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ABSTRACT

YOM YHWH AS A BIBLICAL-THEOLOGICAL THEME

by

Robert Czarnitzki

Adviser: Jiří Moskala
ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Thesis

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Title: YOM YHWH AS A BIBLICAL-THEOLOGICAL THEME

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Date completed: April 2010

Problem

Although it has been shown in recent studies on the topic that the “Day of YHWH” is to be understood not only as a collocation or concept, but as a motif-complex (a theme), the single theological motifs comprising the motif-complex have seemingly never been outlined in a systematic text-oriented study.

Method

This thesis investigates which main theological motifs comprise the motif-complex of the “Day of YHWH” by means of a text-oriented study of the final text as existent today. It shall be asked whether the “Day of YHWH” is a true biblical-theological theme, that is, whether it is deeply rooted within biblical tradition. This will
include an analysis of whether there is a biblical background and a biblical eschatological outlook linked with the “Day of YHWH.” To accomplish this aim of investigating whether the “Day of YHWH” is an ongoing biblical-theological theme, the biblical data will be investigated in three steps:

First of all the biblical text is to be studied. This includes a survey of all the texts using the exact expression “Day of YHWH,” all the texts using the exact expression “Day of YHWH” with an insertion of one word (like revenge, salvation, or wrath) and lastly all the texts using the word “day” with YHWH as a subject and developing a significant day theology. Second, the main theological motifs are to be detected by a detailed study of catchwords, word clusters, and syntactic connections. Third, a biblical intertextual study is to outline the theme’s inner-biblical linkages, its origin and outlook.

Results

The main theological motifs linked to the “Day of YHWH” are the motif of cataclysm, divine wrath, judgment, salvation and war, with the motif of judgment being the most dominant among these. The most dominant metaphors used are metaphors of cataclysm, fear, judgment, pride, and war. The most dominant microstructure is the expression “for the day is at hand.” The biblical intertextual study shows most linkages with the Egyptian plagues (Exod 7–11), Miriam’s song (Exod 15), the blessings and curses lists (Deut 28–29), the Song of Moses (Deut 31–32) and Wisdom Literature.

Conclusions

In the light of the main theological motifs, metaphors, and microstructures it may be stated that the “Day of YHWH” is indeed a biblical-theological theme with its motifs
recurring again and again throughout biblical literature. The inner-biblical origin of the “Day of YHWH” is most likely to be traced back to the blessings and curses lists and the Song of Moses (Deut 28–29; 31–32), even more so if one sees the Song of Moses as originally being YHWH’s own song. The eschatological outlook of the “Day of YHWH” is manifest in several texts looking ahead to its last, ultimate eschatological occurrence. The uniqueness of the “Day of YHWH” lies in its essence of being an event impacting time, even eschatological time, leading to the installment of transcendence.
Andrews University
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

*YOM YHWH AS A BIBLICAL-THEOLOGICAL THEME*

A Thesis
Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
Robert Czarnitzki
2010
YOM YHWH AS A BIBLICAL–THEOLOGICAL THEME

A thesis
presented in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
Master of Arts

by

Robert Czarnitzki

APPROVAL BY THE COMMITTEE:

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Jiří Moskala, Ph.D. Th.D., Chair

_________________________________
Jacques Doukhan, D.H.L., Th.D.

_________________________________
Richard Davidson, Ph.D. Date approved
To Rainer:

קולי אל יהוה אקרא ויענני מהר קדשו סלה
Ich rufe mit meiner Stimme zum HERRN,
so erhört er mich von seinem heiligen Berge.

(Psalm 3:5)

To Margrit:

אדני מעון אתה היית לנו בדר ודור
Herr, du bist unsere Zuflucht für und für!

(Psalm 90:1)
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<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AB</td>
<td>The Anchor Bible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABD</td>
<td>The Anchor Bible Dictionary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AJT</td>
<td>American Journal of Theology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AJT</td>
<td>Asia Journal of Theology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARG</td>
<td>Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte</td>
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<tr>
<td>ASTI</td>
<td>Annual of the Swedish Theological Institute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATHANT</td>
<td>Abhandlungen zur Theologie des Alten und Neuen Testaments</td>
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<td>AThR</td>
<td>Anglican Theological Review</td>
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<td>AUSS</td>
<td>Andrews University Seminary Studies</td>
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<tr>
<td>BASOR</td>
<td>Bulletin of the American Society of Oriental Research</td>
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<td>BI</td>
<td>Biblical Interpretation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bib</td>
<td>Biblica</td>
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<td>BibLeb</td>
<td>Bibel und Leben</td>
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<tr>
<td>BibOr</td>
<td>Biblica et Orientalia</td>
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<tr>
<td>BibSac</td>
<td>Bibliotheca Sacra</td>
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<tr>
<td>BKAT</td>
<td>Biblischer Kommentar Altes Testament</td>
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<tr>
<td>BN</td>
<td>Biblische Notizen</td>
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<tr>
<td>BRev</td>
<td>Bible Review</td>
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<tr>
<td>BT</td>
<td>The Bible Translator</td>
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<tr>
<td>BV</td>
<td>Biblical Viewpoint</td>
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<td>Full Name</td>
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<tr>
<td>BW</td>
<td>Biblical World</td>
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<td>Biblische Zeitschrift</td>
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<td>BZAW</td>
<td>Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die Alttentamentliche Wissenschaft</td>
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<td>CBQ</td>
<td>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</td>
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<td>CBQM</td>
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<tr>
<td>CBTJ</td>
<td>Calvary Baptist Theological Journal</td>
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<td>CDCH</td>
<td>The Concise Dictionary of Classical Hebrew</td>
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<td>ColT</td>
<td>Collectanea theologica</td>
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<tr>
<td>CQR</td>
<td>Church Quarterly Review</td>
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JJS  Journal of Jewish Studies
JNES  Journal of Near Eastern Studies
JNSL  Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages
JOTT  Journal of Translations and Textlinguistics
JQR  Jewish Quarterly Review
JSJ  Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Periods
JSLL  Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures
JSOT  Journal for the Study of the Old Testament
JSS  Journal of Semitic Studies
JTS  Journal of Theological Studies
Kairos  Kairos
Kerux  Kerux
Laur  Laurentianum
LS  Louvain Studies
LumVie  Lumière et vie
MdB  Le Monde de la Bible
NedTT  Nederlands theologisch tijdschrift
Nem  Nemalah
NIBCOT  The New International Biblical Commentary of the Old Testament
NICOT  The New International Commentary of the Old Testament
NIDOTTE  New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis
NTT  Norsk teologisk tidsskrift
OTE  Old Testament Essays
PRSt  Perspectives in Religious Studies
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<td>RevistB</td>
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<td>Rivista biblica italiana</td>
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<td>RocT</td>
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<td>RQ</td>
<td>Restoration Quarterly</td>
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<td>SBLSP</td>
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Motivation for This Thesis

