction: A Reappraisal of the Chaoskampf Theory in the Old Testament* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2005), 158; see further the hymn quoted by Green, *Storm-God*, 49.

⁶ Green, *Storm-God*, 35, note 127.

⁷ See “The Epic of Creation,” translated by Benjamin Foster (*COS* 1.111: 390-402).

⁸ See Thorkild Jacobsen, “The Battle between Marduk and Tiamat,” *JAOS* 88 (1968): 104-8. A second Mesopotamian example of the *Chaoskampf* is found in what W. G. Lambert has termed the Labbu myth, in which the deity Tishpak defeats the sea-dragon in storm warfare. For translation, see Alexander Heidel, *The Babylonian Genesis* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1942], 120-21, with discussion in W. G. Lambert, “Ninurta Mythology in the Babylonian Epic of Creation,” in *Keilschriftliche Literaturen*, ed. Karl Hecker and Walter Sommerfeld (BBVO 6; Berlin: Dietrich Reimer, 1986), 55-61, as well as Theodore Lewis, “CT 13.33-34 and Ezekiel 32: Lion-Dragon Myths,” *JAOS* 116 (1996): 28-47.

“raising wind” and “causing rainfall” (V 50-52). In other words, Marduk reserves the storms for himself, in contrast to the more regulated aspects of creation. It is important to take note of this detail in the *Enuma Elish*, for it shows that, as in other texts, the storm god/Divine Warrior defeats chaos and nurtures order in creation with the very same weapons; the storms by which Marduk defeats Sea are also those by which he nourishes the earth. The weapons of the storm-god thus have a unified but dual function: dual in that thunder and lightning are the means by which chaos is defeated and the earth is watered, but unified in that both contribute to the creation of cosmic order. As we will see below, the same can be said for Baal’s weapons of thunder and lightning.

The imagery of theophanic divine warfare seen in myth is also found in Mesopotamian prayers. It is at the thunder-voice of Adad that “the heavens convulse, the earth shakes, the mountains tremble.”⁹ Ishtar is the “hero” whose “fiery glow . . . blazes against the enemy,”¹⁰ while Nergal is hymned as a “warrior, splendid one,” “clad with frightening sheen,” “who grasps the pitiless deluge-weapon, who massacres (?) the enemy.” He is also a “[l]ion clad in splendor, at the flaring-up of whose fierce brilliance . . . evil-doer and wicked have found their way into crevices.”¹¹

The radiant appearance of the Divine Warrior in battle was not, however, limited only to gods and goddesses in Mesopotamia. Mesopotamian royal Annals give abundant examples of descriptions of Assyrian kings who engage in battle with historical enemies with thunder, lightning, flood and fire, to tumultuous effect. Shalmaneser I, for example, claims that he is a “strong warrior, mighty in battle, who burns up the enemy, thunders (like Adad) among his foes, who bursts forth like a flame of fire.”¹² The prism inscription of Tiglath Pileasar I speaks of the monarch as “the exalted leader (?), whom Assur has caused to brandish his weapons” and “the fiery tempest, whose splendor overwhelms the quarters (of the world); the glowing flame which, like the rush of the storm, overpowers the enemy’s land.”¹³ Little wonder, then, that this king speaks of how his enemies were “overwhelmed” by the “terror and fear of the splendor of Assur, my lord,” as it was manifested on the battlefield.¹⁴ Indeed, Niehaus even discusses how Tiglath-Pileasar I “fashioned bronze lightning-bolts and inscribed some of his conquests on them as a

⁹ Erich Ebeling, *Akkadische Gebetserie ‘Handerhebung’* (DAWBIO 20; Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1953), 104, quoted in Michael Fishbane, *Biblical Myth and Rabbinic Mythmaking* (Oxford: Oxford, 2003), 45.

¹⁰ Ben Foster, *Before the Muses: An Anthology of Akkadian Literature* (2 vols.; CDL Press: Bethesda, MD 1993), 2:512.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 622.

¹² Daniel Luckenbill, *Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia* (2 vols.; New York: Greenwood, 1926), 1:38-39.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 1:73.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 1:75.

memorial”¹⁵—doubtless an appropriate action for a king who thunders against his enemies like Adad! Assur-nâsir-pal, for his own part, says that, when given his kingship by the gods, “their [i.e., the gods] weapons they presented as my . . . royal gift—the radiance of whose arms and the awe-inspiring splendor of whose rule have made him supreme over the kings of the four quarters (of the world).”¹⁶ The same later says that, in battle, “I thundered against them like Adad . . . of the storm, and I rained down flame upon them.”¹⁷ Similarly, Shalmaneser III is “like Adad,” who “rained down upon them [i.e., his enemies] a devastating flood.”¹⁸ The Saba’a Stela, a dedicatory inscription of Adad-nirari III, describes Adad as the one “who is clothed with luminosity, who rides the great storms (and) is clothed with fierce splendor, who causes the evil one to fall . . . [and] who causes the lightning bolt.”¹⁹ Finally, Sennacherib describes himself in the Taylor Prism in battle as “the flame that consumes the insubmissive [*sic*], who strikes the wicked with the thunderbolt.”²⁰

The visible splendor of the Divine Warrior and King in Mesopotamia (whether actually divine or human) is thus a prominent aspect of his warfare and victory on the battlefield. Peter Machinist explains “the form in which the ‘glory’ appears” as “that of an almost tangible emanation of a human king’s power, overwhelming in battle all his enemies.”²¹ Indeed, this tangible glory is, in Mesopotamian thought, almost a separate entity, which can exist in different contexts (e.g., cultic ones) and can be embodied by deities, kings, or even weapons or cult objects.²² Without glossing over the complexity of this concept, however, it should here be emphasized that this glory consists of “a dazzling aureole or nimbus which surrounds the divinity” (or the king favored by the divinity) which terrifies his enemies.²³ Indeed, the very same terms are used to describe the visible splendor of Divine Warrior and the king who participates in his victories.²⁴

The same combination of themes is also found in Egyptian literature, if not exactly in the same forms. The closest parallels to the language and imagery used in Sumerian and

¹⁵ *God at Sinai*, 131-32, citing E. A. W. Budge and L. W. King, eds., *Annals of the Kings of Assyria* (London: Harrison and Sons, 1902), 1:79-80.

¹⁶ Luckenbill, *Ancient Records*, 1:140.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 1:156.

¹⁸ “Kurkh Monolith,” translated by K. Lawson Younger, Jr. (*COS* 2.113A:261-64).

¹⁹ “Saba’a Stela,” translated by K. Lawson Younger, Jr. (*COS* 2.114E:274-5).

²⁰ Luckenbill, *Ancient Records*, 2:115.

²¹ “Assyria and Its Image in First Isaiah,” *JAOS* 103 (1983): 727.

²² See the discussion of George Mendenhall, “The Mask of Yahweh,” in *The Tenth Generation: The Origins of the Biblical Tradition* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1973), 32-66, especially 52-53.

²³ A. Leo Oppenheim, “Akkadian *pul(u)ḫ(t)u* and *melammu*,” *JAOS* 63 (1943): 31-34.

²⁴ See the respective entries in *CAD* for the terms *melammu*, *namrurrū*, and *šalummatu*, which list numerous examples of these terms for divine radiance being applied both to deities and kings.

Akkadian texts is found from the 18th dynasty onwards, when West Semitic gods began to have an influence in Egypt. During this period, Pharaoh is said to have a “battle cry” like that of “Baal in the heavens.”²⁵ A magical text from this period contains the line, “Baal smites thee with the cedar tree which is in his hand.”²⁶ In addition, one of the El-Amarna tablets compares Pharaoh to Baal, who thunders in the heavens so that the whole land trembles.²⁷ Furthermore, the Egyptian god Seth was imagined to give his voice or roar in heaven, so that the earth shakes.²⁸ Finally, it should be noted that Pharaoh could appear in battle in radiant glory, to the great terror of his foes. The fact that this tangible splendor is associated with the sun in Egypt, instead of with the storm, as in Mesopotamia, does not negate the authenticity of this parallel. Ramesses II, for instance, fighting against Muwatallis II of Hatti at Qadesh in 1275, claims that his Uraeus-serpent was destroying his enemies by spitting flames at them and that his appearance “like Re, in his appearing at dawn,” sent forth rays which “burned up the bodies of the rebels.”²⁹

Finally, it should be noted that, in addition to the Baal Epic, the theme of divine appearance and cosmic disturbance are found in at least one other West Semitic text: one of the Kuntillet Ajrud inscriptions speaks of God shining forth, so that the mountains melt.³⁰

Even so brief a survey as this provides a helpful background for the discussion of Ugaritic and biblical examples of theophany and *Chaoskampf* in many ways. Four points, in particular, should be emphasized. First, theophanic imagery shows great stability throughout the millennia in which it was used, even while it is capable of great flexibility in any particular expression: the standard images of thunder and lightning, fire and deluge, earthquake and fearful trembling are used over and over again. This constant re-use should not, however, be taken to imply that such imagery was used thoughtlessly or carelessly, since these phenomena attend divine royal battle in very serious situations. Second, images of thunder, lightning, and rushing water are frequently combined with fire; while such a combination is counter-intuitive for modern readers, it was natural for ancient audiences.³¹ It appears that lightning and fire were

²⁵ “The Egyptians and the Gods of Asia,” translated by John Wilson (*ANET* 249).

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ The text is tablet 147, lines 13-14; see Samuel Mercer, ed., *The Tell El-Amarna Tablets* (2 vols.; Toronto: Macmillan, 1939), 2:483.

²⁸ Adolf Erman, *Die Religion der Ägypter* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1934), 37.

²⁹ “The Battle of Qadesh: The Poem, or Literary Record,” translated by K. A. Kitchen (*COS* 2.5A:37); similar imagery is used in “The Victory Setla of King Piye,” translated by Miriam Lichteim (*COS* 2.7:46).

³⁰ Moshe Weinfeld, “Kuntillet ‘Ajrud Inscriptions and Their Significance,” *SEL* 1 (1984): 126. The profound importance of these themes is underscored by their survival and use in post-biblical literature, such as Ethiopian Enoch 1.3-7; see Jeremias, *Theophanie*, 51-55, for further discussion.

³¹ See Jeremias, *Theophanie*, 82, and Paul Hanson, *The Dawn of Apocalyptic* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975), 184.

associated particularly closely in these bodies of literature, just as they are in the Hebrew Bible (note, for instance, Pss 18.9, 13-14; 29.3; 50.3; 97.3; Isa 66.15; Ezek 1.13). Third, theophanic splendor is not just an attendant circumstance to the battle against chaos, but is rather one weapon within that warfare. Such radiance is also a frequent part of the manifestation of the victorious Divine Warrior after his battle. Finally, the theophanic defeat of chaos by the human king replays the cosmic victory in the human realm; it is mythic in exactly the sense discussed in the first chapter of this project.

It is with this larger background in mind that we may turn to the closest extra-biblical parallel of the *Chaoskampf* in the Ugaritic Baal Epic.

Introduction to the Baal Epic

The plot of the Baal Epic fits conveniently into three parts: Baal's defeat of Yam and subsequent cosmic kingship (KTU 1.1-1.2), two parallel attempts (the first unsuccessful) to build a palace for Baal and the inception of his rule from it (KTU 1.3-1.4), and Baal's half-victorious conflict with Mot (KTU 1.5-1.6). Some scholars have expressed doubts that these tablets can be read in this order, or that there is a larger, narrative relationship binding them together at all;³² but Mark Smith has argued in favor of both of these conclusions in a way which is as thorough and as it is persuasive.³³ It will be sufficient to summarize his argument here. Although Smith does not discount the possibility of redactional shaping of this material, he essentially argues for the ordering of the tablets as found in KTU and their narrative continuity because of the profound structural and thematic coherence obtaining between the conflicts of Baal with Yam and Mot.³⁴ The fact that both conflicts surround, on both sides, the building of Baal's temple is also significant for Smith's case.³⁵ Thus, with regard to Baal's two central battles, Smith points out that both have two rounds which begin with a surrender by Baal and end in the defeat of

³² See, for example, Johannes De Moor's placing of KTU 1.3 at the head of the cycle (*The Seasonal Pattern in the Ugaritic Poem of Ba'lu according to the Version of Illimilku* [AOAT 16; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1971]). Doubts about narrative unity among the tablets are expressed by Baruch Margalit, *A Matter of Life and Death* (AOAT 206; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1980), 9-11; Richard Clifford, "Cosmogonies in the Ugaritic Texts and in the Bible," *Or* 53 (1984): 189-93; Sam Meier, "Baal's Fight with Yam (KTU 1.2 I, IV): A Part of the Baal Myth as Known in KTU 1.1, 3-6?" *UF* 18 (1986): 241-54; Gregorio del Olmo Lete, "Ugaritic Semantics III," *UF* 9 (1977), 31.

³³ Smith makes essentially the same case both in his article, "Interpreting the Baal Cycle," *UF* 18 (1986): 324-32 and in his commentary, *The Ugaritic Baal Cycle. Volume 1: Introduction with Text, Translation and Commentary of KTU 1.1-1.2* (VTSupp 55; Leiden: Brill, 1994), 2-25. A much briefer form of the same sort of argument can be found in J. C. L. Gibson's earlier article, "The Theology of the Baal Cycle," *Or* 53 (1984): 205-10.

³⁴ See "Interpreting the Baal Cycle," 327ff, for his complete list of these similarities.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

Baal's opponent, that Athtar is involved both times, as is Shapsh (who even asks the same question about El's continued support of a god's rule in KTU 1.2 III 15-19 and 1.6 IV 22-29), and that the conflict ends both times on the note of Baal's kingship. The supposition of narrative continuity in KTU 1.1-1.6 is thus far more probable than their treatment as separate texts.

Smith is no less helpful with regard to the central theme of the cycle—a subject which, as Smith notes, has been a contentious one in the history of the study of this text. Smith lists four major interpretations of the cycle which differ from his own (seasonal, ritual, cosmogonic, and “life vs. death”), leveling judicious criticisms at each.³⁶ Smith's own contribution in this regard concerns kingship—or, more specifically, Baal's struggle to gain and define his kingship.³⁷ The frequency with which this theme is found in the speech of the characters in the epic, as well as the way in which both Baal's battles and his palace are explicitly related to his kingship, supports this (see KTU 1.1 IV 24-27, 1.2 IV10, 32, 1.3 III 28-31, 1.3 V 29-39, 1.4 VII 42, 1.6 V 5-6, and 1.6 VI 27-35 for the explicit relation of conflict and temple-building to Baal's rule).³⁸ Kingship is, in other words, not just one theme among many in the cycle, but the locus to which the epic's other themes point and in relation to which they gain their meaning.³⁹ Even more, placing Baal's kingship at the center of the cycle also helps to explain the various strengths and weaknesses of competing interpretations of the cycle. Smith demonstrates this last point rather brilliantly:

Baal is king precisely because he is the deity who can mediate the blessings of the natural cosmos both to human society and to the company of the pantheon. The means of providing blessings are his rains, which the seasonal interpretation has emphasized. These rains revivify the world, duly noted by proponents of the cosmogonic approach. Baal's kingship brings life to the world, prevailing over the forces of death and destruction, as stressed by those who view the Baal cycle as a struggle between the forces of life and death. Within the framework provided by the kingship interpretation, the other views (perhaps excepting the ritual approach) fall into their proper context. The different views of the cycle are therefore compatible to a certain extent, and each one elucidates a different aspect of Baal's kingship.⁴⁰

³⁶ See “Interpreting the Baal Cycle,” 314-22.

³⁷ In agreement with Smith on this point are J. C. L. Gibson, “The Mythological Texts: The Baal Cycle,” in *The Handbook of Ugaritic Studies*, ed. G. E. Watson and N. Wyatt (HdO I.39; Leiden: Brill, 1999), 193 (in modification of the “seasonal” interpretation expressed in *CML* 18-19); Wyatt, *Space and Time*, 97; Neil Forsyth, *The Old Enemy: Satan and the Combat Myth* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University, 1987), 45; and Patrick Miller, *The Divine Warrior in Early Israel*, HSM 5 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 1973), 32, 39.

³⁸ “Interpreting the Baal Cycle,” 322.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 332.

Analysis of Texts Relating to Theophany in the Baal Epic

With a summary of the narrative of the Baal cycle and its central themes ready at hand, we may turn to specific passages in the Baal cycle which bear directly on theophany.⁴¹ Baal's defeat of Yam is the first passage which must be discussed. The Ugaritic version of the storm god's defeat of Sea has, naturally enough, attracted a great deal of interest already; for present purposes, the most important aspect of this passage concerns the exact nature of Baal's victory and its implications. The problem of the lack of storm imagery in this battle may then be addressed.

The text describing Baal's actual defeat of Yam (after Yam's form collapses beneath the weapons for Kothar-and-Hasis) reads: *yqt b'l . w yšt . ym . ykly . ʔpt . nhr* (KTU 1.2 IV 27). Unfortunately, although it is obvious Baal is destroying his opponent, these three verbs can be translated differently.⁴² The first is often derived from the root *qll*, "to drag out, away,"⁴³ which certainly makes sense; but Wyatt, with reference to BH usage, translates as "gathered up," noting the parallel to Anat's action towards Mot (KTU 1.6 ii 30-37).⁴⁴ This translation also fits best with Yam's form having collapsed under Baal's weapon (lines 25-26). Baal is thus probably gathering up his enemy here. The two most plausible options for the second verb are from *nšt*, "to dry up" and from *štt*, "to separate."⁴⁵ It is difficult to decide between them, for, if Baal has shattered Yam's form, then it would make sense that he would then separate or scatter his opponent; on the other hand, since Yam is the sea, his defeat would involve being dried up. Perhaps the easy connection with the first verb makes the first of these two more probable (indeed, it is possible that the mythical dismemberment of Yam's body would have already implied that he was dried up with regard to the earth). Finally, the third verb almost certainly means "to finish." Baal thus gathers Yam up and scatters him, making a complete end of his opponent (or drying Yam up, and thus finishing him off).

If these actions have been correctly interpreted, we may proceed to explore exactly what implications Baal's victory has. The most important is that Baal's victory wins him cosmic kingship (KTU 1.2 IV 10, 32). The exact sort of victory this new king has won should, furthermore, be understood in light of Yam's identification with and representation of the

⁴¹ All Ugaritic Texts are taken from Manfred Dietrich, et. al., eds., *The Cuneiform Alphabetic Texts from Ugarit, Ras Ibn Hani, and Other Places (KTU: Second, Enlarged Edition)*, ALASP 8 (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1995).

⁴² For a complete listing of the different options here, see Smith, *Ugaritic Baal Cycle*, 353-55.

⁴³ *CML* 44; Smith, "The Baal Cycle," 104.

⁴⁴ *RTU* 67, note 146. The root in view here would be the same as BH *שׁק*, from which is derived *שׁק*, "chaff."

⁴⁵ Smith, *Ugaritic Baal Cycle*, 352.

cosmic, world-surrounding ocean.⁴⁶ However it is translated, Baal's victory means not an annihilation of Yam—aside from the fact that the sea still existed as Ugaritians wrote and read the Baal epic, note how Baal still worries about Yam in KTU 1.4 vi 7-13—but the nullifying of his power with regard to the earth/dry land. Yam's own ambitions for mastery over the earth are apparent in the opening scenes of the narrative, for the plan to crown Yam under El's rule may be seen as a manifestation of Yam's desire to conquer and rule the earth, under which circumstances the rains would have apparently been at the mercy of unpredictable Yam, or the sea might have covered the earth.⁴⁷ This last possibility is especially intriguing in light of Baal's gathering up and scattering of his opponent. ANE cosmological ideas are in play here: as Wyatt has convincingly argued, the conception of the earth as a flat plane surrounded on all sides (or covered) by water meshes naturally with the image of a warrior-god beating back, holding back, or, in this case, drying up or scattering the chaotic waters in order to form a space within which human life is possible.⁴⁸ And it is precisely because Baal is the warrior who can win such a victory that he is acclaimed king.⁴⁹

Baal's defeat of Yam is thus a perfect example of the defeat of chaos by the Divine Warrior. It is, however, strange to note that it is not explicitly said that Baal defeats Yam by means of his thunder and lightning. Indeed, this apparent exception to the expected means of the defeat of chaos by the Divine Warrior is no small problem for the present project, which argues that OT theophanic storm imagery must be interpreted in relation to the defeat of chaos—for if this is so, why does the paradigmatic extra-biblical example of this theme appear to break the pattern?

In response to this problem, different strands of evidence may be assembled which show that the lack of explicit reference to thunder and lightning in this episode counts not as an exception to the expected pattern of the defeat of chaos by the storm god/Divine Warrior, but as a variation on the theme (in harmony with the definition of myth given in the first chapter). Mark Smith argues in this regard that the clubs given by the divine craftsman are actually

⁴⁶ Gibson, "Theology of the Baal Cycle," 218; Forsyth, *The Old Enemy*, 50.

⁴⁷ Toombs, "Baal, Lord of the Earth," 618.

⁴⁸ See *Myths of Power: A Study of Royal Myth and Ideology in Ugaritic and Biblical Tradition* (UBL 13; Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1996), 19-115.

⁴⁹ It is sometimes argued that Baal's victory over Yam amounts to a creation of the world; see, for instance, Loren Fischer, "Creation at Ugarit and in the Old Testament," *VT* 15 (1965): 313-23. However, the fact that cities already exist in the epic (note the towns Baal captures in KTU 1.4 VI and the reference to Kothar-and-Hasis' dwelling place in Egypt or Crete) counts against finding a creation account in the epic (Forsyth, *The Old Enemy*, 47), as does El's title of *ab . adm* and *bni . bnwt* (see Kapelrud, "Baal, Schopfung und Chaos," *UF* 11 (1979): 408-9). As David Tsumura writes, Baal is the preserver and savior, not the creator, of the cosmos (*Creation and Destruction: A Re-Appraisal of the Chaokampf Theory in the Old Testament* [Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2005], 55).

thunderbolts and lightning,⁵⁰ quoting (among others) Theodor Gaster, who comes to the same conclusion on the basis of overwhelming comparative evidence from similar myths from India, Egypt, and Greece, wherein the divine craftsman gives the Divine Warrior thunderbolts and lightning by which he defeats the dragon and/or the sea.⁵¹ Gaster also points out that the weapons spring from Baal's hands, flying toward their target, which fits well with the supposition that these clubs are understood, even if not explicitly described, as thunder and lightning.⁵²

The fact that Kothar-and-Hasis refers to the weapons which he gives Baal as *šmdm* (KTU 1.2 IV 11, 18) strengthens this line of argument. Yigael Yadin interprets the second word of the phrase *בעל צמר* in line 15 of the Kilamuwa inscription from Zinjirli not in reference to a place (which is otherwise unknown), but as referring to a weapon; furthermore, according to Yadin, this weapon is not a mace, but (given the basic meaning of the root) something tied.⁵³ He understands this tied weapon to be "double-lightning paired at the middle," noting a pictorial representation of the storm god from Arslan Tash,⁵⁴ which shows the Divine Warrior wielding bundles of lightning tied at the middle.⁵⁵ This makes it all the more plausible that Baal is using a weapon of the same sort.

All of this comparative evidence may be further buttressed with the fact of Baal's constant association with storms elsewhere in the Baal Epic and other Ugaritic texts, together with the militaristic overtones of these natural phenomena (note his description in the poem in KTU 101).⁵⁶ Baal is almost ubiquitously depicted in Ugaritic literature as riding his cloud-chariot across and the skies, wielding his thunder and lightning as weapons and in order to nourish the earth. The images used to describe Baal tie, in other words, the fertility and warrior aspects of his activity as closely as could be wished. It is thus preferable, in light of the discussion of myth from the first chapter of this project, to understand the particular twist which

⁵⁰ "Interpreting the Baal Cycle," 330, note 93.

⁵¹ *Thespis: Ritual, Myth and Drama in the Ancient Near East* (rev. ed.; New York: Gordian, 1975), 164-66.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 167. This understanding of Baal's two weapons is also supported by Patrick Miller, "Fire in the Mythology of Canaan and Israel," in *Israelite Religion and Biblical Theology: Collected Essays* (2 vols.; JSOTSupp 267; Sheffield: Sheffield, 2000), 1:18, as well as André Caquot, Maurice Sznycer, and Andrée Herdner, *Textes Ougaritiques* (2 vols; Paris: Cerf, 1974), 1:75.

⁵³ "Symbols of Deities at Zinjirli, Carthage and Hazor," in *Near Eastern Archaeology in the Twentieth Century: Essays in Honor of Nelson Glueck*, ed. J. A. Sanders (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1970), 211-214.

⁵⁴ See ANEP 501, pg 170.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* Green makes a similar contention (*Storm-God*, 22-23, 26-27, 156).

⁵⁶ Mark Smith, *The Early History of God: Yahweh and the Other Deities in Ancient Israel* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1990), 60.

the defeat of chaos is given in the second tablet of the Baal Epic not as an exception to the usual pattern of the defeat of Sea by the storm god, but as an intentional variation of the basic myth which is consonant with Baal's other struggles to consolidate his reign: just as Baal needs the help of Anat and Athirat to gain permission to build his house, so he needs the help of the divine craftsman to eliminate his main rival. But this victory does not fall outside of his essential nature as a storm god.

We now turn to Baal's summons to Anat, a passage of considerable beauty and of major importance to this discussion:

<i>thm . aliyn . b'l . hwt</i>	Decree of Mighty Baal, word
<i>aliy . qrdm . qryy . b arš</i>	of the victorious warrior: offer ⁵⁷ in the earth
<i>mlhmt št . b 'prm . ddym</i>	bread-offerings, ⁵⁸ place in the dust harmony, ⁵⁹
<i>sk . šlm . l kbd . arš</i>	pour peace ⁶⁰ in the heart of the earth,
<i>arbdd . l kbd . šdm</i>	tranquillity ⁶¹ in the heart of the fields.
<i>ḥšk . 'šk . 'bšk</i>	Grasp your spear and your mace; ⁶²
<i>'my . p'nk . tismn . 'my</i>	to me let your feet run, to me
<i>twth . išdk . dm . rgm</i>	let your legs hurry. For a word
<i>iṭ . ly . w . argmk</i>	I have, and I will tell (it) to you;
<i>hwt . w . aṭnyk . rgm</i>	a message, and I will repeat (it) to you: word
<i>'s . w . lḥšt . abn</i>	of tree and whisper of stone;
<i>tant . šmm . 'm . arš .</i>	the sighing of the heavens with the earth, ⁶³
<i>thmt . 'mn . kbkbm</i>	of the deep with the stars.

⁵⁷ Translation of this verb taken from Gibson *CML* 49. Although one could read "set" or "place," the ritual connotations of this passage recommend Gibson's rendering.

⁵⁸ The translation is from Gibson (*CML* 49). While taking the root to refer to war is possible (note Anat's aggressive nature), doing so might lead to a tension in the sense of the line, for the command to Anat is to cease from fighting. In other words, taking *mlhmt* as "war" would require one to posit an opposite command couched in the same language (Anat is to cease from war, but increase peace). It seems best to follow Gibson on this line.

⁵⁹ Thus *DUL* 1:266. Gibson's "mandrakes" (*CML* 49), while philologically possible, appears somewhat odd next to the more general terms for peace in the surrounding lines.

⁶⁰ Or "peace-offering," a perfectly justifiable translation, given the verb preceding.

⁶¹ Thus *DUL* 1:98; the authors note, however, the difficulty of the term and give an extensive bibliography. On the other hand, Peter van Zijl translates *dd* as "love" and interprets *arb* as Aphel form of *rby*, "to increase, to multiply;" he notes that, given the parallelism, another verb would be expected (*Baal* [AOAT 10; Kevelaer: Butzon & Bercker, 1972], 58).

⁶² Instead of understanding here three imperatives commanding Anat to come quickly, the translation of Wyatt, *RTU* 42, is preferable; see his explanation and bibliography in note 16.

⁶³ Or perhaps "underworld," a likely enough translation, given the cosmic dimensions of the language.

<p><i>abn . brq . d l . td' . šmm</i></p> <p><i>rgm. l td' . nšm . w . tbn</i></p> <p><i>hmlt . arš . atm . w ank</i></p> <p><i>ibgyh . b tk . gry . il . špn</i></p> <p><i>b qdš . b gr . nhlty</i></p> <p><i>b n'm . b gb' . tlity</i></p>	<p>I understand the lightning which the heavens do not know, the speech which men do not know, and the multitude of the earth does not understand. Come, and I will reveal it in the midst of my mountain, Divine Saphon, in (my) sanctuary, in the mountain of my heritage, in (my) pleasant place, in the hill of my victory.⁶⁴</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(KTU 1.3 III 13-31)</p>
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Several elements in this passage call for attention. First, Baal enjoys a mastery of lightning and thunder before his palace is completed.⁶⁵ Baal will soon introduce his need for a palace, but, with regard to this passage, this is not yet at issue; as this point, Baal simply wishes to reveal his mastery of thunder and lightning to Anat.⁶⁶ This suggests that Baal enjoys a mastery of these elements by his very nature.⁶⁷

Second, Baal goes out of his way to emphasize that human beings do not know the secret of his storms. The importance of Baal's victory for the order and fertility of the earth and the dire consequences of his defeat for those who depend on him are thus implied (cf. KTU 1.5 VI 23-25, 1.6 I 6-8).

Third, the content of Baal's summons to Anat may best be understood from within the larger sweep of the *Chaoskampf* theme in two important ways. First, peace and well-being on a cosmic scale exist here as a result of the defeat of chaos; the defeat of Yam in KTU 1.2 IV is not too far in the background of this passage. The sighing of heaven and earth, deep and stars in Baal's lighting beautifully speaks to the harmony between all parts of the cosmos under Baal's

⁶⁴ Both Dennis Pardee ("The Ba'lu Myth," *COS* 1.86:253) and Mark Smith ("The Baal Cycle," in *Ugaritic Narrative Poetry*, ed. Simon B. Parker [SBLWAW 9; Atlanta: Scholars, 1997], 110) take *qdš* and *n'm* as adjectives defining "mountain" and "hill." It is grammatically preferable to take these two words as substantives, rather than understanding the *b-* prefix to interrupt an adjectival phrase.

⁶⁵ Habel, *Yahweh Versus Baal* (New York: Bookman, 1964), 57.

⁶⁶ In a short article, Mark Smith has argued that the secret for which Baal summons Anat is not Baal's thunder, but his palace ("Baal's Cosmic Secret," *UF* 16 [1984]: 295-98). Although Smith quite rightly emphasizes the relation of the display of Baal's lightning to his palace, the word of tree and whisper of stone of which Baal will speak to Anat cannot refer to a palace. It is a poetic way of describing thunder.

⁶⁷ See Steve Wiggins, "The Weather under Baal: Meteorology in KTU 1.1-6," *UF* 32 (2000): 581.

reign. Indeed, the progression from the defeat of Sea by means of thunder and lightning to cosmic harmony and fertility under Baal's storms highlights the organic relationship between the martial and fertility-producing aspects of Baal's reign, for the storms with which Baal nourishes the earth are also the weapons with which he defeats his enemies.

The second way in which Baal's summons to Anat is best understood in relation to his defeat of chaos is found in the extravagant language with which Baal describes the location at which he will reveal his secret. It is to his mountain that Baal summons Anat—the mountain which is also his throne and sanctuary, a cosmic, paradisiacal (*n'm*)⁶⁸ place which he has won through the defeat of chaos. The way in which this passage sets in relation Baal's defeat of chaos, his cosmic throne, and his revivifying storms is most significant for an understanding the *Chaoskampf* motif, for it shows that it is from the place which Baal wins because of his defeat of chaos that he will nourish the earth, doing so with the very same weapons with which he defeated that chaos. These concomitant parts of the rule of the Divine Warrior will take on different relations as the cycle proceeds, but they are already in play here.

We may close our examination of this passage by noting that Anat, in agreeing to Baal's requests, adds the following wish to her stereotyped repetition of the envoys' message:

<p>yšt b[š]m[m] . b'l . mdlh . yb'r</p>	<p>May Baal place in the heavens his lightning-bolt,⁶⁹ may</p>
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⁶⁸ The root *n'm*, while sometimes describing mundane pleasures, can take on greater dimensions in the OT, being used of Yahweh's own beauty in Ps 16:11, 27:4 [in a cultic context], and 90:17.

⁶⁹ Ugaritic *mdl* is very difficult. The verb of this root means "to saddle" or "to harness" (Joseph Aistleitner, *Wörterbuch der Ugaritischen Sprache* [BUVSAWL 106; Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1963], 77). If taken in a strict sense, Anat would probably be calling for Baal to harness his chariot, set out and effect his storms; John Day interprets the word along these lines (*God's Conflict with the Dragon and the Sea: Echoes of a Canaanite Myth in the Old Testament* [UCOP 35, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985], 33). On the other hand, given the parallelism, it is often taken as "lightning" (cf. *CML* 51). This is supported by de Moor's insight that Anat uses this term precisely in response to Baal's claim to understand the lightning ("Der *mdl* Baals im Ugaritischen," *ZAW* 78 [1966]: 70). Taking it in this way conforms to the other use of the word in the cycle, in which it forms one part of Baal's meteorological retinue as he descends into the underworld (KTU 1.5 V 7); this latter context creates the expectation that a meteorological phenomenon is denoted by this word. Wyatt appears to combine these two ideas, translating the word as "rope," but interpreting the line to mean that "a shaft of lightning is the harness of Baal's chariot" (*RTU* 81, note 56). Pardee translates this as "watering devices," from the root *dly*, to draw water ("Ba'lu," 253, note 95); this is another plausible option. See Robert Good, "Some Ugaritic Terms Relating to Draught and Riding Animals," *UF* 16 (1985): 81, note 21, for a fuller discussion of this term; an extensive bibliography for this word may be found in *DUL* 2:527 (they tentatively offer "meteor" as a translation).

[rkb . 'r]pt . [q]rnh

the Cloud-Rider kindle his lightning.⁷⁰

(KTU 1.3 IV 25-27)

Anat thus responds to Baal's summons with a complementary wish that Baal would indeed kindle his storms.

The next passage relevant for our investigation is found after Baal has finally won El's permission for a palace. With El having given the command, Athirat responds with a similar call for Baal to build his palace—but not before saying,

wn ap . 'dn . mtrh

Now, at last,⁷¹ may Baal enrich with his rain,

b'l . y'dn . 'dn . ikt . bgl̄

may (he) greatly enrich⁷² by his chariot in the storm;⁷³

⁷⁰ Literally, “burn/irradiate his horn.” The above translation is from Wyatt (*RTU* 81). Pardee categorically states that there is “no comparative basis” for understanding *qrm* as referring to lightning (“Ba’lu,” 253, note 95). However, although there are not many examples, Hab 3:4 uses the root in a theophanic context in which the deity’s weapons are being described (vv. 4-5; see the further discussion in chapter four of this project). Furthermore, in the context of the above quote, we would expect some reference to lightning (Baal has just told her that it is the subject of their conference). It is also difficult to imagine what else would be flashing or burning in this context (note also the frequent connection between lightning and fire, mentioned earlier in the discussion of ANE theophanic imagery).

⁷¹ This translation is Gibson’s, who notes that the two words literally mean “and moreover” (*CML* 60). Pardee explains that the conjunctive *w-* here “bears an extending morpheme” (“Ba’lu,” 260, note 158).

⁷² The root *'dn* is most often translated here as “appoint a time or season” (see, e.g., Pardee, “Ba’lu,” 260; *RTU* 101). This translation has strong philological foundation and makes perfect sense. I have, however, adopted Smith’s translation above (from “The Baal Cycle,” 129), taking the word to be from the same root as BH עָרַן. This translation is given because the emphasis in the Baal Epic falls not so much on Baal appointing the season of his rains, but on his rains and the fecundity which they bring in a more general sense. The almost supernatural fertility of the earth is a prominent theme in the cycle, but no other passage specifically lays emphasis on the season of Baal’s rains. This translation finds support in the parallel Aramaic and Akkadian texts of the Tell Fekheriyeh inscription, where the word is used as an epithet of Hadad in this sense: *m'dn . mt. kln*, “who enriches all regions” (see A. R. Millard and P. Bordreuil, “A Statue from Syria with Assyrian and Akkadian Inscriptions,” *BA* 45 [1982]: 135-41; A. R. Millard, “The Etymology of Eden,” *VT* 34 [1984]: 103-6). See further Smith, “Interpreting the Baal Cycle,” 314, note 5, and Tsumura, *Creation and Destruction*, 112-25 (especially 116-18), for extensive bibliographic references on this word and the passage in general.

⁷³ The phrase *ikt . bgl̄* is most difficult. Different translations include “driving showers” (Pardee, “Ba’lu,” 260; he thinks the phrase is “unclear”), “rich water in a downpour” (Smith, “Baal Cycle,” 129), “abundance of moisture,” if the first word is read as *irt* (*RTU* 101, note 136; the similarity between the Ugaritic signs for *k* and *r* has suggested to Marvin Pope and Jeffrey Tigay that the latter letter should be read [“A Description of Baal,” *UF* 3 (1971): 129]). Another option is “(his) barque . . . in the snow” (*CML* 60). *DUL* 2:904, with an extensive bibliography, supports this, noting two other occurrences of the first word in administrative texts with the meaning of “boat.” Gibson has, however, noted that the second word (which he translates as “snow”) might also be taken as referring to a tempest (in line with a post-biblical Hebrew meaning, “to boil;” *CML* 60, note 6). Given the context, this is most attractive (see further Tsumura, *Creation and Destruction*, 121-22, who understands the term [in a slightly different way])

w tn . qlh . b 'rpt
šrh . l arš . brqm

may he also thunder⁷⁴ in the clouds,
loose to the earth (his) lightning.

(KTU 1.4 V 6-9)

Athirat's statement is significant in that it forms a kind of mirror-image to Baal's summons to Anat. The hinge relating them is the building of Baal's palace. The connection between Baal's storms and his palace is stated in this passage in a strong way: as Pardee notes, *wn ap* suggests a "cause-and-effect relationship" between Baal's palace and his nourishing of the earth in his storms.⁷⁵ Because Baal has a palace, in other words, the kingship which he has won can be fully actualized specifically in relation to the sort of king Baal will be: he can ride in his storm-chariot and water the earth.⁷⁶ The themes of the defeat of chaos, kingship, temple, and fertility are thus being brought into progressively nuanced relation.

As with the permission to build, the completion and ritual preparation of Baal's palace comprises another important hinge for the development of the major themes of the Baal cycle. This is so because these themes coalesce into a provisional climax after the palace is completed, and it is in this climactic moment that Baal's theophany occurs. After Baal allows for the final part of the construction of his palace—the building of the window—we read:

yptḥ . ḥ
ln . b bhtm . urbt
b qrb . hkml [.] yptḥ
b'l . bdqt [.] 'rpt
qlh . qdš [.] b'l [.] ytn
yḏny . b'l . ṣ[at .] špth

He [Kothar-and-Hasis] opens
a window in the house, an aperture
in the midst of the palace. Then Baal opens
a rift in the clouds,
his holy voice Baal sounds,
Baal repeats the issue of his lips.⁷⁷

to refer to the motion of overflowing subterranean waters). With regard to the first word, Oswald Loretz has convincingly argued that it could be translated as "chariot" in relation to a Hurrian loan-word, *šuhitu* ("A Hurrian Word (tkt) for the Chariot of the Cloud Rider? (KTU 1.4 v 6-9)," in *Ugarit, Religion and Culture*, N. Wyatt, et. al. (UBL 12 [Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1996]), 171. He thus translates as, "the time of the chariot in the storm," noting that this rendering is "perfectly justified not only philologically but also realistically in the context of a description of Baal's bringing a period of rain" (*ibid.*, 171). This is to be preferred to attributing a ship to Baal (which is nowhere else spoken of) which creates snow (when Baal is usually identified with rain).

⁷⁴ Or "give his voice." As elsewhere in the Baal Epic and the ANE, the thunder of the storm god is his voice (see, e.g., Ps 18.14; Niehaus, *God at Sinai*, 130-31; Jeremias, *Theophanie*, 13, 89).

⁷⁵ "Ba'lu," 260, note 158.

⁷⁶ Cf. Loretz, "Cloud Rider," 173; Smith, *Ugaritic Baal Cycle*, 179.

⁷⁷ Pardee's less literal but entirely justifiable translation should be mentioned: "Ba'lu makes the thunder roll over and over again" ("Ba'lu," 262).

qlh . q[dš .]trr . arš
 sat . [špt]h] grm [.] aḥšn
 rtq⁷⁹ . [xxxxxxxxx]
 qdmym . bmt . ar[s]
 tttn . ib . b'l . tiḥd
 y'rm . šnu . hd . gpt
 gr . w y'n . aliyn
 b'l . ib . hd[[x]]t . lm . thš
 lm . thš . ntq . dmrn

'n . b'l . qdm . ydh
 k tgđ . arz . b ymnh
 bkm . ytb . b'l . l bhth

His holy voice shakes the earth,
 the issue of his lips shakes⁷⁸ the mountains
 . . .
 The ancient high places⁸⁰ of the earth
 shake. The enemies of Baal cling to⁸¹
 the trees, the haters of Hadd the sides of
 the mountain. Then Mighty Baal speaks:
 "Enemies of Hadd, you should truly⁸² quake;⁸³
 truly quake at the weapons of the Mighty
 Warrior.

Baal eyes the axe in his hand,
 a cedar speeds in his right hand.⁸⁴

Thus Baal is enthroned in his house.

(KTU 1.4 VII 25-42)

This theophany of Baal forms, for present purposes, the most important Ugaritic text under examination. With his palace completed, the window/rift in the clouds allows Baal to

⁷⁸ This form is taken by Jeremias (*Theophanie*, 87, note 1) as an *aphel* form with an energetic nun. Gibson (*CML* 65) and Pardee ("Ba'lu," 262) translate with "shake;" Aistleitner defines more strictly as "sich beeilen, fliehen," "to hurry" (*Worterbuch*, 118).

⁷⁹ The first edition of *KTU* does not show a word divider, implying that *rtq* comprises only the first part of a word, the whole of which is now lost. *DUL* 2:749 defines *rtq* as "to tie up," but, rather than translate the phrase, they simply note the broken context. Gibson has *rhqm*, "far off (peoples)" (*CML* 65); Smith has *rljq* ("Baal Cycle," 137).

⁸⁰ Gibson translates as "peoples of the east" (*CML* 65). However, the text appears to emphasize that it is the enemies of Baal who are trembling; the introduction of the otherwise unspecified peoples of the east dilutes the thrust of the passage.

⁸¹ Literally, "grasp;" this translation is Gibson's, who correctly infers the sense of the line (*CML* 65). Smith, in a similar vein, understands that Baal's enemies "take to the woods" ("Baal Cycle," 137). Although it would make sense philologically to translate this as "seize" or "take possession," to speak of Baal's enemies encroaching on his territory jars with the climactic context; the consummation of Baal's rule and an expected fearful response to his theophany suggests that Baal's enemies are overwhelmed by his appearance, grasping for the nearest available support in their confusion, rather than consolidating their own territory.

⁸² Or "why?," as an ironic question; either way, the sense is the same. The above rendering is from *RTU* 110, note 159; Wyatt takes the word as an emphatic *l* with an enclitic *mem*.

⁸³ Or "fear" (*RTU* 110, note 160, citing an Akkadian and Arabic parallel).

⁸⁴ These two lines are very difficult and have elicited widely varying translations. The above translation is based on Wyatt's reading of *qdm* as "axe" from an Akkadian parallel (*RTU* 110-11, notes 164-65), which makes excellent sense of the parallelism of the lines, unlike those which take *qdm* as "before" (e.g., "the eye of Baal is faster than/is before his hand" [*CML* 65]). The image is clearly related to Baal's military prowess.

sound his holy voice in thunder in the human realm; as a result, the earth shakes and Baal's enemies tremble. His dominance over his realm thus manifested, he is enthroned in his house. Even such a basic reading of the text as this provides much for a comparison with OT theophanies. But we may enrich our understanding of Baal's theophany by submitting the text to closer scrutiny.

First, it is important to emphasize that the context for Baal's theophany is his victorious kingship. This is seen in several ways. The obvious fact that Baal thunders from his cosmic throne, which is at once his temple and the center of the world, is most significant in this regard. But the context of kingship gained through conflict is also seen in the sequence of events which constitute the much discussed and (it may be suggested) little understood window episode. The fact that the window is called for no less than three times and that these three calls are not strictly bound within the narrative of the building of the palace, but fall outside of it, suggests that it is being structurally highlighted.⁸⁵ For this reason, as well as because of the widely varying accounts given for this episode, it is important to be careful about its interpretation.

Despite the multiplicity of explanations offered for it,⁸⁶ the exact wording of the narrative has not always been fully appreciated: Baal refuses the window out of fear for his daughters before Yam (KTU 1.4 VI 10-14),⁸⁷ perhaps by way of invasion. By the time Baal assents to Kothar-and-Hasis' idea, however, Baal's royal palace has been completed and ritually prepared, a feast has been held, and Baal has marched through his territory, annexing some number of cities. He then allows for his window—through which he terrifies his enemies with his thunder. The delay and eventual construction of the window are thus related to Baal's rule and the conflicts attendant to it. Baal initially refuses a window, for fear of his adversary Yam; however, once his reign is strengthened through the completion of the palace/throne and the seizing of towns, he allows for it, further demonstrating his dominance against his enemies

⁸⁵ Dirk Kinet, "Theologische Reflexion im ugaritischen Ba'al-Zyklus," *BZ* 22 (1978): 240.

⁸⁶ This episode has received many interpretations. A. Kapelrud has suggested this deliberation is used for dramatic effect (*Baal in the Ras Shamra Texts* [Copenhagen: G.E.C. Gad, 1952], 96); however, given the climactic location of the incident, it is questionable whether or not the completion of Baal's palace and rule would be delayed only for literary effect. In addition to a literary explanation, each proponent of a certain proposal for the central theme of the epic has claimed the support of this episode: De Moor understood the text to imply that Baal's rains come just at the right time, while Gaster saw a "rain-making ceremony" here, but Fisher emphasized the putative cosmogonic implications of the text (Smith makes this point in "Interpreting the Baal Cycle," 335). Margalit, in an eccentric exegetical move, has argued that the window episode is a low point in the cycle, leading to Baal's submission to Mot and death from a snakebite (*Life and Death*, 63). See further bibliography on this juncture of the Baal Epic in Green, *Storm-God*, 194, note 192.

⁸⁷ As noted by Smith, "Interpreting the Baal Cycle," 336.

through this aperture.⁸⁸ It is, indeed, no coincidence that Baal's very next speech implies that no-one else can establish dominion in the earth (KTU 1.4 VII 43-44), a speech itself immediately followed by a challenge to Mot which is expressed in terms of kingship (KTU 1.4 VII 50). The stages of the window episode show us up close, as it were, one more instance of the ever unfolding, intricate inner workings of the *Chaoskampf* theme.

It is important to be clear about this issue, for, in addition to the other interpretations listed briefly above, it has been suggested that the opening of the window has to do with nothing more than allowing the rains to fall.⁸⁹ On the face of it, this makes sense, given the frequent connection of Baal's rains and his palace; it may also be tempting for modern, scientifically-oriented readers to assume that the main significance of the storms of the storm god has to do with his fertilizing the earth. It is, furthermore, not natural for us to associate windows with warfare. However, to allow the fecundity of the earth which Baal produces to dominate our understanding of the nature of Baal's rule contradicts the repeated evidence that Baal's storms in the natural realm are subsumed under his role as king and warrior. While not unrelated to Baal's rains, the window episode is primarily related in the text to his rule.

In addition to the explicit wording of the text, the relationship between divine rule and the window in Baal's palace is further seen in that it would have been natural for ancient audiences to associate windows with conflict. Daniel Bodi has written that, in the ancient Near East, "the window represents a frontier between two . . . domains," a kind of liminal space which was vulnerable or undefined, thus easily becoming a site of conflict.⁹⁰ He cites, as evidence of this, the *lamassu* angels guarding the borders of Mesopotamian temples, incantations protecting

⁸⁸ As Smith himself points out, the issue may not be as simple as the above statement implies, for neither the completion of the palace nor the tour of Baal's territory specifically has to do with Yam's threat ("Interpreting the Baal Cycle," 337). In light of this, Smith suggests that another conflict between Baal and Yam may have taken place where the text is broken; on his reading, it is only after Baal has again defeated Yam that he is confident enough to allow a window. The problem with this suggestion is the recurrent nature of divine conflict in the *Chaoskampf*, even as this myth is expressed in the Baal Epic. As is well known, Anat makes reference to a defeat of the watery powers in KTU 1.3 III 38-47 which cannot easily be identified with Baal's victory against Yam in KTU 1.2 IV. Likewise, Mot's speech to Baal concerning Baal's defeat of the twisting serpent in KTU 1.5 I 1-4 cannot easily be identified with Baal's defeat of Yam, even though chaotic powers are in view both times. In light of the continued threat which chaos represents, even after it has been defeated, why should yet another (hypothesized) conflict with Yam at this point give Baal such great confidence? It seems best simply to allow for this ambiguity and understand that Baal's actions in between his refusal and assent to the idea of a window give him the confidence to change his mind (see Kinet, "Theologische Reflexion," 241).

⁸⁹ See, e.g., Green, *Storm-God*, 194-96, and Kinet, "Theologische Reflexion," 241. The fact that rain falls not from a break in clouds, but from the clouds themselves, is a clue that tying the rift in the clouds exclusively to rain is misguided.

⁹⁰ *The Michal Affair: From Zimri-Lim to the Rabbis* (HBM 3; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2005), 41.

the passage of a child during birth, and the significance of the gates of a city.⁹¹ It is thus not surprising that Baal should consolidate his rule over the earth from this heavenly palace through a window; indeed, in an ancient Near Eastern context, it makes perfect sense that he would do so.

As a result, it is clear that Baal's theophany has to do with his rule. This relationship may be understood in two ways, according to which Baal's theophany both manifests and consolidates his rule. That Baal's thunder through the rift in the clouds symbolizes, expresses, and makes unmistakably visible his rule on the earth is a valid but obvious point. To note only this, however, does not do justice to the full significance of his theophany, for the climactic place which it occupies suggests that Baal's theophany does not merely symbolize a kingship which has already been gained in its entirety. It rather appears that the window in Baal's palace and the sounding of his thunderous voice consolidate his rule in some way—that Baal is not completely king over the earth without manifesting his power in the most impressive fashion. This is substantiated by the fact that the means of Baal's self-disclosure, thunder and lightning, are weapons: note the relation, consonant with other descriptions of Baal, between the thunder which Baal utters and the lightning-tree, wielded in his right hand, before which Baal's enemies quake. Baal's theophany is thus an intrinsic part of the consolidation of his rule over the earth through conflict, occurring from his completed temple/throne. Indeed, the connection between theophany and divine rule is an intimate one, for it is through the very same window which is made possible because Baal has tightened his hold on his kingdom that King Baal makes his presence directly known in the earth.

If the context and function of Baal's theophany are clear, then we may proceed to inquire further as to its exact nature. If theophany counts as the direct and immediate presence of the deity on the human scene, what exact form does this take in the Baal cycle? In order to answer this question, however, we will first need to investigate the understanding of the relation between the divine and human realms implicit in the Baal Cycle, for, just as the *Chaoskampf* theme can only be understood in light of ANE cosmology, so Baal's theophany may best be appreciated in light of the nature of the relationship between the divine and human realms.

In essence, the relationship which is set up between the world of the divine and the human, natural realm in the Baal Epic is one in which the divine realm is safeguarded as transcendent from, while simultaneously profoundly connected to, the human realm. This claim contradicts the nearly ubiquitous conclusions of the middle decades of the last century that myth concerns the personification of nature, the total immanence of the gods in the natural world, or

⁹¹ Ibid., 41-42.

the unification or consubstantiality of the divine in nature. Against such an understanding, the simultaneous transcendent and connected nature of the divine realm is substantiated in a number of ways. Consider, for example, the frequent parallels which actions in the divine realm find in concurrent natural phenomena. A prominent example of this sort of overlap is found in the connection between the window in Baal's divine palace and the rift in the clouds, for it appears that the command to open the window is an event in the divine realm which finds a visible correspondent in the rift in the clouds. The same could be said for the relation between Baal's chariot and storm clouds. The transcendent nature of the events of the divine realm is thus implied, together with a direct connection between the event in the divine realm and its earthly parallel. In some real sense, the rift in the clouds *is* a window in Baal's palace. As Ronald Clements has written, "the gods were both transcendent and immanent, revealing themselves in the world of men, and yet remaining superior to it, and being unconfined by its spatial and temporal boundaries."⁹²

It is only in light of this sort of relation between the divine and human realms that Baal's theophany may be appreciated for the striking act which it is, for his theophany amounts to nothing less than a crossing over from the divine realm to the human. Rather than taking some action which finds a visible correspondent in natural phenomena but which is, in essence, restricted to the realm of the gods, the opening of the window creates a doorway between the two worlds through which Baal may act directly upon and within the human world. In other words, Baal reveals something of himself in natural phenomena, for he stirs up storms in the heavens in accordance with his divine nature—but Baal's thunder in his storm counts as a more intense revelation of his presence, for his thunder is the very uttering of his voice, sounded from his divine palace directly into the human realm. Although Baal does not descend on the cloud-chariot in visible form in his theophany, he is audibly present on the human scene in the strongest possible way. Indeed, in all the many connections of divine action and resultant natural phenomena, it is the voice/thunder, traveling through the palace window, which traverses the boundary between the divine and the human. This is Baal's theophany.

The special significance of Baal's thunder can be discerned even in the term used to describe it in the Baal Epic, for thunder is described in a slightly different way from his other actions in the context of Baal's rule over the earth. This different handling is revealed in the lack of a clear distinction between thunder and the sounding of Baal's voice; note how, in the

⁹² *God and Temple* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1965), 3. H. W. F. Saggs, *The Encounter with the Divine in Mesopotamia and Israel* (London: Athlone, 1978), 89-90, makes a similar claim for the understanding of the relationship between the divine and natural phenomena in Mesopotamia.

passages translated above, there is no separate word for thunder, as there is for lightning (*brq*). Rather, the crashing sound which emanates from storms is directly labeled as the giving of Baal's voice (*ql ntn*). Baal's lightning clearly has both a natural (*brq*, the lightning) and divine dimension (Baal's mace or cedar tree in his right hand); the natural dimension of Baal's thunder, however, has no word separate from the divine action which causes it, so that the earthly phenomenon of thunder is described only and immediately in terms of its divine counterpart. It would not, of course, be wise to give too much weight to this distinction, for Baal's thunder and lightning are often set in equal relation, without special place given to either (see, e.g., KTU 1.4 V 6-9). Nevertheless, thunder does appear to be particularly significant with regards to Baal's presence in and rule over the earth. Without denying the symbolic nature of Baal's thunder, then, there does appear to be a different sort of relation between the divine and natural aspects of it, such that thunder, in particular, expresses Baal's theophany.

We may close our discussion of this crucial passage by asking what practical significance Baal's theophany might have had for Ugaritians. Would Baal's theophany have actually made any difference for the life of the city in the minds of the Ugaritic mythographers, or is it merely a mythic reflex?

The ambiguous identity of the enemies which Baal terrifies through his theophany provides an answer to this question. Their identity is ambiguous because the *ib* and *šnu* of Baal (lines 35-36) appear without introduction in the narrative and without bearing any explicit connection to Baal's other conflicts. Cassuto's suggestion that Mot's helpers are in view here is understandable,⁹³ but probably wrong, for Baal's theophany is (by definition) an unmistakable manifestation of his presence in the human realm and to human beings. For this reason, it is probable that human enemies are in view here; that these human enemies are, furthermore, the enemies of the city-state of Ugarit is inferable from the likely connections between the rule of Baal in the divine realm over the earth and the rule of the human king in Ugarit. Baal's theophany is thus directed against the actual, historical enemies of Ugarit. Although this connection is inferential in nature and not explicit, it is nevertheless justified; as Wyatt notes, "[i]t is hard to credit that such an insistent treatment of a royal theme should in principle simply have nothing to do with the real world of Ugarit."⁹⁴ The politically unstable situation in which Ilimilku wrote, with Ugarit situated between the powerful Egyptian and Hittite empires, makes

⁹³ *Biblical and Oriental Studies* (trans. I. Abrahams; 2 vols.; Jerusalem: Magnes, 1975), 2:138.

⁹⁴ *Myths of Power*, 156; see also Smith, *Early History*, 58.

this supposition all the stronger.⁹⁵ The promise that Baal will receive appropriate sacrifice if he drives away the enemy from the gates of Ugarit in KTU 1.119, lines 26-36, is also relevant here.⁹⁶

In light of this, the manifestation of Baal's rule as over against his enemies would have had the greatest significance for Ugaritians, for it implies that those who stand against Ugarit also stand against Baal. And Baal is no mere local hero—he is the triumphant lord of the earth, who richly nourishes all of nature. Not only that, but this god, far from being distant, is directly present on the human scene through the rift in the clouds and his thunder. All enemies of Ugarit are thus setting themselves not just against a particular city-state, but against the very order of things, the hard-won harmony between the divine and human realms. In other words, every thunderstorm would have been a palpable reminder and adumbration of the presence of Baal's invincible and blessed rule in the earth. In this sense, the thunderstorm may function within the Baal cycle in a manner somewhat similar to Noah's rainbow, for, although not a sign of a covenant, any storm would have shown not only the blessings of the cosmic order of Baal's rule, but also his direct presence as a victorious king. It is thus directly relevant to the well-being and self-understanding of the humans who wrote it.

Finally, we should take note of the trembling reaction to Baal's theophany, an aspect of the text which is of profound importance for the present project. The significance of this imagery consists in the parallel between the shaking of the mountains and the shaking of Baal's enemies before his thunder: nothing can stand before Baal! The particular images used to describe the cosmic effects of Baal's theophany are thus perfectly appropriate to the inner meaning of the theophany itself within the larger sweep of the theme of Baal's victorious kingship. In other words, this theophanic imagery is not a comparison between divine being and action and natural phenomena; Baal's thunderous power is not here compared with an earthquake. Rather, the symbolic value of Baal's theophany within the mythic narrative (Baal's invincible rule, won by means of his storm-weapons) explains the cosmic effects attendant to it (his enemies shaking before his thunder).

Another passage describing the cosmic effects of divine warfare in a way which will be most helpful for understanding the same imagery in OT theophanic texts follows close after Baal's theophany: the justly famous passage in which Mot describes Baal's smiting of the fleeing and twisting serpent. Although there is no theophany recorded in this passage, the same

⁹⁵ Smith, *Origins*, 100, 129; *RTU* 35; Itamar Singer, "A Political History of Ugarit," in *Handbook of Ugaritic Studies* (ed. Nicolas Wyatt and Wilfred G. E. Watson; HdO I.39; Leiden: Brill, 1999), 688, note 284, and 697, note 311.

⁹⁶ See translation and discussion by Wyatt in *RTU* 421-22.

harmony between cosmic imagery and the *Chaoskampf* which was revealed in the passage describing Baal's theophany is also discernible here. In this passage, Mot claims that, although Baal defeated the serpent, he will devour Baal,⁹⁷ so that

ttkh . ttrp . šmm

The heavens will burn⁹⁸ and droop.⁹⁹

(KTU 1.5. I 4)

Rather than indicating cosmic disturbance caused by divine conflict only in a general sense, we know from the rest of KTU 1.5-1.6 that Mot actually does swallow and consume Baal, just as he threatens in this passage. Furthermore, Baal's entire meteorological retinue follows him to the underworld, so that the earth languishes in his absence. Most significant in this connection is the statement that Shapsh burns in the heavens by the power of Mot (KTU 1.6 II 26-27), for these lines imply that, although the sun normally contributes to the fruitfulness of the earth, it becomes a death-dealing agent in times of drought.¹⁰⁰ It is in this context that the statement of Mot that the heavens will burn and droop after Baal dies may be fully appreciated, for it is easy to imagine the very place from which Baal watered the earth to grow hot and droop in the absence of the storm god. Even taking the second interpretative option listed above for *ttkh* could make sense here: on this reading, the thought might be that the heavens are bare without the storms and clouds of Baal. The suitability of this imagery in relation to the cosmic dimensions of the mythic narrative will be important to remember in the discussion of various OT examples of cosmic theophanic disturbances.

⁹⁷ The above statement assumes, of course, that the shift from the protasis to apodosis occurs between lines 3 and 4, as Wyatt and Gibson read it (RTU 115-16, CML 68). Others attach line 4 to the description of Baal's actions, however (UNP 141, Adrianus van Selms, "A Systematic Approach to CTA 5,I,1-8," UF 7 [1975]: 477-82; Frank Moore Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic* [Harvard, MA: Harvard, 1973], 150). Although van Selms' argument is most judicious, his interpretation of the passage leads to an odd reading of line 4, which he interprets to mean that Baal's lightning-weapon not only destroyed the serpent, "but also set the heavens on fire," so that the sky "got weak places where the rain could fall through, as it is the case with a ruined palace" (ibid., 481). In light of the blessings which Baal's storms bring to the natural order, however, it seems strange that he would be said to destroy the sky here. See John Emerton, "A Further Note on CTA 5 I 4-6," UF 10 (1978): 73-77, for a more detailed response to van Selms.

⁹⁸ The basic idea of the verb, since it is found in sexual contexts, appears to be "to grow hot" (see, e.g., KTU 1.11). *DUL* 2:903, however, translate as "to uncover, undress," defining its use in this passage as "to be left naked, wanting."

⁹⁹ Daniel Sivan takes this verb as a tD form from *rpy*, to be weak (*A Grammar of the Ugaritic Language*, HOS 1/28 [Leiden: Brill, 1997], 255). Other translations include "go slack" (Pardee, "Ba'lu," 265), "droop (helpless)" (CML 68), and "wither" (Smith, "Baal Cycle," 141).

¹⁰⁰ I came to this conclusion independently, before reading the same thought in Emerton, "A Further Note," 74.

We may move more quickly through the rest of KTU 1.5-1.6. The essential point for present purposes is that Baal is known to be alive or dead with regard to the fecundity of the natural world. This is seen first in KTU 1.5 II 2-6, where Mot, stretching his jaws to the underworld and stars, moves to consume Baal, as well as the produce of the earth and the fruit of the trees. Baal unreservedly submits to Mot, with his entire meteorological retinue accompanying him to the underworld (KTU 1.5 V 6-11). The barrenness of the earth is the obvious result; indeed, the aftereffects of Baal's death even extend to the divine realm, since both El and Anat fear that their own death will follow Baal's (KTU 1.5 VI 22-25 and 1.6 I 6-8). Baal's role as nourisher and sustainer even of the divine realm surfaces here, as it does in KTU 1.4 VI 38-59, where he provides a feast for the gods in his newly-finished palace.¹⁰¹ The struggle between Baal and Mot here is cosmic in scope; the threat which Mot poses to the king and sustainer of the human realm and all life within it could not be more dire.¹⁰²

This cosmic desiccation is reversed, however, in the dream of El. In KTU 1.6 III 4-7, 10-13, El envisions that

<i>šmm . šmn . tmṛrn</i>	The heavens rain oil,
<i>nḥlm . tlk . nbtm</i>	The valleys run with honey
	(KTU 1.6 III 5-6)

As a result, El knows that Baal, Lord of the earth, lives (lines 9, 21). The cosmic intensity of Baal's nurturing of the earth is here implied, answering Mot's universal desiccation. While this luxurious abundance should probably not be taken as theophanic in a strict sense, it is parallel to Baal's theophany in thunder in that Baal's kingly presence is manifested both through his thunder (in an immediate and direct sense) and the fertilizing effects of his thunder-storms (in a more general sense).

Summary and Conclusions

The burden of this chapter has been to contextualize Baal's theophany as clearly as possible within the narrative and thematic development of the mythic Baal Epic. In order to do so, Smith's arguments concerning the proper ordering of the tablets of the cycle and their narrative cohesion have been briefly stated, as well as his argument for divine kingship as the central theme of the cycle. It has proved important to locate this theme in the privileged place it

¹⁰¹ Clifford, "Cosmogonies," 191.

¹⁰² Green, *Storm-God*, 198; Smith, "Interpreting the Baal Cycle," 337-38.

deserves, for it has thrown light on every other part of the narrative: Baal engages in battle in order to become king in the divine and human realms, his palace exists as a cosmic center for the exercise of his kingship, and his nurturing of the earth forms one aspect of his dominion over it. Even Baal's lesser conflicts (against human enemies in KTU 1.4 VII and against the twisting dragon, as referred to by Mot in KTU 1.5 I and by Anat in 1.3 III) are not to be divorced from the larger motif of Baal's defeat of chaos and establishment of his rule. It has also been seen how Baal's theophany is intrinsically tied to the development of the theme of kingship and its ancillary motifs, for Baal consolidates his kingship over the earth by means of directly revealing his presence in his thunder. Baal's theophany is thus part-and-parcel of his mighty and nurturing rule from his palace. This is the context in which its full significance can be appreciated.

In particular, two conclusions from this investigation of the Baal Epic are essential for the interpretation of OT Divine Warrior storm theophanies. First, the inner meaning or content of Baal's storm weapons is found in their simultaneous militaristic and nurturing aspect; as stated elsewhere, it is with the same weapons with which Baal defeats chaos that he creates fecundity in the earth. This suggests that OT audiences would have understood Yahweh's appearance in the storm to imply both his defeat of chaos and his restoration of creation or his people. Second, the images attending divine warfare of the mountains shaking and the heavens burning and drooping have been seen to cohere with and gain their meaning from within the larger theme of Baal's defeat of chaos and the establishment of his rule. These images are not merely spectacular, impressive displays of power. They rather operate fully within the larger symbolic universe of the myth and even support and express that symbolic universe and the narratives told about it through their exact expression.

These two considerations will be of the greatest help in interpreting OT theophanic texts, even when the profound differences between Ugaritic and OT literature are taken into account. The fully mythic re-application of these basic motifs will be seen again and again in prophetically rendered Divine Warrior theophanies. It is to these OT texts that we now turn.

Chapter 3

Theophany and *Chaoskampf* in the Book of Isaiah

We now turn to Divine Warrior theophanies in Isaiah. As discussed in chapter one, each relevant passage is first translated with text-critical notes; a description of the passage's boundaries, structure, and poetic "shape" is then given. Four issues are then discussed with regard to each passage (although not necessarily in the same order): the presence and function of the Divine Warrior motif, the exact way in which Yahweh's direct presence is described, the effects of this theophany, and, finally, the contribution which the theophany makes to the larger advance of the text. Consideration of these four factors will show how theophanic images support and reinforce the use of the *Chaoskampf* or Divine Warrior theme, as well as the unsuitability of any metaphorical understanding of these theophanic images.

Yahweh Alone Exalted on the Day (2:6-22)

10) Go into the rock, hide in the dust

from before the terror of Yahweh and from

before the splendor¹ of his exaltation.

בוא בצור והטמן בעפר
מפני פחד יהוה ומזהדר גאנו

11) Haughty human eyes will be brought low

and human exaltation will bow down,

and Yahweh alone will exalt himself² on that day.

עיני גבהות אדם שפל ושח רום אנשים

ונשגב יהוה לברו ביום ההוא

12) For there is a Day for the Lord of Hosts

against everything proud and exalted, against

כי יום ליהוה צבאות

על כל גאה ורם ועל כל נשא וגבה³

¹ הדר, in relation to Ugaritic *hdrt*, can take on connotations of "appearance" or "visitation" (see *DUL* 1:335). The nuance here appears to be "visible splendor."

² John Eaton has argued that many verbs describing theophanies in the Niphal stem contain a reflexive nuance ("Some Misunderstood Words for God's Self-Revelation", *BT* 25 [1974]: 331-38); cf. *GKC* 51c.

³ The MT has ועל כל נשא ושפל, but the LXX's και ἐπὶ πάντα ὑψηλὸν και μετέωρον και ταπεινωθήσονται suggests a reading of ועל כל נשא וגבה ושפל (the other versions support the MT). The oddness of the MT's ועל כל נשא—it is not clear how that against which Yahweh has a Day could be both high and low, and, if it is taken as a verb, it produces its own clause, breaking the very regular pattern of these verses—has led to the plausible suggestion that the text originally read ועל כל נשא וגבה, which is adopted above (see Michael Barré, "A Rhetorical-Critical Study of Isaiah 2:12-17," *CBQ* 65 [2003]: 523). Andrew Bartlett, however, retains the MT, reading the word in question as an infinitive absolute and translating as "against everyone raised up and to be brought down" (*The Book around Immanuel: Style and Structure in Isaiah 2-12* [BJSUC 4; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1996], 195); James Barr has also noted how a list of four objects in the OT can often have one which is opposite of the rest (cf. Exod 4.11; see *Comparative Philology and the Text of the Old Testament* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1968], 255).

- everything lifted up and proud;
- 13) against all the cedars of Lebanon, וְעַל כָּל-אֲלוֹנֵי הַבְּשֹׁן
 against all the oaks of Bashan;
- 14) against all the high mountains, וְעַל כָּל-הַגְּבָעוֹת הַנִּשְׂאוֹת
 against all the lofty hills;
- 15) against every tall tower, against every וְעַל כָּל-חֹמֹה בְּצִוְרָה
 fortified wall;
- 16) against all the ships of Tarshish, וְעַל כָּל-אֲנִיֹּת תַּרְשִׁישׁ
 and all their beautiful crafts.
- 17) The pride of man will be brought down וְשַׁח גְּבוּהַת הָאָדָם
 and human exaltation will bring low,
 and Yahweh alone will exalt himself on that day. וְנִשְׁגַּב יְהוָה לְבַדּוֹ בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא
- 18) Worthless images will utterly pass away; וְהָאֱלִילִים כָּלִיל חָלְפוּ⁴
- 19) they will go into the caves of the וַיָּבֹאוּ בַּמְעֻרוֹת צְרִים
 rocks and the holes in the dust וּבַמְחִלּוֹת עָפָר
- from before the terror of Yahweh and from before מִפְּנֵי פַחַד יְהוָה וּמִהֲרַר גְּאוֹנוֹ
 the splendor of his exaltation
- when he arises to terrify the earth. בְּקוֹמוֹ לְעַרְץ הָאָרֶץ
- 20) On that day man will cast away the worthless בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא יִשְׁלִיךְ הָאָדָם
 images of his silver and the worthless אֵת אֱלִילֵי כֶסֶף וְאֵת אֱלִילֵי זָהָב
 images of his gold,
- which they made for themselves to worship, אֲשֶׁר עָשׂוּ-לוֹ לְהִשְׁתַּחֲוֹת
 to the moles and the bats, לְחַפְרָפוֹת⁵ וְלַעֲטָלִפִּים
- 21) going into crevices of the rocks לְבוֹא בְּנִקְרוֹת הַצְּרִים
 and the clefts of the cliffs וּבְסַעְפֵי הַסְּלָעִים
- from before the terror of Yahweh and from מִפְּנֵי פַחַד יְהוָה וּמִהֲרַר גְּאוֹנוֹ
 before the splendor of his exaltation
- when he arises to terrify the earth. בְּקוֹמוֹ לְעַרְץ הָאָרֶץ

⁴ The MT shows here וְהַנְּשָׂאִים וְהַרְמִים, which is well-attested text critically; but the extremely regular pattern of vv. 12-16 justifies deletion. The phrase was probably added later in an attempt to tie the passage together (cf. v. 14; Hans Wildberger, *Jesaja 1-12* [BKAT 10; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1965], 94).

⁵ All the version, as well as 1QIsa^a, read a plural for this word; the MT's singular form is easily explained as a haplography in relation to the next word.

⁶ MT divides into two words (לְחַפְרָפוֹת) what is probably one (cf. 1QIsa^a).

The poetic structure of this passage may be outlined as follows. (Only vv. 10-21 are translated above since vv. 6-9 and 22, although part of the passage, do not directly relate to the depiction of Yahweh's theophany.) The first of three discrete sections is found in vv. 6-9, identifiable through the second person address to Yahweh beginning v. 6 and ending v. 9, which decry the land's limitless financial and military resources as idolatry learned from foreigners. They also introduce the theme—pervasive in this chapter—of exaltation or loftiness and humiliation or lowliness by tying the worship of idols (יִשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ, v. 8) to human groveling and self-humiliation in the worship of their own creations (וַיִּשְׁפַּל and וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ, v. 9). Even the final plea that these idolaters not be forgiven contains an echo of this dynamic (אֵשׁ, v. 9). The imperative beginning v. 10 hints at a junction in structure, while the use of בּוֹא gives a clue to the shape of the last two sections of the poem. The first of these (vv. 10-17) contains a list of every proud and lofty human accomplishment against which Yahweh has a Day (vv. 12-16) on which he alone will be exalted, to the humbling of all else (vv. 11 and 17, forming an inclusio around the description of the לַיּוֹם לַיהוָה in vv. 12-16). The final section (vv. 18-22) details specifically the defeat of idolatry “on that Day” in two parallel sections (vv. 19, 20-21), each containing a form of בּוֹא and climaxing with Yahweh's exclusive self-exaltation (vv. 19, 21). Parallel to the concluding exhortation of v. 5, v. 22 ends the passage. Both of the latter sections (vv. 10-17, 18-21) show an incremental intensification from the former: vv. 10-17 actually depict the defeat of the paradoxically humiliating self-exaltation of man first addressed in v. 9, while vv. 18-21 continue the theme of the Day (from v. 10) by expanding the description of Yahweh's self-exaltation (vv. 10, 19, 21) and by focusing on the idols (אֱלֹהִים) first introduced in v. 8.⁷

⁷ A variety of different accounts of the structure of this passage have been suggested; v. 5 can be, for instance, read with vv. 6-8. J. D. W. Watts' proposal of a chiasm in the passage (*Isaiah 1-33* [WBC 24; Waco, TX: Word, 1985], 33-34), while not without merit (vv. 11 and 17 and 10 and 19 would fit such a structure), suffers from the lack of congruence between vv. 6-9 and vv. 20-22; the text appears rather to reflect a gradual build-up to the double climax of vv. 19 and 21. Oswalt divides according to vv. 6-11, 12-17, 18-22 (*The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 1-39* [NICOT; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986], 119-29), while Bartlet reads according to vv. 5-9, 10-11, 12-16, 17-19a, 19b-22 (*The Book around Immanuel* 190-92). More from the perspective of source criticism, Joseph Blenkinsopp understands the original text to contain vv. 6-8, 10, and vv. 12-16 (an indictment and verdict), with vv. 9, 11, 17 and 18-22 as different kinds of glosses transforming the passage into a universal apocalyptic judgment (“Fragments of Ancient Exegesis in an Isaian Poem [Jes 2 6-22],” *ZAW* 93 [1981]: 51-62). Others put a strong break between vv. 19 and 20, with vv. 20ff as a later addition (see Marvin Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-4 and the Post-Exilic Understanding of the Isaiah Tradition* [BZAW 171; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1988], 143; Ben Ollenburger, *Zion: The City of the Great King* [JSOTSupp 41; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1987], 110; with further discussion by Hugh Williamson, “The Formation of Isaiah 2.6-22,” in *Biblical and Near Eastern Essays*, ed. Carmel McCarthy and John F. Healey [JSOTSupp 375; London: T&T Clark, 2004], 57-67).

Isa 2.6-22 thus essentially concerns Yahweh's future world-wide defeat of idolatry, but almost every aspect of this passage is related to the exaltation/humiliation dynamic: when man proudly raises his own idols, he is really debasing himself (see especially v. 20)—but there is coming a time when Yahweh will humble all idolatrous human pride and alone be exalted. Is the language of exaltation and humiliation a metaphorical way of expressing Yahweh's defeat of idolatry? While this may appear plausible at first blush, further consideration will suggest that the groveling, cowering reaction to Yahweh's theophanic self-exaltation is expressed in terms not only in harmony with other ideas in the passage which are themselves not metaphorical, but in terms which positively supports these other ideas and their interrelationships and cannot be extricated from them. This suggests that the particular reaction to Yahweh's presence in this passage is not set alongside the passage's other themes of theophany, divine rule, etc., as a metaphor for them, as a figure of speech which functions in a different way from the other symbols in the text, but rather inheres in the text's larger symbolic structure as one part of it. Attention to the four central questions laid out at the end of the first chapter of this project will show why this is the case, for it will be seen that the dynamic of humiliation and exaltation definitively shapes not only the exact expression given to Yahweh's theophany, but also the reaction to it, the defeat of chaos in this passage, and the contribution of the theophany to the text.

First, the exact expression given to Yahweh's direct presence relates to his exaltation. The key phrase in this regard is **מִפְּנֵי פֶחַד יְהוָה וּמִהֲרֵר גָּאֹן** (vv. 10, 19, 21). The repetition of the preposition **מִן** sets in relation fear and splendor as two aspects of Yahweh's direct presence from before which idolaters will flee. The use of **מִפְּנֵי**, as well as the fearful reaction, signals the palpable nature of Yahweh's self-exaltation (**גָּאֹן**). The expansion of this refrain in vv. 19 and 21 with **לְעֵרֵץ הָאֲרֶץ** also connotes Yahweh's theophanic presence: the use of **קוֹם** (another "height" word!) signifies the inception of divine action (cf. Ps 76.10, Isa 33.10).⁸ The direct agency of Yahweh in demolishing the world's idols thus defines this passage's theophany.

The reaction to this theophany is found the classic reaction of fear before Yahweh's appearance, but even this is expressed in terms of abasement or lowliness (vv. 10, 19-22). The casting away of idols to cave-dwelling moles and bats from before Yahweh's glory is of a piece with this humiliation/exaltation theme as the pride of idolatry undergoes a disgusting and humiliating end. The characteristic reaction of fear before Yahweh's presence is thus the means

⁸ See further Frank Schnutenhaus, "Das Kommen und Erscheinen Gottes im Alten Testament," ZAW 76 (1964): 7.

by which Yahweh's exclusive self-exaltation is accomplished in this passage; as sometimes occurs elsewhere in poetic theophanies, the reaction to Yahweh's appearance specifies the results of his intervention. Indeed, the intensification of terms from "going" to "hiding," from "rock" to "dust," and the additional notice of the terror of Yahweh in his arising (vv. 10, 19, 21) almost gives a miniature narrative of idolaters fleeing from before Yahweh's splendor.

Just as the exact nature of Yahweh's theophany and the human reaction to it are clarified in relation to the theme of exaltation and humiliation, this theme also reveals the presence of the *Chaoskampf* motif and the contribution of this theophany to the early chapters of the book of Isaiah. The defeat of chaos is seen in the relationship of 2.6-22 to the vision of 2.1-5. That the two passages are related, despite some evidence of a redactional seam between vv. 5 and 6,⁹ is demonstrable in light of the exaltation of Yahweh's temple mount in vv. 1-5 and his self-exaltation in vv. 6-22; the similarity between vv. 2 and 14 is especially striking in this regard.¹⁰ In light of this connection, it may be noted how Yahweh's victory in 2.1-5, while not specifically accomplished against the sea or cosmic chaos, is expressed in the elevation of the place of Yahweh's rule over every other height (v. 2), which clearly implies his fully consummated and unhindered dominion over the earth from the perspective of the cosmic geography of the cosmic center.¹¹ Yahweh thus rules over the entire world from his temple in blessed peace, and the nations, no longer clamoring and roaring like the sea around Zion, miraculously flow upwards (וַיִּנְהָרוּ, v. 2) to the temple in obedience.¹² The universal peace under the rule of Yahweh which results from this pilgrimage also fits with the expected results of the *Chaoskampf* (indeed, beating swords into pruning forks may even contain a hint of the fertility emanating from the cosmic center after chaos is defeated). Although not reproduced mechanically, the materials of the *Chaoskampf* have not here been reduced to figures of speech, for the exaltation of the temple

⁹ Wildberger, in particular, draws attention to the somewhat rough transition in v. 6 (*Jesaja 1-12*, 92).

¹⁰ On the connections between vv. 1-5 and 6-22, see further Rémi Lack, *La Symbolique de Livre d'Isaïe* (AnBib 59; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1973), 37.

¹¹ The elevation of the temple mount is not a metaphor, as is often claimed (see, e.g., David Stacey, *Isaiah, Chapters 1-39* [London: Epworth, 1993], 16), for it is not clear what the raising of Yahweh's mountain could stand as a figurative comparison for (if it is claimed that this metaphorically stands for Yahweh's unhindered dominion, it should be answered that the image is not a metaphorical comparison for divine dominion—Yahweh's rule is not like a high mountain—but rather directly expresses that dominion within the symbolism of the cosmic center). Ronald Clements similarly claims that the mythic background of this passage has been "transformed into a more directly . . . theological idea," without explaining the difference between mythic themes and direct theological ideas (*Isaiah 1-39* [NCBC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980], 41). From a different perspective, John Goldingay notes the idea of the cosmic mountain, but interprets the verse in purely physical or topographical terms; this may lead to his mistaken claim that it is not stated why the nations come (*Isaiah* [NIBC 13; Carlisle: Paternoster, 200], 43).

¹² The "chaotic" hint in this verb is also recognized by William Dumbrell, "The Purpose of the Book of Isaiah," *TB* 36 (1985): 116.

mount, the up-hill flowing of the nations, and universal peace are not metaphors for some other part of Yahweh's act of restoration, but rather express the rule of Yahweh on Zion within a mythic cosmic framework.

From this perspective, the accomplishment of Yahweh's self-exaltation in vv. 6-22 effects a defeat which stands as a necessary precursor to Yahweh's unhindered universal dominion.¹³ Yahweh's self-exaltation and defeat of idolatry through the appearance of his splendor and the *Schreckensreaktion* to it are thus the effective cause which give way to his blessed rule over the world. The particular formulation given to the defeat of chaos and subsequent rule of the divine king (the raising/exaltation of Yahweh and the temple mount) thus informs the reaction attendant to Yahweh's theophany (the lowering of idols and idolatry). The main themes of this chapter—Yahweh's palpable splendor, the exaltation of the temple mount, the pilgrimage of the nations, universal harmony, the defeat of idolatry—are thus shaped in their exact expression in reference to the exaltation/humiliation dynamic. To claim, however, that the reaction to Yahweh's theophany in this passage is a metaphor arbitrarily attributes a different intention behind one part of the complex of images making up this chapter and destroys the way in which the reaction to Yahweh's appearance supports and actualizes the defeat of idolatry. The reaction to divine appearance stands, in this passage, too close to the myth of the *Chaoskampf* to be separated from it; and it is, in any case, not clear how cowering and groveling counts as a productive comparison with some other consequence of Yahweh's theophany. Rather than functioning as metaphorical language for the sake of drawing attention to Yahweh's power, the cowering of idolaters functions as one part of the overall expression given to Yahweh's defeat of all competitors to his reign in this chapter.

Expanding our focus, we might also note that the mythical exaltation of the mountain of Yahweh's temple forms something of a visionary fulfillment to the purification and redemption of unfaithful Zion in 1.24-28, and that the more generally stated humiliation of human pride in 2.6-22 finds concrete expression in the humiliations of 3.1-4.1, where children replace rulers (3.2-4) and anyone owning even a cloak is claimed as a leader (3.6-8; cf. 3.16-17).¹⁴ Yahweh's

¹³ Sweeney has argued for a more strictly chronological relation between vv. 1-5 and 6-22, understanding the latter to show the negative response to invitation of 2.1-5 (*Isaiah 1-4*, 162). However, v. 3 is better read as a resolution among the nations, not an invitation to them.

¹⁴ See John Oswalt, *Isaiah 1-39*, 120. The idea of Yahweh's exaltation, expressed by the clause *רם ונשא* (or, more generally, a form of *רם* and the Niphal of *נשא*), is not restricted to the early chapters of Isaiah. Note its use in 6.1, 30.25, 33.10, 52.13, and 57.15, with further discussion in H. G. M. Williamson, *The Book Called Isaiah: Deutero-Isaiah's Role in Composition and Redaction* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994), 38-41.

self-exalting theophany thus sends shock-waves beyond the borders of ch. 2, particularly in that it counts as the means by which the vision of 2.1-5 may come into reality.

Yahweh and the Weapons of his Wrath (13.2-13)

- 2) On a bare hill raise a standard, lift the עַל הַר־נִשְׁפָּה שְׂאוֹנִים הָרִימוּ קוֹל לָהֶם
voice to them;
wave the hand, and they come (to) the gates of the nobles. הִנִּיפוּ יָד וַיָּבֹאוּ פִתְחֵי נְדִיבִים¹⁵
- 3) I, I command my sanctified ones; אֲנִי צִוִּיתִי לְמִקְדָּשִׁי
I also¹⁶ call my warriors for the sake of my anger, גַּם קָרָאתִי גִבּוֹרֵי לְאַפִּי¹⁷ עַל־יְזִי גְאוּתִי
those exulting in my exaltation.
- 4) A tumultuous roar on the mountains, the appearance קוֹל הַמּוֹן בְּהָרִים דְמוֹת עִם־רָב
of a great host;
a crashing roar of kingdoms, of nations gathered: קוֹל שְׂאוֹן מִמְּלָכוֹת גּוֹיִם נֹאסְפִים
Yahweh of Hosts mustering a host for war, יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת מִפְקֵד צְבָא מְלַחְמָה
- 5) coming from a far-off land, from the ends of בָּאִים מֵאַרְצֵן מְרַחֵק מִקְצֵה הַשָּׁמַיִם
the heavens:¹⁸
Yahweh and the weapons¹⁹ of his wrath to destroy יְהוָה וְכָלֵי זַעְמוֹ לְחַבֵּל כָּל־הָאָרֶץ
all the earth.
- 6) Wail, for the Day of Yahweh is near, as הִילִילוּ כִּי קָרוֹב יוֹם יְהוָה כְּשֶׁד מִשְׁדֵּי יָבוֹא
destruction from the Almighty it comes.
- 7) Therefore every hand grows weak, and every עַל־כֵּן כָּל־יָדַיִם תִּרְפִּינָה
human heart melts (8) and they are confounded.²⁰ וְכָל־לֵבב אָנוּשׁ יָמָס וַיִּנְבְּהֻלוּ

¹⁵ The LXX reads ἀνοίξατε οἱ ἄρχοντες, taking פתח as another imperative (“let the nobles open”) and apparently omitting the word בוא; Targum, Vulgate and Syriac, with minor variations, stay close to the MT. Although one might expect a preposition between the verb and object (see Hans Wildberger, *Jesaja 13-27* [BKAT 10; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1978] 501), it apparently depicts a host “assembling . . . at the nearest seat of government” (Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah* [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993], 137) and thus shows the outcome of the three imperatives of the verse.

¹⁶ Patrick Miller suggests this phrase may be translated as “loudly I have called” (*The Divine Warrior in Early Israel* [HSM 5; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973], 136, note 214).

¹⁷ The word order of this verse is unexpected, and *BHS* understandably recommends moving לְאַפִּי to the first line (“I command for my wrath my consecrated ones”). This would make the line run more smoothly, but the isolation of לְאַפִּי between two descriptions of Yahweh’s warriors may be intended as a surprising hint at a theme given fuller development later in the passage.

¹⁸ Miller interprets this clause to imply that Yahweh’s army is both a human and a divine one (*Divine Warrior*, 136), which would fit well with the meaning of the passage. The phrase may, however, simply refer to the horizon where heaven and earth meet (Oswalt, *Isaiah 1-39*, 303).

¹⁹ Although כלה more commonly means “vessels,” Wildberger notes how the term in 2 Sam 1.27 refers to weapons, which better fits the present context (*Jesaja 13-27*, 502).

- Pangs and anguish seize (them), as those
giving birth they writhe; **צִירִים וַחֲבָלִים יֵאָחֲזוּן** **בְּיֹלְדָהּ יִחִילוּן**
- each is aghast toward his neighbor, their faces
are faces of flames.²¹ **אִישׁ אֶל-רֵעֵהוּ יִתְמָהוּ** **פְּנֵי לְהַבִּים פְּנֵיהֶם**
- 9) Behold, the Day of Yahweh comes,
cruel, with fury and burning anger,
to make the earth desolate, and its sinners
to destroy from it. **הִנֵּה יוֹם-יְהוָה בָּא אֲכַזְרִי** **וְעִבְרָה וַחֲרוֹן אַף**
לְשׁוֹם הָאָרֶץ לְשָׂמָה **וַחֲטָאִיהָ²² יִשְׁמִיר מִמֶּנָּה**
- 10) For the stars of the heavens and their
hosts will not give their light,
the sun will be dark in its going forth, and
the moon will not shine its light. **כִּי-כּוֹכְבֵי הַשָּׁמַיִם וְכִסְלֵיהֶם** **לֹא יִהְיוּ אוֹרָם**
חֹשֶׁךְ הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ בְּצֵאתוֹ **וַיָּרַח לֹא-יִגִּיהַ אֹרֹו**
- 11) I will punish the world for evil, the wicked
for their iniquity;
I will make the haughtiness of the proud
cease, the pride of the terrible I will humble. **וּפְקַדְתִּי עַל-תְּהַבֵּל רָעָה** **וְעַל-רָשָׁעִים עֲוֹנָם**
וְהִשְׁבַּתִּי נָאוֹן זָדִים **וְנָאוֹת עָרִיצִים אֲשַׁפִּיל**
- 12) I will make mortals more valuable than
gold, man more than gold from Ophir. **אוֹקִיר אָנוּשׁ מִזָּפֹז** **וְאָדָם מִכֶּתֶם אוֹפִיר**
- 13) Therefore the heavens I will shake, and
the earth will shake out of its place,
in the wrath of the Lord of Hosts, on the day of his
burning anger. **עַל-בֵּן שָׁמַיִם אֲרַגִּיז** **וְתִרְעַשׂ הָאָרֶץ מִמְקוֹמָהּ**
בְּעִבְרַת יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת **וּבְיוֹם חֲרוֹן אַפּוֹ**

The poetic shape of this passage conforms neatly to the expected dual form of a theophany: Yahweh appears at the head of his army (vv. 2-5) to great cosmic effect (vv. 6-8, 9-13).²³ The series of imperatives beginning the first section (v. 2) yields to a narrative-like account about Yahweh and his army, showing their summons (v. 2), commissioning (v. 3), mustering (v. 4), and approach (v. 5). The first reaction of human fear also begins with an

²⁰ The MT's **וּנְבָהִלוּ** sticks out and may be a later addition. The LXX translates it with the second word of v. 8 as "their old men are troubled" (which Wildberger retains as superior to the MT [*Jesaja 13-27*, 502]). I have taken it above as an exegetical addition to v. 7.

²¹ The mention of fire in this passage of theophanic warfare is striking, and Geyer suggests that it may do more than characterize the anguished facial expression of the attacked, but may show that fire is part of what is terrifying humanity. He translates as "at the presence of flames, their faces (are set)" (J. B. Geyer, "Twisting Tiamat's Tail: A Mythological Interpretation of Isaiah XIII 5 and 8," *VT* 37 [1987]: 177).

²² 1QIsa^a and LXX lack the suffix.

²³ Cf. the similar analyses of Motyer, *Isaiah*, 137, and Oswalt, *Isaiah 1-39*, 303-5.

imperative (vv. 6-8). The effects of Yahweh's theophany are then projected on to a cosmic scale in vv. 9-13, a subsection which alternates between descriptions of the Day (vv. 9, 13b) and its effects (vv. 10, 13a). The similarity in phrasing between the first line of v. 9 and the second of v. 13 reveals an *inclusio* which sets off these verses; but the mention of the *יְהוָה יוֹם* in vv. 6 and 13, the repeated use of *עַל-כֵּן* in vv. 7 and 13, together with the thematic coherence of reactions to the Day, all subsumes vv. 9-13 as a subsection of vv. 6-13. It should finally be noted that, although many commentators continue this section to v. 18, the poetic markers internal to vv. 6-13, together with the more mundane images of military destruction in vv. 14-18, recommend drawing a boundary at v. 13.

How is Yahweh present in this passage? No extended description of his descent from heaven or his entrance on his chariot is given, but the flow of vv. 2-5 prompts the reader to envision Yahweh as actually leading this army: after the summons (v. 2),²⁴ Yahweh emphatically asserts his command over those set apart for his service (v. 3). The terrible roar of the nations summoned in v. 4 gives way of the image of Yahweh mustering (*מִפְקֵד*) his army; their subsequent approach in v. 5 specifies that it is Yahweh and the instruments of his wrath who appear on the horizon. These verses thus show Yahweh's direct manifestation as general of his host.

It is in relation to the mustering of this great host that the *Chaoskampf* theme is also noticeable. Not only is Yahweh obviously portrayed as a warrior here, but chaotic imagery is applied to the mustering of his army: this assembling causes a *קוֹל דְּהִמּוּן* and a *קוֹל שְׂאוֹן* (v. 4; compare Ps 46.4, 65.8, Isa 17.12). Although it is surprising to see phrases normally applied to chaos attributed to the warrior and/or his army, such a reversal is not uncommon in other ANE or OT uses of the *Chaoskampf* theme²⁵ and should be understood to imply the inevitably destructive nature of the defeat of chaos. This would fit its use here, as increasingly full expression is given to Yahweh's destructive wrath over the world's iniquity (hinted at in v. 3, given slightly fuller expression in the purpose clause ending v. 5, and more fully in vv. 9 and 11).

If the nature of this theophany is clear, how do the three aftershocks listed in vv. 6-13 fit with it? The first reaction of overwhelming human fear (vv. 6-8) is easily understood in the face of the approaching army and Yahweh's purpose in mustering it. The second and third effect, however, which involve earthly desolation and cosmic darkness (vv. 9b-10) and cosmic shaking

²⁴ As Patrick Miller notes, this verse abounds with ambiguity with regard to who gives these commands, who is commanded, and the identity of the host coming to surround the standard ("The Divine Council and the Prophetic Call to War," *VT* 18 [1968]: 102-3).

²⁵ This sort of attribution is particularly prevalent in Assyrian royal annals.

(v. 13b), are perhaps more readily relegated to merely exaggerated language in the service of emphasizing divine power.²⁶ It is probably better, however, to interpret this cosmic darkness and shaking in relation to the descriptions of Yahweh's Day immediately preceding and following them in vv. 9 and 13a. With regard to the first of these, the internal connection between the description of the Day (v. 9) and its effects (v. 10) is revealed in light of the cosmic perspective of this entire passage, a perspective seen in the combination of שָׁמַיִם and אֶרֶץ in parallel clauses in vv. 5 and 13. Just as both heaven and earth are involved in Yahweh's action in those verses, so here, the earth is made a desolation (לְשֹׁמֵרָה, v. 9) in order that its sins may be wiped out from it,²⁷ and then every heavenly body goes dark. The world thus sinks into a chaos-like condition which is described in a way which is proportionate to the sins found in it and to the punishment meted out in response.

The same is the case for the cosmic shaking of v. 13, although Yahweh's Day is given a slightly different description in the verses preceding this reaction: although desolation is still a major theme (v. 12), Yahweh's punishment for evil this time involves stopping (וְהִשְׁבַּתִּי, v. 11) and humbling (אֲשַׁפִּיל, v. 11) ruthless human arrogance. This humbling may influence the exact expression of the first line of v. 13, in which Yahweh makes the heavens tremble, so that the earth shakes out of its place. Ancient cosmological ideas, in which the earth and firmament are constructed and connected in order to keep out the primeval waters (cf. Ps 104.5), are operative here.²⁸ Yahweh's shaking of the heavens thus leads to the earth crumbling out of the secure place given it in creation. The idea is of cosmic reduction to chaos, as in vv. 9b-10, but the chain-reaction of Yahweh shaking the heavens so that the earth is shaken out of its place suggests an appropriately "humbling" image. The cosmic reactions to Yahweh's appearance at the head of his army are thus in harmony with the cosmic scope of Yahweh's purpose in mustering it; only in a reduction of the world to chaos may a just and effective punishment for sin be accomplished.

The approach of Yahweh and the instruments of his wrath and its accompanying reactions are, of course, intentionally placed as the first scene in the oracles against the nations in chs. 13-23, prophecies which climax in the world-wide judgment and restoration of chs. 24-27.

²⁶ As, for instance, Goldingay claims (*Isaiah*, 100). Otto Kaiser, in a similar vein, argues that the darkness of v. 10 implies Yahweh's approach in the storm and that his purposes are concealed from human beings (*Isaiah 13-19* [trans. R. A. Wilson; OTL; London: SCM, 1974], 17). Although Kaiser is by no means insensitive to the cosmic dimensions of this passage, he extracts this image from its cosmic context in reading it this way.

²⁷ The parallelism between the two clauses of the second line of v. 9 suggests that the second expands upon or intensifies the first, so that the thought is that not only will Yahweh make the earth a desolation, but (more specifically) he will destroy or wipe out the sinners inhabiting it.

²⁸ See Kaiser, *Isaiah 13-39*, 18.

Their placement at the head of ch. 13 leads the reader to associate the various international upheavals described in 13.14-23.18 as one smaller aspect or foretaste of Yahweh's complete and final destruction of the cosmos for sin.²⁹ Even in ch. 13, such an association is suggested by the mention of Babylon's pride in the use of גָּאוֹן in v. 19 (echoing vv. 3, 11) and the nearness of Babylon's time (קָרוֹב, v. 22, echoing v. 6).

These considerations suggest that the images of darkness and shaking which attend Yahweh's theophany are more than indirect or figurative ways of describing Yahweh's power or comparisons with natural phenomena, but should rather be understood as the cosmic results of his theophany in judgment. To claim that vv. 9-13 contain figures of speech highlighting divine power leads to underwhelming conclusions, for it is not necessary to state, at this point in the progression of thought in the text, that Yahweh is powerful, but rather that he is judging sin by means of cosmic destruction in proportion to that sin. Although the *Chaoskampf* is given a somewhat surprising twist as the warfare of the Divine Warrior plunges the cosmos into chaos in judgment, the vitality of the mythic and cosmic themes in this passage is undeniable; and it is by means of attention to these that the imagery of theophany may be most fully understood.

"Before his Elders, Glory!" (24.21-23)

21) And it will be on that day that Yahweh will punish the host of the height on high and the kings of earth on the earth.	וְהָיָה בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא יַפְקֹד יְהוָה עַל־צְבָא הַמָּרוֹם בְּמָרוֹם וְעַל־מַלְכֵי הָאָדָמָה עַל־הָאָדָמָה
22) They will be gathered as the gathering of prisoners into a pit and shut in a prison, and after many days, they will be punished.	וְאִסְפוּ אִסְפָּה אֲסִיר־ ³⁰ עַל־בוֹר וְסִגְרוּ עַל־מִסְגֵּר וַיִּמְרַב יָמִים יַפְקְדוּ
23) Then the White One will be disgraced, and the Hot One ashamed, for the Lord of Hosts will reign on Mount Zion in Jerusalem, and before his elders—glory!	וְחִפְרָה הַלְּבָנָה וּבוֹשָׁה הַחֲמָה כִּי־מֶלֶךְ יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת בְּהַר צִיּוֹן וּבִירוּשָׁלַם וְנָגַד זְקֵנָיו קְבוֹר־ ³¹

²⁹ See Claire Matthews, *Defending Zion* (BZAW 236; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1995), 60.

³⁰ Although the LXX, Syriac and Vulgate essentially support the MT on this verse (while 1QIsa^a does not show אֲסִיר), it is tempting to delete אִסְפָּה אֲסִיר as a gloss (yielding a balance of three clauses with three words each), or at least אֲסִיר, since the preceding word is not in the construct state. The second clause of the line, however, does show an internal object, just as the first does, and both disputed words contribute to the rhyme of the line. Given the similarly overloaded expression of v. 21, it may be best to refrain from emending this verse.

The structure of these three verses is easily discerned in the repetition of the root פקד in vv. 21-22, which frames Yahweh's action of the imprisonment and punishment of hosts heavenly and earthly. The immediate result of this is the shame of sun and moon because of the establishment of Yahweh's glorious rule on Mt. Zion (v. 23).³² The sequence of conflict and enthronement is apparent. Before giving more attention to their exact expression in these verses, however, the same theme of conflict and enthronement may be noted in the broader development of chs. 24-27.

Isa 24-27 is basically a collection of four poems: 24.1-20, dealing with divine judgment; 24.21-25.21, signaled by the use of יהוה אלהים in 24.21 and 26.1, which concern Yahweh's enthronement; 26.1-27.1, again signaled by יהוה אלהים at beginning and end, which are more theodicy-like in nature, containing assurances of Yahweh's victory over evil and death to a community which has yet to fully experience it;³³ and 27.2-13, which contains two "on that day" poems (vv. 2-11, 12-13) dealing with Yahweh's rich vineyard, the end of divine wrath, and Israel's restoration.³⁴ A particularly important dimension of these four chapters is found in the typological nature of the two cities in Isa 24-27, one of which (the "city of chaos") is destroyed, while the other, as a cosmic center, is established (the former is mentioned in 24.10; 25.2, 12; 26.5; 27.10 and the latter in 24.23; 25.6-7, 10; 26.1; 27.13).³⁵ This latter city is undoubtedly to be identified with Zion, the place of Yahweh's presence and rule over the world.³⁶ The former, however, is probably not intended to have any concrete historical identification, but rather stands for human systems intended to produce security which operate on principles opposite that of

³¹ LXX, Syriac and Vulgate read a verb here, which would yield יכבד, but these translations are probably meant to reflect the idea of the appearance of the *kabod* inherent in the wording of the MT, not a different text.

³² Sweeney correctly emphasizes that it is the establishment or consummation, not the mere fact, of Yahweh's rule which is in view here (*Isaiah 1-4*, 52).

³³ See Child, *Isaiah*, 189, 195.

³⁴ See Bernhard Anderson, "The Slaying of the Fleeing, Twisting Serpent: Isaiah 27:1 in Context," in *Uncovering Ancient Stones*, ed. Lewis Hopfe (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1994), 9-11.

³⁵ See Motyer, *Isaiah*, 194; Georg Fohrer, "Der Aufbau der Apokalypse des Jesajabuchs (Is 24-27)," *CBQ* 25 (1963): 44. Dan Johnson has given several extensive arguments against any typological reading of 24-27, identifying instead the city of ch. 24 with Jerusalem and that of 25 with Babylon (he notes how the destruction of the city in ch. 24 leads to chaos, while ch. 25 shows the same destruction leading to a new order, these effects being appropriate for the cosmic center [Jerusalem] and the enemy of order [Babylon]). Although his argument is not unconvincing, it is more natural to see the "city of chaos" in a broader, symbolic sense (see *From Chaos to Restoration: An Integrative Reading of Isaiah 24-27* [JSOTSup 61; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1988], 25-31, with specific criticism by Joseph Loete, "A Premature Hymn of Praise: The Meaning and Function of Isaiah 24:14-16c in its Present Context," in *Studies in Isaiah 24-27*, ed. J. C. De Moor, et. al., Oudtestamentische Studiën 18 [Leiden: Brill, 2000], 229-231).

³⁶ Seitz, "Isaiah, Book of (First Isaiah)," *ABD* 3:486.

Zion.³⁷

Although the *Chaoskampf* motif in Isa 24-27 has already received much attention (in particular by Millar³⁸ and Day³⁹), it may be noted here that Yahweh's judgment in 24.1-20 amounts to an uncreation and flood-like reduction of the world to chaos. This is especially apparent in the withering of natural fertility in vv. 7-12 and the trembling of the cosmic architecture of creation in vv. 18-20, so that the earth, instead of being firmly established against the powers of chaos, is utterly shaken.⁴⁰ This chaos is all due to covenant infractions (v. 5); as John Goldingay writes, "God stops holding back the concentrations of dynamic power and energy that surround human life" as the natural consequence of breaking the everlasting covenant (v.5), "for the terms of God's covenant with the world are themselves the foundation on which it rests. They reflect the nature of the world itself, and when they are ignored, calamity can only follow."⁴¹

The sequence of thought in ch. 24 thus clearly fits with the *Chaoskampf*, even though ch. 25 expands upon this theme in surprising ways: while Yahweh does intervene as a warrior and renew his kingship in 24.21-23, he also swallows up death forever during the feast for all nations in 25.6-8, celebrated on his cosmic mountain. Neither Baal nor Marduk decisively defeat death in their victories, but Yahweh's action here still fits the pattern of the defeat of chaos (the characterization of Mot in the Baal Epic as voracious, swallowing all life, makes the connection all the stronger, even while accentuating the unique victory of this particular Divine Warrior).⁴²

³⁷ Although Babylon is frequently named for the role (in contrast to Johnson's argument, noted above), the fact that almost every possible guess about the historical identity of the destroyed city in ch. 24 has been made, together with the ambiguous character of the text itself, appears to preclude any one identification (see Benedikt Otzen, "Traditions and Structure of Isaiah XXIV – XXVII," *VT* 24 (1974): 197; Marvin Sweeney, "Textual Citations in Isaiah 24-27," *JBL* 107 (1988): 43, note 19; Fohrer, "Der Aufbau," 41).
³⁸ William Millar argues for a nearly perfect replication of the *Chaoskampf* theme as found in the Baal Epic (which he defines according to the pattern of threat-war-victory-feast) in the various passages of Isa 24-27 (*Isaiah 24-27 and the Origin of Apocalyptic* [HSM 5; Missoula, MT: Scholars, 1976], 65-81). However, Millar's inclusion of a feast as an essential part of the *Chaoskampf* is perhaps not repeated often enough elsewhere to be included in the definition of the theme. Furthermore, his application of this scheme to Isa 24-27 produces questionable results, for passages are grouped together which do not appear to be related (thus, 24.16b-25.8 is taken as a discrete section, even though this overrides several prominent structural features in the text). Cf. the criticisms of Samuel Pagán, "Apocalyptic Poetry: Isaiah 24-27," *BT* 43 (1992): 320.

³⁹ *God's Conflict with the Dragon the Sea* (UCOP 35, Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1985), 177-85.

⁴⁰ John Day has emphasized the similarity of the last line of v. 18 to Baal's theophany, and rightly so, since the opening of the windows leads to the shaking of the earth in both passages (see *God's Conflict*, 177). However, Day is wrong to claim a theophany for v. 18 simply on the basis of this similarity, since Yahweh's direct presence is not explicit here.

⁴¹ Goldingay, *Isaiah*, 141; cf. Robert Murray, *The Cosmic Covenant* (Heythrop Monographs 7; London: Shed & Ward, 1992), 1-24.

⁴² This connection is often pointed out; see, e.g., Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-4*, 53.

This feast is particularly significant for the unfolding progression of these chapters, since it not only cancels perhaps the most destructive aspect of cosmic chaos (death), but more positively implies, in light of the parallel sequence in Exod 24 of divine appearance before Israel's elders during a meal, the remaking of the covenant which was broken in ch. 24.⁴³

But the mention of elders brings us back to vv. 21-23. Given that the *Chaoskampf* is profoundly entrenched in these chapters, what harmony may be discerned in the expression given to this theophany, its effects, and its contribution to the advance of the text? Strikingly, Yahweh's theophany is described with a single word in v. 23, קְבוֹרָה—the glory in which the divine King begins to hold court.⁴⁴ The effect of this visible manifestation is the shame of the “hot one” and the “white one,” which already suggests a connection between the visible radiance of Yahweh's appearance and the light of the sun and the moon. But why are these heavenly bodies referred to indirectly, and why would shame language be used?

Both of these questions may be answered in reference to the ambiguity of צַבָּא in v. 21, since the word can connote either heavenly bodies or supernatural powers.⁴⁵ This latter nuance is clearly in play in Yahweh's punishment of the heavenly host and earthly kings in vv. 21-22, a punishment which implicitly counts as a defeat of rival powers; only after these powers are deposed may his unhindered reign begin.⁴⁶ As the reader moves into v. 23, however, the two nuances to the term begin to overlap: after the host on high (supernatural powers) are imprisoned in vv. 21-22, Yahweh's glorious reign puts to shame the host on high (the sun and moon) in v. 23. The indirect language used to speak of the “host” of the sun and moon and the shame they bear in comparison to Yahweh's glory both relate to the defeat preceding the establishment of Yahweh's reign: this host is exposed as no host at all, and cannot even directly be named as such.⁴⁷ After Yahweh defeats the host on high, in other words, they no longer shine.

The “shame” or darkening of the sun and moon thus functions not as a comparison with natural phenomena in order to speak, in a striking way, about Yahweh's power; divine power is not here compared to a solar eclipse. Rather, the particular reaction to this theophany is inextricably woven together with the mythic expression given to Yahweh's defeat of rival powers and the renewal of his reign from Zion. The cosmic coherence among the ideas and

⁴³ See Kaiser, *Isaiah 13-39*, 195, Johnson, *From Chaos to Restoration*, 57. Timothy Willis, “Yahweh's Elders (Isa 24, 23),” *ZAW* 103 (1991): 381-83, gives a fuller discussion of the alternatives for understanding the elders' presence here.

⁴⁴ See Watts, *Isaiah 1-33*, 330.

⁴⁵ See, e.g., Dan 8.10, in addition to other references in *BDB* 839. This connection between the two meanings of hosts is noticed by Glenn Miller, “Isaiah 25:6-9,” *Int* 49 (1995): 175, but not further pursued.

⁴⁶ Johnson notes how the victory of the Divine Warrior can lead to the execution of the chaos monster's accompanying hosts (as, for instance, in the *Enuma Elish*; *From Chaos to Restoration*, 56).

⁴⁷ Watts, *Isaiah 1-33*, 331.

images of vv. 21-23 as a mythic narrative is also apparent in relation to vv. 1-20, for the undoing of the creation of the earth would naturally lead to the extinguishing of the stars—as, in fact, it does in 13.9-13, a passage showing many similarities to ch. 24. It has been noted elsewhere that Isa 24-27 plays the role of climaxing chs. 13-23, placing the judgment and restoration of these former chapters on a world-wide scale and giving both a note of finality;⁴⁸ this role is clearly in evidence with regard to the way in which Yahweh’s “uncreating” judgment is described in both ch. 13 and 24. But unlike ch. 13, ch. 24 is not focused exclusively on this judgment. It is as if we are to imagine that Yahweh’s reign, which is inaugurated after the destruction of the world, involves a new creation, in which light in the cosmos comes from a different source. The effect of the defeat of all hostile powers, in other words, is not just the fertility of the earth, but an entirely new world, in which Yahweh’s glorious reign is the only light.⁴⁹

“With his Sharp, Great and Strong Sword” (26.20-27.1)

20) Go, my people, enter your chambers, וּסְגֵר דְלַחְיָךְ בְּעֶדְךָ
and shut your doors behind you;

hide for a brief moment until wrath passes by. עַד-יַעְבוֹר זַעַם

21) For behold, Yahweh לִפְקֹד עֲוֹן יִשְׁבֵּהָאָרֶץ עָלָיו
is coming out of his place to punish the iniquity of the
inhabitants of the earth;

and the earth will reveal its וְגִלְתָּהּ הָאָרֶץ אֶת-דַּמְיָהּ
blood,⁵⁰ and no more will it cover its slain.

⁴⁸ This is a common characterization of these chapters; see, e.g., John Day, “God and Leviathan in Isaiah 27:1,” *BSac* 155 (1998): 423-36. Marvin Sweeney has argued that the connections between Isa 13-23 and 24-27 are very close, understanding Isa 24.13 specifically to allude to 17.6 and 24.15 to 21.1 (“Textual Citations,” 41).

⁴⁹ Despite the coherence among the different sections in chs. 24-25, however, several ambiguities hinder further suggestions as to the particular role which vv. 21-23 play. For instance, the presence of hosts heavenly and earthly comes as a bit of a surprise, since nothing in the description of the desolation and twisting of the earth in vv. 1-20 would prepare us for a battle in high places. The nature of the punishment of these hosts is also not clear; is their punishment to be equated with their imprisonment, or is it only a prelude to an execution? The fact that they will be punished after many days probably suggests the second option, but what this punishment is, or why there would be a delay, is not explained. Johnson takes this phrase to indicate that the period of waiting for readers is not yet over, so that their salvation is certain, but not yet actualized (*From Chaos to Restoration*, 56). Watts also notes how a similar period of time must elapse before Yahweh’s final action with regard to Tyre (23.17; see *Isaiah 1-33*, 325). Helpful as these comments are, however, these verses still retain some mystery as to their meaning and function in the larger sweep of chs. 24-27. Thus, although the mythic nature of Yahweh’s theophanic rule is clear in this passage, several questions remain concerning the events surrounding it.

⁵⁰ Oswalt notes that the plural form may be translated as “bloodshed” (*Isaiah 1-39*, 488).

27.1) On that day, Yahweh בְּחִרְבוֹ הַקָּשָׁה וְהַגְּדוֹלָה וְהַחֲזָקָה יִפְקֹד יְהוָה
 will punish with his sharp, great and strong sword
 Leviathan the fleeing serpent, וְעַל לְוִיָּתָן נָחַשׁ עֶקְלָתוֹן
 Leviathan the twisting serpent,
 and he will slay the dragon in the sea. וְהָרַג אֶת־הַתַּנִּין אֲשֶׁר בַּיָּם

It should be admitted from the outset that Isa 26.20-27.1 is not really a discrete section, for 27.1 shares only the theme of Yahweh's punishment (פְּקָד), while being separated from 26.20-21 by different imagery and the phrase בְּיָוֵם הַהוּא.⁵¹ The repetitions of this phrase in 27.2, 12 and 13 probably also imply that 27.1 is meant as something of a transition to 27.2-13. On the other hand, the second person address of v. 19, which forms the first part of a three part response to the preceding prayer,⁵² while not unrelated, is not part of the theophany of vv. 20-21, and so is discussed below only in relation to the contribution of this passage.

The *Chaoskampf* theme is obviously in full use here, even if in surprising ways. Not only is the dragon of the sea slain, but, subsequent to its defeat, Yahweh's vineyard blossoms under his defense (vv. 2-6) and Israel worships at the cosmic center (v. 13); instead of the renewal of the natural realm, Israel is spiritually renewed and spreads its "fruit" through the world.⁵³ It is also important to note that Yahweh wins two battles against chaos here: first, he punishes the iniquity of the earth (vv. 20-21), and then chaos on a higher plane (27.1). The moral and cosmic dimensions of chaos are both in play.⁵⁴ Furthermore, Yahweh's manner of appearance is clearly seen as he sets out from his cosmic throne, and the effect of his theophany, while not the expected reaction of fear, is still easily identified with the uncovering of the earth's blood before his presence. As Jörg Jeremias notes, this revealing fits perfectly with Yahweh's unstoppable purpose to punish.⁵⁵ The reader is thus to imagine the covenant community hiding as Yahweh sets out to punish the iniquity of the earth, here identified with bloodshed, the guilt of which is irrevocably exposed before the divine presence.⁵⁶ The expression given to the theophanic appearance of the Divine Warrior is thus clear, as well as the general way in which

⁵¹ See Errol McGuire, "Yahweh and Leviathan: An Exegesis of Isaiah 27:1," *RQ* 13 (1970): 173.

⁵² Brueggemann, *Isaiah* (2 vols.; WC; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1998), 1:209, lists v. 19, vv. 20-21, and 27.1 as three separate responses to the lament of vv. 7-18.

⁵³ See Niehaus, *God at Sinai* (SOTBT 1; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 113; McGuire, "Yahweh and Leviathan," 178. The link between 26.20-27.1 and 27.2-6 is strengthened by the cessation of wrath in 27.4, wrath which sets out to punish the earth in 26.20 (Anderson, "Isaiah 27:1," 10).

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ *Theophanie: Die Geschichte einer alttestamentlichen Gattung* (WMANT 10; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1965), 19.

⁵⁶ See Wildberger, *Jesaja 13-27*, 999; cf. Gen 4.10, Ezek 24.8 (Oswalt, *Isaiah 1-39*, 489, note 5).

the defeat of evil in 26.20-27.1 and fructification of Israel in 27.2-6 answer the admission in the communal prayer concerning the community's total inability to bring salvation to being in the earth in 26.18.

These considerations strongly suggest that the interrelated theme of the defeat of chaos, divine rule from the cosmic center, and renewed fertility are being used in this passage in their mythic sense, not as "strong emotive language" by which to express the defeat of moral evil,⁵⁷ nor as "descriptive figures of speech" for nations.⁵⁸ By the question of why the poet would resort to figurative language in so desperate a situation, the internal coherence of the themes of conflict, enthronement, and fertility shows that they are articulated in this passage from within the larger structure of thought of the *Chaoskampf*, not as metaphor for some other action of Yahweh.

Beyond this, however, the kaleidoscopic nature of the different passages making up chs. 24-27 makes it difficult to specify further the contribution of Yahweh's theophanic intervention. It is, for instance, puzzling that Yahweh's defeat of his enemies, first described in 24.21-23, is narrated again; although פִּקֵּר is used in both passages, it is not clear how they are related (is the same event being described twice? or is one subsequent to the other?). Even in the midst of the rapidly shifting perspectives of these different texts, however, a few further proposals concerning the suitability of the exact expression given Yahweh's theophany and the reaction to it may tentatively be advanced. First, it is probable that the place in which Yahweh's people are told to hide and the place from which he sets out in vv. 20-21 is Zion, the cosmic center.⁵⁹ Furthermore, there may possibly be a connection between the bloodshed and corpses which cannot hide from before Yahweh's punitive presence and the references to death and life beyond death in 26.13-14, 18. It is also possibly significant that Yahweh sets out to punish because of those slain (הָרַרְנִיָּה, v. 21) and to slay the dragon (וְהָרַג, 27.1). Although one does not want to over-interpret these echoes, if the specific example of iniquity which Yahweh will punish is meant to fit with the larger advance of the text, then the implication of v. 20 may be that the violence and bloodshed which has characterized life in the city of chaos so far is going to be punished—indeed, Yahweh will slay Leviathan—but that death will not be the end for the community dwelling in Zion. Inasmuch as death is one aspect of cosmic chaos and Yahweh's

⁵⁷ Oswalt, *Isaiah 1-39*, 491.

⁵⁸ Edward Young, *The Book of Isaiah* (2 vols; NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969), 2:234.

⁵⁹ The same suggestion is made by Motyer, *Isaiah*, 220. There may also be allusions here to hiding in the Ark (in line with other hints back to the Flood in ch. 24) and/or to the Passover (see Exod 12.11, 23; Johnson, *From Chaos to Restoration*, 81-82).

swallowing of death means death's end, the thought of this passage thus may not be too different from that of ch. 25.

"I Will Distress Ariel" (29.1-8)

- 1) Woe, Ariel, Ariel, city where David encamped;
add year to year, let the feasts run on.
- 2) But I will distress Ariel, so that there will be
mourning and lamentation,
and she will be to me like Ariel.
- (3) I will encamp against you round about,⁶⁰ I will
besiege you with tower,
I will raise siegeworks against you.
- 4) You will sink low, from the underworld
you will speak, from the dust your words will be low;
your voice like a ghost from the
underworld will sound; from the dust your words
will chirp.
- 5) The multitude of your
strangers will be like fine dust, the multitude of terrible
ones like blown chaff.
- And it will be suddenly, in an instant—
- 6) by the Lord of Hosts you will be visited
in thunder, shaking, and
a great roar; with storm, tempest, and flame of
devouring fire.
- 7) And as a dream, a vision of the night
will be the multitude of all the nations amassed against
Ariel,
- הוֹי אֲרִיאֵל אֲרִיאֵל הוּי אֲרִיאֵל
סָפוּ שָׁנָה עַל־שָׁנָה חַגִּים יִנְקָפוּ
וְהִצִּיקוֹתִי לְאֲרִיאֵל וְהִיתָה תִּאֲנִיָּה וְאֲנִיָּה
וְהִיתָה לִּי כְּאֲרִיאֵל וְחִנִּיתִי כְּדוֹר עָלֶיךָ
וְהִצִּיקוֹתִי עָלֶיךָ מִצָּר וְהִתְחַלֵּתִי עָלֶיךָ מִצָּר
וְשָׁפַלְתָּ מֵאָרֶץ חַדְבְּרֵי וּמִמַּעַפָּר תִּשָּׁח אִמְרָתְךָ
וְהָיָה כְּאֹב מֵאָרֶץ קוֹלְךָ וּמִמַּעַפָּר אִמְרָתְךָ הִצְפִּצְךָ
וְהָיָה כְּאֶבֶק בַּק הַמּוֹן זְרִיךְ⁶¹ וּכְמִן עֵבֶר הַמּוֹן עֲרִיצִים
וְהָיָה לְפַתַע פְּתָאִם מֵעַם יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת תִּפְקֹד
בְּרַעַם וּבְרַעַשׁ וּקוֹל גְּדוֹל סוּפָה וּסְעָרָה וְלֶהַב אֵשׁ אוֹכְלָה
וְהָיָה כְּחֹלֶם חֲזוֹן לַיְלָה הַמּוֹן כָּל־הַגּוֹיִם הַצְּבָאִים עַל־אֲרִיאֵל

⁶⁰ Literally, "like a ball." See Hans Wildberger, *Jesaja 28-29* (BKAT 10; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1982), 1098-99, who gives detailed discussion of this word and the other terms describing the siege.

⁶¹ MT's "strangers," is often emended to the זְרִיךְ, "insolent ones," of IQIsa^a, but reference to strangers makes sense in relation to the foreign attackers. Wildberger also notes that זְרִים and עֲרִיצִים occur together in Isa 25.5 (*Jesaja* 28-39, 1099).

and all those fighting against her and her stronghold
and those distressing her.

וְכָל-צָבִיָּהּ וּמְצֻדָתָהּ וְהַמְצִיקִים לָהּ

8) It will be as when someone hungry dreams
that he is eating,

וְהָיָה כְּאִשֶּׁר יַחֲלֵם הָרָעֵב וְהִנֵּה אוֹכֵל

but he awakes and his stomach is empty;

וְהִקִּיץ וְרִיקָה נַפְשׁוֹ

as when someone thirsty dreams that he is drinking,

וְכְאִשֶּׁר יַחֲלֵם הַצָּמֵא וְהִנֵּה שֹׁתֶה

but he awakes thirsty and his soul is frantic,

וְהִקִּיץ וְהִנֵּה עֵיף וְנַפְשׁוֹ שׁוֹקֵקָה

thus will be the multitude of nations

כִּן יִהְיֶה הַמּוֹן כָּל-הַגּוֹיִם הַצֹּבְאִים עַל-הָר צִיּוֹן

encamping against Mt. Zion.

As one might imagine, attempts to recover various stages of the prehistory of this paradoxical passage are numerous.⁶² When commentators turn to analyzing the text in its present form, however, a two-part structure is often discerned in which an attack on Jerusalem is made in vv. 1-4 or 1-5, while a sudden transition (לְפִתְעָה פְתָאם), v. 5 leads to a miraculous deliverance of the city in vv. 5-8.⁶³ G. C. I. Wong has, however, challenged this common analysis, arguing that vv. 1-7 consistently speak of doom for Jerusalem. Important considerations in his argument include the fact that אֵשׁ אוֹכֵלָהּ is always an image for judgment, thus coloring the otherwise ambiguous פֶּקֶד with ominous overtones, as well as the fact that the comparison with a dream in v. 7 would not imply the insubstantiality of Jerusalem's enemies, since dreams were of great significance in that culture.⁶⁴ On Wong's reading, then, v. 8 is a later re-interpretation of v. 7, re-directing the oracle in a more hopeful direction. Although Wong raises some helpful points, his argument does not entirely convince, for, although Yahweh's consuming fire does always act in judgment, it is not clear against whom it is unleashed (Jerusalem or those besieging it?). Furthermore, the image of Jerusalem's enemies as flying chaff in v. 5 unambiguously implies their defeat.⁶⁵ Despite these reservations about Wong's analysis, however, it will be helpful to keep the paradoxical nature of Yahweh's action in this passage clearly in view, for a positive outcome for Jerusalem in this siege is only given in the unambiguous final two verses.

⁶² See Wildberger, *Jesaja 28-39*, 1100-1102, for a summary of such attempts.

⁶³ See, e.g., Oswalt, *Isaiah 1-39*, 528; Wildberger, *Jesaja 28-39*, 1100.

⁶⁴ G. C. I. Wong, "On 'Visits' and 'Visions' in Isaiah XXIX 6-7," *VT* 45 (1995): 371-73.

⁶⁵ Note the use of the same image in Isa 17.13 and 41.15, as well as Job 21.18; Hos 13.3; Zeph 2.2; Ps 1.4, 35.5.

With these comments in mind, the common understanding of v. 5 may be supported, so that the passage begins with a more vague statement of Yahweh's distressing of Jerusalem⁶⁶ (v. 2) which is then specified as he directly lays siege to it (v. 3); the result of such action is a deathly reduction of the city's prayers, which are murmured as if by a ghost (v. 4). Just as Jerusalem speaks from the dust, however, v. 5 shows the city's enemies⁶⁷ to be fine dust and passing chaff, clearly hinting at their defeat. This hint of deliverance is followed immediately by a "cliffhanger" buildup in the second half of v. 5 which explodes into Yahweh's visitation in thunder, earthquake, storm and fire in v. 6. In harmony with the rest of this passage, however, the significance for Jerusalem of Yahweh's appearance is ambiguous until the insubstantiality of the attackers is stated in vv. 7-8, where, by way of contrast with vv. 1-3, Yahweh is no longer working against his city through these attackers. This passage thus gives expression to Yahweh's plans for Jerusalem in a way which, although highly paradoxical, is quite in keeping with chs. 28-33, such that Yahweh both judges and delivers his people in the same action.⁶⁸ Both of these actions are, in fact, expressed in absolute terms, precluding any assumption that Yahweh only partially judges and then saves his people.

If the texture and progress of this passage have been correctly understood, then the surprising use of the *Chaoskampf* motif may be noted in the initial reversal of the *Völkerkampf* theme, as Yahweh joins the כָּל־הַגּוֹיִם הַמִּזֵּן in their attack on Jerusalem (vv. 2-3).⁶⁹ This direct attack against his own city is not, however, accomplished theophanically. Yahweh does not directly appear until v. 6, where his manner of appearance is stated simply with הִתְפַּקֵּד in v. 6; the fronted prepositional phrase underlines the totally unexpected nature of the visitation. As noted above, פָּקֵד is ambiguous: Yahweh is visiting his city—but to what end?

The imagery attending Yahweh's theophany is, however, perhaps less ambiguous. At first glance, the second line of v. 6 seems overloaded, for not just one image is used to describe the manifestation of Yahweh's presence, but five: thunder (רָעַם), earthquake (רָעַשׁ), a great roaring (קוֹל גְּדוֹל), a storm (סוּפָה וּסְעָרָה), and fire (לֶהַב אֵשׁ אוֹכֵלָה). Any metaphorical understanding of the imagery of storm, fire and earthquake is rendered problematic not only by the desperate situation in which this imagery is used, but more importantly by the fact that, while it is not clear what these images could count as metaphors for beyond divine power, more than a

⁶⁶ As many commentators have noted, "Ariel" can be a name for Jerusalem or a term for an altar (see, e.g., Oswalt, *Isaiah 1-39*, 526). Both senses are in play in this text, especially in v. 1, where the city of David is ironically told to continue its useless festivals.

⁶⁷ Wildberger takes the דָּ of v. 5 to be Jerusalem's own tyrants, which would significantly affect the interpretation of the verse; but the הַמִּזֵּן is identified clearly with the attacking armies in vv. 7-8.

⁶⁸ Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-4*, 56.

⁶⁹ Watts is to be credited with this insight (see *Isaiah 1-33*, 381).

claim to divine power is needed at this point in the text. This is the case because Yahweh's visitation in v. 6 leads without interruption to the flight of the enemy in vv. 7-8. Without any intervening description of Yahweh's defeat of Zion's besiegers, the images of v. 6 cannot count as a metaphorical description which emphasizes Yahweh's power as he intervenes, but must themselves describe that intervention as Yahweh battles with the weapons of the storm god. The cosmic symbolism of the *Chaoskampf* is clearly in full play in this passage.

Three more clues suggest that the images of theophanic storm warfare in v. 6 have been interwoven with the rest in the passage in a way which recommends granting them an equal place within the text's mythic symbolic structure, rather than understanding them as metaphors intended to illuminate by comparison some aspect of the passage. It was noted above that v. 6 appears overloaded in expression; it is almost as if image is piled upon image, each intensifying the reality of divine presence. The juxtaposition of this overloaded description with the dream-like insubstantiality of Jerusalem's attackers suggests that every aspect of traditional theophanic imagery has been employed here in order to show Yahweh's utter defeat of Jerusalem's enemies, who are not said to flee (as in 17.12-14) but rather immediately become as unreal as a vision in the night before the reality of the divine presence. Second, there is a natural interplay between Yahweh's appearance in the storm and the blown chaff to which the enemies are compared in v. 5. Finally, there may also be an intended play in the thunder and great noise (קוֹל גְּרוֹל) with which Yahweh's presence is manifested as over against the ghostly whispering of Jerusalem's קוֹל; if this is an intentional allusion, it may imply that Yahweh's presence ends the terrifying humbling of the city or counts as salvation from that state.

If the expression given to Yahweh's appearance does contain clear implications of his victory against Jerusalem's attackers, however, it might still be wondered whether or not the thunder, earthquake, storm and flame which explode on the human scene are entirely good for the city continuing in its useless festivals (29.1) and unwilling to listen to the prophetic word (28.12). True, Jerusalem's besiegers will be completely defeated; but what of those for whom the prophetic word of trust is gibberish (28.12-13) and are blind to Yahweh's strange work (29.14; cf. 6.9-10)? This spiritual blindness to Yahweh's work amidst the various political upheavals of that time is very much in the foreground of chs. 28-35, just as is Yahweh's absolutely secure dwelling place in Zion (note 28.16-17; 29.7-8; 30.19, 29; 31.4-5, 9; 33.17-24). The particular approach taken to these two realities of instability and security, however, now centers around Israel's perception of Yahweh's strange work (29.14) of simultaneous judgment

on and deliverance of Jerusalem,⁷⁰ so that only for those who perceive the true nature of Yahweh's strange work will the divine presence be salutary. In other words, the uncertainty of Yahweh's פִּקְדֹן is not, despite Yahweh's defeat of Zion's attackers in this passage, totally resolved. Note especially in this regard the trembling of Zion's sinners in 33.14 who are overwhelmed by the אֵשׁ אוֹכֵלֶתָהּ in Yahweh's dwelling place. The exact expression given to the theophany of 29.6 thus appears intentionally constructed to imply the defeat of Jerusalem's attackers, but to defer the resolution of the issue of Israel's blindness and their enjoyment of any blessings resulting from that defeat until later chapters of this section of the book.

Yahweh Will Shatter Assyria (30.27-33)

- 27) Behold, the name of the הִנֵּה שֵׁם־יְהוָה בָּא מִמֶּרְחֹק
בְּעֵר אָפוּ וְכָבֵד מִשָּׂאָה
 Lord comes from afar, burning in his anger, with
 dense smoke rising;⁷¹
- his lips are full of rage, his tongue is like וּלְשׁוֹנוֹ כְּאֵשׁ אֹכֶלֶת
שִׁפְתָיו מְלֵאוֹ זַעַם
 a consuming fire,
- 28) his breath is like a rushing stream, unto וְרוּחוֹ כִּנְחַל שׁוֹטֵף
עַד־צְנָאֵר יַחֲצֶה
 the neck it divides⁷²—
- to shake the nations in a false sieve, וְרָסַן מִתְעָה עַל לְחַיֵּי עַמִּים
לְהַנְפִּיחַ גּוֹיִם בְּנֶפֶת שָׂא
 a bridle leading astray on the jaws of the peoples.
- 29) You will have the song, as on the night when הַשִּׁיר יִהְיֶה לְכֶם
כְּלֵיל הַתְּקִדֵּשׁ־חַג
 a feast is sanctified,

⁷⁰ As Oswalt writes, the temptation to make alliances with Egypt (chs. 30-31) necessitates a message which assures that Yahweh can still destroy his own city, and then utterly save it (*Isaiah 1-39*, 526).

⁷¹ MT's מִשָּׂאָה is difficult with regard to whether or not it derives from נִשָּׂא and with regard to its meaning (possibilities include "burden," "utterance," or "smoke;" see Watts, *Isaiah 1-33*, 403). Oswalt understands it to denote a heavy burden of punishment (*Isaiah 1-39*, 566). William Irwin slightly re-writes the text to mean "with liver fuming," which fits with the other body terms in these verses (*Isaiah 28-33: Translation with Philological Notes*, BibOr 30 [Rome: Biblical Institute, 1977], 97). Paul Kruger reads the MT as "his rage is overwhelming," with מִשָּׂאָה being understood literally as "rising up" and כָּבֵד as overwhelming in the sense of having unbearable weight; on this reading, the term is an immediate description of the feeling of anger rising ("The Obscure Combination of מִשָּׂאָה כָּבֵד in Isaiah 30:27: Another Description for Anger?" *JNWSL* 26 (2000): 155-62). Liudger Sabottka similarly interprets, according to a comparative מִן, as "heavier than one can bear" ("Is 30, 27-30: Ein Übersetzungsvorschlag," *BZ* 12 (1968): 242), as does Targum. Wildberger suggests Judg 20.38 as a parallel (הַעֲשֵׂן הַמִּשָּׂאָה), which is the foundation of the above translation (see *Jesaja* 28-39, 1208).

⁷² Although the sense here is clear, חֲצָה is somewhat difficult; Oswalt suggests that the image may be of water going around a person's neck (*Isaiah 1-39*, 565).

and joy of heart, as לְבוֹא בְהַר־יְהוָה אֶל־צוּר יִשְׂרָאֵל
 when one walks to a flute to go to Yahweh's mountain, to the
 Rock of Israel.

30) Yahweh will make the splendor of ⁷³ וְנַחַת זְרוּעוֹ יִרְאֶה
 his voice to be heard, and the descent of his arm
 he will cause to be seen,

in anger, wrath, and a flame of נֶפֶץ וְזֶרֶם וְאֶבֶן בָּרָד
 consuming fire, with storm, downpour, and hailstone;

31) for by (his) thunder, Yahweh will shatter כִּי־מִקוֹל יְהוָה יַחַת אַשּׁוּר
 Assyria, with the rod he will strike;

32) and every stroke of the וְהָיָה כָּל מַעֲבַר מַטֵּה מוֹסְדָה
 appointed rod⁷⁴ which Yahweh brings down on him

will be to tambourine and harp; battling בְּתַפִּים וּבְכַנְרוֹת
 with brandished arm,⁷⁵ he will fight with (Assyria).⁷⁶

33) For Tophet is prepared from long ago, כִּי־עָרוֹד מֵאֲתָמוּל תִּפְתָּה
 even for the king it is made ready;

its pyre is made deep and wide, with fire and וְהָיָה הָעֵמִיק הָרַחֵב מִדְּרַתָּה
 wood in abundance.

The breath of Yahweh, as a stream of sulfur, אֵשׁ וְעֵצִים הִרְבָּה
 kindles it.

The structure of this passage is best defined according to a two-part parallel development in vv. 27-29 and 30-33. The *וְהָיָה* opening v. 27 introduces the entire passage as the *וְשָׁמְעוּ־יְהוָה* comes from afar. Yahweh's appearance is then described from the second line of v. 27 to the first line of v. 28, where an infinitive shows the purpose of his coming (the defeat of the

⁷³ Since *ויר* implies visible splendor—a strange attribute for a sound—it is possible *ויר* is a better reading (cf. Ezek 7.7; see F. M. Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard, 1973], 176, note 126). More probably, however, the clause show the visible splendor of Yahweh's battling from the storm.

⁷⁴ As *BHS* notes (see note 32a), the correct reading here may be "chastising rod," which involves only a change between *ד* and *ר*; it is difficult to decide between the two alternatives.

⁷⁵ This difficult phrase is taken in any number of ways: "battling with brandished arm" (RSV, adopted above), "in battle with the blows of his arm" (NIV), "with warrings waving" (Oswalt, *Isaiah 1-39*, 564) "to war dances, the slashing stroke he fights with" (Irwin, *Isaiah 28-33*, who notes the parallel with Isa 19.16). *וְהָיָה* almost certainly refers to the action of Yahweh's arm as he fights.

⁷⁶ As Watts notes, although one would expect the text to say here that Yahweh fights with Assyria, Assyria is referred to in the masculine in this passage (note the *qere* *בם*, apparently showing the same expectation); as a result, the antecedent here may be *וְהָיָה* (*Isaiah 1-33*, 404).

nations); a reference to cultic rejoicing closes the subsection. The same pattern recurs in vv. 30-32: Yahweh's appearance in anger (v. 30) leads to his defeat of Assyria (vv. 31-32), while v. 32 ends with another reference to festal joy. The last verse concludes the passage in its depiction of the funeral pyre made for Assyria.⁷⁷ This passage thus shows two parallel depictions of Yahweh's defeat of the nations in vv. 27-29 and 30-33.⁷⁸ The connections between vv. 27 and 33 (discussed below) bind the whole together.

The *Chaoskampf* theme is clearly in play in this passage as Yahweh fights (לָחַם, v. 32) from the storm (v. 30) against his people's enemies. The two descriptions of Yahweh's appearance in vv. 27-28a and 30 are, furthermore, given specific expression in order to fit with the exact way in which he defeats the nations surrounding Jerusalem. With regard to the first of these, Yahweh's coming from afar neatly contrasts his bridling of the nations to send them away in v. 28b. That Assyria now has to bear a yoke instead of imposing it on others is also part of this contrast;⁷⁹ the rejoicing of Israel as they go (לְבוֹא) in safety to Mt. Zion also probably forms part of this contrast.⁸⁰ In other words, Yahweh's theophany is expressed in terms of "coming," which has the effect of the nations "leaving" and Israel "coming." (That it is the שָׁמַיִם יְהוָה which comes may perhaps best be understood as playing on the cultic references in vv. 29, 32, while simultaneously implying the war-like nature of his coming, since the same phrase takes on martial nuances in extra-biblical texts.⁸¹) This first depiction of Yahweh's appearance in v. 27 has also been shaped to connect with the concluding verse with regard to the image of Yahweh's breath (כְּנַחֲלִי in v. 28 and נְשַׁמַּת יְהוָה in v. 33) and the fire which comes from it (אֵשׁ in v. 27 and בַּעַר in v. 33), implying that Yahweh's flaming breath ignites the funeral pyre in which the Assyrian king is finally laid to rest.⁸²

⁷⁷ The analysis given here is slightly different from that offered by W. A. M. Beuken, who understands the passage to unfold according to the introductory הִנֵּה of v. 27, followed by two main subsections identified by consecutive perfect forms which begin vv. 30 and 32; v. 33 concludes the passage ("Isaiah 30: An Prophetic Oracle Transmitted in Two Successive Paradigms," in *Writing and Reading the Scroll of Isaiah*, ed. Craig C. Broyles and Craig A. Evans [vol. 1 *Writing and Reading the Scroll of Isaiah*, ed. Craig Broyles and Craig Evans; VTSupp 70; Leiden: Brill, 1997], 392).

⁷⁸ Beuken, "Isaiah 30," 392.

⁷⁹ Stacey, *Isaiah 1-39*, 191.

⁸⁰ Beuken, "Isaiah 30," 389, 390, 392.

⁸¹ See KTU 1.16 VI 56, which makes reference to 'trt šm b'l, "Astarte-name-of-Baal," in the midst of a curse describing destruction (see T. H. Gaster, *Thespis* [rev. ed.; New York: Gordian, 1975], 156, for further discussion and similar references, as well as Mark Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001], 75).

⁸² Jeremias may be correct in further drawing out the significance of the cultic nuances of this passage in understanding it to envision Assyria as the sacrifice which Yahweh makes at this festival (*Theophanie*, 58).

The same can be said of the second description of Yahweh's direct appearance in v. 30, in which Yahweh makes his glorious voice/thunder (קול) heard and makes the descent of his arm to be seen in wrath, fire, and storm (v. 30) as Assyria is shattered by Yahweh's thunder (קול, v. 31) and struck with Yahweh's staff (note וַיִּנְחֵת זָרְעוֹ in v. 30 and יְנִיחַ עָלָיו . . . מִטָּה in v. 32). The twofold depiction of Yahweh's theophany is thus put to direct use in describing his defeat of Assyria. Rather than understanding Yahweh's fiery breath, descending arm and thunderous voice as metaphors drawn from the realm of nature to emphasize divine power, the larger framework surrounding the irresistible weapons of the Divine Warrior, battling on the cosmic mountain, provides a better context within which to understand why Assyria is shattered and broken. Neither the descriptions of Yahweh's appearance nor those of Assyria's defeat can be removed from this passage's particular expression of the progression of thought from theophanic storm warfare against evil to renewal of divine rule, for their support of this progression is direct and organic in nature, rather than indirect or figurative. This interpretation contradicts both Kaiser's claim that lightning in this passage "could be seen as" an expression of anger, and thunder as a curse against Yahweh's enemies,⁸³ as it does Oswalt's argument that the storm imagery of this passage compares Yahweh's action to a storm that sweeps away those who might "crouch in the dry wadis for protection."⁸⁴ These interpretations understand the significance of storm warfare in too general a way, divorced from the narrative progression of the *Chaoskampf*.

What contribution does Yahweh's theophany make to the larger advance of these chapters in Isaiah? An answer to this question is not immediately obvious, partially because the sequence of thought in ch. 30 is distinctly different from that of ch. 29. As discussed above, the theophany of 29.1-8, although eventuating in the defeat of Jerusalem's besiegers, intensifies through its ambiguities the issue of spiritual sight and the consequences of willful blindness to Yahweh's strange work; the problem of Israel's blindness occupies much of the rest of the chapter (with a prophecy of restoration to sight in vv. 17-24). By way of contrast, 30.1-17 begins with the problem of Israel's blindness, followed by a promise of its healing in vv. 18-26—and then Yahweh comes in wrath to defeat Assyria. Although this victory is not explicitly located on Mt. Zion in vv. 27-33 (aside from the hint which ends v. 29), this is where Assyria is defeated elsewhere in the book (see 14.25, 29.1-8, 31.4-9). The passage under investigation thus appears to be part of the promise of restoration made in vv. 18-26, given to the people dwelling on Mt. Zion, in Jerusalem (v. 19). This would explain the more directly positive nature of the

⁸³ *Isaiah* 13-39, 307.

⁸⁴ *Isaiah* 1-39, 565.

theophany (by way of contrast with that of 29.1-8). It also suggests a possible relationship between the claim that Yahweh makes his voice to be heard and his arm to be seen (v. 30) and the promise that those in Zion will someday see their Teacher (v. 20). The issue of spiritual sight in ch. 30 is thus promised a joyful resolution in v. 20, which is then related to an unambiguously positive theophanic defeat of Jerusalem's enemies in vv. 27-33—those dwelling on Mt. Zion will actually see Yahweh defeat their attackers.

The Blind Will See the Glory of Yahweh (35.1-10; 40.1-11; 52.7-12)

- 1) The desert and dry place exult, let the wilderness rejoice and blossom;
 like a crocus (2) it blossoms abundantly, let it rejoice with joy and exulting.
 The glory of Lebanon is given to it, the splendor of Carmel and Sharon.
 They see the glory of Yahweh, the splendor of our God.
- 2) יששׁוּׁ 85 מְדַבֵּר וְצִיָּה וְתִגַּל עֲרָבָה וְתִפְרַח
- 3) Strengthen weak hands, make stumbling knees firm;
 4) say to the anxious of heart, “Be strong, do not fear: Behold your God, he comes with vengeance,⁸⁶ with divine recompense, he comes that he might⁸⁷ save you.”
- 4) אָמְרוּ לְנַמְהֲרֵי־לֵב חֲזִקוּ אֶל־תִּירָאוּ הִנֵּה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם נָקָם יָבֹא גְמוּלַ אֱלֹהִים הוּא יָבֹא וַיִּשְׁעֶכֶם
- 5) Then the eyes of the blind will be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped;
 6) then as a deer the lame will leap, the dumb tongue sing for joy.
 For waters will break forth in the desert, and streams in the wilderness,
- 5) אִזְ תִּפְקַחְנָה עֵינֵי עִוְרִים וְאָזְנֵי חֲרָשִׁים תִּפְתַּחְנָה
- 6) אִזְ יִדְלַג כַּאֲיֵל פֶּסַח וְתָרַן לְשׁוֹן אֵלִים כִּי־נִבְקְעוּ בַמִּדְבָּר מַיִם וּנְחָלִים בְּעֲרָבָה

⁸⁵ Deleting the MT's final *mem* here as dittography; it is not translated in the versions and it is not clear to what the object would refer (see *BHS* 1a; Wildberger, *Jesaja* 28-39, 1353).

⁸⁶ Although “vengeance comes” might be an easier reading (see Watts, *Isaiah* 34-66, WBC 25 [Waco, TX: Word, 1987], 5), the above translation is given because the whole point of the passage is that Yahweh is the one coming; נָקָם and גְמוּלַ describe the goal of his approach.

⁸⁷ Oswalt captures the sense of the jussive form with the subjunctive in English (*Isaiah* 1-39, 619).

7) the parched ground will be as a pool, the וְהָיָה הַשָּׂרֵב לְאֵגִם
dry ground as springs of water; וְצִמְאוֹן לְמַבְוֵי מַיִם

in the haunt of dragons, her resting place, grass will בְּנוֹהַ תַּנִּים רִבְצָה
be as reed and rush. חֲצִיר לְקִנְיָה וְגַמָּא

8) There will be there a highway, a way;⁸⁸ וְהָיָה-שָׁם מִסְלֹל וְדֶרֶךְ
a holy way it will be called. וְדֶרֶךְ הַקִּדְשׁ יִקְרָא לָהּ

Nothing unclean will travel לֹא-יַעֲבֹרֵנוּ טָמֵא
on it, it will be for him walking on the way; (on it) fools will not wander.⁸⁹ וְהוּא-לָמוּ הַלֶּךְ הַדֶּרֶךְ
וְאִוִּילִים לֹא יִתְעוּ

9) There will not be there לֹא-יְהִיָּה שָׁם אַרְיָה
a lion, and no ravaging beast will travel on it; they will not be found there.⁹⁰ וּפְרִיץ חַיּוֹת בְּלִי-יַעֲלֶנָּה
לֹא תִמְצָא שָׁם

The redeemed will go, (10) the ransomed of Yahweh וְהָלְכוּ גְאוּלִּים
will return; וּפְדוּיֵי יְהוָה יָשׁוּבוּן

they will go to Zion with singing, with וּבָאוּ צִיּוֹן בְּרִנָּה
everlasting joy on their heads; וְשִׂמְחַת עוֹלָם עַל-רֵאשָׁם

joy and gladness will overtake them, and grief and שְׂשׂוֹן וְשִׂמְחָה יִשְׁיגוּ
sorrow will flee away. וְנִסּוּ יָגוֹן וְאַנְחָה

This chapter may be divided into two main sections, vv. 1-7 and 8-10. The first of these constitutes a chiasm which surrounds the coming of Yahweh in the second half of v. 4 with human physical and/or spiritual healing (vv. 3-4a, 5-6a) and natural renewal (vv. 1-2, 6b-7).⁹¹

⁸⁸ Although possibly a dittography (1QIsa^a does not show it, and LXX makes it conform to the second clause, reading ὁδὸς καθαρά), the *waw* may be taken just as easily as epexegetical: “indeed, a way” (see WOC 39.2.4 and Peter Miscall, *Isaiah 34-35: A Nightmare/A Dream* [JSOTSupp 281; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999], 107, note 119).

⁸⁹ All of the versions seem to struggle with this difficult line (the LXX expands to four clauses, the Vulgate makes certain interpretative additions, adding “for us” to the second clause of the MT and turning the last clause into a purpose clause; Targum shows three clauses, but reads “those traveling on the path will not cease;” Syriac essentially reflects MT). Following the *atnah* in the second clause would yield, “it will be for him; no traveler, not even fools, will go astray” (cf. NRSV). However, this clashes with the use of the plural in the third clause and the singular in the second. The proposal of *BHS* that the second clause is a corrupt variation of the third (“the fool going on its way will not wander,” see *BHS* note 9c, cf. Mathews, *Defending Zion*, 122, note 2) is attractive and yields a balanced two-part line, but it is not clear how the redeemed and ransomed (v. 10) who travel this way could be called fools. The above reading understands the verse to mean that neither fools nor unclean will go on this holy way, but only those to whom it belongs.

⁹⁰ As with v. 8, the final clause of this line is often deleted to produce a balanced two-clause line (see, e.g., Cross, *Canaanite Myth*, 172). The MT is, however, retained above and understood to give a final, climactic negative to the lack of any danger on the way back to Zion; two parallel three-clause lines are thus found in this final section of the poem.

⁹¹ See Alfred Marx, “Brève note textuelle sur Esaïe 35,8,” *ZAW* 107 (1995): 125.

The passage ends with a way back to Zion in vv. 8-10 and the joy and safety of those traveling on it. A crucial clue to understanding this beautiful poem is found in the way in which the themes of joy, the return to Zion, the blossoming of the desert, and human renewal are all linked together (note how the joy of those returning in v. 10 echoes that of the desert in vv. 1-2, as well as the link between natural and spiritual renewal by means of the כִּי of v. 6).⁹² Furthermore, all of these themes are associated with the coming of Yahweh in glory (vv. 2, 4-5 [note especially the אֵץ of v. 5], 9-10). The reader is thus to imagine the desert blossoming as the renewed and redeemed exiles see the approach of Yahweh to lead them back to Zion—to their great joy.⁹³

Yahweh's theophanic appearance is formulated in two ways in this passage. The first of these is found in the ambiguous association of the glory and splendor of the transformed desert with the sight of the glory and splendor of Yahweh (v. 2), while the second shows Yahweh coming for his people (v. 4). The reader is apparently meant to imagine the desert blossoming with the very splendor of Yahweh as he comes for his people in exile. Although it is not explicitly stated, the approach of Yahweh in v. 4 should not be disassociated from the return to Zion in vv. 8-10; the implication is that Yahweh comes to his people and then accompanies them on their way home to the promised land (as with the first Exodus, so with the second).

The reaction to this theophanic approach is found in the transformation of the wilderness and the healing of human ailments. In order to see the harmony between the imagery of natural and spiritual renewal and the exact formulation of Yahweh's manifested presence, as well as the use of the *Chaoskampf* motif in this passage, the larger contribution of ch. 35 to the advance of the book must be disclosed, first with regard to ch. 34, then with regard to chs. 28-35. That this passage is intrinsically related to and provides closure for the total judgment and desolation of ch. 34, despite the lack of any explicit transition between the two chapters,⁹⁴ is suggested by a variety of links, the strongest of which are found in the transformation of the haunt of dragons into a lush place of reeds and rushes (בְּנֵי תַנִּים; נֹהַ תַּנִּים חֲצִיר לְבָנוֹת יַעֲנָה, 34.13; בְּנֵי תַנִּים רַבְצָה חֲצִיר לְקָנָה וְגִמְאָא, 35.7). It is also worth noting Yahweh's day of vengeance for Zion in 34.8 and his approach with vengeance in 35.4 (נָקַם in both verses).⁹⁵ The echo of נָקַם is

⁹² As Mathews, *Defending Zion*, 121, notes.

⁹³ Although the exile is not explicitly mentioned, it is implied, given the larger context of chs. 28-35, by יִשְׁבֹּן. Furthermore, the ambiguous הִפְתָּה in v. 2 is (from the perspective of the whole) to be identified with those returning to Zion in vv. 8-10 (Motyer, *Isaiah*, 275; note how the LXX translates the this word with ὁ λαός μου).

⁹⁴ Mathews, *Defending Zion*, 10.

⁹⁵ See Marvin Pope, "Isaiah 34 in Relation to Isaiah 35, 40-66," *JBL* 71 (1952): 235-43, who gives further links between the two chapters. Different accounts of the historical relationship between chs. 34 and 35 are possible; Williamson, for instance, argues that they were probably not written as a single piece (*Isaiah*, 220).

especially significant, since it implies that there is a cause-and-effect relationship between judgment and restoration in these chapters, such that the latter cannot happen without the former.⁹⁶ That no-one can travel through the wilderness which Yahweh's judgment creates in 34.10 is also answered in the holy way of 35.8, just as the safety of the way to Zion, expressed in terms of the lack of any ravaging animals there, directly contrasts the monstrous inhabitants of the wasteland in 34.11-15.⁹⁷

The significance of the interrelationship between complete, devastating judgment and complete restoration of what has been destroyed is most helpfully disclosed with reference to the *Chaoskampf* theme. Although the divine defeat of chaos is not mechanistically reproduced here—Yahweh does not defeat chaos, but reduces the world to it in an act of judgment which takes the form a sacrifice (34.6-7), not a battle—the renewal of the earth is effected in this passage from the cosmic center as the King who rules there returns his people to it. Even here, of course, it is not the storms of the Divine Warrior from his cosmic throne which cause the earth to blossom, but his glorious presence which invests the wilderness; and the idea of total security in relation to the cosmic mountain is here extended to the route leading back to Zion. Despite these alterations, however, the mythical themes of the nourishing reign of the divine King from the cosmic center do shape the framework within which the restoration of ch. 35 is laid out for the reader, and also provide the best context for understanding the renewal of the wilderness as an effect of Yahweh's presence.⁹⁸

The presence of the *Chaoskampf* in chs. 34-35 already suggests that the renewing effects of Yahweh's appearance are not metaphors, as has often been suggested. This metaphorical interpretation of the images of natural and spiritual renewal in 35.1-10 takes different forms: the desert is sometimes understood as a general figure for life without God,⁹⁹ sometimes as a

⁹⁶ Mathews, *Defending Zion*, 138; Bernard Gosse, "Isaïe 34-35: Le chatiment d'Edom et des nations, salut pour Sion," *ZAW* 102 (1990): 396.

⁹⁷ Mathews, *Defending Zion*, 13, 136, and Oswalt, *Isaiah 1-39*, 626.

⁹⁸ Other scholars who have argued for the operation of the *Chaoskampf* in Isa 35 and 40-55 include Tryggve Mettinger, who notes that chaos can be identified with uncreation, moral evil, political disorder or natural desolation, while order implies harmony and security in the natural realm, society and temple; such an identification explains much of the imagery of this part of the book ("In Search of the Hidden Structure: YHWH as King in Isaiah 40-55," in *Writing and Reading the Scroll of Isaiah*, ed. Craig Broyles and Craig Evans [vol. 1 *Writing and Reading the Scroll of Isaiah*, ed. Craig Broyles and Craig Evans; VTSupp 70; Leiden: Brill, 1997], 143-54.) Bernhard Anderson also writes that the overlap of creation and redemption in these texts may be understood in relation to the divine defeat of chaos, for Yahweh "is the creator who originated the cosmos, who maintains order in the face of threats of chaos, and who created—and now re-creates—a people out of the chaos of bondage" ("Introduction: Mythopoeic and Theological Dimensions of Biblical Creation Faith," in *Creation in the Old Testament*, ed. B. W. Anderson [IRT 6; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984], 21).

⁹⁹ James Smart, *History and Theology in Second Isaiah: A Commentary on Isaiah 35, 40-66* (London: Epworth, 1967), 47, 293.

metaphor for spiritual insensitivity;¹⁰⁰ on the other hand, it has also been claimed that the dramatic way in which a desert changes figuratively expresses the transformation of God's people,¹⁰¹ or that the healing of natural desiccation and physical infirmity are both "figures for salvation."¹⁰² The relationships among the central themes in chs. 34-35—especially in their role as a climax of chs. 28-35¹⁰³—suggest, however, that the renewing effect of Yahweh's theophany cannot be understood as indirect or metaphorical language which describes some other divine action or its effects. This is apparent even in 35.1-10, in which the very glory of Yahweh is given to the desert (v. 2), the renewal of which is intrinsically related to (יָצַי, v. 6) human physical and spiritual renewal. The intimate link between natural and spiritual renewal in the articulation of the text does not allow for either to be set in metaphorical relation to the other or to some other action of Yahweh, but rather envisions both as the direct result of Yahweh's manifestation.

This argument can be applied more widely to chs. 28-35. It was also noted above that the idea of Yahweh's people as spiritually blind and deaf is constantly formulated in these chapters in relation to Yahweh's strange work for and against Jerusalem; furthermore, the judgment which Israel's blindness brings about is also associated with desolation and destruction, while restoration from judgment involves both natural and spiritual renewal. However, while natural renewal is elsewhere linked with spiritual sight (e.g., 29.17-24, 30.20-26), this is the first time it has been linked with theophany. This link between the problem of understanding and trust in Yahweh and theophany is actually very strong, for the expressions used in vv. 3-4a to describe the preparations for Yahweh's theophanic approach are earlier applied to those who do not trust Yahweh, who are blind to his work, and who come under his judgment (כָּשָׁל in 28.13, 31.3 and מָהָר [more positively] in 32.4). The fact that it is the redeemed and ransomed who are encouraged with such language is striking, for it implies that it is the very ones who met the terrifying prospect of Yahweh's judgment of his own dwelling place (29.1-8) with sleepy insensibility (28.7-13, 29.9-10) which is even willfully produced (30.10-11) who will have their eyes opened before Yahweh's coming. It is almost as if

¹⁰⁰ Watts, *Isaiah 34-66*, 15; Brueggemann, *Isaiah*, 1:276-77.

¹⁰¹ Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66* [trans. D. M. G. Stalker; OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1969], 275; Young, *Isaiah*, 2:450-51.

¹⁰² Oswalt, *Isaiah 1-39*, 623.

¹⁰³ The influence of ch. 35 may reach even further; opinions vary on the extent to which ch. 35 acts as a climax. Mathews lists proponents for a climactic role for chs. 34-35 which extends back to ch. 28, to ch. 13, or to ch. 1 (*Defending Zion*, 30). In my opinion, the reduction of the cosmos to chaos in different places in chs. 1-12 (see 5.26-30, 8.21-22, 9.17-20, as well as the contrast with the cosmic *shalom* of 11.6-9), as well as chs. 24 and 13, suggests a provisional climax to all of the book may take place here. The anticipatory function of ch. 35 in relation to chs. 40-55 is also significant in this regard.

Yahweh's strange work of simultaneous judgment and salvation with regard to Jerusalem (28.21, 29.1-14) is made less strange in ch. 35: while it is the same divine action in chs. 28-33 which somehow involves both judgment and salvation, the two are more clearly distinguished in chs. 34-35, with judgment (נִקְמָה) falling on the world לְרִיב צִיּוֹן (34.8), in contrast with Yahweh's related but subsequent restoration as he approaches with vengeance (נִקְמָה), recompense and salvation (35.4). The double attack on and defense of Zion is thus shifted entirely in Zion's favor, while those who were imperiled because of their incomprehension before Yahweh's warfare against Jerusalem are now restored even unto beholding Yahweh's glory as all traces of his judgment are erased from the natural world and everything that caused judgment is removed from the spiritual constitution of Yahweh's people.

The two effects of Yahweh's theophany—the renewal of the natural realm and the healing of Israel's blindness—are thus integrally related to the larger progress of chs. 28-35 and form a natural climax to the section of the book. This language of natural renewal is not set alongside spiritual renewal as a metaphor for it; the two are rather parallel from within the great mythic continuum of order and chaos. Just as the judgment which falls on all the world (and Jerusalem) in Yahweh's action through the Assyrians and Babylonians reduces the world to chaos, so the return to Zion, the cosmic center, causes all of creation to blossom again—together with the people who inhabit it. And Yahweh accomplishes this return and renewal through his direct presence.

Beyond looking backwards to chs. 28-33 to tease out the significance of the images accompanying Yahweh's theophany in 35.1-10, however, it is necessary to turn to Isa 40-55, for 35.1-10 perfectly anticipates this later section of the book. Two passages which, in particular, display strong connections with 35.1-10 are 40.1-11 and 52.7-12. The first of these envisions (among other things) a highway in the wilderness (v. 3) and a leveling of every mountain and valley (v. 4) in the revelation of the יְהוָה כְּבוֹד before all flesh (v. 5). That this highway is for Yahweh as he leads his people back from captivity in exile is clear from vv. 9-11, as a herald proclaims (בְּשֵׁר, v. 9) Yahweh's approach (הִנֵּה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם, v. 9; הִנֵּה אֲדֹנָי יְהוָה בְּחֻזֵּק יְבוּא, v. 10) and rule (וְזִרְעוּ מִנְּשֻׁלָה לֹא, v. 10). Similarly, 52.7-12 contains a proclamation (בְּשֵׁר, used elsewhere in chs. 40-55 only in 41.27) of the visible return of Yahweh to Zion (עֵין בְּעֵין, v. 8), who has laid bare his holy arm and salvation won before the sight of all the nations (v. 10).

The clear connections in vocabulary among all three texts are strengthened by their structurally significant locations: just as 35.1-10 ends the first half of the book before the coda-like historical reprise of chs. 36-39, so 40.1-11 begins the second half. The same structurally

significant location is apparent with regard to 52.7-12, for Isa 40-55 ends with the climactic Servant Song (52.13-53.12), a description of blessings subsequent to the Servant's action (54.1-17), and then a final conclusion Isa 40-55 (55.1-13). This sets off the second proclamation of Yahweh's return to Zion in 52.7-12 as a boundary, complementing the one beginning these chapters in 40.9-11 and suggesting that everything in between should be read in light of the proclamation of King Yahweh's return to Zion.

From this perspective, it is noteworthy that, even though Yahweh's coming in 40.3-5, 9-11 and 52.7-12 does not provoke any cosmic convulsions, images of natural renewal and joy, as in 35.1-10, occur frequently between these programmatic passages (see 41.17-20; 43.16-21; 44.1-5; 44.23; 45.8; 51.3, 9-11; 52.9) and thus implicitly in relation to Yahweh's theophanic escort in the second Exodus. The imagery attending theophany is thus identical to that recorded in 35.1-10. The *Chaoskampf* is at work in these passages in a manner similar to that of chs. 34-35 as well, but perhaps in a more obvious way. Just as in 35.1-10, the cosmos is bursting in fertility in 40.1-52.12 as the divine King renews his rule by bringing his people back to the (soon to be rebuilt) temple at cosmic center. But the relationship of the return from exile with the defeat of chaos is more clearly expressed in 51.9-11, where the arm of Yahweh cleaves and pierces the dragon and dries up the Sea, so that a way is made for the redeemed to return. The explicit echo in 51.11 with 35.10 and 52.10 makes the connection between the defeat of chaos and the joyful return to Zion very strong.¹⁰⁴ In other words, the way in which theophany and the reaction(s) to it are expressed is practically identical in 35.1-10, 40.3-5, 9-11, and 52.7-12, an expression rendered coherent with reference to the special articulation given to the *Chaoskampf* in this part of the book of Isaiah.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴ See Thomas Podella, "Der 'Chaoskampfmythos' im Alten Testament: Eine Problemanzeige," in *Mesopotamia-Ugaritica-Biblica*, ed. M. Dietrich and O. Loretz [AOAT 232; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1993], 313. The mythical vitality of these images, which is apparent from their use, has not prevented some commentators from assigning them to the role of merely spectacular imagery. Oswalt, for instance, writes that the cleaving of the dragon in 51.9 is not mythical, but partakes of stock imagery without participating in the larger system of thought behind it (*The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40-66* [NICOT; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996], 341). Westermann similarly speak of the metaphor of Yahweh as a king in 52.7-10 (*Isaiah 40-66*, 250) and the metaphor of Yahweh's arm as standing for the "decisive fact" of redemption which all can see (*ibid.*, 252).

¹⁰⁵ One variation between 35.1-10 and 40.1-11 and 52.7-11 is found in the problematization of spiritual sight in chs. 40-55 (see especially 43.8-13: "Send forth the blind people!"). In these chapters, it becomes clear that, even though the return is certain, those benefiting from it cannot act as proper witnesses to Yahweh's incomparability because of their spiritual insensitivity. As a result, it is perhaps not surprising that, although Yahweh's salvation is accomplished in 52.10 before the eyes of all the nations, specific prophecies about restored sight are not given, as in 35.1-10. This variation from 35.1-10 should not be given too much weight, however, for the very next passage speaks of astonished reactions to the Servant in relation to seeing the revealed arm of Yahweh (52.15-53.1).

Yahweh Sets Out as a Warrior (42.13-17)

- 13) Yahweh as a warrior sets out, as a יְהוָה כְּגִבּוֹר יֵצֵא
 man of war he arouses fury;
 he shouts, he also roars, against his foes he shows עַל-אֹיְבָיו יִתְגַבֵּר
 himself mighty.
- 14) “I have been silent for a long time, I was quiet, I הִחֲשִׁיתִי מֵעוֹלָם
 restrained myself;
 (now) as one giving birth I blow, gasp and pant at once. אֲשֶׁם וְאָשָׂאף יַחַד
- 15) I lay waste mountains and high places, אֶחָרִיב הָרִים וְגִבְעוֹת
 all their grass I dry up. וְכָל-עֵשְׂבָם אוֹבִישׁ
- I make rivers into islands,¹⁰⁶ pools I dry up. וְאֶגְמִים אוֹבִישׁ
- 16) I lead the blind on וְהוֹלַכְתִּי עֹרְרִים בְּדֶרֶךְ לֹא יָדְעוּ
 a way they do not know, on paths they do not בְּנִתְיבוֹת לֹא-יָדְעוּ אֲדַרְיֵכֶם
 know I guide them.
- I make darkness before them as light, אֲשִׁים מְחֹשֶׁךְ לְפָנֵיהֶם לְאוֹר
 and crooked paths straight. וּמַעֲקָשִׁים לְמִישׁוֹר
- These are the things I do for them—I do not אֵלֶּה הַדְּבָרִים עֲשִׂיתֶם
 forsake them. וְלֹא עֲזַבְתִּים
- 17) They will be turned back and utterly shamed, נִסְגּוּ אַחֲזֹר יִבְשׁוּ בְשֵׁת
 those trusting in an idol, הַבֹּטְחִים בַּפֶּסֶל
 those saying to an image, ‘You are our god.’ הָאֹמְרִים לְמַסְכָּה אַתֶּם אֱלֹהֵינוּ

The structure of this passage is a controversial matter, for v. 13 is almost universally paired with vv. 10-12 on form-critical grounds as the reason for the praise of vv. 10-12.¹⁰⁷ However, a variety of considerations suggest a strong break between vv. 12 and 13, first among which is that vv. 10-12 contain a number of echoes of key terms in vv. 5-9, implying that they are a response of praise to Yahweh’s action in those previous verses (תהלה in vv. 8, 10, 12; חרש in vv. 9, 10; כבוד in vv. 8, 12). Furthermore, the serene call to praise in vv. 10-12 contrasts with the snorting zeal of Yahweh as a warrior in vv. 13-14. Finally, as has often been

¹⁰⁶ The plausible change to “dry places” (לְצִיּוֹת, BHS 15a) is probably an easier reading.

¹⁰⁷ See the exhaustive listing of those who take this position in William S. Prinsloo, “Isaiah 42, 10-12: ‘Sing to the Lord a New Song,’” in *Studies in the Book of Isaiah*, ed. J. Van Ruiten and M. Vervenne (BETL 132; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1997), 289, notes 1-3.

noted, the use of different *Gattungen* in Isa 40-55 is not rigid, and so should not be relied upon too heavily in subdividing passages.¹⁰⁸

When examining vv. 13-17 as a discrete section, however, we are immediately faced with the fact that Yahweh's appearance as a warrior takes the form of a simile (פְּנִיבֹר, v. 13) and is immediately followed by the comparison with a woman giving birth (פְּיִלְדָה, v. 14). Is the divine appearance of the warrior here reduced to the status of metaphor? The inequality between the two similes suggests that this is not the case: the influence on the text of the comparison of the second line of v. 14, which emphasizes Yahweh's strenuous breathing, does not extend beyond that particular verse; on the other hand, Yahweh engages in actions quite in keeping with the Divine Warrior in this passage (v. 15). The image of the travailing woman may thus be said to function in the service of the portrayal of Yahweh as a warrior, for, as Katheryn Darr has noted, the three unusual verbs of this line describe the noises which Yahweh makes as he arouses himself to fight after a long time of inactivity.¹⁰⁹ Indeed, inasmuch as the second verb describing Yahweh's self-arousal sometimes occurs in a noun form in theophanic descriptions of Yahweh's dispersal and drying up of the chaotic waters (Ps 18.16; cf. Exod 15.8), the simile of a travailing woman may even reinforce the use of the *Chaoskampf* myth in this passage.¹¹⁰

Discerning this passage's contribution to the broader advance of the text will throw light on the exact use of the *Chaoskampf* theme in it. The nature of this contribution is disclosed in the allusion in v. 16 to 40.3-5, an allusion clearly signaled by the reference to the הַרְרָה, as well as the repetition of מִישׁוֹר (only elsewhere in Isaiah at 40.3 and 11.4).¹¹¹ This connection with the introduction to Isa 40-55 throws light, in turn, on the particular image of desolation in v. 15. At first blush, the image of desolation seems out of place amidst so much rejoicing as the desert blooms in the theophanic return of Yahweh to Zion with his people. When the correlation of Isa 34-35 is brought to mind, however, in which Yahweh's destruction of the world counts as a necessary precursor to restoration, the particular significance of this image is easier to identify: the desolation and drying up which Yahweh effects counts as a necessary precedent to Yahweh's leading the blind on straightened paths. Furthermore, this desiccation and parching of the natural realm is probably to be associated with the blast of Yahweh's roar (vv. 13-14). The

¹⁰⁸ William S. Prinsloo, "Isaiah 42, 10-12," and John Ferrie, Jr., "Singing in the Rain: A Meteorological Image in Isaiah 42:10-12," in *Imagery and Imagination in Biblical Literature*, ed. Lawrence Boadt and Mark Smith (CBQ Monograph Series 32; Washington, D. C.: Catholic Biblical Association, 2001), 99.

¹⁰⁹ Katheryn Darr, "Like Warrior, Like Woman: Destruction and Deliverance in Isaiah 42:10-17," *CBQ* 49 (1987): 567.

¹¹⁰ Darr makes this connection between אָשַׁם in v. 14 and the other uses of נְשָׁמָה (ibid.).

¹¹¹ This connection is noted Watts, *Isaiah 34-66*, 131; cf. Klaus Baltzer, *Deutero-Isaiah* (trans. Margaret Kohl; Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), 145.

reader is thus to imagine Yahweh, the Divine Warrior, setting out to remove all barriers opposing the salvation and restoration of his people (v. 15) and then leading them home on straightened paths (v. 16). The fact that those being lead are blind (v. 16) implies further that this passage was written, not just as a repetition of 40.3-5, but with 42.7 in mind, showing an awareness of the increasingly severe problem of Israel's blindness.

The harmony among the different elements of the description of the manner of Yahweh's appearance, its effects, and the contribution of this theophanic intervention in context is thus disclosed once the inequality of the similes of v. 13 is recognized. Failure to identify the different levels at which these images of warrior and woman operate in the text obscures, however, its inner coherence. For instance, Oswalt, who equalizes the similes of v. 13, understands them both to emphasize an event which takes place at a climactic moment (just as a battle involves long preparation beforehand and birth is preceded by nine months of pregnancy); but this leads him to interpret v. 15 as speaking only of Yahweh's power over creation and the straightened paths for blind Israel as speaking only of Yahweh's help for Israel in its helplessness.¹¹² The role which these images play within the larger polarity of order and chaos, as this polarity is expressed in Yahweh's judgment and restoration of the world and the return of his people to Zion, is missed. The images attending this particular expression of this Divine Warrior theophany must rather be said to function in a fully mythic way.

A Redeemer Will Come to Zion (59.15b-20)

15) Yahweh saw, and it was evil in his eyes that וַיֵּרָא יְהוָה וַיִּרְעַב בְּעֵינָיו כִּי־אֵין מִשְׁפָּט
there was no justice;

16) he saw that there was no-one, and he was וַיֵּרָא כִּי־אֵין אִישׁ וַיִּשְׁתּוֹמֵם כִּי אֵין מִפְּגִיעַ
appalled that there was no-one intervening.

So his arm won salvation for him, and his own וַתּוֹשַׁע לוֹ זְרַעוֹ וַצְדָקְתּוֹ הִיא סִמְכֶתָהוּ
righteousness was his support.

17) He dressed in righteousness as armor, וַיִּלְבַּשׂ צְדָקָה כַּשָּׂרָן וְכֹבֵעַ יְשׁוּעָה בְּרֹאשׁוֹ
with a helmet of salvation on his head;

he dressed in garments of vengeance as וַיִּעַט כַּמַּעֲיֵל קִנְאָה וַיִּלְבַּשׂ בְּגָדֵי נָקָם תְּלַבְּשֵׁת
clothing, and wrapped on zeal as a cloak.

¹¹² *Isaiah 40-66*, 126-7. Similar overgeneralizations hamper Westermann (*Isaiah 40-66*, 104) and R. N. Whybray (*Isaiah 40-66* [NCBC; London: Oliphants, 1975], 78) in their discussion of this passage.

- 18) According to recompense, thus כַּעַל גַּמְלוֹת כַּעַל יִשְׁלַם חֲמָה לְצַרְיָו גְּמוּלָ לְאֵיבָיו
 he will repay.¹¹³ wrath to his enemies, recompense to his foes,
 to the islands he will repay recompense.¹¹⁴ לְאֵיִים גְּמוּלָ יִשְׁלַם
- 19) They will fear¹¹⁵ from the וַיִּירָאוּ מִמַּעַרְבֵי אֶת־שֵׁם יְהוָה וּמִמְזֶרְח־שֶׁמֶשׁ אֶת־כְּבוֹדוֹ
 west the name of Yahweh, from the rising of the sun his glory,
 for he will come like a rushing river, with the כִּי־יָבוֹא כְּנָהָר צָר רֵיחַ יְהוָה נֹסְסָה בּוֹ
 wind of Yahweh driving it;¹¹⁶
- 20) a redeemer will come to Zion, וּבָא לְצִיּוֹן גּוֹאֵל וְלִשְׁבֵי פֶשַׁע בְּיַעֲקֹב נֹאֵם יְהוָה
 to those repenting¹¹⁷ of rebellion in Jacob, says Yahweh.

The main structural division of this passage, which is easily separable from what precedes and what follows,¹¹⁸ occurs between vv. 17 and 18, so that vv. 15-17 comprise Yahweh's preparation and vv. 18-20 his action against the lack of justice in the community.¹¹⁹ The manner of Yahweh's appearance is described in the second half of the passage as he enters

¹¹³ The second use of כַּעַל is problematic, since other similar constructions would lead one to expect it to govern another noun; *BDB* 758 takes the use to be similar to that of כִּי . . . כִּי: "the like of their deeds is the like of (that which) he will repay" (see further Oswalt, *Isaiah 40-66*, 526, note 68). The versions tend to be paraphrastic with this clause, the LXX severely reducing it, the Syriac combining the two clauses in one, the Vulgate rendering as *sicut . . . quasi*.

¹¹⁴ The LXX does not show this clause and *BHS* 18c recommends deleting it; if it is retained, it would constitute the only three-clause line in the passage. However, the world-wide nature of Yahweh's salvific/judging action in v. 19 and 60.9 (and 56-66 generally) speaks in favor of retaining it (Gregory Polan, *In the Ways of Justice Toward Salvation: A Rhetorical Analysis of Isaiah 56-59* [American University Studies VII.13; New York: Peter Lang, 1986], 299-300). The LXX is, in any case, extremely clipped on this verse.

¹¹⁵ Although emending to וַיִּירָאוּ (cf. *BHS* 19a) would provide a good parallel the sight of the divine glory in the second clause, the MT should probably be retained as the harder reading; note also the fearful manner of Yahweh's appearance in the second line.

¹¹⁶ As Oswalt notes, this verse is subject to a variety of ambiguities: is Yahweh the subject of יָבוֹא with צָר as an adjective, or is צָר the subject ("when the enemy comes in like a river")? Furthermore, נֹסְסָה can be derived from נָס (as above) or from נָסַח, "to raise a standard" (*Isaiah 40-66*, 526, note 72). The LXX and Vulgate translate basically according to the rendering given above; Targum, by contrast, understands the first clause to refer to the advance of oppressors (as does the Syriac), who are divinely defeated in the second clause. The reading given above, however, makes the best sense in relation to v. 18 (emphasizing the fierceness of his coming) and does not introduce the problematic idea of an enemy attack (which is nowhere else implied in this chapter). The grammatical tension in the lack of the article on צָר is the only strike against it (but cf. the discussion of occasional irregularities in the use of the article in GKC 126z).

¹¹⁷ The LXX's καὶ ἀποστρέψει ἀσεβείας probably assumes a hiphil infinitive (cf. Targum's וְלִאֲחַבֵּא מִרְדֵּיָא, "to turn the rebels" to Torah), but the MT's "repent" should be retained (see Schramm, *The Opponents of Third Isaiah* [JSOTSupp 193; Sheffield: Sheffield, 1995], 141, note 2).

¹¹⁸ Concerning the contribution of v. 21, see Paul Smith, *Rhetoric and Redaction in Trito-Isaiah* (VTSupp 72; Leiden: Brill, 1995), 126, as well as Brevard Childs, *Isaiah* (OTL; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 486, 490-91.

¹¹⁹ Smith, *Rhetoric and Redaction*, 123, and Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 350.

Zion (v. 20); the simile of the second line of v. 19 emphasizes the furious, overwhelming nature of that entrance (in harmony with v. 18). Yahweh's appearance as the Divine Warrior is further qualified in vv. 16-17 as he arms himself with salvation and victory, as well as passionate recompense. The effects of Yahweh's coming are found in the first line of v. 19 in the world-wide reaction of fear before Yahweh's visible splendor.

While it is obvious that many of the standard elements of war-like theophany are operative in this passage, the harmony among their particular expression is found in the identity of Yahweh's enemies (v. 18): the implicit contrast with Yahweh's coming as a גִּוֹאֵל to the penitents of Zion (v. 20), together with the larger context of the communal lament over sin (59.1-15a), suggests that Yahweh intervenes here against those persisting in injustice and unrighteousness in the Israelite community.¹²⁰ This combination of themes is of a piece with the larger concerns of Isa 56-66, some attention to which must now be given in order to appreciate the full significance of the particular formulation given to this Divine Warrior theophany.

Rolf Rendtorff has argued, in an insightful article, that the use of צְדִיקָה in 56.1 is programmatic for the rest of the book. According to Rendtorff, the first use of this term in this verse, joined with מִשְׁפָּט, connotes right behavior, while the second, joined with יְשׁוּעָה, implies divine salvation or victory; inasmuch as this first sense of "righteousness" overlaps with its use in Isa 1-39 and the second with the use of the term in chs. 40-55, Rendtorff suggests that 56.1 combines the first two major sections of the book in one verse and thus sets the agenda for the last section of Isaiah.¹²¹ This agenda is directly related to the fact that the magnificent promises of chs. 40-55 have not yet fully come into being: Yahweh's salvation is but near, his victory about to be revealed. As Childs writes, the return from Babylon is no longer identified with "the inbreaking of the new age" (as in Isa 40-55), but is "only as illustration, a foretaste, of God's promise, which is increasingly identified with a new creation of heaven and earth (65:17ff)."¹²²

A central concern of these chapters is thus to bring the community into line with this imminent salvation and to exclude those who will not repent of syncretistic Yahwism.¹²³ But a significant development in chs. 56-66 is found in a new division between the true community and those excluded, in partial fulfillment of earlier passages in the book: salvation and inclusion

¹²⁰ See Schramm, *The Opponents of Third Isaiah*, 141.

¹²¹ See Rolf Rendtorff, "Isaiah 56:1 as a Key to the Formation of the Book of Isaiah," in *Canon and Theology* (trans. Margaret Kohl; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993), 181-89.

¹²² Childs, *Isaiah*, 447.

¹²³ Smith, *Rhetoric and Redaction*, 44 and Brooks Schramm, *Opponents*, 82. Schramm has argued persuasively (against the proposal of Paul Hanson in *The Dawn of Apocalyptic* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975]) that the dividing line in Isa 56-66 is between Yahwism which is pure and that which is syncretistic (as opposed to prophetic and priestly groups, as Hanson argues).

in the people of Yahweh comes to those repenting unto righteousness, whether in Israel or among the nations, while judgment will fall on those who persist in unrighteousness, again whether inside ethnic Israel or outside of it.¹²⁴ As a result, Isa 40-55 and 56-66 may be said to address different aspects of the complete restoration of Zion, the former dealing with Yahweh's actions which effect restoration, the latter with the conditions which must be met in order to participate in it.¹²⁵ The central concerns of Isa 56-66 are thus focused on the repentance and righteousness which must attend Yahweh's final victorious intervention and which will allow those righteous to participate in that victory, drawn from Israel and the nations.

Considerations such as these reveal that the description of Yahweh coming, with full recompense, to Zion's penitents (who have, as it were, just confessed their sins in 59.1-15a) fits closely with the larger concerns of chs. 56-66. This larger background also explains the particular armament of the Divine Warrior as *צָרִקָה*, *יְשׁוּעָה* and *גְּמוּלָה*, by which he overcomes and reverses the bemoaned sin of his people and draws a division between those who repent and those who will not. It appears that the same divine intervention which counts as a saving act for some brings recompense to others. The participation of the nations in this action in v. 18 (if the last clause is original), although given negative expression, still conforms to the thought of Isa 56-66.¹²⁶ The fact that Yahweh's appearance specifically involves coming to Zion is also significant: as elsewhere in chs. 56-66, the promises of Yahweh's return to Zion in chs. 40-55 are renewed and slightly altered. Yahweh is still coming, but now his coming will affect a terrible division within Israel. But as in chs. 40-55, this coming is attended by a world-wide display of divine glory.

The contribution of this passage to the larger context is thus discerned in the way in which Yahweh arms himself with salvation and victory in order to overcome the lack of justice and righteousness in the community; the intertextual echoes among the roots *שָׁפַט*, *צָרִק* and *יָשַׁע* extend back across all of chs. 56-59, specifically recalling vv. 4, 9, 11, 14 of ch. 59, as well as 56.1.¹²⁷ In addition, this theophanic appearance also anticipates ch. 60 in an important way. This is seen in the way in which the glorious appearance of Yahweh as he enters Zion in 59.19-20 continues the imagery of light/righteousness and sin/darkness in 58.8-10 and 59.9-11,

¹²⁴ See Smith, *Rhetoric and Redaction*, 206, and Barry Webb, "Zion in Transformation: A Literary Approach to Isaiah," in *The Bible in Three Dimensions*, ed. D. J. A. Clines (JSOTSupp 87; Sheffield: Sheffield, 1990), 65-84.

¹²⁵ See Smith, *Rhetoric and Redaction*, 44, and Christopher Seitz, "Isaiah, Third," *ABD* 3: 503-5.

¹²⁶ See Smith, *Rhetoric and Redaction*, 125.

¹²⁷ See Polan, *Ways of Justice*, 302, 310; Smith, *Rhetoric and Redaction*, 124, 206; Bernard Gosse, "Detournement de la vengeance du Seigneur contre Edom et les nations en Isa 63,1-6," *ZAW* 101 (1990): 107.

imagery which then flows into the light and splendor which attend the vision of Zion's restoration in 60.1-3, 7, 9, 13, 19-22.¹²⁸ Although a variety of roots are used, the language for light develops a consistency over these chapters which encourages a holistic reading. The implication appears to be that, in contrast to the sin and darkness which presently characterizes the community (58.8-10), Yahweh's glorious theophanic entrance into Zion in the sight of the whole world (59.19-20) leads to the command to Zion to arise and shine (60.1), a command given precisely because Yahweh's glory will be seen in the city (v. 2), dispelling the darkness covering all the earth (v. 2) and attracting all the world, who restore to Zion her children and furnish the materials for the temple (vv. 3, 9, etc.).¹²⁹ Indeed, Yahweh's appearance may even signal a new creation as the light of his presence renders the sun and moon obsolete (v. 19; cf. 24.23, 65.17). From this perspective, the one after-effect attending Yahweh's theophany in 59.19 of universal fear before divine glory, in addition to continuing the theme of the world-wide revelation of divine glory from ch. 40, sets the stage for the world-wide pilgrimage to Zion by means of which the city's restoration is realized in ch. 60. Rather than functioning as an invented comparison with natural phenomena in order to emphasize or explore some other aspect of Yahweh's intervention in this passage, the specific image of glorious splendor attending this theophanic manifestation plays an integrally supporting role within the larger vision of Yahweh's return to and restoration of Zion as Warrior and King as Zion shines with Yahweh's own glory. Indeed, it might even be said that Yahweh's theophany essentially accomplishes the salvation which has been lacking in the community, effects the restoration of Zion, and draws the nations to it. But the manifested and visible glory which takes up residence in Zion cannot act as a metaphor.¹³⁰

The theophany of 59.15b-20 is thus profoundly rooted in the larger advance of chs. 56-66 with regard to the issue of righteousness/victory (צִדְקָה), the new division in the community between those apostate in Israel and those repentant among the nations, and the restoration of Zion in chs. 60-62.

¹²⁸ See the same claim in Ronald Clements, "A Light to the Nations," in *Forming Prophetic Literature*, ed. James Watts and Paul House (JSOTSupp 235; Sheffield: Sheffield, 1996), 68.

¹²⁹ Cf. W. A. M. Beuken, "The Main Theme of Trito-Isaiah: 'The Servants of YHWH,'" *JSOT* 47 (1990): 71.

¹³⁰ As claimed by Westermann, who strangely asserts that the old concept of an actual theophany is "almost entirely obliterated" by the image of a star rising in 60.1 (*Isaiah 40-66*, 357), and by Whybray, who sees here a metaphor taken from the sun rising (*Isaiah 40-66*, 230).

Turning our attention once again to the larger sweep of chs. 56-66, we may complete our analysis of this theophanic text by noting the large-scale chiasm which structures these chapters:¹³¹

- A. The world-wide gathering of Yahweh's people at Zion (56.1-8)
- B. Judgment against the wicked and promises for the righteous (56.9-58.14)
- C. Lament over sin and confession (59.1-15a)
- D. Yahweh's intervention as divine warrior (59.15b-21)
- E. Yahweh's complete restoration of Zion (60.1-62.12)
- D'. Yahweh's intervention as divine warrior (63.1-6)
- C'. Lament over sin and confession (63.7-64.11)
- B'. Judgment against the wicked and promises for the righteous (65.1-66.17)
- A'. The world-wide gathering of Yahweh's people at Zion (66.18-24)

While this chiastic structure should not blind us to the mounting climax which unfolds in the last chapters—note how repentance appears to be a live option in chs. 56-59, while the lines between the righteous and wicked have hardened in chs. 65-66¹³²—it does throw into sharp relief the significant locations of theophanic texts in this section of the book of Isaiah: Yahweh's theophanic warfare in 59.15b-21 and 63.1-6 not only surrounds the chiastic climax of Zion's restoration (chs. 60-62), it also seals off the threats of judgment against those excluding themselves from the community in 66.15-17, as well as introducing the final display of divine glory in Zion in 66.18-24. It is to this final theophanic intervention which we now turn.

“Behold, Yahweh will Come in Fire” (66.15-17)

- 15) For behold, Yahweh comes in fire, and כִּי־הִנֵּה יְהוָה בָּאֵשׁ יָבוֹא
וְכִסּוּפָה מְרַכְבְּתָיו
his chariots, like the stormwind,
to requite his anger in hot fury, his roar in flames וְנִעַרְתּוּ בְלֶהֱבֵיאֵשׁ
לְהָשִׁיב בְּחִמָּה אָפוּ
of fire.
- 16) For by fire Yahweh executes judgment, כִּי בָאֵשׁ יְהוָה נִשְׁפָּט
וּבְחַרְבוֹ אֶת־כָּל־בָּשָׂר
and by his sword, on all flesh;
and many will be the slain of Yahweh— וְרַבּוֹ חַלְלֵי יְהוָה
- 17) those sanctifying themselves הַמְתַּקְדְּשִׁים וְהַמְטַהְרִים אֶל־הַגַּנּוֹת
אַחַר אַחַר בְּתוֹךְ
and cleansing themselves (to go) to the gardens
after one in the midst,¹³³

¹³¹ I am indebted on this point to Oswalt, *Isaiah: 40-66*, 462; see also Goldingay, *Isaiah*, 14; Lack, *La Symbolique de Livre d'Isaïe*, 125.

¹³² Mathews, *Defending Zion*, 85, note 47.

¹³³ In favor of retaining the MT on this difficult phrase, see Joseph Blenkinsopp, “The One in the Middle: A Study of a ‘Pagan’ Ritual in Isaiah 66:17,” in *Reading from Right to Left: Essays on the Hebrew Bible*

those eating pig's flesh, and abominations, and
the mice,
will be destroyed together, says Yahweh.

אֲכָלֵי בֶּשֶׂר הַחֲזִיר וְהַשֶּׁקֶץ וְהָעֵבֶבֶר
יִחָדוּ יִסָּפוּ נְאֻם־יְהוָה

Although it is easy to separate the appearance of the Divine Warrior in v. 15 from the preceding promises of restoration, little else concerning the overall structure of Isa 66 is certain, for while the chapter is sometimes divided (not without justification) according to vv. 1-4, 5-17, and 18-24,¹³⁴ this division is often not followed.¹³⁵ Although this disagreement urges caution on the matter, the present discussion proceeds under a division according to vv. 1-6, 7-14, 15-17, and 18-24,¹³⁶ the first section centering on judgment against syncretistic Yahwism within Israel and climaxing in v. 6, and the final clause of v. 14 functioning as a transition to v. 15-17. On this reading, the final section stands in chiasmic parallel to 56.1-8. Although many commentators have been unsure about the placement of v. 17, it is probably best understood as joining the judgment of vv. 15-16 to the syncretistic practices condemned throughout ch. 65 and in 66.1-6.¹³⁷

Regardless of the ambiguities relating to structure, Yahweh's theophany is clearly seen in his coming (v. 15). Furthermore, he comes as a warrior, in fiery manifestation, with sword and chariots.¹³⁸ Although none of the expected cosmic convulsions are recorded in response to Yahweh's theophany, various connections in the text show that its effects are felt far beyond the confines of vv. 15-17. Because these connections take on increasingly complex significance as we reach the end of the book of Isaiah, it will be most helpful first to consider the links between vv. 15-17 and the rest of ch. 66, then chs. 56-66, and then for the rest of the book. Although it is impossible exhaustively to catalogue here all of the intertextual echoes which unite chs. 65-66 and tie them to the rest of the major sections of the book, tracing some of the major links will

in Honour of David J. A. Clines, ed. J. Cheryl Exum and H. G. M. Williamson (JSOTSupp 373; Sheffield: Sheffield, 2003), 63-64. While the LXX completely re-translates as "in the doors" (in parallel with "to the gardens"), the Vulgate directly reflects MT; the Peshitta and Targum do so indirectly, reading respectively "one after one in the midst" and "company after company."

¹³⁴ Childs, *Isaiah*, 533. Proponents of this schema point to the introductory formula of v. 5, the link of 66.4 back to 65.12, 14, and the envelope of divine judgment of vv. 5-6 and 15-16 which surrounds vv. 7-14.

¹³⁵ Smith, for instance, divides according to vv. 1-4, 5-9, 10-14, and 15-17, according to the three imperatives concerning hearing, seeing, and beholding (*Rhetoric and Redaction*, 162-63); see the plethora of other proposals listed by Oswalt, *Isaiah 40-66*, 665, note 13. Hanson's proposal that the old forms of judgment and salvation oracles are being mixed together here is worth noting (*Dawn*, 162-63).

¹³⁶ See the slightly different formulation in Oswalt, *Isaiah 40-66*, 665.

¹³⁷ Smith, *Rhetoric and Redaction*, 129-30.

¹³⁸ Does the plural form refer to the chariots of the hosts accompanying him? The Divine Warrior could easily be accompanied in this way, but if this is the case here, the text does not expand on this more fully.

help to show the contextual suitability for the exact form given to theophanic intervention as well as its status as mythic symbol, as opposed to a series of metaphors.

Two major links tie the theophany of 66.15-17 to the rest of ch. 66. First, the judgment announced against apostate Israelites in vv. 1-6 climaxes with a crashing roar (קול שׁוֹן, v. 6) as Yahweh executes recompense to these enemies from his temple. The language, related to the use of thunder as a weapon, is clearly theophanic (note the language of divine appearance in v. 5), but the description of divine execution of judgment is not further elaborated. Although there are no explicit echoes between v. 6 and vv. 15-17, the fact that both show Yahweh's judgment of syncretistic, merely outward forms of worship implies that v. 6 constitutes a provisional fulfillment of the final division within the community which is implicit from 65.1 onwards—a provisional fulfillment which is then fully realized in 66.15-17.¹³⁹ Yahweh's theophany thus effects the final division between faithful and apostate which is spelled out throughout chs. 65-66.

The second major link within ch. 66 has to do with the final vision of vv. 18-24,¹⁴⁰ especially with regard to its repeated references to all nations seeing Yahweh's glory and worshipping in his presence in a purified Zion (vv. 18, 19, 23). It appears that Yahweh comes to stay in vv. 15-24, his entrance on the human scene in v. 15 leading to his permanent installation as king on Mt. Zion. This connection between vv. 15-17 and 18-24 is further significant in light of the profound role which the *Chaoskampf* theme plays in this connection. Note, in this regard, how Yahweh's judgment by fire and sword slays many in v. 16, while v. 24 depicts the corpses of those slain rebels as suffering unquenchable fire.¹⁴¹ Moreover, the perfect restoration of the temple in an unbreakable cycle of pure worship in a new creation counts as the ultimate defeat of evil and restoration of order, under holy divine rule, from the cosmic center.¹⁴² It is as if the reality of divine presence in vv. 15-16 infuses the new creation, the fire of Yahweh's judgment continually burning against those slain, but his glorious presence continually available to his worshippers (vv. 22-24).

¹³⁹ See Smith, *Rhetoric and Redaction*, 130, 165-66.

¹⁴⁰ Of course, if the *בְּאֵהָרָה* of v. 18 is emended with to the LXX and Vulgate to *בְּאֵהָרָה*, it would count as a rather obvious link with Yahweh's coming in v. 15. The versions are, however, probably simplifying this difficult verse rather than offering a better reading. The MT is best understood as implying that "the time is coming," in connection with Isa 27.6, Jere 51.33, Ezek 39.8 (Douglas McC. L. Judisch, "Isaiah 66.18," *CTQ* 59 [1995]: 231).

¹⁴¹ Edwin Webster, "A Rhetorical Study of Isaiah 66," *JSOT* 34 (1986): 102.

¹⁴² See Smith, *Rhetoric and Redaction*, 170, and Jon Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 89-90. As Levenson notes, there is a calculated ambiguity between the new temple and the new creation, since the temple counts as a microcosm of creation.

The fluid progression from Yahweh's entrance in vv. 15-16 and installation in vv. 18-24 is also highly significant for the role which vv. 18-24 play with regard to the book as a whole. Without in any way being comprehensive on this issue, it should be noted that Yahweh's final theophanic intervention and installation in glory in Zion fulfills the division within the community which was introduced in 56.1-8 and proleptically described in other places, such as 59.15b-20.¹⁴³ It also fulfills the promises of 40.5 with regard to Yahweh's coming to Zion and all flesh beholding his glory. Finally, it has often been pointed out how the condemnation of merely formal worship in 1.10-20 and the vision of a purifying judgment of Zion which brings an end to idolatry in 1.27-31 is also fulfilled here.¹⁴⁴

The import of these macro-structural links is to throw into relief the harmony in the exact expression given to Yahweh's theophany in relation to its contribution to ch. 66 as a whole. The images describing Yahweh's theophanic warfare and installation as King on Zion cannot count as metaphor, for their connection to other non-metaphorical themes is too tight. Furthermore, they support those themes not by means of comparison between two unrelated entities, for it is exactly the images of combat by sword and fire which in themselves contribute to this expression of the *Chaoskampf* ("and many will be the slain of Yahweh," v. 16). Not even the statement that Yahweh's chariots are like the stormwind lessens the fully mythic impact of this passage, for, just as with the image of a warrior in 42.13, this simile stands very close to the reality it describes. This is the case because Yahweh roars in the midst of his warfare in v. 15, an action perfectly consonant with theophanic storm warfare. Metaphorical interpretation of these images destroys this prophetic expectation of an utterly real, final, and permanent manifestation of Yahweh, as judge and king, in Zion.¹⁴⁵

Conclusion

This chapter has surveyed the descriptions of Yahweh's theophanic intervention as a Divine Warrior with an aim towards showing the organic relationship and larger coherence between the imagery which describes divine appearance and the reaction to it and the *Chaoskampf* myth. Although a few more texts from the book of Isaiah will be discussed in

¹⁴³ Seitz, "Isaiah, Third," *ABD* 3: 504; Smith, *Rhetoric and Redaction*, 171, 206-7.

¹⁴⁴ On the relation of ch. 66 to ch. 1 generally, see Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-4*, 22-23; idem, "Prophetic Exegesis in Isaiah 65-66," in *Writing and Reading the Scroll of Isaiah*, ed. Craig C. Broyles and Craig A. Evans [vol. 1 *Writing and Reading the Scroll of Isaiah*, ed. Craig Broyles and Craig Evans; VTSupp 70; Leiden: Brill, 1997], 464-65; David Carr, "Reaching for Unity in Isaiah," *JSOT* 57 (1993): 74; Anthony Tomasino, "Isaiah 1.1-2.4 and 63-66, and the Composition of the Isaianic Corpus," *JSOT* 57 (1993): 81-98. Many more passages from Isa 1-39 could be added on this score (see, e.g., Sweeney, "Prophetic Exegesis," 467-68).

¹⁴⁵ Seitz, "Isaiah, Third," *ABD* 3:506.

chapter five below, it has been repeatedly shown that these theophanic images do not function as metaphors, but rather support the theme of the defeat of chaos and renewal of divine rule, often specifying the results of such intervention. The next chapter will turn to another section of the prophetic corpus, the Book of the Twelve, to submit the Divine Warrior theophanies found therein to the same analysis.

Chapter 4
Theophany and *Chaoskampf* in the Book of the Twelve

Having completed our study of Divine Warrior theophanies in Isaiah, we continue our investigation by turning to the same theme in the Book of the Twelve.

Yahweh will Roar from Zion (Joel 4.15-17)

- 15) The sun and moon will grow dark, and the stars will gather in their brightness. שָׁמֶשׁ וְיָרַח קָדְרוּ וְכּוֹכְבִים אָסְפוּ נְגִהֵם
- 16) Yahweh will roar from Zion, from Jerusalem will he thunder, and the heavens and earth will shake. וְיִהְיֶה מִצִּיּוֹן יִשְׁאַג וּמִירוּשָׁלַם יִתֵּן קוֹלוֹ וְרָעְשׁוּ שָׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ
- But Yahweh will be a refuge for his people, a stronghold for the people of Israel. וְיִהְיֶה מַחְסֵה לְעַמּוֹ וּמְעוּז לְבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל
- 17) Then you will know that I am Yahweh your God, dwelling on Zion, my holy mountain. וִידַעְתֶּם כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם שֹׁכֵן בְּצִיּוֹן הַר־קֹדְשִׁי
- Jerusalem will be holy, and strangers will never pass through it again. וְהָיְתָה יְרוּשָׁלַם קֹדֶשׁ וְזָרִים לֹא־יַעְבְּרוּבָּה עוֹד

While only vv. 15-16 in Joel 4 directly concern theophany,¹ they are embedded in a larger context detailing Yahweh’s gathering of and attack on the nations which violated his people in exile. James Nogalski has convincingly argued that this chapter is structured in a chiasm, according to which the central themes of the chapter are introduced in vv. 1-3: imminent restoration (v. 1), judgment against the nations (v. 2), and the slavery of Yahweh’s people (v. 3). These three themes are then unfolded in greater detail in reverse order (the slavery of Yahweh’s people in vv. 4-8, the judgment of the nations in vv. 9-17, and restoration in vv. 18-21).² This chiasm also shows a progression in thought, in which the introduction (vv. 1-3) leads to the

¹ While the MT of the last clause of v. 11 may also appear to call for theophanic intervention (הִנְחַח), “Send down your warriors, Yahweh”, a clipped request directed at Yahweh in the middle of the summoning of the nations (vv. 9-14) is strange; the versions also diverge on this clause. Allen reads with the LXX (“let the timid man become a hero” [*The Books of Joel, Obadiah, Jonah and Micah* [NICOT; London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1976], 107; cf. *BHS* 11c]), while Wolff, understanding the original form to be from חָח and with Targum and the Vulgate, reads “that Yahweh may shatter your heroes” (*Joel and Amos* [trans. Waldemar Janzen, et. al.; Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977], 73).
² *Redactional Processes in the Book of the Twelve* (BZAW 218; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1993), 5.

reasons for summons (vv. 4-8), the actual summons and battle (vv. 9-17), and the blessed results of that battle (vv. 18-21).

The themes of theophanic divine warfare against chaos are easy to spot: with the tumultuous nations gathered roundabout (הַמְּוֹנִים, v. 14), Yahweh roars from Zion, to cosmic effect, in defeat of his enemies (vv. 15-16). The sanctity and security of his dwelling in the cosmic center thus assured “on that day,” the cosmos reverberates with supernal fertility, while the nations suffer utter desolation (vv. 18-21).³ Fully in keeping with the complex pattern of allusions which echo among the various passages of this book, vv. 9-17 and 18-21 recall and provide resolution to earlier passages in several important ways. First, instead of roaring against his own city at the head of his army (2.1-11), Yahweh roars against the nations from Zion, where they have been gathered to be judged.⁴ This allusion to 2.1-11 also probably explains why it is stated that the holiness of Jerusalem will be undefiled by strangers passing through, for the earlier passage describes at great length the approach (2.3-6) and penetration (vv. 7-9) of the invading army. Second, while the earlier “army” of locusts resulted in agricultural desolation, Yahweh’s victory here results in abundance for Zion (אֶפְיָקִי and מִיָּם, v. 18, are used only elsewhere in the book at 1.20, and the new wine [עֵסִים] v. 18 is mentioned only elsewhere at 1.5). Furthermore, Zion’s former desolation is inflicted upon the nations (שָׁמָּה מְדִבָּר in v. 19 exactly echoes the effects of Yahweh’s first attack in 2.3).⁵ The use of the recognition formula before the description of the blessed fertility of Yahweh’s reign also recalls its only other use in the book at 2.27, following a description of the fertility which follows repentance. Yahweh’s final victory and reign on Zion thus provide the climax to the book; indeed, the enduring stability of Yahweh’s people which results from this victory (לְדָוִד וְדָוִד לְעוֹלָם and לְדָוִד וְדָוִד, 4.20) is expressed precisely in the terms used to describe the incomparable nature of the calamity dealt with in chs. 1-2 (1.3, 2.2).

³ It is just as well to note that, while Yahweh’s theophanic intervention is associated with the Day of Yahweh in Joel, specific issues regarding the origin and evolution of the concept of the Day of Yahweh do not effect the above attempt to interpret the imagery attending divine battle, for, even though occurring “on that day,” the same harmony between the *Chaoskampf* and the imagery surrounding it will become apparent as the book is surveyed. (Issues regard the origin and development of the concept of the Day of the Lord are, in any case, quite vexed; see the discussion and bibliography of Kevin Cathcart, “Day of Yahweh,” *ABD* 2:84-85)

⁴ Ferdinand Deist, “Parallels and Reinterpretation in the Book of Joel: A Theology of the Yom Yahweh?” in *Text and Context: Old Testament and Semitic Studies for F. C. Fensham*, ed. W. Claassen (JSOTSupp 48; Sheffield: Sheffield, 1988), 71.

⁵ See the further parallels in James Nogalski, “Intertextuality and the Twelve,” in *Forming Prophetic Literature: Essays on Isaiah and the Twelve in Honor of John D. W. Watts*, ed. James Watts and Paul House (JSOTSupp 235; Sheffield: Sheffield, 1996), 102-24, 111, note 23.

The passage under investigation is thus tightly connected to the rest of the book. However, the intention informing the choice of the darkening of sun, moon and stars and the shaking of heavens and earth as the specific effects of Yahweh's theophany in vv. 15-16 is not immediately clear. Why were these two images chosen from the stock of typical reactions to divine appearance, and how are they to be interpreted? The use of identical imagery in 3.4 and 2.10-11 (the latter showing even identical phrasing) suggests that, just as with the other allusions across the book, following these associations will provide a promising context for interpretation. Due to the complex design of the book, however, some account must be given of the structure of the whole; this will help to shed light on the specific use of each instance of the repeated imagery of darkness and trembling.

With regard to the structure of the book of Joel, Allen has noted that some ambiguity obtains according to whether or not form or content counts as the primary criteria: with regard to content, chs. 3-4 appear noticeably different from chs. 1-2, while formally the promises and assurances from 2.18 onward answer the laments of 1.2-2.17.⁶ The recognition formula in 2.27 and 4.17 speaks in favor of the first option, but the change from lament to comfort and promise probably counts as the more significant hinge of the book, subsuming these two recognition formulas into a larger construction in which the agricultural desolation of 1.2-20 is answered in 2.18-27, while the spiritual concerns of 3.1-5 and 4.1-21 speak respectively to 2.12-17 and 2.1-11.⁷ A quasi-chiastic pattern results, so that the locust plague and drought in 1.2-20 (A), interpreted as but a precursor to a more ominous assault in 2.1-11 (B), stimulates repentance in 2.12-17 (C). This repentance is answered by the repairing of the covenant relationship in fertility and blessing in 2.18-27 (A'), the deepening and renewal of the covenant relationship in 3.1-5 (C'), leading to security amidst the final assault on Jerusalem in 4.1-21 (B'). Two sections detailing spiritual restoration (3.1-5 and 4.1-21) thus follow material blessing (2.18-27). The first and last section of the second half of the book both conclude with the recognition formula as new-found knowledge of Yahweh arises from the reversal of the people's desolation. While the change in language and ideas from chs. 1-2 and 3-4 is still striking, the major transition of the book should not be placed here, for the latter two chapters continue the idea of security already introduced in 2.17-28 by means of a transition from agricultural to spiritual blessing, one which is made with ease in other parts of the OT (e.g., Isa 32.15-20 and 44.1-5).⁸

⁶ *Joel*, 39.

⁷ See Wolff, *Joel*, 7, and Allen, *Joel*, 40.

⁸ Allen, *Joel*, 40-41.

The first occurrence of the images of cosmic trembling and darkness is thus found in Yahweh's assault on his own city, prefigured by the locust plague of ch. 1, in 2.1-11. This passage contains a chiasm of four parts, all but the first beginning with a form of פָּנָה: the announcement of the Day of the approaching army (vv. 1-2; A), the appearance of the army (vv. 3-6; B), the penetration of the army (vv. 7-9; B'), and the effects of the Day as cosmic trembling and darkness (vv. 10-11; A'). The first of these, the shaking of heaven and earth, is explicitly related in this passage to Yahweh's thunderous roar at the head of his army; Yahweh is here engaging in battle against his own city. The second effect of the theophany in vv. 10-11, the image of darkness, while not common in the *Chaoskampf*, finds two subtle associations elsewhere in the passage which gives clues to its meaning.

First, while the MT of v. 2 shows that the army which Yahweh leads is spread out on the hills כְּשֶׁחָר, "like the dawn," strong arguments favor emending slightly to כְּשֶׁחָרָה, "like darkness." While the MT is not impossible and has the support of the versions, it is more likely that the original comparison would have been to a swarm of locusts which blot out the horizon than to one which lightens it⁹ (note also Exod 10.19 in this regard). The image of darkness is found again in the second clause of v. 6, which reads that, in addition to writhing before Yahweh's army, "every face gathers its brightness" (כָּל־פָּנִים קִבְּצוּ פָּארוֹר). While the meaning of פָּארוֹר is not certain (it only occurs elsewhere in an almost identical phrase in Nah 2.11) and the phrase is translated in different ways in the versions, the similarity with regard to the verb in the last clause of v. 10 suggests a similar idea is in play.¹⁰ It appears that, just as the locust plague of ch. 1 suggests to the prophet a future and more ominous assault on Jerusalem, so the darkness created by the cloud of insects spreads, in this vision of the future, from the encroaching army, to those attacked, to creation itself. Little wonder that Yahweh's Day is a day

⁹ See Allen, *Joel*, 74.

¹⁰ The phrase is certainly a difficult one, since it is not clear whether the noun is to be derived from פָּאָר, "to glorify," or פָּרוֹר, "a pot" (see Wolff, *Joel*, 38) and whether קִבֵּץ (Piel) refers to gathering together in the sense of "concentrating" or in the sense of gathering so that no brightness can be seen. The versions tend to translate according to the root פָּרוֹר, but do so in different ways: LXX has ὡς πρὸς ἀκαυμά χύτρας, "as the burning of a pot;" Vulgate has "gathered in a pot;" the Syriac reads "black as the heating of a pot;" Targum reads אֶהְפָּאוּ אֶחָדָא אֶחָדָא כְּקִדְרָא "covered with a covering of blackness like a pot." The LXX thus interprets in terms of an image of brightness, while Targum and the Peshitta, even though translating with the same word, understand it to refer to darkness. This ambiguity is resolved, however, by the use of the parallel verb אָסַף in v. 10, for while both אָסַף and קִבֵּץ refer elsewhere in the OT to gathering together (which would favor a translation of "grow flushed/bright"), v. 10 clearly refers to darkness, which, in turn, suggests a similar reading for v. 6. Gesenius also notes that a *qāṭlūl* form for nouns is possible (he cites שֶׁפָּרוֹר and נֶאֱפָרָה as parallel examples; see 84m), which would point to the root פָּאָר and imply that the brightness of faces is being withdrawn in this phrase. These considerations justify interpreting the phrase in terms of darkness.

of deep darkness (2.1)! The darkening of the heavens is thus associated with the menacing and unstoppable advance of Yahweh at the head of his army in this passage and the certain defeat they will inflict—exactly the implication of the shaking of heavens and earth.

A similar association is made in the second occurrence of the image of cosmic darkness in 3.4. While no reference to cosmic shaking is given here, the changing of the sun to darkness and the moon to blood on Yahweh's Day does strongly recall 2.10-11. The image is presented in a chiasmic form, so that those wonders (מוֹפְתִים) pertaining to the earth are presented in the second clause of v. 3, and those to heaven in the first two clauses of v. 4.¹¹ Both Allen and Wolff convincingly interpret the middle set of this chiasm, the signs given in earth of blood, fire and columns of smoke, as relating to war.¹² While the significance the darkening of the sun and moon is less clear, the fact that the moon changes to blood ties the darkening of the skies to the imagery of warfare in the first part of the line. It is as if the imagery describing the מוֹפְתִים בְּאֶרֶץ infects the מוֹפְתִים בַּשָּׁמַיִם, as if we are to imagine the burning which accompanies the conquests of war as blocking out the sun, the blood spilt as shading the moon with its own color. These portents of war, however, only act as precursors to Yahweh's Day. As in 2.2, the threatening nature of this Day is stated; but the promise of refuge on Zion on that Day in 3.5 counts as a marked contrast to Yahweh's assault in 2.1-11, which affords no escape (פְּלִיטָה) is used in both 2.3 and 3.5 and nowhere else in the book). Whence this reversal?

Wolff plausibly answers this question by noting the outpouring the divine רוּחַ in 3.1, interpreting it as "the establishment of a new, vigorous life through God's unreserved giving of himself" in contrast to the natural weakness of "flesh" (cf. Isa 31.3).¹³ But this divine outpouring, as Wolff rightly notes, has not so much to do with enabling obedience, as in Ezek 36, as much as with renewed knowledge of Yahweh; inasmuch as dreams and visions are accepted modes of revelation (cf. Num 12.6), the implication is that this new knowledge of Yahweh will be as immediate and direct as it is widespread.¹⁴ This new spiritual knowledge is significant not only as another dimension to Yahweh's blessing in 2.18-27, but also in relation to the מוֹפְתִים of vv. 3-4, since such wonders always contain a revelatory dimension.¹⁵ The sequence of thought appears to be that, since humanity has been endowed with the divine spirit, it can recognize the signs preceding the Day, call for refuge, and receive it. The imagery of

¹¹ Wolff, *Joel*, 68.

¹² Allen, *Joel*, 101, and Wolff, *Joel*, 68.

¹³ *Joel*, 66. Nogalski also rightly notes the connection between 3.1-5 and ch. 2, such that a positive response to the call to repentance sets in motion the blessings of chs. 3-4 (*Redactional Processes*, 5, 44).

¹⁴ Wolff, *Joel*, 66. As Wolff notes, the thought is similar to Jere 31.31-33.

¹⁵ This is true in the use of the term in Exodus (e.g., Exod 7.3-5), Deuteronomy (e.g., Duet 4.34), and other prophetic books (e.g., Ezek 24.24-27; see Paul Kruger, "mōpēt," *NIDOTTE* 2:880).

earthquake and darkness has the same content—certain defeat in war—but takes on an opposite nuance, due to the gift of the divine רִיחַ.

In light of its use elsewhere in the book of Joel, the darkening of the sky and shaking of heavens and earth as a result of Yahweh's thunderous assault in 4.15-17 should be understood in relation to the last line of v. 16 and its statement of divine refuge, so that the adversative *waw* beginning the line is given strong emphasis: even though the signs of Yahweh's warfare are over their heads, Yahweh's people will find a refuge during his assault. In other words, while the darkness and shaking in 2.10-11 implied the unstoppable nature of Yahweh's assault on Jerusalem, because of the change described in the first passage detailing spiritual blessing (3.1-5), these images now describe the assault against the armies gathered around Zion. Identical content is applied in opposite ways with regard to Yahweh's people as one moves from lament to promise in the book, from the Divine Warrior's destruction of his own dwelling to its utter security and sanctity. The cosmic shaking and darkness which attend Yahweh's theophany are thus seen to be more significant than images used in a metaphorical comparison highlighting divine power, for they support and help to express the symbolic tapestry which composes the book. If these images are only metaphors for divine power, then the actual accomplishment of the defense of Zion and the defeat of the nations is left unexplained, for this victory is not achieved merely because Yahweh is powerful, but because he engages in conflict with the nations. Furthermore, if taken from their context in the larger symbolic narrative of Joel, cosmic shaking and darkness are so general as images that it is not clear why they would be chosen as a striking and productive comparison with some other aspect of Yahweh's person or action. Cosmic shaking and darkness are no more metaphorical than the plague, drought, disaster and war which began the book or the security, fecundity and covenant union which ends it. And it is the divine defeat of chaos, by means of the storm weapons of the Divine Warrior, which unifies them all.

“From Zion Yahweh Roars” (Amos 1.2)

2) From Zion Yahweh roars, from Jerusalem he thunders;	וּמִירוּשָׁלַם יִתֵּן קוֹלוֹ	יְהוָה מִצִּיּוֹן יִשְׁאָג
the pastures of the shepherds mourn, and the height of Carmel withers.	וַיִּבֶשׂ רֹאשׁ הַכַּרְמֶל	וְאִבְלוֹ נְאוֹת הָרְעִים

Yahweh thunders from his throne in Amos 1.2, his direct presence as clearly implied in the first line as is the desolating effect of his attack in the second. As many commentators have

pointed out, the second line of v. 2 implies a merism which contains all fruitful areas of nature.¹⁶ This image of desolation probably does not, however, count as a metaphor, since thunder would connote the renewing effect of rainstorms for pasturelands and fertile areas; not their withering. This contradiction between the fields of associations of these two concepts is often noted.¹⁷ Both Soggin and Weiss, for instance, understand the verse as a deliberately contradictory metaphor, in line with other surprising claims which the prophet makes about Yahweh and Israel's history.¹⁸ Andersen and Freedman explain the tension by claiming that Yahweh's voice has here been demythologized, so that the images need not be expected to be coherent.¹⁹ But surely Yahweh's thundering is more felicitously contextualized within other ANE mythic ideas and images of divine warfare—ideas and images by no means remote to the book (note, for instance, the hymns of 4.13, 5.8, 9.5-6). If this is the case, however, why would the particular image of the desolation of the most fruitful of areas be used in this particular context?

The strongly probable claim that 1.2 counts as something of a motto or summary for the book²⁰ suggests that the entire book must be perused in order to answer this question. Such a survey reveals, however, that theophanically executed judgment, resulting in desolation in the earth, receives frequent hints throughout the book but is not fully described until the last chapter. Initially, of course, it might be expected that one need look no further than the unrelenting words of judgment against Judah, Israel and the surrounding nations in 1.3-2.16 to find the specific application of this theophanic image; and it should be admitted that the words which Yahweh speaks against the nations naturally come to be associated with his roaring in 1.2.²¹ This association is made all the stronger by the sinister comparison between a lion's roaring over its prey and Yahweh's prophetically mediated word in 3.8 (see also 3.12), emphasizing the certainty with which the divine word of judgment will come to pass.²² Furthermore, Yahweh's action against the nations sometimes takes on theophanic overtones, such as in 1.14, where a fire is

¹⁶ See, for instance, John Hayes, *Amos, The Eight-Century Prophet* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1988), 65.

¹⁷ See J. Alberto Soggin (*The Prophet Amos: A Translation and Commentary* [trans. John Bowden; London: SCM, 1987], 29); Andersen and Freedman (*Amos* [AB 24; New York: Doubleday, 1989], 225); and Meir Weiss ("Methodologisches über die Behandlung der Metapher," *TZ* 23 [1967]: 6-11).

¹⁸ See Soggin, *Amos*, 29, as well as Weiss, "Behandlung," 11; Hayes, *Amos*, 63; James Mays, *Amos* (OTL; London: SCM, 1969), 22.

¹⁹ *Amos*, 25.

²⁰ See Shalom Paul, *Amos* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 36, note 39. A variety of opinions are possible concerning the relation of this summary to 1.1 and their redactional history (see Hayes, *Amos*, 55-56).

²¹ As Hayes notes, 1.2 creates expectations about God and his action which are unfolded in 1.3-2.16 (*Amos*, 66; see also Gerhard Pfeifer, "Denkformenanalyse als exegetische Methode," *ZAW* 88 [1976]: 70).

²² The fact that the lion's roar in 3.4, 8 clearly is a metaphor does not, of course, dilute the mythic quality of the Divine Warrior's roar in 1.2, even though, at the level of the final form of the book, we are meant to read the two together.

kindled against the wall of Rabbah in the midst of a tempest and storm (בִּסְעֵר בְּיּוֹם סוּפָה; cf. 5.9 for an image which is similarly amenable to theophanic intervention, but not developed). These connections to 1.2 are only hints, however; Yahweh does not actually appear in 1.3-2.16 at the head of the army attacking these places, as in Isa 13.1-13. Furthermore, the sentencing of the nations is not expressed in terms of natural desolation, but rather in relation to military defeat and exile. As a result, the reaction to Yahweh's theophanic roar in 1.2 does not naturally find application specifically within these indictments.²³

Further undeveloped hints of theophanic judgment are found in chs. 4-6 and 7-8, where Yahweh's judgment of Israel in military defeat and exile is frequently tied to natural disasters. In 4.6-13, for instance, Israel's recalcitrance in the face of divinely ordained natural catastrophe (the root יבש occurs in 1.2 and 4.7 and nowhere else in the book) climaxes with a direct visitation from God (לְקִרְאֵת אֱלֹהֵיךָ, v. 12). This passage, however, has nothing more to say about Yahweh's presence and any reaction it might cause. Yahweh also threatens in 5.17 to pass through the midst of his people (בְּקִרְבְּךָ) to great mourning (אבל, echoing 1.2); significantly enough, the text then goes on to speak of the Day of Yahweh (5.18-20). But while such a context would easily accommodate a theophanic description, the reader is given nothing more than hints about this, even though the image of 1.2 is clearly being put to use.

The same could be said for the images of natural desiccation under divine judgment which continue in chs. 7-8, even though this withering is pictured on a cosmic scale and takes on a note of finality as one draws near to the end of the book. These chapters contain two still-undeveloped hints of theophanic intervention which involve natural desolation as Yahweh first claims that he will not again pass through his people (7.8 and 8.2, echoing 5.17). Second, Yahweh's judgment causes an earthquake in 8.7-8, to the mourning of all the inhabitants of the earth (v. 10, widening the perspective of 1.2 even while repeating the root אבל).

As the reader reaches the final chapter of the book, however, the themes normally associated with theophany and the defeat of chaos begin to receive fuller expression. This is first seen in the unity of thought of 9.1-6. The divine appearance in 9.1 constitutes a most interesting variation to the usual description of theophany: instead of shaking the earth from his temple, Yahweh appears in his temple to his prophet, who participates in making the entrance to the temple itself shake. Clearly, with the destruction of the temple imminent (v. 1), no part of the cosmos is safe for Israel—not even captivity in exile (v. 4). Inasmuch as the temple is both

²³ It is worth noting that Targum interprets the second line of 1.2 in such a way as to tie it explicitly to 1.3-2.16, reading ויצדון מדורי מלכיא ויחרב תקף כרכיהון "the dwellings of kings will wither, and the strength of their fortifications will be ruined."

the center of the cosmos and symbolically contains all the cosmos within itself, Yahweh's dismantling of his own temple naturally leads to a complete lack of security anywhere else in the cosmos. The connection of vv. 1-4 with the poetic statements concerning the destruction of creation in vv. 5-6 is, as a result, very strong (the second line of v. 6 is especially striking in its reversal of the picture of creation given in Ps 104.6-7).

Within this description of cosmic destruction in vv. 5-6, however, a single line strikes a different note, wherein Yahweh builds his מִעֲלֹתָיו in the heavens, and founds his אֲנָדָתוֹ on the earth (v. 6). In a helpful article, Reinhard Messner and Martin Lang have discussed the implications of this line, arguing that the root אָנַד essentially refers to binding something together (in Akkadian, the root can refer to an architectural structure) and that the line as a whole refers, *pars pro toto*, to the temple (note again Ps 104.2-3 in this regard).²⁴ The reason why the "steps" and "vault" are singled out is that they serve a "binding" function; they attach what Yahweh is dismantling in judgment. The implication of this nuance is to give an isolated and slightly ambiguous statement of cosmic restoration in the midst of total judgment: while the temple and earth shake and melt (vv. 1, 5) in destruction under Yahweh's hand, Yahweh is the one who builds his heavenly temple, founding it on the earth (v. 6).²⁵ The chiasmic structure of 6a, as opposed to the sequential unfolding of the surrounding verses, nicely mirrors the content of the line.²⁶

How this cosmic restoration is actually worked out is, as mentioned above, ambiguous from the perspective of vv. 1-6. But what is hinted at in vv. 1-6 receives explicit and full treatment in vv. 11-12, where the Davidic tabernacle is rebuilt. Appropriate to this rebuilding of the divine sanctuary is the cosmic intensity of the agricultural fertility which follows in v. 13, for, as in other examples of the *Chaoskampf*, a (re-)built and fully-functioning sanctuary acts as a center from which creation is renewed. The desolation caused by divine judgment and introduced programmatically in 1.2 finally gives way to blessing in these verses. The connection between 1.2 and 9.11-15 is strengthened by the status of the latter verses as a kind of epilogue to the book.²⁷ We thus see how the initial image of agricultural desolation before Yahweh's theophany in the introductory verse of the book is put to specific (if clipped) use in the descriptions of Yahweh's judgment throughout the book, even as this withering and mourning in nature takes on cosmic proportions in later chapters—and is then finally reversed on an equally

²⁴ "Gott erbaut sein himmlisches Heiligtum: Zur Bedeutung von אֲנָדָתוֹ in Amos 9,6," *Bib* 82 (2001): 93-98.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 95-98.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 96.

²⁷ Paul, *Amos*, 288.

to elicit repentance (even though the door to do so is still open, as Amos 5.4-6, 14-15 [echoing Joel 2.12-14] make plain).³²

Surprisingly, however, although Amos ends with the same supernal fecundity under Yahweh's renewed reign, there is, in contrast with Joel, no indication in the book that the people have repented. As Paul House writes, the implication of this omission may be that even if "the prophets' efforts fail due to lack of returning, the day of the Lord itself will effect a new beginning."³³ Despite this incongruity, however, the theophany ending the book of Joel and beginning and ending Amos still displays the ancient central dual meaning implied in the storm weapons of the Divine Warrior as he defeats his enemies (whether among the nations or in his own people) and renews creation from his temple—but what happens quickly in Joel is spread out over the entire book of Amos. The mythic content of this imagery is thus unchanged by its use in the larger shaping of this early section of the Book of the Twelve even as it is spread out over the course of two books.

"His Wrath Is Poured Out Like Fire" (Nahum 1:2-8)

2) A jealous and vengeful God is Yahweh; אֵל קְנוּא וְנָקָם יְהוָה נָקָם יְהוָה וּבַעַל חַמָּה
Yahweh takes vengeance and is a master of wrath.

Yahweh takes vengeance against his enemies, נָקָם יְהוָה לְצָרָיו וְנוֹשֵׁר הוּא לְאִיְבָיו
he is nursing (it) for his foes.

3) Yahweh is slow to anger and great יהוה ארך אפים וגדול כח ונקמה לא ינקה יהוה
in power, Yahweh will in no way clear the guilty.

In the storm and tempest is his way; cloud בַּסּוּפָה וּבַשְּׁעָרָה דָּרְכוּ וְעָנָן אַבְק רִגְלָיו
is the dust of his feet.

4) He roars at the sea and it dries up; all the גוער בים ויבשהו וכל הנהרות החריב
rivers are made desolate.

Bashan and Carmel languish and the bloom אַמְלֵל בָּשָׂן וְכַרְמֵל וּפְרַח לְבָנוֹן אַמְלֵל
of Lebanon languishes.

5) The mountains shake before him and the high הרים רעשו מפניו והגבעות התמגגו
places melt.

³² Paul House, "Endings as New Beginnings: Returning to the Lord, the Day of the Lord, and Renewal in the Book of the Twelve," in *Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers 2002* (Atlanta: SBL, 2002), 270; Rolf Rendtorff, "How to Read the Book of the Twelve as a Theological Unity," in *Reading and Hearing the Book of the Twelve*, ed. James Nogalski and Marvin Sweeney (SBLSymS 15; Atlanta: SBL, 2000), 81.

³³ House, "New Beginnings," 271.

The earth heaves³⁴ before him, the world and all its inhabitants. ותשא הארץ מפניו ותבל וכל־יְשִׁבֵי בָּהּ

6) Before his wrath who can stand? And who can endure in the heat of his anger? לפני זַעֲמוֹ מִי יַעֲמוֹד וּמִי יִקוּם בַּחֲרוֹן אַפּוֹ

His fury is poured out like fire; the rocks are broken before it. חֲמָתוֹ נִתְּכָה כְּאֵשׁ וְהַצְּרִים נִתְּצוּ מִמֶּנּוּ

7) Yahweh is good, a stronghold³⁵ on the day of trouble, devoted to those who take refuge in him. טוֹב יְהוָה לְמַעוֹז בְּיוֹם צָרָה וְיִדְעַ חֲסִי בּוֹ

8) But in an overwhelming flood he will make a complete end of those rising up against him; darkness will pursue his enemies. וּבִשְׁטָף עֵבֶר כָּל־הַיַּעֲשֵׂה בְקִמּוֹ³⁶ וְאִיבּוֹ יִרְדֶּף־הֶשֶׁךְ

Something of a miniature narrative is presented to the reader in Yahweh's war-like appearance in this hymn. Yahweh appears in the storm in v. 3³⁷ and delivers his devastating rebuke to the sea in the first clause of v. 4. That rivers should be mentioned in the parallel clause is not surprising, but the fact that both dry up, so that the richest places of the earth languish, shows that the Divine Warrior's battling does not here issue in the renewal of creation but spreading desiccation. This sense of impending doom continues in v. 5, where cosmic shaking first afflicts the mountains, then the earth, and then the inhabited world and those dwelling therein. There is no particular action taken on Yahweh's part which causes this shaking; it is not specified, for instance, that Yahweh's thunder and lightning are what shakes the earth (as in Ps

³⁴ The use of נשא here is somewhat unusual, but emending to a form of שאה (*BHS* 5b; cf. Targum's וחרבחה, "laid waste" and the Peshitta's שָׁא, "to shake") is not necessary.

³⁵ Although the sense of the line basically remains the same, the LXX differs slightly on this clause, reading "to those who hope in him." This may suggest adding לְמַחְכְּיוֹ or understanding the MT's לְמַעוֹז as a mistake for it. See Jon Levenson, "Textual and Semantic Notes on Nah. I 7-8," *VT* 25 (1975): 792-95.

³⁶ Emending according to *BHS* 8b, with a variety of Greek witnesses and Targum. MT's "her place" forms a poor parallel with the following clause.

³⁷ The reader will note that, instead of driving his awesome chariot in storm clouds in v. 3, Yahweh treads on the clouds as the dust of his feet. This is an unusual twist to theophanic storm imagery, but since clouds and dust are nowhere else associated in the OT (and I know of no ANE parallel that might be helpful here), it is difficult to interpret its significance. The fact that the dust of one's feet is hardly an exalted position (cf. Mal 3.21) may imply a reduction of the role of storm clouds from that of the cloud-chariot to merely the dust which Yahweh treads on his path. Such a reduction might be appropriate to the fearsome wrath to which this theophanic description gives repeated emphasis; but it is difficult to be sure. Jeremias understands the basic idea of Yahweh's approach in the storm to be at work in this passage, but takes the exact wording of the text to imply not that Yahweh is riding on his cloud-chariot, but rather that he is stirring up storm clouds with his steps; since the clouds are only an accompaniment to Yahweh's theophany in this passage, this implies his sovereignty over the natural elements (*Theophanie*, 32-33).

77.19 or Joel 2.10-11). It is simply “before him” that this happens (מִפְּנֵי).³⁸ As the theophanic description continues into v. 6, however, it becomes clear that it is the anger of Yahweh’s presence before which the earth shakes (לְפָנֵי זַעַמּוֹ), echoing v. 5; a similar connection is made between divine anger and cosmic shaking in, e.g., Ps 18.8 and Isa 13.13). The transition between vv. 5 and 6 is a smooth one: note how this cosmic trembling leads naturally to the rhetorical questions in v. 6, which highlight that no-one can stand or endure before his fierce anger. The connection between the shaking of the earth in v. 5 and the inexorable nature of divine wrath in v. 6 is strengthened by the melting of the high places in the second clause in v. 5, for while such melting stands out against the trembling and heaving of the other clauses in the verse, it fits closely with the burning anger of v. 6.

The text pauses at v. 7 to allow for the discriminatory nature of this theophany, promising refuge to those trusting him in the midst of judgment, but then quickly turns again to judgment in v. 8, this time expressed by means of the images of a devastating flood and darkness. While the kaleidoscopic shift in the imagery of storm, fire, flood and darkness may appear contradictory to modern readers, the author has done no more than draw upon (or perhaps one should say, plunder) the standard fund of images to describe theophanic intervention.

This unrestrained looting of typical theophanic imagery in order to pile image upon image for divine wrath dovetails naturally with the larger concern of the book, which concerns the judgment of Nineveh. From this perspective, is it clear that the hymn of 1.2-8 introduces and intensifies the judgment of Assyria throughout the rest of the book.³⁹ More specifically, the reference to enemies in v. 8 (אֹיֵב, echoing v. 2) and rebels (קוֹם, echoing v. 6), to which Yahweh makes a complete end, as well as the fully dried chaff in v. 10 which is consumed (echoing vv. 4 and 6), creates a pattern of linkages which, simply by implication, identify the Assyrians as the enemies who are destroyed. This identification is, of course, most natural, and the description is entirely suited to its context: just as it did not suit Nahum’s purpose to speak of any renewal of creation or covenant after the defeat of the enemy, Yahweh’s defeat of chaos is here described

³⁸ Although one does not want to make overly fine distinctions in this matter, especially since נָעַר, “rebuke,” arguably refers not so much to moral censure as an angry protest or even an explosive blast or roar (see A. A. Macintosh, “A Consideration of Hebrew נָעַר,” *VT* 19 (1969): 471-79, and James Kennedy, “The Root G‘R in the Light of Semantic Analysis,” *JBL* 106 (1987): 47-64), it is likely that Yahweh’s rebuke refers only to the drying up of the waters in v. 4 and does not extend to the cosmic shaking of v. 5, since this rebuke is often associated with the fleeing or the drying up of the waters (Ps 18.16, 46.7, 104.7, 106.9; Isa 17.13, 50.2; cf. Exod 15.8), while the shaking of the earth is most often associated with Yahweh’s thunder and lightning (see, e.g., Ps 29.5-6, 77.19, 97.4; Joel 2.10-11) or his wrath (Ps 18.8; Isa 13.13).

³⁹ See Kevin Cathcart, “The Divine Warrior and the War of Yahweh in Nahum,” in *Biblical Studies in Contemporary Thought*, ed. Miriam Ward (Somerville, MA: Greeno, Hadden & Co, 1975): 68-76.

totally in its destructive aspect. It hardly needs to be mentioned that the rebuke of the sea and shaking of the earth cannot count as metaphorical descriptions of Yahweh's judgment of Nineveh. This is the case partially because, as in Amos 1.2, there is disconnect between the image of the storm-cloud and the drying up of the rivers, partially because there is no indication that the ancient mythic images of storm warfare are being used in any other way than to express the Divine Warrior's defeat of his enemy, and partially because metaphorical or naturalistic interpretations can discern nothing more in this passage than the suddenness and power of divine judgment in the intricate imagery of storm, roaring, desolation, fire, darkness, shaking and flood.⁴⁰ Irrespective of the fact that such an approach fails to do justice to the complexity of this imagery, it is simply not clear how such imagery counts as a striking and productive comparison. By way of contrast, attention to the mythic significance of storm warfare brings to light the inner coherence among the images which express Yahweh's defeat of Nineveh.

Four final points may close the discussion of this hymn. First, it is worth noting that the simile in the second line of v. 6 between Yahweh's anger and fire should probably not be relegated merely an arbitrary comparison from the natural realm (as opposed to, for instance, the water poured down a slope of Mic 1.4, to be discussed below), since Yahweh's theophany in anger is repeatedly given "heated" emphasis in vv. 2-3 and 6a. This is one of those similes which stands very close to the reality it describes.⁴¹ Second, in contrast to such passages as Isa 13.1-13 and Joel 2.1-11, Yahweh is not said actually to lead his own army against Nineveh, even though it would be easy to imagine him doing so in an attack on a foreign power. Third, imagery which is similar to that used in the theophany of 1.2-8 sometimes appears elsewhere in the book; note the chariots running like lightning in 2.5 and the devouring fire of 3.13, 15. However, this imagery is not used in a sufficiently specific or pointed way so as to suggest it is intended to recall the theophany of 1.2-8.

Fourth, it is impossible to miss, in analyzing this particular theophanic description, how the hymn begins with an intentional reversal of Yahweh's hallowed character as אֱלֹהִים אֲרֶךְ אַפַּיִם (Exod 34.6) by claiming that Yahweh is אֱלֹהִים וְגֵרוֹל־כַּחַם (v. 2). This is all the more striking in light of another echo of this famous creed in a location much closer to Nahum:

⁴⁰ See, for instance, O. Palmer Robertson, *The Books of Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah* (NICOT; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), 64-65, as well as Walter Maier, *The Book of Nahum* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1959), 157. Robertson also makes the strange claim that the storm is given as a figure of divine judgment because of its intermediary position between heaven and earth, signifying Yahweh's action from heaven against the nations. But why a storm, of all things, would be chosen to communicate this nuance is not clear.

⁴¹ Jeremias helpfully cross-references Deut 32.22 in this discussion of this verse, understanding it in the same way as done above (*Theophanie*, 32).

the book of Micah ends with an affirmation of divine mercy intended to remind the reader of Exod 34 in 7.18-20. The transition from warnings about sin and descriptions of future judgment in the first six books of the Book of the Twelve to this corpus' version of the oracles against foreign nations implies that this echo is intentional, and that Nahum shows the end of divine patience and the actual beginning of the judgment of the world, here focused on Assyria. Yahweh is slow to anger, true, but in Nah 1.2-8, his anger has finally reached the boiling point, without any chance for repentance.⁴² The images describing Yahweh's appearance in wrath and its tumultuous effects in Nah 1.2-8 thus help to strengthen the dual reference to Yahweh's character as being slow to anger in its role as a hinge in the Book of the Twelve from the book's first to its second major section, even as both references echo this creed in opposite ways.⁴³

"You Set Out for the Salvation of your People" (Habakkuk 3.3-15)⁴⁴

- | | | |
|---|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 3) God from Teman comes, the Holy One
from Mt. Paran; | וְקָדוֹשׁ מִהַר־פָּאֵרָן | אֱלֹהֵי מַתְיָמָן יָבֹא |
| his glory covers the heavens, his radiance ⁴⁵
fills the earth. | וַתְּהַלְתוּ מִלְאָה הָאָרֶץ | כְּסֵה שָׁמַיִם הוֹדוּ |
| 4) Brightness like light appears,
a double-bolt ⁴⁶ in his hand; there ⁴⁷ is the covering of his power. | וְשֵׁם חֲבִיּוֹן עֹזָה | וַנִּגְהַ כְּאוֹר תְּהִיָּה |

⁴² House, *Unity*, 145; *ibid.*, "New Beginnings," 276. James Nogalski has argued for a variety of smaller connections between Nah 1.2-8 and Mic 7.8-20, even contending that the breaks in the acrostic of Nah 1 can be explained by the intent to weave the two books together (note, e.g., the presence of "enemies" in Nah 1.2 and Mic 7.8, 10). See *Redactional Processes*, 104-15.

⁴³ Raymond Van Leeuwen, "Scribal Wisdom and Theodicy in the Book of the Twelve," in *In Search of Wisdom: Essays in Memory of John Gammie*, ed. Leo Perdue, et. al. (Louisville: Westminster, 1993), 47.

⁴⁴ Although this disclaimer was already made earlier in this project, it is worth stating again that no attempt will be made to record and evaluate the hundreds of emendations which have been proposed for this chapter; indeed, it would not be necessary or even helpful to the present argument to do so. Only those textual difficulties which are most severe or which most directly touch upon theophanic imagery are discussed. Fuller discussions of the versions and evaluations of proposed emendations may be found in J. H. Eaton, "The Origin and Meaning of Habakkuk 3," *ZAW* 76 (1964): 144-70; J. J. M. Roberts, *Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah* (OTL; Louisville: Westminster, 1991), pgs 128-48; and Theodore Hiebert, *God of my Victory: The Ancient Hymn in Habakkuk 3* (HSM 38; Atlanta: Scholars, 1986), 4-57. It should be pointed out that, despite the difficulties of this text, those scholars arguing for the basic reliability of the MT probably form the majority (see Oskar Dangl, "Habakkuk in Recent Research," *CR:BS* 9 [2001], 132-35). It may also be noted that there is some question concerning the translation of tense in this chapter, since the *yiqtol* forms could denote present/future or, as in Ugaritic poetry, could be used as preterites to narrate past events in combination with suffix forms (Roberts, *Habakkuk*, 151, Hiebert, *God*, 77-79, and Francis Andersen, *Habakkuk* [AB 25; New York: Doubleday, 2001], 264; see WOC 31.1 for a general discussion). My translation, which is mostly in the present tense, is not intended to resolve this problem, but only to give full weight to the visionary nature of the passage.

⁴⁵ Given the parallelism, this is probably a better translation than "praise" (note the Hiphil of הִלֵּל; see W. Rudolph, *Micha-Nahum-Habakkuk-Zephaniah* [KAT XIII 3; Göttersloh: Mohn, 1975], 234).

- 7) Under distress⁵⁰ I see the יִרְגָזוּן יְרִיעוֹת אֶרֶץ מִדְיָן כּוֹשָׁן תַּחַת אֲנִי רָאִיתִי אֶהְלִי כּוֹשָׁן
tents of Cush, the curtains of the land of Midian are trembling.
- 8) Did it burn against the אִם בְּנִהְרִים אֶפְדָּא אִם-בַּיָּם עִבְרָתְךָ הַבְּנִהְרִים חָרָה יְהוָה
rivers, Yahweh; did your anger (burn) against
the rivers; did your wrath (burn) against the sea,
that you ride with your horses, your chariots of מִרְכַּבְתֶּיךָ יְשׁוּעָה כִּי תִרְכַּב עַל-סוּסֶיךָ
salvation?⁵¹
- 9) Utterly uncovered is your bow⁵² as you swear שְׁבַעוֹת מִטּוֹת אֶמְרָא עֲרִיָה תַעוֹר קִשְׁתְּךָ
oaths over (your) arrows.⁵³

⁵⁰ Although it is very tempting to follow those (e.g., Jörg Jeremias, *Theophanie: Die Geschichte einer alttestamentlichen Gattung* [WMANT 10; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1965], 40, note 2, Andersen, *Habakkuk*, 310-11) who understand a 3fs *yiqtol* form of the verb (paralleled in Ugaritic and Akkadian) חָתָא, “to shake,” behind the MT’s אֲנִי תַחַת אֲנִי—it would fit as smoothly with the second clause of v. 7 as it would with the last clause of v. 6, as Robert Haak reads (*Habakkuk* [VTSupp 44; Leiden: Brill, 1992], 91)—the MT is not as difficult as is often supposed: אֲנִי can imply “distress,” or the like (see Prov 12.21, quoted by Robertson, *Habakkuk*, 221, note 5), and תַחַת can be used in phrases speaking of being burdened “underneath” (see Prov 30.21, Isa 24.5, quoted by Eaton, “Origin,” 150); note also the cosmic shaking which sin causes in Ps 82.5. Is the phrase intended to echo the shaking which would have been denoted by the root חָתָא even while connecting to the larger issue of the righteous and the wicked in the book?

⁵¹ The form of this rhetorical question normally expects a negative answer (see *BDB* 51, 210), which is often understood to imply that Yahweh does not battle cosmic chaos in this passage, but his people’s historical enemies. However, the clear link between this verse and v. 15, in which Yahweh treads on the raging waters, speaks against such an understanding. Hiebert also quotes Gesenius to the effect that, instead of expecting a negative answer, the –ה interrogative sometimes implies “that the contents of the statement are well known to the hearer, and are unconditionally admitted by him” (GCK 150e; see Hiebert, *God*, 102-4).

⁵² Or perhaps “incited, aroused” (see *BDB* 734); cf. the Vulgate’s *suscitans suscitabis*, 8 HevXIIgr ἐξέγειρεῖς. (8 HevXIIgr is listed, together with the Greek Barberini version, in Albrecht Scriba, *Die Geschichte des Motivkomplexes Theophanie* [FRLANT 167; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1995], 226-27).

⁵³ A plethora of plausible readings have been offered for this most difficult clause. מִטּוֹת almost certainly refers to a weapon (cf. v. 14) which, in relation to the first clause, may denote “arrows” (although a more general sense is not impossible; cf. Robertson’s “battle rods are sworn by oath” [*Habakkuk*, 234]). The first word of the clause may be derived from שָׁבַע, “be sated,” שָׁבַע, “to swear,” or שִׁבְעָה, “seven;” John Day supports this last option, noting references to “seven lightnings” of Baal in KTU 101, line 3, and the seven-fold reference to Yahweh’s thunder in Ps 29 (“Echoes of Baal’s Seven Thunders and Lightnings in Psalm XXIX and Habakkuk III 9 and the Identity of the Seraphim in Isaiah VI,” *VT* 29 [1979]: 146). That Yahweh here “satisfies the arrows of his bowstring/quiver” is also a plausible option (reading the MT’s אֶמְרָא as either from יָחַר [see *BHS* 9c] or from אֶשְׁפָּה [Barberini]; see Roberts, *Habakkuk*, 139-140, and Hiebert, *God*, 27). On the other hand, if this were the original reading, it is difficult to imagine how the MT arrived at אֶמְרָא; Rudolph, noting this difficulty, slightly emends the MT to read, “a fullness of arrows you let fly” (שִׁפְעַת מִטּוֹת תֵּאָבֵר) [*Habakkuk*, 236]. It may simply be best, however, to understand here a reference to the ritual preparation of weapons, which finds parallels in the ANE (note, for example, also the importance given to the naming of Baal’s weapons; see Haak, *Habakkuk*, 95, and Eaton, “Origin,” 152).

The earth is cloven by rivers,⁵⁴ (10) the mountains see you and writhe. רְאוּךָ יַחֲלוּ הַרִים נְהָרוֹת תִּבְקַע-אֲרֶץ

A cloudburst overflows water; the deep gives its voice. וְרָם מַיִם עָבַר נָתַן תְּהוֹם קוֹלוֹ
On high the sun⁵⁵ lifts its hands, (11) the moon stands in its height. רוֹם יִרְיֵהוּ נִשָּׂא שֶׁמֶשׁ יָרַח עֹמֵד זִבְלָה

Your arrows speed as lightning, your lightning-spear in radiance. לְאוֹר חֲצִידָךְ יִהְלְכוּ לְנִגְהַ בְּרֶקַח חֲנִיתֶךָ

(12) In anger you tread the earth, in wrath you trample the nations. בְּזַעַם תִּצְעַד-אֲרֶץ בְּאַף תִּדְרוֹשׁ גּוֹיִם

(13) You set out for the salvation of your people, for the salvation of your anointed. יֵצְאתָ לְיִשְׁעַ עַמֶּךָ לְיִשְׁעַ אֶת-מְשִׁיחֶךָ

You strike the head from the house of the wicked, laying bare from foundation to neck.⁵⁶ מִחֲצֵתָ רֹאשׁ מִבַּיִת רָשָׁע עָרוֹת יִסּוֹד עַד-צְוֹנָאֵר

⁵⁴ How one translates this line depends on how one understands its function within this passage. If Yahweh is commencing his assault after readying his weapons in the first two clauses of v. 9, then one might read “you cleaved the earth with rivers” or “you cleaved/smashed the rivers to the earth,” the former denoting the transformation of the chaotic waters into a life-nurturing water supply (as Roberts, *Habakkuk*, 155-56, interprets), the latter, Yahweh’s smashing of the foe named in v. 8. This latter reading is the more probable of the two, given the threatening appearance of Yahweh’s bow and arrows in the previous line (v. 8; see Eaton, “Origin,” 152, and Umberto Cassuto, *Biblical and Oriental Studies* [trans. Israel Abrahams; 2 vols.; Jerusalem: Magnes, 1975], 2:12); one would, in addition, not expect the transformation of the chaotic waters into a life-giving source (as implied by the former reading) until after their defeat. But even the latter reading, according to which Yahweh is smashing the rivers, has problems, for it is strange to see Yahweh ready his bow and smash the enemy, to have the elements react for two and a half lines (vv. 10-11a), and then for Yahweh’s arrows to break forth (v. 11b). Reading a Niphal instead of a Piel for בקע (in line with the LXX’s passive ῥαγήσεται) resolves this incongruity. On this reading, this clause begins the reaction of the cosmos to Yahweh with the underground waters breaking forth from the boundaries set for them at creation. In parallel with vv. 6-7, where the cosmos shakes at the mere sight of the Divine Warrior, Yahweh only prepares his bow in the two-clause line of v. 9; three two-clause lines describing cosmic reactions follow, and then Yahweh lets fly his arrows in v. 11b, moving on to trample and smash his foe (vv. 12 and 14).

⁵⁵ Although the versions are not much help on this line (the Vulgate and Syriac reflect the MT, while the LXX and Barberini expand the line to alleviate some of these problems), the fact that there is no waw joining שמש and ירח, in addition to the singular verb and singular suffix on זבלה, suggests we should understand the sun to be lifting its hands on high (see, e.g., Andersen, *Habakkuk*, 330; Hiebert, *God*, 30). Doing so allows the parallelism of this line to fall into order.

⁵⁶ The enemy here is apparently compared to a house (ראש probably contains a pun; see Robertson, *Habakkuk*, 239; Rudolf, *Habakuk*, 231, 246, translates as “First,” “roof”). A similar idea is found in Num 24.17 (וּמַחֲזִין פְּאַתָּי מוֹאָב), “he shall strike the corners of Moab”), just as Yam’s spine has “cornerstones” (Ugaritic *pnt*) in KTU 1.2 IV 17 (noted by Johannes C. de Moor, *The Rise of Yahwism: The Roots of Israelite Monotheism*, BETL 91 [Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1990], 133, note 146). Tsumura discusses a variety of other possibilities for reading the MT as it stands according to different syntactical structures (*Creation and Destruction* [Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2005], 175-78), the most interesting of which would be to take the outer and inner four words of the line together in a AXYB parallelistic

- (14) You smite with his rods the head; פָּרְזוּ יַסְעֵרוּ לְהַפְּיֹצֵנִי נִקְבְּתָ בְּמַטְיֹו רֹאשׁ
his warriors storm in to scatter me;
their exultation as one devouring the poor in secret.⁵⁷ עָנִי בְּמִסְתָּר כְּמוֹ-לֶאֱכֹל
- (15) You tread on the sea with your horses, the חָמַר מַיִם רַבִּים דָּרְכָתָ בַיָּם סוֹסֵיךָ
surge of many waters.

The structure of this magnificent but often perplexing poem is divided into two major sections, vv. 3-7 and 8-15. Yahweh is referred to in the third person in vv. 3-7, a section bounded on both ends by concrete geographical references,⁵⁸ while vv. 8-15 show direct address to Yahweh and begin and end with references to the raging waters.⁵⁹ There is some progression between the two sections: cosmic reactions to Yahweh's appearance are stated passively in vv.

structure: "You crushed the head to the neck, from the house of the evil one you laid bare the foundation" (ibid., 176-77).

⁵⁷ None of the plethora of suggestions given for this line relieves its problems (Andersen, *Habakkuk*, 313, and Hiebert, *God*, 8, leave it untranslated). With a few exceptions, the Syriac and Vulgate basically support the MT. The Greek versions, while varying widely, appear to be struggling with a text not too different from that passed on in the MT; "feeding on the poor in secret" is preserved in all three witnesses, as is Yahweh's smiting the heads of his enemies (although Barberini speaks of vengeance on this score, reading some form of נקם [Eaton, "Origin," 155]). The middle phrase, on the other hand, is translated in different ways ("they open their bridles" [LXX], "trusting in pride" [Barberini], "they are agitated to scatter us" [8HevXII]). Roberts makes an attractive suggestion by taking Yahweh as the subject, emending to read "his followers you stormed against, to scatter them" and omitting any reference to exultation (*Habakkuk*, 144, notes 74-76). This would certainly fit well with the first half of the line. The 3mpl reading is, however, well attested text-critically; and were Yahweh the original subject, one wonders how this text became confused. Rudolph attractively emends יסערו to a passive (with the LXX), so that Yahweh's action in the first clause of the line leads to the confusion of the enemy in the second; he also reads לְהַפְּיֹצֵן for the MT's לְהַפְּיֹצֵנִי, citing a similar use in Ps 56.7, which would fit well in context (*Habakkuk*, 237-38). Unfortunately, however, the sole example of the Niphal of סער (2 Ki 6.11) speaks of rage, not confusion; and his extensive re-working of the end of the verse to speak of a lion's lying in wait and devouring is speculative.

Trying to make sense out of this line is all the more frustrating because the despoiling of the body of the enemy (to be expected, in light of the Baal Epic and the Enuma Elish, after the enemy has been fatally struck) may be hinted at in the references to scattering and eating (compare further Ps 74.13-14; Ezek 29.3-5, 32.2-6; Hiebert, *God*, 46, 104-5 makes this insight, with further parallels to Enuma Elish convincingly made by Avishur, *Ugaritic Psalms*, 130-31). The text is, however, so unclear that nothing more can be made of these hints. Odd as the MT is, however, Yahweh's continued offensive against this historical instantiation of chaos in this verse is clear. Furthermore, the reference to the devouring of the poor would not be totally out of place within the larger polarity between the wicked and the righteous in the book, especially as the former prey upon the latter. Finally, it is perhaps possible that the prophet, as part of this latter group, somehow felt himself under attack as part of his vision (prophets can participate in visions, cf. Amos 9.1). But it is difficult to know what else to say about this obscure verse.

⁵⁸ For discussion of these various localities and peoples, see, e.g., Hiebert, *God*, 84-92.

⁵⁹ As noted by, e.g., Robertson, *Habakkuk*, 230, and Andersen, *Habakkuk*, 261.

3-7 (vv. 5-6) and actively in vv. 8-15 (vv. 10-11), and Yahweh actually engages in battle in the second section.⁶⁰

The first section neatly divides between Yahweh's coming (vv. 3-5) and the reaction to it (vv. 6-7). Similar divisions are often made with regard to the second half of the poem, according to which Yahweh fights cosmic chaos in vv. 8-9, which provokes a reaction in vv. 10-11; vv. 12-15 are commonly understood to show the conflict moving to a historical plane.⁶¹ This analysis may, however, reflect an overly sensitive division between myth and history, for Yahweh's defeat of the raging waters is stated again in the putatively "historical" ending to the poem in v. 15. A better approach may lie in understanding Yahweh's attack on chaos to be narrated in vv. 8-9 and 15, as well as in 11b-14a. If the 3mpl יִסְעָרֵי is to be trusted, then it probably denotes a storming response against Yahweh's attack. As a result, reactions against Yahweh's assault may be said to be listed in vv. 9b-11 and 14. The MT of the last clause of v. 9 may, of course, speak of one aspect of Yahweh's warfare; but it was noted above (see footnote 54) that such a reading strangely interposes the smashing of either the earth or the rivers (v. 9b) between the readying of Yahweh's weapons (9a) and his assault with them (11b). It seems preferable to understand v. 9a to speak of Yahweh readying his weapons, at the mere sight of which the cosmos reacts for three lines (vv. 9b-11a) before Yahweh actually begins to fight (v. 11bff). If this is correct, then the second half of this poem displays an A-B-A-B-A pattern, alternating between Yahweh's attack and the reactions to it.⁶² This pattern thus builds upon the single occurrence of appearance and reaction in vv. 3-7 in a parallel structure.

In light of the structure of vv. 3-15, we may note the obvious elements of theophanic divine warfare as Yahweh comes in glory (v. 3), armed and accompanied by his divine retinue (vv. 4-5). This is paralleled in vv. 8-15 as Yahweh rides his chariot(s) to fight the chaotic waters with bow, spear and mace (vv. 9, 11, 14, 15) and trample the nations (v. 12). The imagery attending Yahweh's direct conflict with chaos is, as expected, that of cosmic shaking (vv. 6-7, 10), together with the roaring of the deep (v. 10), and (perhaps less expected) floods of water (vv. 9b, 10). Why would these particular images be chosen, and why are they given this particular formulation?

⁶⁰ See Andersen, *Habakkuk*, 284.

⁶¹ See, e.g., Jeremias, *Theophanie*, 43-44.

⁶² See Avishur, *Ugaritic Psalms*, 118, for a similar analysis. It is tempting to claim a chiasmic form for vv. 8-15, and Avishur does point to some striking features in this regard (*ibid.*, 119), as does Hiebert, who notes the repetition of מַטֵּה and the root עָרַה in vv. 9 and 13-14 (see, e.g., Theodore Hiebert, "The Use of Inclusion in Habakkuk 3," in *Directions in Biblical Hebrew Poetry*, ed. Elaine Follis [JSOTSupp 40; Sheffield: Sheffield, 1987], 126-27; Hiebert also argues for a chiasm in vv. 3-7). While it may be possible that vv. 8 and 15 and 9a and 13-14 bound vv. 9b-12 on both sides, v. 14 is very unsure with regard to its reading, and there are, in any case, perhaps not enough echoes in the passage to sustain this analysis.

If vv. 3-7 depict Yahweh's coming, then it is worth noting the particular sequence of events in vv. 6-7: Yahweh stops and the earth shakes, he looks and the nations startle; the mountains then crumble and fall, just as Midian and Cush tremble. It is interesting to note that, in contrast to the chiasmic or nearly chiasmic relationships between the clauses of the lines making up vv. 3-5, v. 6 shows a more linear verb-verb-noun structure repeated twice in the first line and a verb-noun-noun structure, again repeated twice, in the second; perhaps we are to imagine a domino-like effect in the shaking of the earth in this verse. It is also worth noting that the earth and the nations shake together (v. 6) before a specific nation is singled out (v. 7). The fact that no other event occurs between Yahweh's standing (halting his and his vanguard's advance) and the shaking of the earth, just as nothing intervenes between his looking and the startling of the nations, reveals a surprising omission of any reference to conflict; the implication may be that as soon as Yahweh reaches the place of battle, the enemy is undone. If there is an allusion here to the early chapters of Judges, in which Cushan-Rishathaim (Judg 3.8) and Midian (6.1) are said to oppress Israel, then the groups listed in v. 7 may stand for Babylon as an oppressor, much in line with the larger concerns of the book of Habakkuk.⁶³ Furthermore, the fact that the mountains which crumble before him are qualified as ancient pathways (הַלְלִיכֹת, v. 6) may play upon Yahweh's coming (בֹּא, v. 3), so that even the route which Yahweh's army takes on the way to battle is "defeated." It may further be noted that, if the MT to the first clause of v. 7 is retained and a play between "iniquity" and "distress" is intended in אִיִּן תַּחַת, this would take on greater significance in light of the larger polarity in the book between the righteous and the wicked. All of this suggests that the particular reaction to Yahweh's march is calculated to imply the certainty of the enemy's defeat without actually narrating it: Yahweh stands, and the nations tremble.

Although the issue will need to be taken up again, it may provisionally be argued here that the shaking of the earth and the nations in vv. 6-7 should not be understood as a metaphor for divine power, at least in part because the reaction to Yahweh's appearance is not presented to the reader in a different way from the mythic themes of vv. 3-5 of Yahweh's approach in splendor with his divine army; the cosmic shaking which Yahweh effects rather exists within the same symbolic universe as the description of his war-like approach. Nor is the shaking of the mountains a metaphor for the defeat of the nations, for vv. 6-7 set both the earth and the nations in an equal relationship: first the earth (A) and the nations (B) shake in v. 6a, and then a specific part of the earth (A') in 6b and then specific nations (B') in v. 7. In other words, claiming one part of the theophanic description of vv. 3-7 as metaphor arbitrarily attributes a different

⁶³ Thus Robertson, *Habakkuk*, 228.

intention to one part of the text in a way which cuts across the text's fluid progression from appearance to reaction. It is, furthermore, significant that Cushan shakes under iniquity (v. 7), for this hints that their trembling occurs not because of divine power, but before imminent destruction because of sin. But it is best to consider the rest of Hab 3 before continuing this line of reasoning.

Turning to the second half of this poem, we find recorded two reactions to Yahweh's appearance in vv. 9b-11a and (probably) in the second half of v. 14. While the mountains, as above, shake in v. 10, the image as a whole is very different: the subterranean waters break forth, as do the waters above (vv. 9b and 10a); the implicit contrast between the lower and upper waters implies that the enemy named in v. 8 is unleashing all of its forces against Yahweh, transgressing the boundaries laid at creation.⁶⁴ This is not merely a reaction of fear, as Jeremias claims,⁶⁵ but a full-out counterassault, just as the roaring of the deep shows chaos fighting back against Yahweh.⁶⁶

The final reaction in vv. 10b-11 to the preparation of Yahweh's weapons in v. 9a contrasts those preceding, for the sun and moon are not among the objects of Yahweh's attack, but participants in (or at least worshipful witnesses to) Yahweh's victory.⁶⁷ The parallel to this image in Josh 10.12-13 strongly suggests that the sun and moon are part of Yahweh's cosmic host⁶⁸ (perhaps paralleling v. 5). It has been suggested that the particular image of the sun raising its hands and the moon standing still implies that their light fails before the splendor of Yahweh's theophany;⁶⁹ given the reference to the light of Yahweh's arrows in the second half of v. 11, this is at least possible. However, the sun does not stop shining in Josh 10, and one would imagine that the darkening of the sun could be more clearly expressed by the lowering of its hands (rays) than by raising them. It rather appears that, in vv. 9b-11a, the sun and moon participate in Yahweh's victory, while cosmic chaos reacts fearsomely to the mere sight of

⁶⁴ Hiebert, *God*, 98; Andersen, *Habakkuk*, 329; Jeremias, *Theophanie*, 51. As Hiebert notes, the image is very similar to that of the flood in Gen 7 (*God*, 99).

⁶⁵ *Theophanie*, 51.

⁶⁶ Andersen (*Habakkuk*, 329) claims that the deep here is shouting in terror, not defiance, but this misinterprets this common element in theophanic warfare.

⁶⁷ Inasmuch as זָבַלָהּ can refer to "height" or "lofty abode"—note the זָבַלָהּ בַּיִת of Yahweh to which Solomon refers in 1 Ki 8.13—the image may be of these bodies standing still in their course or standing up to worship. As in v. 4, however, the ambiguity may well be intentional.

⁶⁸ Hiebert, *God*, 100. Andersen also points out that these bodies are not listed in the enemy army of Tiamat in the *Enuma Elish*, which would count in favor of understanding them to be on Yahweh's side, not that of the enemy (*Habakkuk*, 332).

⁶⁹ See Jeremias, *Theophanie*, 51; Roberts, *Habakkuk*, 156; Day, *God's Conflict with the Dragon and the Sea* (UCOP 35; Cambridge: Cambridge, 1985), 108; and, with slightly different emphases, Rudolph, *Habakkuk*, 245.

Yahweh's preparation for battle, launching its own attack. This fearsome counterassault notwithstanding, Yahweh, having readied his bow (v. 9), lets fly his arrows (v. 11b) and tramples and pierces the enemy (vv. 12-14). The storming warriors of v. 14, on this reading, react in exactly the same way as the waters of vv. 9b-10, fighting back against Yahweh.

If this interpretation of vv. 3-7 and 8-15 is at all on the right track, then it is clear that the reactions attendant to Yahweh's theophany are presented to the reader in an unusual way. Yahweh's absolute defeat of the nations is clearly signaled in vv. 6-7, but there is no actual conflict between them. This divine victory is no less clearly present in vv. 8-15 (vv. 8 and 15, in their position surrounding the whole, make this explicit), but the actual clash between the Divine Warrior and chaos involves, in relation to vv. 3-7, a far more terrifying outbreak on the part of the enemy. The opposite might be expected, of course, so that Yahweh's march provokes a counterassault, but the actual conflict ends with the enemy defeated; but the text rather implies that the conflict itself grows more intense as the reader moves into the second half of these parallel sections. In other words, despite the certainty of Yahweh's victory, chaos is not explicitly and finally defeated in this passage: it is still fighting back. Indeed, if the use of חִמָּר in v. 15 is read together with Ps 46.4 (its closest parallel in any case), it may show the waters still storming between Yahweh's trampling steeds. As will be argued below, the dynamic, impressionistic nature of this passage, with Yahweh's certain victory perforated by raging, rebelling chaos, fits well with its visionary nature.

But this raises the question of the contribution of this theophany to the larger sweep of the text—a question which is problematized by the archaic language, musical notations, and visionary elements in it. The general contribution of this passage to the book is, of course, clear: Yahweh's direct defeat of chaos and the wicked for the salvation of his people (vv. 8, 13, recalling 1.4, 13; 2.4) answers both Habakkuk's complaint against injustice and Yahweh's mediate means for punishing it (1.2-4, 12-17). But the function of this vision in context is qualitatively more complex than other prophetically narrated theophanies which are not themselves explicitly separated from their surroundings by archaic language and instructions for musicians. Why would Habakkuk 3 be preserved in this way, and what implications does the form in which it is preserved have for understanding it?

Several answers are possible in response to the first of these two questions. That Habakkuk skillfully wrote a poem with intentionally archaic language, which was later incorporated into public worship (the evidence of which being included in the transmission of the book), is possible but probably unlikely. On the other extreme, Theodore Hiebert has explained the final form of the text by understanding vv. 3-15 as an ancient hymn, used in

corporate worship, which was added by scribes later than Habakkuk to an already complete prophecy (1.1-2.17). According to Hiebert, this addition was deemed necessary within the larger mutation in Israelite theology from classical prophecy to apocalyptic (Hiebert's dependence on the work of Paul Hanson for reconstructing this development is explicit), wherein the now-frustrated expectation of divinely caused change within history (Hab 2.6-17) is transferred to a final, supra-historical intervention which is presented as a vision (3.3-15).⁷⁰ Consistent with this argument, whatever visionary elements in Hab 3 might tie the text to the prophet (such as the 1cs form of הָאֱלֹהִים in v. 7) are expunged or emended by Hiebert as later glosses or additions; he also re-reads v. 2, on the basis of the Greek witnesses, to refer merely to a recitation of past deeds, not a plea for their renewal.⁷¹

Unfortunately, Hiebert's argument suffers from a variety of vulnerabilities. For example, the expansive LXX of v. 2 provides only shaky ground for emending the MT.⁷² The הָאֱלֹהִים of v. 7 is similarly deleted too conveniently by Hiebert as simply being awkward in context.⁷³ (The evidence to which Hiebert appeals only appears, in other words, after emending the MT in questionable ways.) Hiebert also does not account for how Habakkuk is told to wait for a vision (וַיִּזְכֹּר) in 2.2-3.⁷⁴ The manifold vulnerabilities of Hanson's reconstruction of the rise of apocalyptic⁷⁵ correspondingly weaken Hiebert's argument, as does his strange conclusion that, even though Hab 3 was added later because the original ending to the prophecy was felt to be inadequate by disenfranchised post-exilic groups, this last chapter still does not provide a suitable resolution for the book,⁷⁶ allowing for its separation from the whole by modern scholarship. In addition to these imbalances, however, Hiebert's initial reasons for suspecting the unity of the book are not very strong to begin with.⁷⁷ Finally, the extent to which the woes of 2.6-17 give a satisfying answer to Habakkuk's complaint may be questioned, for, although they

⁷⁰ See Hiebert, *God*, 129-49, especially 136-38.

⁷¹ Hiebert, *God*, 82, 110.

⁷² See the painstaking discussion of v. 2 in the MT and the LXX in Andersen, *Habakkuk*, 274-83.

⁷³ Hiebert, *God*, 22.

⁷⁴ This connection is made by a variety of authors; see Robertson, *Habakkuk*, 213; Roberts, *Habakkuk*, 150; Eckart Otto, "Die Theologie des Buches Habakuk," *VT* 35 (1985): 293-94.

⁷⁵ Note Brooks Schramm's decisive arguments against Hanson in *The Opponents of Third Isaiah* (JSOTSup 193; Sheffield: Sheffield, 1995), as well as early critical review of Robert Carroll, "Twilight of Prophecy or Dawn of Apocalyptic?," *JSOT* 14 (1979): 3-35.

⁷⁶ Hiebert, *God of my Victory*, 135.

⁷⁷ Hiebert points to the positive portrayal of the anointed king in v. 13 (by way of contrast with the wicked kings reigning during the prophet's lifetime), the lack of any explicit reference to Babylon or its cruelties in vv. 3-15, the fact that the historical events in the background of ch. 3 are the Exodus, the crossing of the Red Sea, and other events early in Israel's history, as well as the resolution to the problems of Babylonian supremacy already offered in 2.6-17 (*God*, 134-135). None of these considerations is very strong; the messiah of v. 13 could, for instance, be an ideal figure (cf. Rudolph, *Habakkuk*, 245), and the poem need not explicitly refer to Babylon to apply to it.

are stated in a general way, giving them wide applicability, it is not clear how the surprising reversal they envision will actually come about. Furthermore, inasmuch as these woes appear to envision Babylon being overwhelmed by yet another nation within the various political upheavals of that time and place, no sufficient answer is given to Habakkuk's initial complaint about God's immediate plans to punish unjust nations with other nations themselves unjust.

But if the theophanic vision of Hab 3 is neither a completely later addition, nor a complete creation of the original author, how should it be understood? This question may be approached by drawing a distinction between the nature of the relationship of vv. 3-15 to their context in the final form of the text (a literary question) and the historical question concerning the origin of vv. 3-15 and the circumstances surrounding their later attachment to the book. The first of these is easier to answer than the second: the first-person comments surrounding the hymn in vv. 2, 16-19—the repetition of שְׁמַעְתִּי and the root נגז prompts one to read them together—are most naturally interpreted as referring to the vision of vv. 3-15 itself. Although this interpretation is an inference, the position of vv. 2 and 16-19 around the vision of vv. 3-15, together with the sheer magnificence of this poem, which acts as the gravitational center of the book, inevitably attracts the reference of שְׁמַעְתִּי and שְׁמַעְתִּי (vv. 2, 15) and פָּעַלְתָּ (v. 2) to the following hymn. The content of the report and action which Habakkuk hears and fears is thus given in vv. 3-15; that Habakkuk is waiting for a vision (2.2-3) makes this connection all the stronger.⁷⁸ The connection between the (almost certainly older) hymn and the rest of Habakkuk's prophecy is thus quite strong. How the prophet actually came across this hymn is, however, a matter of speculation, for the text does not explain how this came about.⁷⁹

In light of this strong literary connection between two texts which almost certainly have chronologically distant origins, the musical notations in 3.3-15 may be explained, at least in part, as undeleted appendages from an ancient hymn. Additionally, the notations in vv. 1 and 19 may imply that Habakkuk's own response to the ancient hymn of vv. 3-15 was incorporated in later use in worship (the 1cp suffix ending v. 16, if original, would have helped such a later incorporation, or may itself have been changed to reflect this later use;⁸⁰ note further how Ps 77 analogously includes first-person responses to divine action). It may also be suggested that these

⁷⁸ Cf. Rudolph, *Habakuk*, 240, 242.

⁷⁹ One cannot help but wonder whether Habakkuk was participating in communal worship when this very hymn sparked the vision for which he had been waiting. The verse preceding the vision (2.20) may support this, as may the possible cultic overtones in Habakkuk's reference to his מִשְׁמָרָה (2.1); compare the use of the term in 2 Chr 7.6, 8.14, 35.2, where it refers to priestly temple watches (Marvin Sweeney, "Structure, Genre and Intent in the Book of Habakkuk," *VT* 41 [1991]: 71). The text, however, allows one to do no more than speculate over these hints.

⁸⁰ As noted by Rudolph, *Habakuk*, 242.

notations perform, in light of the command of 2.20, a meta-communicative function, preserving the hymn as an active entity, even as the book sets out on its trajectory beyond its original setting.⁸¹ If this supposition is correct, then the reader may be meant to “hear” the music of the hymn even after it was long severed from its original context in temple worship; an invitation to the reader to make the hymn their own song is thus being offered.⁸²

The ancient hymn of Habakkuk 3 thus gives the content of Habakkuk’s vision and the answer to the problems raised in the book—an answer which continues directly to speak (or sing!) to later readers. In light of this, the contribution of this theophanic description—or, better put, the use which the surrounding text makes of this ancient hymn—can be clarified. It was mentioned above that, while Yahweh’s victory is certain in vv. 3-15, it is not explicitly narrated; the reader rather watches as Yahweh advances, readies his weapons, and attacks, while chaos lashes back at him. Having now examined the role which vv. 3-15 play in greater detail, it is clear that presenting the battle in this way is no accident, for the Babylonian threat is, from the perspective of the prophet, still looming in the future. The contextual suitability of this particular formulation of Yahweh’s theophanic defeat of chaos may be stated with greater detail first with regard to ch. 3, then the book as a whole, and then the canonical location of Habakkuk within the Book of the Twelve.

First, 3.2, with its request that Yahweh renew the great acts of salvation of which Habakkuk catches a glimpse in his vision, also beseeches Yahweh to remember to act mercifully in the midst of trembling (רָדַף), the same root also describing Midian’s trembling before Yahweh’s appearance (v. 7) and Habakkuk’s response to his vision (v. 16). Its placement at three crucial junctures in the poem, the second of which describes the reaction to theophany, so that Habakkuk shakes (vv. 2, 16) along with the nations (v. 7), is significant in that Habakkuk’s response contrasts sharply with his earlier confrontational attitude (2.1),⁸³ but does not give way to terror or despair, instead showing unshakable confidence (3.17-19). This paradoxical response is sharpened by the prophet’s statement that his steps beneath him tremble (3.16), but that Yahweh makes his feet like a sure-footed animal (3.19).⁸⁴ It appears that, while the trembling of the nations implies their certain defeat, the trembling of the prophet leads to

⁸¹ The best discussion of this aspect of Hab 3 is found in James Watts, “Psalmody in Prophecy: Habakkuk 3 in Context,” in *Forming Prophetic Literature: Essays on Isaiah and the Twelve in Honor of John D. W. Watts*, ed. James Watts and Paul House (JSOTSupp 235; Sheffield: Sheffield, 1996), 209-23.

⁸² Watts, “Psalmody in Prophecy,” 222; J. Gerald Janzen, “Eschatological Symbol and Existence in Habakkuk,” *CBQ* 44 (1982): 409.

⁸³ Robertson, *Habakkuk*, 242; Rudolph, *Habakuk*, 240.

⁸⁴ Andersen, *Habakkuk*, 342.

security in the midst of impending calamity, who can even rest before the invading Babylonians (אָנַח, echoing the thought of 2.2-4).⁸⁵

Indeed, Habakkuk can not only wait faithfully, but enjoy to full measure the salvation (ישׁע, 3.18, echoing 3.8, 13) which he has envisioned. This is the case because the image of an animal treading upon the high places (וַעֲלֵ בְּמוֹתַי יִדְרֹכֵנִי, v. 19) recalls the actions of the Divine Warrior (note the echo from הִרְכֵּתָּ in v. 15,⁸⁶ the root being used nowhere else in the book, and compare Mic 1.3) as well as those who participate in the victory which this warrior accomplishes (cf. Ps 18.34).⁸⁷ The desolation of v. 17 may also fit as an intentional echo to the theophany of vv. 3-15, since theophanic intervention does sometimes result in cosmic desolation; but this verse may also refer more generally to trust in Yahweh even when all signs of his goodness are withdrawn.⁸⁸ The trembling reaction to Yahweh's war-like appearance thus spreads outside the description of the theophany and connects with the central themes of the book. The theophanic hymn in vv. 3-15 and the surrounding reactions to it in vv. 2, 16-19 display a natural connection, such that, while Yahweh's war-like appearance shakes everything to its foundations, it has diametrically opposite long-term effects for the faithful, for, in the midst of trembling which affects even the prophet, he can still tread on the heights (3.19).

These considerations speak strongly against any metaphorical interpretation of Yahweh's intervention in Hab 3 and the reactions attendant to it, as was briefly argued above in relation to vv. 3-7. Aside from the question of why divine intervention against the wicked in such a desperate situation would be described only in figures of speech, there is no indication that the language describing the effects of Yahweh's theophany for the cosmos and the prophet has a different, merely figurative intention driving it. In addition, the use of רָגַז within and outside of vv. 3-15, as well as the echo between Yahweh's treading on the waters and Habakkuk's treading on the heights, reveals a direct and mutually supporting relationship in the expression of this particular instantiation of the *Chaoskampf*. Such imagery is not metaphorical, comparing two distinct entities in an arresting and fruitful way (so that some aspect of Yahweh's action or its effects are compared with shaking and treading), but rather articulates the victory of

⁸⁵ House, *Unity*, 93. Although often emended to read, "I groan," this less surprising interpretation deflates the paradoxical joy and distress of vv. 16-19. There is also some ambiguity as to whether לַעֲלוֹת refers to the day of distress coming against Habakkuk or the Babylonians. While most modern versions opt for the latter, Andersen notes that יוֹם צָרָה refers only to the suffering of the faithful in the OT (*Habakkuk*, 345), and Cassuto compares the use of עלה here to its use in referring to a military campaign in 1 Ki 15.19 (*Oriental Studies*, 2:14; see further Rudolph, *Habakuk*, 247).

⁸⁶ Hiebert, *God*, 116.

⁸⁷ Cf. Haak, *Habakkuk*, 104.

⁸⁸ See Hiebert, *God*, 114, for the first option, and Andersen, *Habakkuk*, 345, for the second.

the Divine Warrior from within the cosmic narrative of the defeat of chaos and maintenance of order in paradigmatic acts (note the call for Yahweh to renew his action in 3.2). Nor is the conflict with chaos merely a faded echo of a narrative which was once fully known, but is now lost, as Andersen claims. On Anderson's reading, the reader is given only a glimpse of the storm god battling the sea god, without being told the cause of divine anger or the results of the battle; what happens before or after this dramatic moment is lost to us.⁸⁹ Against this, it should be maintained that the full dimensions of the *Chaoskampf* are present in this chapter, and that the incursion of chaos in the form of Babylon, together with Yahweh's defeat of it and the results arising from this victory, show this.

Similar observations may be made for the relationship of ch. 3 to chs. 1-2. The striking role which 2.20 plays in relation to the musical notations of ch. 3 has already been mentioned; it may be added here that the silence called for in all the earth before Yahweh's presence anticipates the theophany of ch. 3, especially in relation to the futility of idolatry (2.18-19).⁹⁰ Indeed, the praise or splendor of Yahweh which fills the earth (3.3) contrasts the reverent silence which is enjoined upon a world devoted to idolatry (2.18-20). The strong parallels in language between 2.14 and 3.3 also suggest that they be read together, so that the knowledge of Yahweh's glory covering the earth like the sea is brought about as Yahweh sets out, with his majesty covering the heavens.⁹¹ Finally, as stated above, the central problem of the book, which concerns the seemingly unassailable presence of evil and Yahweh's questionable means of dealing with it, especially in relation to the צַדִּיק (1.4, 13; 2.4), is answered by Yahweh's theophanic intervention: Yahweh personally destroys all evil for the sake of those faithful to him, no longer punishing iniquity by means of those who participate in it.⁹² Just as with the relation between 3.2 and 3.16-19 with vv. 3-15, the connections between chs. 1-2 and 3 with regard to theophanic divine intervention and the imagery attendant to it are best appreciated not as examples of metaphorical comparison, for their organic and mutually supporting relationship suggest that the mythic narrative of the Divine Warrior's defeat of chaos and evil is being put to new use by means of the cosmic imagery which describes this defeat.

⁸⁹ *Habakkuk*, 317. Anderson thinks the narratives of the Baal Epic and the Enuma Elish to be too distant culturally to help on this point. From a slightly different perspective, Robertson introduces a false dichotomy into his discussion by asserting that the absence of any mention of rivers in other OT passages "supposedly" referring to the battle against chaos indicates that no mythical battle takes place here, but rather a battle against real enemies (*Habakkuk*, 231).

⁹⁰ Otto, "Theologie," 293.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² *Ibid.*, 293-94; cf. Rudolph, *Habakkuk*, 240, who understands the mention of the wicked in 3.13-14 to confirm 2.5.

Finally, it may be noted that the visionary, proleptic nature of Yahweh's intervention in Habakkuk fits perfectly with its location between Nahum (which begins Yahweh's judgment of the nations, focusing on Assyria) and Zephaniah (which climactically expands this judgment to world-wide and creation-destroying proportions, including even Israel). Its middle position is also consonant with Habakkuk's problematization of Yahweh's judgment of the sin of the nations by a nation itself sinful, interrupting, as it were, the oracles against the nations to question the rightness of Yahweh's actions described in these oracles. The same suitability in Habakkuk's canonical position is also evident in Yahweh's response to Habakkuk concerning Babylon's final demise (2.6-19) and the possibility of waiting in security in the midst of crisis (3.16-19; 2.1-4), a crisis, from within the final form of the Book of the Twelve, which implicitly begins in Nahum and is completed in Zephaniah.⁹³

"He Will Advance in the Storms of the South" (Zechariah 9:13-17)

- 13) For I bend Judah, my (bow); I nock כִּי־דָרַכְתִּי לִי יְהוָה
Ephraim.⁹⁴ קָשַׁת מִלְּאֲתֵי אַפְרַיִם
- I incite your sons, Zion, וְעוֹרַרְתִּי בְּנֵי־צִיּוֹן
against your sons, Greece;⁹⁵ and I make you like a warrior's sword. עַל־בְּנֵי־יָוֶן וְשִׁמְתִּיךָ כְּחֶרֶב גִּבּוֹר
- 14) Yahweh will appear over them, he will set וַיֵּצֵא כְּבָרֶק חֲצוֹ
out, his arrow like lightning;⁹⁶ וַיִּהְיֶה עֲלֵיהֶם יְרָאָה
- the lord Yahweh will sound the trumpet, וְהָלַךְ בְּסַעֲרוֹת חִימּוֹן
he will advance in the storms of the south. וְהָדְנִי יְהוָה בְּשׁוֹפָר יִתְקַע
- 15) The Lord of Hosts will defend וְהָיָה צְבָאוֹת יְגֹן עֲלֵיהֶם
them. They will consume and subdue with slingstones; וְאָכְלוּ וְכִבְּשׁוּ אֲבִנֵי־קֶלַע

⁹³ House, "New Beginnings," 277. It was noted above that Nahum shows no fertility resulting from Yahweh's storm warfare, focusing only on its destructive aspects; Hab 3.17 may continue this idea.

⁹⁴ Translation from Shalom Paul, who notes that "to fill the bow" is a technical term for the activity of an archer. He also notes that קָשַׁת applies to both clauses ("A Technical Expression from Archery in Zechariah IX 13a," VT 39 [1989]: 96).

⁹⁵ Although often as a later interpretative addition, Meyers and Meyers note that Greece and Persia were in conflict in the 5th century, the supposed date for most of Zech 9-14 (Carol and Eric Meyers, *Zechariah 9-14* [AB 25C; New York: Doubleday, 1993], 148).

⁹⁶ Although חֲצוֹ is almost always taken as the subject of the clause, several considerations favor the above translation: יֵצֵא is never used elsewhere to describe the flying of arrows in the OT, and Yahweh is the subject of every other verb in vv. 12-15a. Additionally, the second clause of the second line of v. 14 shows a two-word prepositional phrase describing Yahweh's action in the preceding suffix-form verb (the chiasmic ordering of both lines also encourages one to read them together). As a result, v. 14a probably shows Yahweh appearing and setting out, casting lightning-arrows as he does.

they will drink and roar as if with wine,⁹⁷ וּשְׁתוּ הֵמוּ כְּמוֹ-יַיִן וּמָלְאוּ כַּמְזֶרֶק כְּזֵוִיֹּת מִזֶּבֶחַ
they will be full as the bowl, as the corner of an altar.⁹⁸

16) Yahweh their God will save them וְהוֹשִׁיעֵם יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיהֶם בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא כְּצֹאן עֹמֵר
on that day as a flock of his people,
for (they will be) stones of a crown raised⁹⁹ over כִּי אֲבִי-נֶזֶר מִתְנוֹסְסוֹת עַל-אֲדָמָתוֹ
his land.

17) How great is its כִּי מַה-טֹּיבוֹ וּמַה-יְפִיּוֹ דֶגֶן בַּחֹרִים וְתִירוֹשׁ יִנְוֵב בְּחַלּוֹת
goodness and beauty! Grain (for) young men, and wine
makes young women flourish.¹⁰⁰

The structure of this passage unfolds in a quasi-narrative manner as Yahweh readies his “weapon” and incites a battle (v. 13), then appearing over his troops and proceeding in the storm, with arrow flying and trumpet sounding (v. 14). Defended from above, Yahweh’s people participate in the defeat of the enemy (v. 15) and enjoy subsequent blessing (vv. 16-17). While the enemy is not here described in a “chaotic” way, the familiar images of Yahweh’s appearance (רֶאדָה) in the storm with lightning-arrows, together with the resulting natural fertility (v. 17), show that the *Chaoskampf* theme is in full use. The comparison of the fullness of Yahweh’s warriors to the corner of the altar is significant in this regard, for the renewal of nature after the

⁹⁷ The LXX reads, “drink them as wine,” with some other Greek manuscripts showing “drink their blood;” Vulgate and Targum do not show the word (see further Magne Sæbø, *Sacharja 9-14: Untersuchungen von Text und Form* [WMANT 34; Neukirchener: Neukirchener Verlag, 1969], 59-60). While it is possible that some form of דָם was later confused with the verb הָמוּ above, the MT is retained because of the symmetry of verb-verb-noun between the two middle clauses of the verse (see next note).

⁹⁸ This verse is often suspected of bearing additions and (not implausibly) emended to four three-word clauses; כְּזֵוִיֹּת is thus deleted as a variant of כַּמְזֶרֶק (it is not shown in the LXX), וּמָלְאוּ is deleted as having been inspired by וּשְׁתוּ, and הֵמוּ is emended to דָם (see, for instance, Paul Hanson, “Zechariah 9 and the Recapitulation of an Ancient Ritual Pattern,” *JBL* 92 [1973]: 46). However, in addition to the fact that the book of Zechariah often uses somewhat overloaded, repetitive language, the MT reveals a complex series of associations (to be discussed more fully below) wherein Zion’s sons share in both the warfare and the results of the defeat of chaos—complex enough that emendation fractures the verse at its foundations. Besides, the verse may not be as unwieldy as some think; Carol and Eric Meyers, for instance, note that the verses show a progression from eating to drinking to being full (*Zechariah 9-14*, 153), and Douglas Jones notes that two verbs begin both middle clauses of the verse (“A Fresh Interpretation of Zechariah IX—XI,” *VT* 12 [1962]: 249-50).

⁹⁹ Often translated as “sparkle;” the emphasis is, in any case, on their visibility.

¹⁰⁰ As with v. 15 above, v. 16-17 appear to many commentators to be inelegant and subject to various additions (see, for instance, Wilhelm Rudolph, *Haggai—Sacharhja 1-8—Sacharhja 9-14—Maleachi* [KAT XIII 4; Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Mohn, 1976], 184-85); as above, however, no proposal is entirely convincing, and the different clauses do play specific roles in the passage. While the versions do vary widely on these verses, Sæbø understands them to be basically struggling (each in their own way) with a text similar to the MT and does not suggest any emendations on the basis of them (*Sacharja 9-14*, 62).

divine victory often spreads from the warrior's palace/temple. It is noteworthy, however, that no explicit mention of thunder is made to match Yahweh's lightning-arrows; Yahweh instead blows on the trumpet (v. 14). This variation in imagery from thunder to a trumpet blast is, however, contextually appropriate, for Yahweh is almost certainly summoning or commanding his warriors (v. 13) in so doing. Furthermore, a trumpet blast is sometimes associated with thunder (see Exod 19.16, 19, 20.18, and Job 39.25).¹⁰¹ Variations which are similarly intentional and appropriate abound in the imagery of defeat and blessing in vv. 15-17, but their complex and inter-dependent nature require that each clause be examined separately.

Yahweh's direct appearance in storm and lightning has been noted above. The standard imagery for the appearance of the divine warrior is not, however, mechanically repeated in this text, for, just as the trumpet blast of v. 14 resonates in a particularly appropriate way in its context, the lightning-arrows which flash from the storm immediately recall Yahweh's use of Judah and Ephraim as his bow (v. 13). This identification of the Divine Warrior's storm-weapons with Yahweh's people is significant, for vv. 11-12, despite certain ambiguities, clearly claim that a remnant is about to be restored from captivity to the city/temple in Zion.¹⁰² On this reading, the יָבִי beginning v. 13 shows how this will actually come about: Yahweh will destroy those hindering their return through the remnant themselves.¹⁰³ And this implication is made through a specific application of storm imagery in divine warfare. The simile describing Yahweh's arrows as lightning in v. 14 does not drain the image of lightning of its mythic significance as a weapon, but is probably meant to account for the presentation of Yahweh's people as a weapon in v. 13—people who are not compared to weapons, but through whom Yahweh accomplishes his victory from the storm, to blessed effect.

The same is true of the images of v. 15, which skillfully collude the destruction of the enemy with subsequent blessing. This is seen in several ways. First, that Yahweh's warriors here "consume" (אָכְלוּ, v. 15) fits their use as a sword in v. 13, since swords are often said to consume;¹⁰⁴ but the use of the verb also plays off the drinking and boisterous tumult of the warriors in the second line of the verse, as the focus shifts to the first enjoyments of their victory. At the same time, this boisterous drinking may also underscore the fierceness of Yahweh's warriors, for the verb הִגִּיד is often used to describe the raging waters (see, e.g., Ps 46.3); as

¹⁰¹ See further Edgar Conrad, *Zechariah* (Readings: A New Biblical Commentary; Sheffield: Sheffield, 1999), 163.

¹⁰² Rex Mason, "The Use of Earlier Biblical Material in Zechariah 9-14: A Study in Inner-Biblical Exegesis," in *Bringing out the Treasure: Inner Biblical Allusion in Zechariah 9-14*, ed. Mark Boda and Michael Floyd (JSOTSupp 370; London: Sheffield, 2003), 56.

¹⁰³ Conrad, *Zechariah*, 162; Jeremias, *Theophanie*, 134.

¹⁰⁴ See the various references given on *BDB* 37.

elsewhere, the Divine Warrior (or his retinue) can sometimes take on “chaotic” characteristics. As a result, the images of eating and drinking both adumbrate the divine victory and its blessed consequences. The significance of the comparison of their fullness to temple sacrifice for the *Chaoskampf* theme, noted above, has the same effect.¹⁰⁵

The transition to the blessing and fecundity subsequent to victory is complete by vv. 16-17. Since the latter verse clearly expresses the renewed fertility that often results from Yahweh’s victory, it requires little comment beyond noting that the young men and women who enjoy the results of this fertility may appear in this text as a reflection of the post-exilic concern with re-populating the land. The images of the sheep and gemstones of a crown in v. 16 are, however, more complicated, partially because of the abrupt change in imagery and partially because of the use of *šep̄*, which shows that Yahweh’s people are here compared to sheep. Despite the sudden shift in imagery, however, it may be explained as an attempt to tie themes used elsewhere in the book to this passage, for the picture of shepherds and sheep, as well as that of a stone, are deeply rooted in the thought of the book. This is seen in the extended and ambiguous imagery of shepherds and sheep in Zech 10.3, 11.4-17, and 13.7-9, as well as the stone of Zech 3.9; 4.7, 10; and 6.9-15 (the last passage referring to a crown, not a stone, in possible adumbration of the *šep̄*).¹⁰⁶ It thus appears that the author means to tie the struggles over the identity and obedience of Yahweh’s people (as expressed in the shepherd image) and the promises of royal and priestly leadership in a rebuilt temple (as expressed in the images of the stone and crown) to Yahweh’s victory against his enemies through his people.¹⁰⁷ As a result, even though they are presented in the text as similes, these two images do not negate but rather deepen the mythic themes of Yahweh’s victory over all his enemies and the restoration of the temple and its worship, in blossoming fertility.

The contribution of this particular theophanic intervention to its context has already been discussed above with regard to vv. 11-12, where it was argued that Yahweh’s people, in their role as storm-weapons, enact judgment specifically on those keeping them in exile. Broadening our focus to the entire chapter, these observations may be continued by noting how Yahweh’s

¹⁰⁵ Although the connection is somewhat more tenuous, Meyers and Meyers note that, inasmuch as grain offerings could be offered in basins (see Num 7.13), an echo may sound between the basins and wine of v. 15 and the grain and wine of v. 17 (*Zechariah 9-14*, 155). Is it also possible that the young men and women of v. 17 echo Zion’s sons in v. 13?

¹⁰⁶ Meyers and Meyers, *Zechariah 9-14*, 158.

¹⁰⁷ Meyers and Meyers have also argued that there is a connection between the gemstones of v. 16 and the sling stones of v. 15. While the uses of these two different stones are totally different, it would explain why sling stones are singled out as a weapon, along with the much more common weapons of sword and arrow (*šep̄* is, as well, mentioned only elsewhere in chs. 9-14 in 12.3, making the connection stronger; see *Zechariah 9-14*, 154).

judgment of the nations in vv. 1-8 ends on the same note of security from the cosmic center of Yahweh's temple (v. 8). Thus, even if the judgment of the nations in this earlier passage is not specifically ascribed to their participation in Judah's exile and captivity, it is not without importance that both Yahweh's judgment of Judah's neighbors in vv. 1-8 and his victory against Judah's captors in vv. 11-17 end with Yahweh's secure and blessed rule, for it aligns these two divine actions (without necessarily identifying them).

This alignment is strengthened by three further links between vv. 1-8 and 13-17. First, inasmuch as many of the locations named in vv. 1-8 belong inside Judah's ideal borders, judgment against them goes hand in hand with Judah returning to its own land; this matches very closely the goal of Israel's release from the captivity of exile through Yahweh's intervention in vv. 11-12 and 13-17.¹⁰⁸ Second, just as the consuming (וְאָכַל) of Yahweh's warriors in v. 15 echoes their use as a sword in v. 13, it may further echo Tyre's being consumed by fire in v. 4 (בְּאֵשׁ תֵּאָכַל).¹⁰⁹ Third, the raising (נִתְנוּסָסוֹת, v. 16) of Judah as jewels of a crown may echo the standard (סֵ) which is raised in the return of Israel and the nations in other texts (e.g., Isa 49.22, 62.10).¹¹⁰ This link is admittedly weaker than the first two, but the use of Isaian texts in Zech 9 (note how Yahweh's people are a crown in Isa 62.3¹¹¹), as well as the incorporation into God's people of foreign nations in Zech 9.7 (cf., e.g., Isa 49.6), allows it to be legitimately registered as evidence.

Finally, these connections between vv. 1-8 and 11-17 are not only significant in themselves, but also in that they form an envelope structure around the peaceful entrance of Zion's humble king in vv. 9-10, showing the battle which necessarily comes first, before shalom may spread from shore to shore.¹¹² In light of these considerations, any metaphorical interpretation of the images describing Yahweh's appearance and its effects must be rejected. Aside from the strangeness of claiming that this most desperate situation (the restoration of

¹⁰⁸ Meyers and Meyers, *Zechariah 9-14*, 173.

¹⁰⁹ *ibid.*, 153.

¹¹⁰ Mason, "Earlier Biblical Materials," 59.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.* Mason discusses in detail the various texts from Isa 40-48 and 60-62 which are alluded to in this chapter.

¹¹² Mike Butterworth, *Structure and the Book of Zechariah* (JSOTSupp 130; Sheffield: Sheffield, 1992), 179. Paul Hanson has also interpreted ch. 9 as a large-scale depiction of the *Chaoskampf*, but with some different emphases. He adjusts the MT of v. 1 to refer to Yahweh's throne, understands vv. 1-7 to show the campaign of Yahweh and his warriors against their enemies, with the victorious return to the temple in v. 8, followed by a feast and display of might from that temple in vv. 14-17 (see "Ritual Pattern," 46-52). While the account given above is not totally different, Hanson is perhaps overly dependent on the particular definition of the *Chaoskampf* given by F. M. Cross in *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, which has been criticized in ch. 1 of this project. Hanson's emendations of the text are also somewhat speculative in nature.

Israel) and Yahweh's response to it are portrayed entirely in figures of speech, interpreting the storm warfare of Yahweh and his people and its blessed results only as comparisons drawn from the realm of nature to highlight divine power provides no explanation as to why the enemy is defeated and Yahweh's people blossom under his rule. No such superficiality hampers, however, an approach which gives attention to the cosmic symbolism of the weapons of the storm god, by which he defeats chaos and renews creation.

Yahweh Will Fight on the Mount of Olives (Zechariah 14.3-5)

3) Yahweh will go forth and **וַיֵּצֵא יְהוָה וְנִלְחַם בַּגּוֹיִם הָהֵם כַּיּוֹם הַלְחָמוֹ בְּיוֹם קָרָב**
fight against those nations, as when he fights on a day of battle.

4) His feet will **וְעָמְדוּ רַגְלָיו בַּיּוֹם-הַהוּא עַל-הַר הַזֵּיתִים אֲשֶׁר עַל-פְּנֵי יְרוּשָׁלַם מִקְדָּם**
stand on that day on the Mount of Olives,
which is beside Jerusalem to the east.¹¹³

The Mount of Olives will **וּנְבָקַע הַר הַזֵּיתִים מִחֲצִי מִזְרְחָה וְיָמָה גַּיָּא גְדוּלָּה מְאֹד**
be split in two, eastward and westward, a very great valley;
and half the mountain will move to the north and half **וּמִשׁ חֲצִי הָהָר צְפוֹנָה וְחֲצִי־יִנְגְבָה**
to the south.

5) You will flee¹¹⁴ (through) the valley of my¹¹⁵ **וְנָסְתֶם גַּיָּא-הָרִי כִּי-יָגִיעַ גַּי-הָרִים אֶל-אֶזַל**
mountains, for the valley of mountains will reach to Azal.¹¹⁶

You will flee as you fled from **וְנָסְתֶם כַּאֲשֶׁר נָסְתֶם מִפְּנֵי הָרַעַשׁ בְּיַמֵּי עֲזִיָּה מֶלֶךְ-יְהוּדָה**
before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah, king of Judah.

Yahweh my God will come, and all the holy ones **וּבָא יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי כָל-קְדוֹשִׁים עִמָּךְ**
with you.¹¹⁷

¹¹³ While this clause is often excised as a later gloss for those unfamiliar with the geography of the area, an emphasis on Yahweh's taking his stand to the east of the city plays an important role in the significance of the divine battle (see below).

¹¹⁴ The LXX shows "will be blocked up" for all three occurrences of this verb, reading **נָסְתֶם**; this is sometimes supported by modern scholars (cf. the RSV; note the extended discussion of Sæbø, *Secharja 9-14*, 110-13). The idea behind this reading is probably that idolatrous areas outside Jerusalem will be destroyed (Konrad Schaeffer, "The Ending of the Book of Zechariah: A Commentary," *RB* 100 (1993): 184; Mason, "Earlier Biblical Material," 181; Mason lists other possible meanings on 179-80). Such a reading fits badly, however, with the mention of fleeing before Uzziah's earthquake. Furthermore, the mention of flight before a theophany (although given an unexpected twist in this passage) is not unusual, while blocking up a valley is (see Meyers and Meyers, *Zechariah 9-14*, 424-27).

¹¹⁵ A final *mem* is sometimes added to bring it in line with the next clause, or the phrase is emended to **גַּי-הַנֶּחֱמָ**.

¹¹⁶ Although "to its side" would make perfect sense (presumably referring to Jerusalem), the MT is probably the more difficult reading.

The last chapter of Zechariah is rather evenly divided into four sections in an a-b-a-b pattern (vv. 1-5, 6-11, 12-15, and 16-21), the first and third describing Yahweh's attack on the nations, the second and fourth, the effects of his victory.¹¹⁸ The first of these sections divides naturally into Yahweh's gathering of the nations for battle and their victory over Jerusalem (vv. 1-2) and Yahweh's theophanic defeat of these nations, with earth-shattering effects (vv. 3-5); these latter verses surround the resulting earthquake on both sides by Yahweh's coming (אָנֹכִי and אָבִי).

One could hardly ask for a more profound use of the dimensions of the *Chaoskampf* than is found in this chapter, both in its overall progression of thought and in many details. The familiar pattern of military victory (vv. 3-5, 12-15), renewal of creation (vv. 6-11), and intensified divine rule from the temple (vv. 17-21) is central to the chapter. Many details in the text support this central focus: Yahweh will be king on that day (vv. 9, 16, 17), ruling in undifferentiated holiness (vv. 20-21) from a city elevated above all the surrounding area (v. 10) which is utterly secure (vv. 10-11) and has streams of living water flowing from it to the farthest reaches of the earth (v. 8). Indeed, as Meyers and Meyers note, this chapter engages in a sustained balancing act between Jerusalem as a cosmic center and the four corners of the earth and the nations, between the oneness of Yahweh's Day and his name and an unremittingly universal perspective.¹¹⁹ Although there are some elements in this theophanic battle which are completely new—the fertility subsequent to the divine victory here unusually involves a transformation of the structures of creation, so that, for instance, the alteration of night and day ceases (vv. 6-7)—the typical themes expressing the victory and rule of the Divine Warrior are in particularly strong focus.

The same is true of the imagery attending Yahweh's appearance in vv. 3-5, whose stand on a mountain east of Jerusalem causes an earthquake (עָרַע is not uncommon in theophanic texts [Isa 35.6, Mic 1.4, Hab 3.9]¹²⁰) before which people flee. The exact expression of this familiar theme is, however, given unique formulation: Yahweh stands on the Mount of Olives, which splits into a valley through which Yahweh's own people flee. Although it hardly needs to be said, it is not at all clear what the splitting of this valley could count as a metaphor for, nor why this putative metaphor would be given just this expression at this juncture in the text. But if

¹¹⁷ The unusual 1cs and 2ms suffixes are handled in different ways in the versions (Schaeffer, "Ending," 179) and sometimes smoothed out by commentators. While the first suffix may well be a mistake (see the proposals of *BHS* 4/5h), the second is almost surely the more difficult reading and is probably intended to recall the similar address in v. 1.

¹¹⁸ Meyers and Meyers, *Zechariah 9-14*, 451, 493.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 439-40.

¹²⁰ Mason, "Earlier Biblical Material," 179.

no metaphorical comparison with natural phenomena is present in this verse, why would the standard theophanic imagery of earthquake and flight be expressed in these ways?

That Yahweh takes his stand on a mountain implies that he takes up position there to do battle, for conflicts where a divine warrior plants both feet on a mountain and fights are not uncommon in ANE myth.¹²¹ In line with this, the earthquake resulting from Yahweh's stand is not merely a reflection of divine power, but is probably intended to give the Jerusalemites a chance to escape before the enemy is destroyed; the familiar trope of terror-stricken flight before an earth-shaking divine appearance is thus altered to that of the earthquake providing a means of escape before the enemy is destroyed.¹²²

The implication behind the specific location of the Mount of Olives, to the east of Jerusalem, is more ambiguous. It is associated with idolatry in 1 Ki 11.7 and 2 Ki 23.13, but elsewhere with the departure of kings: the human king David in 2 Sam 15.30, weeping as he flees from Absalom, and the divine king in Ezek 11.23, from before his people's idolatry (Ezek 43.1-5 shows the divine *kabod* returning by the same route).¹²³ Although the text does not explicitly identify its mention of the Mount of Olives with any one of these options, the fact that Yahweh is fighting on Jerusalem's behalf suggests that the negative connotations of a king being forced to leave are not in play.¹²⁴ Aside from this, however, the text is general enough that the reader is probably meant only to associate Yahweh's position on the Mount of Olives with an action which solidifies divine rule over the city and perhaps the cleansing of it (although idolatry is not a prominent theme in Zech 9-14, the future holiness of the city is). The possible implication that this battle also involves a cleansing of sin may also be supported by the reference to Uzziah's earthquake, since that king was associated with punished sin (2 Ki 15.1-7, 2 Chr 26.16-23).¹²⁵ Alternatively, it may simply be that the radical change in geography envisioned in the chapter recalled a memorable earthquake in the past.¹²⁶ From this perspective, the implication would be that Jerusalemites will be able to avoid the destructive effects of Yahweh's future warfare, just as they avoided the dangers of the earthquake in the past.

In any case, despite some ambiguity in the precise connotations of the mention of the Mount of Olives and Uzziah's earthquake, the author obviously means the reader to imagine a

¹²¹ See Meyers and Meyers, *Zechariah 9-14*, 419, 98; ANEP 683-85; Mark Smith, *The Early History of God* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1990), 73, note 86.

¹²² Jeremias understands the splitting of the valley to provide a road for Yahweh to make his holy entrance (v. 5b; *Theophanie*, 24).

¹²³ See Mason, "Earlier Biblical Materials," 177-78; Schaeffer, "Ending," 182.

¹²⁴ Contra Schaeffer, who thinks that this geographic location implies the judgment and destruction of Jerusalem, as it did in the book of Ezekiel ("Ending," 182).

¹²⁵ Mason, "Earlier Biblical Traditions," 181-82.

¹²⁶ Meyers and Meyers, *Zechariah 9-14*, 427.

final and decisive action of Yahweh on behalf of his city which will consolidate his rule over it. The particular twist given to the familiar image of an earthquake resulting from Yahweh's self-manifestation is entirely suited to and even supports the larger context, as judgment (vv. 1-2) gives way to an escape route before the final destruction of the hostile nations (vv. 3-5). All in all, this last chapter powerfully climaxes the book-wide concern for a fully functioning temple and consequent blessing (see 2.9-17, 8.3-5, 12) to which all nations will come (8.20-23).¹²⁷ As Rex Mason has written, the promises of the book are not withdrawn, but rather fulfilled after an act of final judgment (14.1-2) and the transformation of the cosmos.¹²⁸

As a result, the particular expression given to theophany in Zech 14.3-5 furthers the central concerns of the text from within the matrix of the *Chaoskampf* and cannot be assigned to metaphor for divine power. At least two ambiguities remain, however. First, descriptions of divine appearance which speak of Yahweh's approach usually specify it further; God thus sets out before his people in the wilderness (Ps 68.8) or comes from the south, from Teman (Hab 3.3). By way of contrast, no such specification is made in Zech 14.3. Inasmuch as half the city is not cut off (v. 2), Yahweh may have allowed a temporary defeat to be dealt to his people before leaving his own city to fight to the east of it; but it is difficult to be sure. Other questions arise on this score: is Yahweh's fighting to the east an effort to rescue those going into exile or those not cut off (v. 2)? And does the combination of $\text{N}\text{S}\text{'}^{\text{r}}$ and NQ imply that he first sets out from Jerusalem, and then returns with his saints to the city? This is a plausible option, and $\text{N}\text{S}\text{'}^{\text{r}}$ and NQ can be used to speak of going out and returning (cf. Gen 30.16, Num 27.17), but the verbs are so general that it is difficult to be sure.

A second ambiguity is found in the imprecise symmetry between Yahweh's conflict and its effects: the earthquake which his appearance causes is not (as one might expect) due to the roaring of his thunder, and the plague which finally defeats the surrounding nations in vv. 12-15 is not one of the expected weapons of the storm god. Were Yahweh to appear in the storm on the Mount of Olives, with Deber and Resheph at his side (cf. Hab 3.6) as he roared and cast lightning bolts in order to make the earth shake, the mountain split, and to throw his enemies into a panic as they are inflicted with a plague, then this ambiguity would be resolved. But the description of Yahweh's appearance is so sparse that these connections remain at the level of speculation. These two ambiguities do not lower the passage to the level of metaphorical description, of course, but it should be noted that, despite the coherence of the description of

¹²⁷ Konrad Schaefer, "Zechariah 14 and the Composition of the Book of Zechariah," *RB* 100 (1993): 382.

¹²⁸ "Earlier Biblical Material," 175.

divine appearance and its effects in this passage, it is not fleshed out in as much detail as some others are.

It should finally be noted that, as with the theophanic descriptions of Nahum and Habakkuk in the second section of the Book of the Twelve, the theophany of Zech 14 is well suited to its larger context within the promises of restoration in this last section of the Twelve. Haggai, as the first book of this last section, shows an ideal response to prophetic preaching about the restoration of the temple. Indeed, in a striking variation on standard theophanic description, Yahweh even promises to shake heaven and earth so that the treasures of the nations come tumbling into the temple and its latter glory (כְּבוֹדָה, often connoting the divine presence) is even greater than that of the first temple (2.6-9). The central concerns of Zechariah are hardly much different, especially in the description of ch. 14 of Yahweh's final defeat of all his enemies and the final purging and consummation of world-wide worship at Zion. Even Malachi ends with a final, purging theophanic appearance of Yahweh in his temple (3.1-4, 16-19). It might even be said that all of the Book of the Twelve leads up to Yahweh's return to and presence in his temple. Although other theophanic passages in the Book of the Twelve take on overtones of finality (as in, for instance, Joel), these overtones become explicit and are greatly intensified as the reader reaches the end of the book.

Chapter 5

Metaphor and Myth in Theophany: Borderline cases

The first chapter of this project argued that, contrary to the dominant interpretation of the imagery surrounding Yahweh's theophanic presence as a warrior in poetic texts as metaphorical comparison with natural phenomena, this imagery should be interpreted in relation to the larger narrative and cosmological structures of the *Chaoskampf* myth. With the example of Baal's theophany in the Baal Epic as a pattern, it has been shown repeatedly that the stock imagery of thunder and lightning, fire and earthquake in theophanic texts in Isaiah and the Book of the Twelve cannot function as a metaphorical way of emphasizing divine power. These images do not "work" as metaphors do, setting in relation two unrelated entities so that, in the interplay between similarity and dissimilarity in their field of associations, various connections can be drawn which reveal something about one of the entities under comparison. There is either a disconnect between the two fields of associations (such as in the desolating effects of Yahweh's appearance in the storm [e.g., Isa 19.1, 5-6; Amos 1.2]), or the mythic dimensions of the passage are simply too strong to be ignored (as in Isa 24.21-23 or 26.20-27.1); or, as most commonly happens, a metaphorical approach results in the most superficial understanding of theophanic imagery, being able to discern only an emphasis on divine power in the extended and finely nuanced descriptions of Yahweh's battling from the storm to defeat his enemies and renew his reign from the cosmic center. Attention to the *Chaoskampf* as a mythic narrative shows the organic and mutually supporting relationship between the theophanic divine defeat of chaos and the imagery attending it, such that this imagery buttresses the particular formulation given to this victory and even specifies its results.

However, not every theophanic description in Isaiah and the Book of the Twelve fits as neatly into the above schema as those texts discussed in chapters three and four. Two brief descriptions of theophany occur at one level of remove from the main line of the development of the text (Isa 50.1-3, 63.10-64.2), and, in one instance, a theophany is only hinted at (Isa 33.1-16). One such passage does not show any clear reaction to Yahweh's presence (Isa 63.1-6), and three are more heavily mixed with metaphor than most other poetic Divine Warrior theophanies (Isa 17.12-14, 31.4-9; Mic 1.3-4). It is thus appropriate to examine these texts which do not neatly fit into this project's paradigm to see what implications they might have for the argument of this project.

“By my Rebuke, I Dry Up the Sea” (Isa 50.1-3)

1) Thus says Yahweh:

כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה

Where is this bill of divorce for your mother, אֵשֶׁר שְׁלַחְתִּיהָ אִי זֶה סֵפֶר פְּרִיתוֹת אִמְכֶם
with which I sent her away?

Or which of my creditors is it to whom I sold you? אוּ מִי מִנּוּשֵׁי אֲשֶׁר־מְכַרְתִּי אֶתְכֶם לֹ
Behold, in your sins you were sold, הֵן בְּעֹנֹתֵיכֶם נִמְכַרְתֶּם וּבִפְשָׁעֵיכֶם שְׁלַחָה אִמְכֶם
and in your rebellions your mother was sent away.

2) Why, when I came, was there no-one; מָדוּעַ בָּאתִי וְאֵין אִישׁ קָרָאתִי וְאֵין עֹנֶה
when I called, was there no-one answering?

Is my hand at all to short to redeem, הֲקַצּוֹר קַצְרָה יָדִי מִפְּדוּת¹ וְאִם־אֵין־בִּי כֹחַ לְהַצִּיל
or have I no strength to deliver?

Behold, at my roar I dry up the sea, הֵן בְּנִעְרָתִי אֲחַר־יָם אֲשִׁים נְהָרוֹת מְדָבָר
I make rivers into a desert;

their fish stink² for lack of water, they die in thirst; תִּבְאֵשׁ דְּנָתָם מֵאֵין מַיִם וְתָמַת בְּצָמָא

3) I clothe the heavens with darkness אֲלֹבִישׁ שָׁמַיִם קִדְרוֹת וְשַׁק אֲשִׁים כְּסוֹתָם
and make their covering sackcloth.

The structure and contribution of this passage are easy to trace: Yahweh answers his people’s complaint against him (v. 1) and then expands on this answer by exposing his people’s unwillingness to respond to him (v. 2); he then assures his people of his absolute ability to redeem them, referring to his rebuke of the sea as proof (vv. 2-3). This passage forms one part of Yahweh’s response to Zion’s complaint in 49.14. This passage thus does not directly describe a theophany—Yahweh does not actually appear in this text and rebuke the sea—but rather makes reference to this in support of the contention of the second line of v. 2.

Yahweh’s direct presence is here alluded to by his roaring against the sea (בְּנִעְרָתִי), an action which cannot be done except directly (see, e.g., Ps 18.16, 76.7, 104.7; Job 26.11; Isa 66.15, et. al.). His presence as a warrior is, furthermore, obvious from the second line of v. 2. But why would the ominous images of stinking, dying fish and darkened skies lend support for Yahweh’s ability to redeem his people? Many commentators have noted that the passage seems

¹ Following *BHS* 2a and *LXX*, Targum, and Vulgate and emending the noun form of MT (מִפְּדוּת) to an infinitive (see J. D. W. Watts, *Isaiah 34-66* [WBC 25; Waco, TX: Word, 1987], 192).

² 1QIsa^a reads חִיבֵשׁ, supported by the *LXX*’s ξηραυθήσουσαι, “they will be dry;” but the MT is surely the more difficult reading (John Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapter 40-66* [NICOT; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996], 316).

somewhat clipped towards the end,³ making this odd juxtaposition all the more puzzling. As the passage stands, however, it is usually claimed that this imagery is used to imply that, if Israel understood Yahweh's power in judgment, they would understand his power to save.⁴ While this may be true to some extent, it is helpful at this point to consider the larger use of cosmic desiccation and blossoming in Isa 35, 40-55, for, as has been shown in chapter three, Yahweh's cosmic judgment is the necessary antecedent to Israel's restoration from Babylon, so that Israel cannot return until Yahweh has prepared the way by the defeat of chaos (see especially the above discussion of 35.1-10 in this regard). If the same thought is at work here, it would explain the juxtaposition of such gloomy imagery with Yahweh's unstoppable power to redeem, for the implication would be that Yahweh's drying up of the sea is the necessary precursor to the new exodus. This would allow for a closer connection between such apparently negative imagery and Yahweh's ability to effect salvation.

At the same time, however, the final two lines of the passage cannot help but have a sobering effect on the reader. Divine judgment might be the necessary precursor to redemption, but the rotting fish and darkened skies express this necessary precursor with such pungency that a threat may be implied. The use of the theme of theophanic warfare in this passage is thus in harmony with the other uses of this theme in Isa 40-55, although it may take on a more ambiguous or even threatening nuance in contrast to other similar passages. Furthermore, as elsewhere in Isa 40-55, the drying up of the sea is not a metaphorical comparison designed to substantiate divine power, but a direct claim to that power within the framework of the (new) Exodus. Just as was noted above with regard to Amos 1.2, it is also noteworthy that since Yahweh's roar is identified elsewhere with his thundering in the storm, there is a disconnect between the field of associations in the putatively metaphorical comparison between the storm and the drying up of the sea.

This passage thus does conform to the pattern laid out in chapters two through four of the present project. However, inasmuch as this theophanic description is enlisted only to support Yahweh's counter-complaint, the range of influence of the imagery is quite limited, unlike other theophanic passages (such as Isa 35).

³ See Oswalt, *Isaiah: 40-66*, 316, note 8.

⁴ See James Smart, *History and Theology in Second Isaiah: A Commentary on Isaiah 35, 40-66* (London: Epworth, 1967), 170, and Walter Brueggemann, *Isaiah* (2 vols.; WC; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1998), 2:121.

“O, That You Would Tear the Heavens” (Isa 63.19-64.2)

63.19) O, that you would tear the heavens, יִרְדָּתָּ מִפְּנֵי הָרִים נָזְלוּ לֹא־קִרְעֶתָ שָׁמַיִם
that you would descend; from before you the mountains
would shake⁵—

64.1) as fire kindles brushwood, and fire מִיַּם תִּבְעֶה־אֵשׁ פְּקֹדֶתָ אֵשׁ הַמָּסִים
makes water boil⁶—

to make known your name to your enemies, מִפְּנֵיךָ גּוֹיִם יִרְגְּזוּ לְהוֹדִיעַ שְׁמֶךָ לְצָרֶיךָ
so that from before you the nations would shake,

64.2) when you did wondrous things יִרְדָּתָּ מִפְּנֵי הָרִים נָזְלוּ בְּעֵשׂוֹתֶיךָ נֹרְאוֹת לֹא נִקְנָה
which we did not expect; you descended, from before
you the mountains shook.⁷

In a manner similar to 50.1-3, this passage does not describe a theophany directly, but begs for theophanic intervention. The structure of this request begins with the request proper, moves to a comparison, is followed by an infinitive of purpose, and closes with a circumstantial clause. Yahweh’s manner of appearance is clearly signaled by the tearing of the heavens in v. 1, while the war-like nature of his intervention and its effect is seen in the trembling of Yahweh’s enemies (as well as the mountains). Before examining why the particular image of shaking would be applied both to the mountains and Yahweh’s enemies, however, it will be helpful to consider the contribution of this sub-section to the prayer as a whole.

Three significant connections link 63.19b-64.2 to its immediate context. First, the image of Yahweh tearing the heavens (קִרְעֶתָ שָׁמַיִם) and descending, although not occurring anywhere else in the OT, should probably be read in light of the petition that Yahweh look down from his heavenly dwelling (מִזְבֵּל קִדְשֶׁךָ וְתִפְאַרְתֶּךָ, 63.15) at the desolation of his earthly temple and dwelling-place (63.18, 64.9-10; 64.10 contains particularly strong echoes of 63.15). The incongruity between the glory and beauty of Yahweh’s heavenly dwelling and the state of his earthly temple thus demands a violent break between the boundary separating them (note, in this

⁵ The MT reads a Niphal form of זלל, “to shake.” The LXX, however, adds καὶ τακίησονται to its translation of this line (which otherwise reflects the MT). Together with the Vulgate’s *defluerent*, a Qal form of נזל, “to flow,” is often read in this verse (a similar problem occurs in Judg 5.5). However, the LXX renders the last phrase of v. 2 without adding to the MT, which suggests that the καὶ τακίησονται of v. 19 is the LXX’s own addition.

⁶ The witnesses differ on this line, applying it directly to the destruction of Yahweh’s enemies (e.g., 1QIsa^a adds לצריכה, and the LXX adds τοὺς ὑπεναγτούς). None, however, contains a better reading (see discussion in Oswalt, *Isaiah 40-66*, 618, note 3).

⁷ The second clause of this verse is possibly to be deleted as dittography from 63.19.

regard, how the root פִּאֵר is used of Zion's restoration in 60.7, 9, 13, and 21). Second, the petition that Yahweh make known his name to his enemies echoes the description of the results of Yahweh's splitting of the Red Sea and leading his people in this passage: the gain of an eternal and glorious name (63.12, 14); the claim to Yahweh as a father beyond Abraham similarly ends with reference to Yahweh's name as a savior from of old (63.16). As a result, this appeal for theophanic intervention amounts, at least in part, to an appeal to Yahweh that he renew his salvific actions of the past. Third, the reference to Yahweh's enemies in 64.1 recalls the enemies of the community which have destroyed the temple (63.18).

These links show the suitability to the context of the particular expression given to the manner of divine appearance. But how is the aftershock of this theophany in harmony with its context? Why would it strike the author as particularly appropriate to speak of shaking, and to apply that shaking both to mountains and to the enemies of Zion? At first blush, it might appear that the former is a metaphor for the latter; but the simile in 64.1, together with the other elements of the request, such as the divine temple, Yahweh's actions in the past, and the encroaching enemies, suggest that the shaking of the mountains is employed beyond the purposes of mere comparison. With regard to the simile which begins v. 1, it was noted above in footnote 6 that many of the versions apply this simile directly to the enemies of the next line, but that these probably do not represent a better reading as opposed to the MT. Despite this, however, the versions are correct to apply the simile to the enemies of v. 2. This is the case because the common element binding the two images of brushwood burning and water boiling is probably to be found in the discomfiture or violent change which the fire brings about in the water and brushwood; it is significant in this regard that three of the other four uses of קָרַק with שֵׁן involve descriptions of divine judgment (Deut. 32.22; Jere 15.14, 17.4; and, somewhat more ambiguously, Isa 50.11). As a result, this simile is not meant to be applied to the manner of divine appearance (the first clause of the second line of 63.19), but its effects on mountains and divine enemies (the second clause). The shaking of the enemies which have destroyed Yahweh's earthly sanctuary thus implies, by means of the simile to burning wood and boiling water, their imminent destruction. The shaking of the mountains and Yahweh's enemies are thus not to be set in a relation of comparison, but should both be taken as results of Yahweh's appearance—results which are themselves drawn into a comparison with brushwood and water in 64.1. The trembling (and implicit defeat) before the divine presence is thus thought of as being as real as the other elements of this passage, such as the grievous disparity between desolate Zion and Yahweh's heavenly dwelling, the enemies which had triumphed over Zion, as well as Yahweh's saving action in the past.

Despite the boundary which can be drawn between metaphorical comparison and mythic divine action in this passage, however, one cannot help but feel, as with the reference to theophany in Isa 50.2-3 above, that this description of divine appearance is noticeably clipped. Why, for example, is it that the mountains are included as objects which receive the effects of Yahweh's theophany? Why not the earth or the waters? Unfortunately, the text does not elaborate further on what significance these mountains might have; there is, for instance, no contrast between other mountains and Mt. Zion as in Isa 2. The text apparently simply draws upon a standard reaction to theophany in this particular location before moving on. It thus appears that both these theophanic descriptions, while fully availing themselves of the mythic dimensions of theophany, do not unfold these dimensions as fully as they could.

"Now I Will Arise" (Isa 33.1-16)

Two undeveloped hints of theophanic activity by Yahweh are given in Isa 33, a chapter readily divided into three sections (vv. 1-6, 7-16, and 17-24).⁸ The chapter begins with the final woe-pronouncement of chs. 28-35, this time directed against the enemy, whose defeat is imminent (v. 1).⁹ A prayer in the midst of this imminent deliverance from the foreign superpower occupies vv. 2-6, while vv. 7-9 depict the actual situation in which the community finds itself. Yahweh's answer to the plight of the community is given in vv. 10-16, while vv. 17-24 close off the chapter (and chs. 28-33) with their vision of the rule of a just king and utter security for Zion.¹⁰

The first of two verses directly relevant for this project is found in the prayer of vv. 2-6:

3) At the tumultuous roar, peoples flee; מְקוֹל הַמּוֹן נִדְרֵי עַמִּים מְרוֹמְמִתָּךְ¹¹ נִפְצוּ גוֹיִם
at your self-exaltation, nations are scattered.

This prayer begins with the community's trust in Yahweh's acting for their salvation (v. 2). The above verse is couched as a second-person address to Yahweh (Yahweh does not directly respond until v. 10), so the depiction of the fleeing of the nations here must be the

⁸ See, e.g., Wildberger, *Jesaja 28-39* (BKAT 10; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1982), 1285; Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 1-39* (NICOT; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986), 591.

⁹ As Childs notes, either Assyria or Babylon could fill this role, since both are typologically related as the enemy around which Yahweh's action for his people revolves in Isaiah (see 10.12, 14.24-27, 21.2; *Isaiah* [OTL; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2001], 246).

¹⁰ The above analysis is indebted to J. J. M. Roberts, "Isaiah 33: An Isaianic Elaboration of the Zion Tradition," in *The Word of the Lord Shall Go Forth*, ed. Carol Meyers and M. O'Connor, (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1983), 15, and Brueggemann, *Isaiah*, 1:263.

¹¹ IQIsa^a reads מְרוֹמְמִתָּךְ, "at your silencing;" LXX shows τοῦ φέβου σου. Most commentators retain MT.

imagined outcome of Yahweh's intervention on their behalf.¹² Yahweh's self-exaltation and scattering of the nations in v. 3 leads to his exalted (נִשְׁבַּח) reign from Zion (v. 5), which involves filling Zion with every spiritual treasure which has been lacking in chs. 28-33 thus far (v. 6).¹³ This pattern of thought fits easily within the development of different themes from ch. 13 of the book of Isaiah onwards: the devastating work of Assyria and Babylon (elsewhere identified with Yahweh's judgment of the world) is about to come to an end, as Yahweh's self-exaltation effects the defeat of the enemy and the restoration of Zion. The theophanic nature of this self-exaltation is implied in its tumultuous roar; in light of similar passages elsewhere, the reader of the book of Isaiah will not be surprised that the nations flee from before it. Beyond this, however, the text does not indicate exactly how Yahweh manifests his presence or why this involves such clamor (is the thunder-weapon of the Divine Warrior in view here?). All that is clear is that the community trusts Yahweh to bring his judgment of the earth by means of the שׁוֹדֵד to an end, to destroy the instrument by which he destroyed the earth, and consummate his just rule in Zion.

The הִנֵּה beginning vv. 7-9 leads the reader back to the present situation of utter desolation under divine judgment, expressed in a manner meant to echo 24.1-13. In response to this, Yahweh claims:

10) Now I will arise, says Yahweh; עָתָה אֶקוּם יְהוָה יֵאמֶר יְהוָה עָתָה אֶרְוֹמֶם עָתָה אֲנִישָׂא
now I will exalt myself; now I will lift myself up.

Yahweh's self-exaltation in the face of the completion of his judgment has two effects: the nations are utterly consumed (vv. 11-12) and sinners in Zion tremble before Yahweh's burning presence in Zion (vv. 13-14); only those who practice righteousness can participate in the consummation of Yahweh's theophanic rule on Mt. Zion (note the similarity in wording of v. 16 with vv. 5-6). The verbs used in v. 10 would easily fit with a further depiction of Yahweh's direct defeat of the nations, but instead the text moves on to imply that the enemy nations which have been working Yahweh's judgment will destroy themselves (vv. 11-12, in harmony with the thought of v. 1; cf. 9.17-19, 10.16).¹⁴

¹² J. J. M. Roberts understands vv. 3-6 to depict Yahweh's past salvific actions, which form the basis of present hope ("Isaiah 33," 15). However, vv. 5-6 are best understood as depicting the righteousness and justice which have been lacking, but which Yahweh will soon give.

¹³ V. 4 is probably also a result of Yahweh's self-exaltation in v. 3, but its textual difficulties and several ambiguities (e.g., to whom does the 2mp suffix on שְׁלַלְכֶם refer?) hinder exact identification of its contribution to the passage.

¹⁴ Roberts, "Isaiah 33," 22.

The sweep of ch. 33 and its contribution to the larger development of Isa 28-35 (as well as 13-35) thus constitutes a perfectly appropriate provisional climax. The agent through which Yahweh has enacted his judgment on the whole world is about to be destroyed as Yahweh consummates his exalted reign on Mt. Zion, leading to perfect security for the city (vv. 18-19), a righteous reign of a human king (v. 17, in fulfillment of 32.1-4), and the forgiveness and healing for all the problems which have plagued Zion's community in chs. 28-31. Note also how the knowledge of Yahweh (v. 6), the sensitivity towards Yahweh's holy presence (v. 14), and the sight of Zion and its king, without any sight or sound of the enemy, all reverse Israel's earlier willful blindness before Yahweh's judgment of his own city and people (e.g., 29.9-16).¹⁵ The three-fold emphasis on the timing of Yahweh's action in v. 10 (עֲתִידָהּ) coming on the heels of the desolation of vv. 7-9 also functions in harmony with the rest of chs. 28-35, for the intrinsic and necessary relation between Yahweh's desolating judgment and healing restoration is a prominent theme elsewhere in this part of the book (see 29.1-8 and the connection between chs. 34 and 35). And in the midst of all of this, it is hinted that Yahweh's defeat of the destroying nations and consummation of his rule in Zion are accomplished theophanically. But no further clues are given as to the exact manner of Yahweh's appearance and engagement in warfare.

Even in light of the more allusive nature of these theophanic references, however, a metaphorical interpretation of vv. 3 and 10 cannot easily be sustained, for the book of Isaiah does envision a real self-exaltation of Yahweh as an intrinsic part of Yahweh's action among the nations and his people. Even the קוֹל הַמּוֹן of his self-exaltation, although not further unfolded in the course of this poem, is probably not mere figurative language, since there is no obvious candidate among the various dimensions of Yahweh's self-exaltation for which a tumultuous roar could serve as a striking and productive comparison. It is better to understand these clipped references in light of other more developed narratives of Yahweh's theophanic self-exaltation in the book of Isaiah—narratives which show larger connections to the defeat of chaos and the establishment of the rule of the Divine Warrior.

Who Is This, Coming from Edom? (Isa 63.1-6)

1) Who is this coming from Edom, with
reddened garments from Borzah;

מִיִּזְהָ בָּא מֵאֲדוֹם חֲמוֹץ בְּגָדִים מִבֹּרְזָה

¹⁵ Roberts, "Isaiah 33," 21; Gary Stansell, "Isaiah 28-33: Blest Be the Tie That Bind (Isaiah Together)," in *New Visions of Isaiah*, ed. Roy Melugin and Marvin Sweeney (JSOTSupp 214; Sheffield: Sheffield, 1996), 77.

this one glorious in apparel, stooping ¹⁶ in his great strength?	צַעָה בְּרַב כַּחוֹ	זֶה הַדְּרוֹר בְּלְבוּשׁוֹ
“I am speaking in victory, mighty to save.” ¹⁷	רַב לְהוֹשִׁיעַ	אֲנִי מְדַבֵּר בַּצְּדָקָה
2) Why is your garment red, your clothes like one treading a winepress?	וּבְגָדֶיךָ כְּדֶרֶךְ בְּנֵת	מִדּוּעַ אָדָם לְלְבוּשֶׁךָ
3) “The winepress I trod alone, with no-one from the peoples with me.	וּמַעֲמִים אֵין-אִישׁ אִתִּי	פּוֹרָה דְרַכְתִּי לְבַדִּי
I am treading ¹⁸ on them in my anger, and I am trampling them in my wrath;	וְאַרְמָסֶם בְּחַמְתִּי	וְאַדְרִכֶם בְּאַפִּי
Their glory ¹⁹ sprinkles my clothes, and all my garments I defile.	וְכָל-מְלִבוּשֵׁי אֲנָאֲלָתִי	וְיוֹז נִצָּחִם עַל-בְּגָדֵי
4) For there is a day of vengeance in my heart, the year of my redemption comes.	וּשְׁנַת גְּאוּלֵי בָאָה	כִּי יוֹם נִקְם בְּלִבִּי
5) I see that there is no-one helping, I am astonished that there is no-one supporting.	וְאִשְׁתּוֹמָם וְאֵין סוֹמֵךְ	וְאֵבִיט וְאֵין עֹזֵר
So my arm wins salvation for me, my wrath, it sustains me.	וְחַמְתִּי הִיא סִמְכָתִנִּי	וְהוֹשַׁע לִי זְרַעִי

¹⁶ The frequent emendation to צַעָה is probably an easier reading; as Oswalt notes, the ambiguity of the versions on this clause favors it, since they would probably be clearer if the original reading had been the expected “striding” (Oswalt, *Isaiah 40-66*, 591, note 4). Oswalt takes the word to imply a kind of swagger in Yahweh’s approach, adding to the impressiveness of his appearance (cf. הַדְּרוֹר in the previous clause). John Sawyer, however, suggests that there may be some ambiguity between the image of a blood-stained warrior and a weary laborer (“Radical Images of Yahweh in Isaiah 63,” in *Among the Prophets*, ed. Philip Davies and D. J. A. Clines [JSOTSupp 144; Sheffield: Sheffield, 1993], 79).

¹⁷ The above translation is based on the RSV. J. W. Olley notes that, while most translations take בַּצְּדָקָה to denote the object of Yahweh’s speaking, the construction properly denotes the manner with which one speaks: “speaking with a saving purpose” (“Notes on Isaiah XXXII 1, XLV 19, 23 and LXIII 1,” *VT* 33 [1983]: 451-52).

¹⁸ The surprising non-consecutive imperfect forms are often emended to consecutive imperfects (cf. *BHS* 3a, b, 5a, 6a). Stylistic alternation between forms may be the aim here, or it could be that the non-consecutive imperfect these implies the “extraordinary, almost unreal nature” of the scene (Sawyer, “Radical Images,” 77-78; see other explanations listed in Oswalt, *Isaiah 40-66*, 592, note 10). It is tempting to try to draw a connection with the surprising use of simple imperfect in the parallel passage of 59.15b-20, but they are probably not used consistently enough in 63.3-6 to validate such a comparison. I have translated with the present tense and the continuous/progressive present (cf. WOC 31.3b-c) to suggest that Yahweh’s action against the nations which began in Edom is still going on as he makes his way to Zion.

¹⁹ נִצָּח usually means “eminence, glory” or “perpetuity;” a hypothetical root is invoked to justify the usual translation of “blood.” Although such a translation certainly makes sense, there may be a deliberate confusion here between the blood of Yahweh’s slain enemies and their glory which he has destroyed; note how redness and glory are related in the second line of v. 1. It seems safer to allow for difficult poetry rather than positing a root for which there is no other evidence (cf. John Scullion, “Some Difficult Texts in Isaiah cc.56-66 in the Light of Modern Scholarship,” *UF* 4 [1972]: 122).

6) I am trampling peoples in my anger, I make them
 drunk²⁰ in my wrath; וְאֶשְׁכַּרְם בְּחַמְתִּי וְאֲבוֹס עַמִּים בְּאַפִּי
 I bring down to the earth their splendor.” וְאוֹרִיד לְאֶרֶץ נִצְחָם

This passage does not conform to the usual pattern of theophanic divine warfare, for while Yahweh does come into view here as a warrior, he does so after his battle; there are thus no descriptions of cosmic aftershocks issuing from the conflict. Despite its exceptional nature, however, the passage is an important one for the unfolding of the central themes in Isa 56-66 and for the role which theophanic warfare plays in them.

The structure of this passage is divided into two questions (in vv. 1 and 2) and two answers (vv. 1 and 3-6), the latter of which forms an imperfect chiasm, with descriptions of divine trampling (vv. 3, 6) surrounding (and implicitly highlighting) the day of Yahweh's vengeance (v. 4); v. 5 upsets this balance to a certain degree. Yahweh directly appears as he comes from Edom (v. 1), strikingly described as having red-stained clothes. The metaphor of treading on a wine press is prominent throughout, but should not be understood too strictly, for Yahweh also makes the nations drunk in his wrath; this flexibility in thought between the nations being compared to the grapes which are crushed and the drinkers of the wine which is made from those grapes contrasts with the image of Yahweh as a warrior, which plays a central role in Isa 56-66 and is not enlisted as material for a comparison with some other aspect of Yahweh's character. The metaphor of the wine press, in other words, supports the mythic theme of the Divine Warrior in this text, from which it may be legitimately distinguished.

The particular role which Yahweh's appearance as a Divine Warrior plays in this location is revealed by the theological qualities which characterize it: victory (צָרָק) and salvation as well as anger and wrath. Divine victory and wrath are, of course, not presented as theological abstractions in Isa 56-66, for his victory constitutes Yahweh's final restoration of Zion and the true Israel, drawn from devoted Yahwists around the world, while his wrath is against those persisting in idolatry. Admittedly, the recipients of Yahweh's victory and judgment are not made clear in this passage—salvation is implicitly promised to whomever Yahweh is addressing, and wrath against the peoples, but the exact identity of these two groups is not made explicit. However, this very ambiguity may serve to reinforce the contribution of this passage to the larger sweep of Isa 56-66. As Schramm has noted, a central issue in these chapters concerns the open border which is given to the nations to join Israel in purified

²⁰ Rejecting the common emendation to “break” (שָׁבַר) as the easier reading. As Oswalt notes, the image of drunkenness is common in depictions of divine judgment (*Isaiah 40-66*, 593, note 15).

Yahweh-worship on Zion, as opposed to the division drawn through the midst of Israel, separating apostates from Yahweh's true people.²¹ Thus, at this point in the text, Yahweh's action of dividing and separating is promised, but it is still apparently open as to who will be found in either group.

The variety of intertextual links binding this passage to the rest of the book supports this interpretation. It has been often pointed out, for instance, that 63.5 and 59.16 are very similar in wording. The chiasmic arrangement of these chapters further suggests that the two interventions of the Divine Warrior which surround the ultimate restoration of Zion in chs. 60-62 are to be read in light of each other.²² As a result of this, Yahweh's theophanic intervention for the sake of victory and wrath surround and form the necessary prerequisite to the vision of chs. 60-62. The fact that divine wrath is given more emphasis in this latter passage²³ relates to the build-up of Yahweh's judgment as one nears the end of the book. The same sort of dynamic exists in the echo of נִקְּרָה יְיָ from 61.2 and 34.8; the fact that chs. 34-35 and 59-60 show a similar necessary relationship between divine recompense and the perfect restoration of Zion supports the same understanding here.²⁴ It is almost as if the two realities of Yahweh's complete devastation of the earth in ch. 34 and complete restoration of it from Zion in ch. 35 are given an expanded visionary fulfillment in Isa 59.15b-63.6. Finally, it should be pointed out how the expectant watchmen of 62.6-7, together with the coming (בָּרָךְ) salvation of 62.11, leads neatly into our present passage.²⁵

The total effect of these echoes is to set Yahweh's act of judgment in 63.1-6 in the larger context of the necessary precursors to his complete and final restoration of Zion: Zion, its worship and its community cannot be completely restored until Yahweh finally acts in wrath against all sin.²⁶ In other words, the two inseparable aspects of Yahweh's restoration in chs. 34-35, expressed there in relation to the return to Zion, find fuller expression in the vision of restoration for those already in Zion in chs. 60-62 and the intervention of the Divine Warrior

²¹ Brooks Schramm, *The Opponents of Third Isaiah* (JSOTSupp 193; Sheffield: Sheffield, 1995), 149.

²² For further links between these two passages, see Bernard Gosse, "Isa 63, 1-6 en relation à la synthèse du livre d'Isaïe en *mšp̄t šdqh* / *yšw'h sdqh*, et la place d'Isa 34-35 dans la rédaction du livre," *ZAW* 113 (2001): 538, 42.

²³ Note how Yahweh's righteousness sustains him in 59.16, while his wrath does so in 63.5 (Claire Mathews, *Defending Zion* [BZAW 236; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1995], 80; see further Gosse, "Isa 63," 540).

²⁴ This connection has not gone unnoticed; see Bernard Gosse, "Detournement de la vengeance du Seigneur contre Edom et les nations en Isa 63,1-6," *ZAW* 101 (1990): 109; Smith, *Rhetoric and Redaction*, 206; Mathews, *Defending Zion*, 81. As Gosse points out elsewhere, the fact that this phrase occurs nowhere else in the OT except for Prov 6.34 highlights the significance of this link (Gosse, "Isaïe 34-35," 397).

²⁵ Paul Smith, *Rhetoric and Redaction in Trito-Isaiah* (VTSupp 72; Leiden: Brill, 1995), 43.

²⁶ See Schramm, *Opponents*, 150; Smith, *Rhetoric and Redaction*, 42.

surrounding and sustaining chs. 60-62 in 59.15b-20 and 63.1-6. Indeed, it is no accident that this new vision contains a renewed call to prepare a highway, invite every nation, and enter into Zion as Yahweh approaches (62.10-12, in obvious echo of 40.1-11). It is worth noting in this connection Oswalt's suggestion that the nations upon whom Yahweh treads in 63.1-6 are precisely those who refuse the invitation of 62.10-12.²⁷ It is, furthermore, in light of this single but double-faceted theophanic intervention that the placement of the communal prayer of 63.7-64.12 may be fully appreciated, for the renewed announcement of the coming of Salvation in 62.11, when understood in light of the appearance of the Divine Warrior, fresh (and bloodied!) from his last battle, leads one to expect that Yahweh is finally coming to Zion for one final purging action. In light of this, the community turns to unhindered confession.²⁸ (If the translation of the simple imperfect forms into the present tense, as done above, is correct, this would support this interpretation by portraying Yahweh's trampling of the nations as an ongoing activity.)

Yahweh's theophanic appearance as a stooping, blood-stained warrior in this passage is thus deeply embedded in the progressive development of the major themes of Isa 56-66. It is incomprehensible that the description of his approach in this manner is intended as a metaphorical comparison with some other divine action. As a result, even though Isa 63.1-6 breaks with the common pattern in theophany of appearance and tumultuous reaction, it does not form an exception to the larger argument of this project.

"Woe to the Tumult of Many Nations" (Isa 17.12-14)

- 12) Woe to the roar of many nations—like הָיָה הַמּוֹן עַמִּים רַבִּים כְּהַמּוֹת יַמִּים יַהַמְיִין
 roaring waters they roar;
 the crash of the peoples—like the crash of וַשָּׂאוֹן לְאֲמִים כְּשָׂאוֹן מַיִם כְּבִירִים²⁹ יִשְׂאוֹן
 mighty waters they crash.
- 13) The nations crash like the crashing of many waters, לְאֲמִים כְּשָׂאוֹן מַיִם רַבִּים יִשְׂאוֹן
 but he roars at them, and they flee far away, וְנָעַר בּוֹ וְנָס מִמֶּרְחֶק
 pursued like chaff on the mountains וְרָדַף כְּמִזְרֵה הָרִים לְפָנֵי-רוּחַ וְכַנְגִלָּל לְפָנֵי סוּפָה
 before the wind, like a whirling³⁰ before a storm.

²⁷ *Isaiah 40-66*, 595.

²⁸ This interpretation is made by Mathews, *Defending Zion*, 86, 164.

²⁹ The LXX places the adjective after "nations," in conformity to the first line; to emend accordingly would also alleviate the shortness of the first part of this line (as dictated by the Masoretic accentuation). The MT is followed above.

³⁰ Or perhaps "tumbleweed" (see Oswalt, *Isaiah 1-39*, 355); the meaning is apparently something whirling before a storm.

14) At evening time, behold, terror! Before לַעֲתָ עָרֵב וְהָיָה בְּלָהָה
בְּטָרָם בְּקֶר אֵינָנוּ
 morning, they are no more.

This is the portion of those who despoil us, the lot זֶה חֶלֶק שׁוֹסֵינֵנוּ
וְנוֹרָל לְבַזְזֵינוּ
 of our plunderers.

The structure of this passage is helpfully analyzed by Motyer, who notes the presence of three poetic lines before and after the central rebuke of Yahweh and flight of the waters.³¹ The divine defeat of chaos is clearly present in this passage as Yahweh roars and puts to flight the roaring nations.³² But this rebuke occurs specifically from Zion as an utterly secure cosmic center (the *Volkerkampf* motif). The identification of the “us” of v. 14 with the covenant community which dwells on Zion is in perfect harmony with this. The rebuke of the nations also shows the manner of Yahweh’s appearance, even though Yahweh’s descent or entrance on the human scene is not described. The direct presence of Yahweh in this passage is also implied by the choice of similes, which speak of flight before the wind (רִיחַ) and a storm (סוּפָה)—both of which are used elsewhere to describe Yahweh’s theophany in the storm (for the latter, see Ps 83.16; Isa 29.6, 66.6; Nah 1.3; for the former, see Ps 18.16, 83.14-16; Isa 30.28, 59.19; Ezek 1.4). Although this image is present in the text as a simile, it is not a random one; a storm theophany is clearly present in the background. The same proximity between simile and reality obtains in vv. 12-13a. These lines do not, as is often claimed, only compare the nations to the sound which the ocean makes, but with the roaring of cosmic chaos.³³ This is the case because there is a link between the roaring of the nations in their attack on Zion and Yahweh’s roaring counter-assault from the cosmic center which puts them to flight. This link suggests that all of these elements in the text operate within a mythic framework. In other words, if the roaring of the nations is merely a figure of speech related to the noise of the sea and is not to be related to the roaring which is one weapon in the conflict with chaos, the flight of the nations from before Yahweh’s roar is left unexplained, for a comparison of this sort cannot explain how Yahweh defeats the nations. It is necessary to understand thunder as a weapon if the progression of

³¹ *The Prophecy of Isaiah* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993), 160.

³² The “many nations” could refer to Assyria and the nations enlisted in their army (Seth Erlandsson, *The Burden of Babylon: A Study of Isaiah 13:2-14:23* [ConBOT 4; Lund: Gleerup, 1970], 75), or, in light of the mention of Damascus in 17.1, could refer to the Syro-Ephramite alliance (Marvin Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-4 and the Post-Exilic Understanding of the Isaiah Tradition* [BZAW 171; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1988], 47).

³³ See, for instance, Otto Kaiser, *Isaiah 13-39* (trans. R. A. Wilson; OTL; London: SCM, 1974), 87; Oswalt, *Isaiah 1-39*, 356; Rebecca Watson, *Chaos Uncreated: A Reassessment of the Theme of ‘Chaos’ in the Hebrew Bible* (BZAW 341; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2005), 59-61.

thought in this passage is to be understood; otherwise, Yahweh and the nations merely threaten one another (in a way which is compared to thunder) and then the nations flee.

Yahweh's rebuke of chaos in historical form is thus clearly the subject of these lines. Furthermore, that he does so from a storm theophany and from his dwelling place in Zion are both justifiable inferences, even if they are not explicitly stated.³⁴ The only imagery attending this theophanic rebuke, however, is found in the simile of chaff or some other insubstantial thing being pursued by a storm wind, as well as that of a dramatic deliverance at dawn.³⁵ Why would these two images be chosen at this particular juncture in the oracles against the nations? Contextualizing Isa 17.12-14 in two respects may help to answer this question. First, a prominent sub-theme in the oracles against the nations is that true security is only to be found in Yahweh's dwelling-place on Zion (see 14.25, 32; 16.1-5; 18.4, 7; and, implicitly, 20.6). This would provide a helpful context for the implicit Zion theology of 17.12-14, aligning the image of the nations fleeing before Yahweh's thunder from the storm with the other claims promising security in Yahweh as he judges the nations. Indeed, the immediate context of 17.12-14, as the first of two "woes" (17.12-14, 18.1-7) completing the burden against Damascus (17.1), strongly reinforces this supposition, since the woe against Ethiopia (18.1-7) shows any potential help from them in war (hinted at by the sending of messengers in v. 2) nullified by Yahweh's withering glance from his dwelling place (בְּמִכּוֹנֵי, v. 4). As a result, both 17.12-14 and 18.1-7 make the same claim in different words,³⁶ the former showing Yahweh's defeat of those nations which attack Zion; the latter, those on which Judah might be tempted to rely in the midst of political and military crises. The image of flying chaff before a (divine) storm thus fits perfectly with the use of the themes of the defeat of chaos, the judgment of the nations, and Zion as a cosmic center in chs. 13-23. In the words of Ben Ollenburger:

We saw earlier that in the language of the Jerusalem cult Yahweh's roar was at the same time the creative force behind the conquest of chaos and the protection of that creation against the threat of nations. In Isaiah 17 it is this theological understanding that Isaiah urges upon his audience in an effort to deter them from the fatal mistake of making common cause with the forces of chaos. These forces, are, according to Isaiah, no threat to Yahweh and if Judah recognizes his exclusive prerogative it will be protected by his creative power.³⁷

³⁴ See the same conclusion in Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-4*, 48, and Day, *God's Conflict with the Dragon and the Sea*, UCOP 35 (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1985), 101-3.

³⁵ John Day has pointed out the connections of this passage to Ps 46, where Yahweh's help comes at dawn (*God's Conflict*, 101).

³⁶ See Oswalt, *Isaiah 1-39*, 359.

³⁷ *Zion: The City of the Great King* (JSOT 41; Sheffield: Sheffield, 1987), 123.

Despite the suitability of the image of v. 13, however, it is not entirely clear why the image of help at dawn would be placed here; the fact that this image occurs only once elsewhere, in Ps 46.6, does not give the exegete much to work with.³⁸ Oswalt has pointed out that the defeat of the Assyrians at night, which is not recognized until dawn (Isa 37.36), provides an attractive link to the mysterious disappearance of the enemy at dawn here.³⁹ Furthermore, since darkness is sometimes associated with chaos, it would make sense to speak of divine help coming at dawn.

In any case, Isa 17.12-14 does show a theophanic rebuke of chaos fitted with the suitable image of chaff fleeing before a storm which demonstrably contributes to the thought of the surrounding chapters. While this passage is somewhat atypical in its reliance on simile to describe the otherwise common reaction of fear and flight before Yahweh's presence, this reliance does not drain the passage of its mythic dimensions—dimensions which are deeply embedded in the larger advance of this section of the book of Isaiah.

Yahweh will Descend to Fight on Zion (Isa 31.4-5, 8-9)

4) For thus says Yahweh to me:

Just as a lion growls, or a young lion over its prey, כִּי כֹה אָמַר יְהוָה אֵלַי
 and when a band of shepherds is called against it, כַּאֲשֶׁר יְהוָה הָאֲרִיָּה
 it is not terrified by their voice, nor by their tumult אֲשֶׁר יִקְרָא עָלָיו מְלֵא רָעִים
מִקּוֹלָם לֹא יַחַת וּמְהֻמוֹנָם לֹא יַעֲנֶה
 bothered:

thus will Yahweh of Hosts descend כֵּן יֵרֵד יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת
 in order to fight on⁴⁰ Mt. Zion and on its hill; לְצַבָּא עַל-הַר-צִיּוֹן וְעַל-גְּבַעְתָּהּ

5) like flying birds, thus Yahweh of כַּצְּפָרִים עֹפּוֹת
 Hosts will defend Jerusalem. כֵּן יִגַּן יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת עַל-יְרוּשָׁלַם

Defending, he will deliver; sparing,⁴¹ he will rescue.⁴² גָּנוֹן וְהַצִּיל פָּסַח וְהִמְלִיט

³⁸ See further Wildberger, *Jesaja 13-27*, 675.

³⁹ *Isaiah 1-39*, 357.

⁴⁰ Or "against;" note the combination of על צבא in Num 31.7, Isa 29.7-8, and Zech 14.12 with that nuance. See below for justification of this translation.

⁴¹ It is not obvious how the use of the infinitive פסח, "to pass over" or "to limp," speaks of Yahweh's deliverance, but the parallel in Exod 12.13, where Yahweh passes over the homes which have prepared the passover sacrifice, suggests that "sparing" is an acceptable translation. Yael Shemesh, however, notes (quoting Richard Dawkins) that a bird, when threatened, may limp away from the nest, acting like easy prey to distract the predator ("Isaiah 31, 5: The Lord's Protecting Lameness," *ZAW* 115 [2001]: 259).

⁴² The translation of this line is taken from Oswalt, *Isaiah 1-39*, 572. The prose insertion is omitted above not because it is "inauthentic" but because it does not immediately pertain to the depiction of *Chaoskampf* and theophany in this passage. Childs has understood the intent behind this insertion well when he notes how the announcement of Yahweh's action naturally leads to a plea to Israel to embrace it (*Isaiah*, 234).

- 8) Assyria will fall by a sword, וְחָרַב לֹא־אִישׁ בְּחָרֵב לֹא־אִישׁ וְחָרַב לֹא־אִישׁ תֹּאכְלֵנוּ
not of man; and a sword, not of man, will devour him.
He will flee from before a sword; his choice וְבַחֲרִיו לְמַס יִהְיוּ וְנָס לֹא מִפְּנֵי־חָרֵב
men will be slaves.
- 9) His rock will pass away for fear, his princes וְחָתוּ מִנֶּס שָׂרָיו וְסִלְעוֹ מִמְּגוֹר יַעֲבוֹר
will desert the standard,⁴³
says Yahweh, whose light is in Zion, וְנָא־יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר־אוֹר לוֹ בְּצִיּוֹן וְחָנוּר לוֹ בִּירוּשָׁלַם
and whose furnace is in Jerusalem.

Although the texture of this passage is not smooth, it is not difficult to discern here a structure of two similes surrounding Yahweh's war-like descent in vv. 4-5, a prose addition both calling for and promising repentance in light of Yahweh's protective action (vv. 6-7), and the victorious result of Yahweh's warfare against Assyria in vv. 8-9. Although the main contours of the passage are clear, however, several ambiguities still divide commentators.

Perhaps the most difficult of these concerns the intention behind the comparison of Yahweh's warfare to a lion growling over its prey: does this imply salvation for Jerusalem or not? Those who argue for the latter point out the negative connotations of the prey over which the lion growls (defending only to eat it later!), the incongruity of understanding the shepherds to attack what the lion defends, and the meaning of **עַל צָבָא**, which elsewhere speaks of a direct attack against something or someone.⁴⁴ On this reading, the sense is close to 29.1-8, where Yahweh's appearance moves surprisingly from judgment against Zion to the defense of it. On the other hand, it may be that the different aspects of the image should not be applied too directly to the situation to which the text speaks; just as the band of shepherds need not be identified with the Egyptians coming to help in vv. 1-3, the lion's prey need not be identified with the city Jerusalem. Both Oswalt and Wildberger argue in this way, understanding it simply to mean that Yahweh cannot be frightened away from the defense of his city.⁴⁵ Oswalt goes on to argue that, although the other four examples of **עַל צָבָא** do mean "to fight against," this would be the only note of judgment sounded in the passage. As a result, only four other OT examples of this phrase are not enough to determine the sense here, which probably means

⁴³ Or: "his princes will desert because of the standard," i.e., the standard of another army. Although grammatically this option is plausible, it is difficult to imagine what other army could be in view here.

⁴⁴ See, for instance, Brevard Childs, *Isaiah and the Assyrian Crisis* (SBT 2/3; London: SCM, 1967), 58-59, and Michael Barré, "Of Lions and Birds: A Note on Isaiah 31.4-5," in *Among the Prophets: Language, Imagery and Structure in the Prophetic Writings*, ed. Philip Davies and D. J. A. Clines (JSOTSupp 144, Sheffield: 1993), 57.

⁴⁵ See Oswalt, *Isaiah 1-39*, 574, and Wildberger, *Jesaja 28-39*, 1241.

simply “fight on.” The specification that Yahweh descends to fight on Jerusalem’s hill increases the probability that the intention is to speak of the location of Yahweh’s warfare, not its object.⁴⁶

A second and similar ambiguity concerns the intention informing the image of flying birds. This is often taken to connote judgment for Jerusalem, so that both images in vv. 4-5 make the same implication; according to this interpretation, the picture here is of vultures, defending their prey and snatching it away from competitors (הַצִּיל).⁴⁷ This second image is, however, far less ambiguous than that of the lion, since the verbs closing v. 5 are elsewhere used in Isaiah to speak of Yahweh’s deliverance of Jerusalem;⁴⁸ furthermore, the defeat inflicted on Assyria is difficult to explain on this reading. If vv. 5-8 are positive, however, and if the image of the lion of v. 4 is taken in a more general sense, then it is more plausible to see all of vv. 4-9 as depicting deliverance for Jerusalem. Two further considerations support this. First, the only defeat explicitly inflicted by Yahweh’s warfare in this passage is given to the Assyrians, not to Jerusalem; the city does not sink into the dust, as in 29.1-8. Second, part of the impetus behind the negative interpretation of vv. 4-5 is the expectation that the attack on Jerusalemite reliance on Egypt in vv. 1-3 continues into vv. 4-9, so that Yahweh judges his people for their faithless turning to Egypt in v. 4.⁴⁹ However, v. 3 already seals the judgment of those who go down to Egypt; even the syntax of the second line of the verse gives a note of finality to their doom. On the other hand, Assyria is the subject of vv. 4-9, not Egypt. A change in perspective is thus apparent in v. 4.

If the basically positive nature of vv. 4-9 (to be qualified below) is correctly understood, then the particular concerns of this project may be put to these verses. Even on this score, however, difficulties arise. Yahweh does appear theophanically in his descent in order to fight in v. 4, but this pugnacious descent is not portrayed in storm imagery, earthquake, or fire, but instead by means two images which clearly are metaphorical (portraying the unmoveable and protective nature of his defense). Furthermore, these images do not clearly adumbrate the use of the *Chaoskampf* myth—the lions and birds of vv. 4-5 are not meant to be understood in any larger cosmic narrative, but as images chosen out of many possible alternatives to make a certain

⁴⁶ Interestingly, J. Cheryl Exum translates as “fight over,” preserving the ambiguity (“Of Broken Pots, Fluttering Birds and Visions in the Night: Extended Simile and Poetic Technique in Isaiah,” *CBQ* 43 [1981]: 337).

⁴⁷ See Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-4*, 59, note 108; Barré, “Of Lions and Birds,” 57. Barré notes how, according to this interpretation, the four verbs ending v. 5 are either taken as later additions or, if retained as original, interpreted negatively.

⁴⁸ See Shemesh, “Isaiah 31, 5,” 257.

⁴⁹ For this faulty assumption, see G. C. I. Wong, “Isaiah’s Opposition to Egypt in Isaia XXXI 1-3,” *VT* 46 (1996): 393.

point in this specific context.⁵⁰ The only possible aftereffect to Yahweh's appearance as a warrior is found in the melting and fleeing of the Assyrian army before the sword "not of man" (although this is not explicitly connected to Yahweh's warfare, no-one else could be wielding such a weapon). In light of this connection, at least, it can be said that there is an organic relationship between divine warfare and theophany and the imagery attendant to it in this passage. Furthermore, the harmony between the exact manner of divine appearance and its effect is not, in itself, a metaphor for some other aspect of Yahweh's nature or action; as Isa 36-37 show, Yahweh actually did fight against Assyria. It should be admitted, however, that the metaphors of vv. 4-5, rather than playing an incidental role in the text, bear most of the weight for describing this theophany. As a result, this passage can only be said partially to fit within the paradigm advanced in this project. Nevertheless, there is still a general conformity to the pattern of theophany and *Chaoskampf* in this text, as well as a harmony which is apparent between Yahweh's descent to fight at Jerusalem and Assyria fleeing before a spiritual sword.

This congruence between divine appearance and its effect also conforms to the larger pattern of OT poetic theophanies in that it makes a specific contribution to the overall flow of the text. This contribution is seen in how the sword with which Yahweh battles and defeats is **לֹא-אֶרֶם**, in obvious echo of how Egypt is **וְלֹא-אֶל וְאֶרֶם** (v. 3). The implication is clearly that Egypt's help remains only in the realm of human resources and ability, in contrast with Yahweh's supernatural and unstoppable help. This play upon natural and supernatural help also resonates within the larger context of spiritual sight (or lack thereof) in the midst of the Assyrian crisis as it is teased out in chs. 28-31. In light of this, despite what is (from the perspective of the task at hand) the somewhat problematic nature of this text, the usual pattern of divine appearance and warfare, with aftershock appropriate to it which contributes to the larger context, is present in this text.

We may close the analysis of this passage by noting the theophanic connotations of the second line of v. 9, wherein Yahweh's brilliant and fiery presence (**תְּנוּרָה** and **אֵוֶר**) in Zion is depicted. One possible clue as to why this passage ends in this way is found in a similar image in 33.14, where Yahweh's action among the nations provokes sinners in Zion to tremble, asking whether anyone can dwell with the consuming fire (**אֵשׁ אוֹכְלָה**) and the everlasting burnings (**מוֹקְדֵי עוֹלָם**) of the divine presence there. Although there is no overlap in terminology, the image is similar enough to suggest a negative connotation to 31.9, which would cast an ominous

⁵⁰ Wildberger raises the possibility that the **קוֹל** and the **הַמּוֹן** of the shepherds may reflect the *Völkerkampf* motif, especially if the shepherds are understood as the kings of the nations (just as ANE kings are often described as shepherds; see *Jesaja* 28-39, 1241). If this is a real implication of the text, however, it is only a faint one. It may be better, as discussed above, to allow the shepherds to remain within the metaphor.

within the larger background of the Combat myth; a different, metaphorical interpretation can no more be posited for the last clause of v. 3 than for the two verbs preceding it or the temple from which Yahweh sets out.

As one turns to the second and third links between Yahweh's theophany in vv. 2-4 and its application in vv. 5-7, however, the line between mythic image and metaphor becomes more difficult to distinguish. This is the case because these links are dependent on the similes expanding the reaction to Yahweh's theophany in the second line of v. 4, not the reactions themselves in the first line of that verse: the metaphorical descriptions of burning wax and poured-out water (v. 4b) embellishing the speedy disintegration of the mountains and valleys before Yahweh's presence (v. 4a)⁵⁵ are linked, in a chiasm, to the demolishing of Samaria's foundation-stones (repeating נגר, v. 6) and the burning of its idols. As a result, it is clear that the interplay between the exact way in which Yahweh's presence is described and the contribution of this theophanic description to the larger advance of the text depends on similes to a greater extent than most other poetic theophanies.

The greater role which similes play in this passage does not, however, mute or drain its mythic qualities. Note, for instance, how the mountains melt and valleys split תִּהְיוּתֵי יַרְדֵּן, i.e., as Yahweh treads on them; as stated above, this is not a metaphorical image. That these mountains melt under Yahweh's fiery presence may also be implied in the comparison with fire in the second line of v. 4. This comparison, in other words, may not stand too far from the reality which it describes (note how Yahweh's presence is sometimes said to be like fire or fiery [e.g., Isa 30.27, Mal 3.2] and sometimes to be fire [Exod 3.2, 13.21; Deut 4.24]). The mythic qualities of this description of Yahweh's theophanic action are further highlighted by a number of echoes between vv. 5-7 and 3.12: whereas the former verses promise that Samaria will be a ruin in a field (וְשָׂמְחֵי שְׂמֶרוֹן לְעֵי הַשָּׂדֶה, v. 6), the latter envisions Zion plowed as a field (צִיּוֹן שָׂדֶה תִּחְרַשׁ) and Jerusalem left in ruins (עֵיִן); furthermore, whereas the shocking identification of Jerusalem as the בְּמוֹת of Judah leads to the razing of the city in 1.5-6, the latter verse warns that the temple mount will be לְבָמוֹת יַעֲרָ. ⁵⁶ These echoes are significant because 3.12 immediately gives way to the vision also given in Isa 2.1-5 of the exaltation of the temple mount and the consummation of Yahweh's rule (4.1-5). The destruction of Zion under theophanic divine judgment is thus tied to a final exaltation of the divine dwelling place which is

⁵⁵ A case can be made either way that the similes of 4b apply only to the mountains (Hillers, *Micah*, 17) or that the first applies to mountains and the second to the valleys (William McKane, "Micah 1,2-7," *ZAW* 107 (1995): 424; John Willis, "Alternating (ABA'B') Parallelism in the Old Testament Psalms and Prophetic Literature," in *Directions in Biblical Hebrew Poetry*, ed. Elaine Follis [JSOTSupp 40; Sheffield: Sheffield, 1987], 69).

⁵⁶ See Bruce Waltke, "Micah, Theology of," *NIDOTTE* 4:937, as well as Wolff, *Micah*, 109.

expressed in deeply mythic terms. As a result, it would not be true to say that the metaphors in 1.4 and their application in vv. 5-7 cancel the mythic dimensions of the prophet's expression of Yahweh's judgment and restoration of his people. But it is certainly true that metaphors play a more prominent role in this theophanic description than is common elsewhere.

Conclusion

This chapter has analyzed six theophanic passages from Isaiah and one from the Book of the Twelve which, for different reasons, do not neatly fit into the paradigm developed in the first and second chapters of this project. Without denigrating the exceptional nature of these seven passages, however, I do not think any presents an intractable contradiction, for each passage still shows the same dimensions of the defeat of chaos and the renewal of divine rule through divine battle, even if these themes are expressed in some unusual ways or appear only in faded outline. Without denying that these passages do form different exceptions to the basic pattern of this project, then, none falls entirely outside of it.

Chapter 6

Summary of the Argument and Conclusions

The great snake lies ever half awake, at the bottom of the pit of the world, curled
in folds of himself until he awakens in hunger and moving his head to the right and the to the
left

prepares for his hour to devour.

But the mystery of iniquity is too deep for mortal eyes to plumb.

–T. S. Eliot, “Choruses from the Rock”

Now that the theophanic passages in the Baal Epic, Isaiah, and the Book of the Twelve have been analyzed from within the larger framework constructed in the first chapter of this project, we are in a position to summarize the argument made about the theophanic defeat of chaos and renewal of divine rule and offer some conclusions on this theme in these bodies of literature.

The burden of this project has been to demonstrate that the imagery of thunder and lightning, fire and earthquake which attends and describes Yahweh’s theophanic defeat of chaos is mythic and not metaphorical—that it is, in other words, best understood within the context of the mythic narrative of the defeat of chaos and not as an invented comparison between two unrelated entities. It was noted in the first chapter that theophanic imagery is almost unanimously understood as metaphor for divine power in the literature on these texts, sometimes even by scholars who are otherwise quite sensitive to the vitality of ANE myth in the Hebrew Bible. In contrast to this larger trend, it was suggested in the first chapter and worked out in the examination of individual texts that metaphor, as an unconstrained and inventive comparison which generates its power through the similarity and dissimilarity between the compared entities, is unsuitable as a framework for understanding theophanic imagery for three reasons. First, attempting to read theophanic imagery as metaphor leads to superficiality in interpretation. It fails to expose the inner coherence of the appearance of the Divine Warrior in the storm, the defeat of the enemy in storm warfare, and the renewal of creation under the reign of that warrior. The claim that the imagery describing Yahweh’s storm warfare and its earth-shattering effects is only metaphor for divine power is totally disproportionate to the intricacy and variability of theophanic texts, for if ancient authors meant only to speak of divine power, there is no reason to introduce such complex imagery. A metaphorical interpretation also fails to explain the defeat

of the enemy in the *Chaoskampf*, for this defeat is not expressed in a straightforward, non-symbolic way, to which storm imagery is attached as metaphor in order to explain or expand upon this victory in some way. The defeat of chaos is rather expressed solely in the storm warfare of the Divine Warrior. But if this imagery only concerns divine power, it is left unexplained why the enemy is defeated or order is restored under divine rule. It has rather been shown that metaphors and similes are consistently set alongside the images of theophanic divine warfare, images which are thus implicitly distinguished from the metaphors attending them (see in particular the above discussion of Isa 17.12-14, 31.4-9, 42.13-17, 63.1-6, 63.19-64.1, 66.15-17 and Mic 1.4, Nah 1.6, and Zech 9.14).

A second reason against any metaphorical interpretation of theophanic imagery arises from the dramatic contexts in which theophanic intervention is described. It is improbable that ancient Israelite poets would have described Yahweh's judgment against his people in exile, the return to the land, and the restoration of all creation only in figures of speech. Third and finally, there is simply no indication that a different intention informs the language of theophanic warfare, taken from the ANE, in biblical texts.

In contrast to a metaphorical interpretation of these texts, a mythic perspective shows greater promise to exploit the full richness and significance of this imagery, especially with regard to the category of the cosmic symbol (as discussed by Ricoeur and Fishbane), i.e., a symbol which inheres in and reflects the structure of the cosmos and the events which have founded it in a direct way. Theophanic imagery of storm and earthquake is best understood as cosmic symbolism in this sense, for it operates within, reinforces, and specifies the divine defeat of chaos and the re-establishment of order in ways which are organically related to the myth of the *Chaoskampf*. This mutually supporting relationship is especially clear with regard to the dual meaning of the weapons of the storm god: dual in that thunder and lightning are used both in the defeat of chaos and the nurturing of fertility from the cosmic center. Attention to the inner content of storm warfare in ANE myths implies that OT audiences would have understood Yahweh's appearance in the storm to connote both his defeat of chaos and his renewal of creation or his relationship with his people (or both) under his reign. From this perspective, it may be seen that the continually varied expression given to the basic elements of thunder, lightning, fire, and earthquake do not form metaphorical comparisons, but rather show a continual re-application of the basic myth of the defeat of chaos and re-establishment of order under divine rule. The mythic nature of this imagery is thus the central conclusion of this project.

Beyond this, however, a few generalizations may be made about these texts. While I will argue below that there is a profound sense in which each prophetic depiction of theophany and *Chaoskampf* is a unique creation, it is worth noting that there are some sub-patterns or repeated permutations which are discernible in these passages.

To turn to the first aspect of theophany, divine appearance, it may be noted that sometimes the splendor of Yahweh's presence is simply stated, without any indication of his "transition," as it were, to the earthly realm (Isa 2.20-21, 24.21-23). Sometimes, Yahweh simply appears or "visits" his people (Isa 29.1-8; Zech 9.14-17). Most frequently, however, it is said that he "comes" in some way: his approach is often described in only a general way (Isa 35, 40-1.11, 52.7-10; Isa 42.13-17, 59.15a-20, 66.15-17; Zech 14.3-5), but, at other times, described in reference to the approach of the storm (Isa 19.1-5; Nah 1.2-8). Sometimes it is specified that Yahweh comes out of his place (Isa 26.20-27.1; Mic 1.3-5) or that his name comes from afar (Isa 30.27-33). At one point, Yahweh comes from Edom (Isa 63.1-6). Yet again, it is once said that Yahweh comes from the south (Hab 3.3-15), and elsewhere that Yahweh comes at the head of his army (Isa 13.1-13). In other passages, however, he descends (Isa 31.4-9, 63.19-64.2). Finally, Yahweh's presence is sometimes implied in his rebuke or roar as he engages in battle (Isa 17.12-14; 50.1-3; Joel 4.15-18; Amos 1.2).

The reactions to Yahweh's presence can be stratified in a similar way. Fear, shaking and flight are the most common: fear is specified as a reaction to theophany in Isa 2.10-21, 13.1-13, 19.1-5, 31.4-9, and 59.15a-20; the earth and/or mountains shake before Yahweh in Isa 13.1-13, Joel 4.15-18, Nah 1.2-8, and Hab 3.3-15; finally, people flee from before Yahweh in Isa 17.12-14, 33.1-16, and Zech 14.3-5. Opposing reactions of total desolation, on the one hand, and cosmic fertility, on the other, are also found after a theophany: desolation in Isa 19.1-5, 42.13-17; Amos 1.2; and Nah 1.2-8; and fecundity in Isa 26.20-27.1; 35.1-10, 40.1-11, 52.7-10; and Zech 9.14-17. In a similar way, cosmic darkness and light can occur because of a theophany, the former in Isa 13.1-13, 24.21-23 and Joel 4.15-18, the latter in Isa 59.15a-20. Furthermore, the waters sometimes dry up before Yahweh (Isa 19.1-5, 42.13-17; Nah 1.2-8), but in Hab 3.3-15, they break out. Perpetual burning is twice the end result of Yahweh's appearance (Isa 30.27-33, 66.15-24), and melting before his presence also occurs (Isa 19.1-5, 31.4-9; Mic 1.3-5; Nah 1.2-8). Finally, it is uniquely stated that Jerusalem's attackers will be as a dream in Isa 29.1-8; a similarly unparalleled reaction is described in Isa 26.20-21 as the earth is unable to hide its slain before Yahweh's presence.

This survey shows that some patterns do emerge when a bird's eye view is taken of theophany in Isaiah and the Book of the Twelve. A closer look at these general patterns,

however, shows profound diversity in individual execution. For instance, Yahweh's approach in Isa 35.1-10, 40.1-11, and 52.7-10 amounts to his escorting his people back to Zion, with the desert blossoming as order is restored to the cosmos. His coming in Isa 59.15a-20 and 66.15-17, however, involves a return to Zion to deal with those dwelling there; in Zech 14.3-5, by way of contrast, he sets out from Zion to battle the surrounding nations. His coming in the storm in Isa 19.1-5 and Nah 1.2-8 is described in different ways (riding on a swift cloud, on the one hand, and making his way in the storm in burning anger, with clouds as the dust of his feet, on the other), just as the mention that *כִּי־הִנֵּה יְהוָה יֵצֵא מִמִּקְדָּשׁוֹ*, stated in identical fashion in Isa 26.21 and Mic 1.3, is followed in the former text by his punishing the iniquity of the earth, in the other by his treading of the high places of the earth in defeat of idolatry.

The reactions to Yahweh's presence show a diversity of similarly considerable proportion, even though it is possible, to an extent, to provide groupings for them. Fear before Yahweh's presence is variously described in terms of sinking or hiding in Isa 2.10-21 (in relation to the exaltation/humiliation dynamic in Isa 2), in terms reminiscent of Holy War in Isa 13.7-8, in relation to the undoing of Egypt as its idols shake and wisdom vanishes in Isa 19.1-5, as Assyria falls by a sword "not of man" in Isa 31.4-9 (echoing 31.3), and as part of his recompense against sinners in Zion in Isa 59.15a-20 in the world-wide glory of his coming. The shaking of the earth before Yahweh shows greater similarity in its individual occurrences: it occurs as part of the undoing of the cosmos in response to sin in Isa 13.1-13, just as in Nah 1.2-8 and Joel 4.15-18, except that the targets in these passages are Babylon and the nations. In Hab. 3.3-15, however, the shaking of the ancient high places counts as a reaction to the mere approach of Yahweh, before he has even begun to fight; this nuance of meaning is not present in the other passages describing cosmic shaking. Cosmic desolation in response to Yahweh's presence also takes on different nuances: in Isa 19.1-5, it is part of his undoing of the Egyptian economy; in Isa 42.13-17, it is part of his leveling of all obstacles blocking his people's return to Zion; in Amos 1.2, it is connected to his passing through the midst of his own people in judgment; and in Nah 1.2-8, it is part of the cosmic destruction which Yahweh's burning anger produces. The same could be said for cosmic fecundity as a result of Yahweh's defeat of chaos: while Isa 27.1-5 imply a spiritual fruitfulness among Yahweh's people, the same theme appears to express abundant re-population among the post-exilic community in Zech 9.14-17. Isa 35, 40.1-11, and 52.7-19, however, relate this fertility to the restoration of the people to Zion as Yahweh renews his reign there.

There are, in other words, a few correspondences among different theophanic passages; the same nuance to the shaking of the earth in Isa 13, Joel 4, and Nah 1 is a good example of

this. Other similarities could be pointed out; Yahweh is claimed as a refuge, for instance, in Nah 1.7 and Joel 4.17. In my opinion, however, the variety in expression, nuance and application or use among these passages far outweighs whatever similarities might obtain among them—beyond, of course, the basic dimensions of the *Chaoskampf*, theophany as essentially an appearance and reaction, and theophanic imagery as basically centered in storm, fire, shaking and fear. The unpredictable variation among the elements of the theophanic defeat of chaos implies that similarities among individual texts are occasional in nature and that the theme is one which constantly reuses, in unpredictable ways, the basic mythic elements of chaos, order, divine appearance, and storm imagery and its aftereffects.

Another generalization which holds true (again, in a limited sense) for the theophanic defeat of chaos in prophetic texts concerns its frequent placement at structurally significant points in the development of a book. Theophanic assaults against chaos are, of course, scattered liberally throughout all kinds of texts (oracles of judgment against Israel or the nations, the dispersal of the nations surrounding and attacking Jerusalem, promises of salvation, hymns, etc.). As a result, great significance should not necessarily be given to the placement of every theophany. Nevertheless, the texts examined in this project do show that theophanies do occur in structurally significant locations. This is true, as we have seen, for the Baal Epic. The same holds for books like Amos, Micah, and Nahum, each of which open with war-like theophanies. Nahum's introductory hymn is especially significant in this regard, for, just as Isa 13.1-3, the oracles against foreign nations begin with a description of theophany. On the other hand, Isaiah and the Twelve (i.e., Zechariah and Malachi) end with theophanies. These prophetic theophanies are, furthermore, of a basically similar sort: those beginning prophetic books depict Yahweh coming in judgment, those ending prophetic books show a final purifying entrance of Yahweh to his temple. Even while noting these similarities in placement, however, the individual descriptions are totally different. In Amos, Yahweh roars from Zion, to desolating effect, while Micah envisions Yahweh leaving his heavenly temple and treading on the high places of the earth, so that the mountains melt. For his part, Nahum shows Yahweh coming in the fire of his wrath, to the shaking and heaving of the earth. The same diversity is apparent in those theophanies ending prophetic books: the final chapter of Isaiah describes Yahweh leading his chariots in fire and storm to slay the wicked before his final installation as King in Zion in unending holiness and worship (but with unquenchable fire for the wicked). The theophanic warfare of Zech 14 is similar only in broad outline; while this chapter does show the final and permanent installation of Yahweh in Zion in unbreakable holiness which is achieved (at least in part) through the defeat of Yahweh's enemies, the description of this holiness and the judgment

of enemies is totally different, consisting of Yahweh standing on the Mount of Olives in battle, so that it splits in half, giving an escape route for the people. Mal 3 similarly shows a fiery entrance of Yahweh to his temple, but this fire (in contrast to Isa 66) is a refining one; the divine entrance is furthermore identified with the “messenger of the covenant” (Mal 3.1).

As a result, although these theophanies are similar in thought in a general way, the actual descriptions are repeatedly different. Theophanic descriptions are unique creations in prophetic texts. The basic dimensions of the defeat of chaos and renewal of divine rule from the cosmic center, together with divine appearance and reaction, are found again and again, but appear in repeatedly creative ways as the myth of the *Chaoskampf* is given continued application in the unfolding development of prophetic vision and thought.

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