Without doubt the prophecies concerning the “Day of YHWH” (יְהוָה) stand out among all the other biblical prophecies. However, this is due not so much on linguistic grounds (in the sense of morphology), nor on literary grounds (in the sense of its ubiquity), but on its literary inimitability. It crystallizes out as an audible and visible catchphrase. It is a biblical concept unequaled in other biblical prophecies, forming an umbrella over a whole host of intertwined texts subsuming most significant theological topics. Indeed, it seems almost impossible to think of it in any other manner than through the conceptions and configurations intrinsically linked to it. Ultimately, it manifests itself perhaps to be one of the most intriguing of all biblical themes within biblical prophetic literature because of its singularity and the multiplicity of theological motifs linked to it, which by itself seems motivation enough to scrutinize it once more in this thesis.


The Inundation of Theses

It does not seem to surprise one that this outstanding topic of the “Day of YHWH” has been the object of vigorous and voluminous uninterrupted scholarly research, specifically over the last hundred years. Indeed, it is likely to be one of the best-served among all biblical topics in the scholarly world. Instead of a satiation of the scholastic market, interest is far from ebbing away in the intellectual world—to the contrary, it is experiencing an ongoing issuing of original studies.\(^4\) Unfortunately, however, the wealth of scholarly studies on the subject to my knowledge has never been brought together in an elaborate and extensive way—an issue which I will only try to tackle here. Unhappily, it has been impossible for me to work my way through all the material listed, which would likely be the work of a lifetime and not that of one semester. Yet I hope that it will manifest itself to be a rich source for many scholars in the same way as it has been a rich source for me.

My history of scholarly research on the topic of the “Day of YHWH” ranges from as early as 1899 to 2009, recognizes works from the Americas as well as Europe (but unfortunately not from Asia), and shows works of all the main languages used in theological works (English, German, French, Spanish, and several others, but none of Asia). In order to limit the inundation of information, I have organized the material into five subdivisions (dissertations, theses, dictionary entries, articles, books, and book sections).

\(^{(1959): 97; Sigmund Mowinckel, Psalmenstudien II: Das Thronbesteigungsfest Jahwäh’s und der Ursprung der Eschatologie (Amsterdam: Schippers, 1966), 229.}\)

The first entry shows doctoral dissertations, the second shows master’s theses.


6 The subsequent master’s theses deal with the topic. The master’s theses accessible to me have been: Florian R. Dunkel, “The Day of the Lord: When?” (M.Th. thesis, Andrews University, 1968); Garrelt Buisman, “The ‘Day of the Lord’ as Reconciliation between Judgment and Salvation in the ‘Book of the Twelve’” (M.Phil. thesis, Stellenbosch University, 2008). The master theses not accessible to me have
the third dictionary entries, the fourth journal articles written for theological journals,


and the fifth books and book sections. Though this list is excessive, but serves as a starting point for an intensive bibliography on the topic.

The Impact of Other Theses

It has been usage to summarize the main thoughts of significant theses written on the topic of the “Day of YHWH” before outlining one’s own thesis. This specific strategy, however, no longer seems sustainable in light of the abundance of scholarly literature. The standards of biblical scholarship in this sense are much higher today than they used to be several years ago. To study the biblical text intensively is one thing, however, to bring the wealth of scholarly sources together, to scrutinize, sort, and summarize them in the light of the text is another thing today. Viewing and valuing the wage of such undertaking it still seems necessary nowadays to systematize these scholarly thoughts in an organized manner rather than to individually silhouette each single thought when outlining the scholarly studies in an overview.

Taking a systematizing strategy as outlined above in my overview, it may be said that scholarly studies on the “Day of YHWH” have obtained the subsequent insights: First, its occurrence is not only unique among biblical literature, showing no synonymous variations whatever,\(^{10}\) but even unique among ancient world literature,\(^ {11}\) where, however, synonymous variations may be detected.\(^ {12}\) Second, it is not simply to be understood as a concept, that is, a mere idea,\(^ {13}\) nor as a collocation, that is, a collective term,\(^ {14}\) but as a complex of motifs\(^ {15}\)—that is, a theological theme—a view which is gaining ever more

\(^{10}\)Norin, “Der Tag Gottes im Alten Testament,” 33.

\(^{11}\)Norin, “Der Tag Gottes im Alten Testament,” 33.


\(^{13}\)Hoffmann, “The Day of the Lord,” 37–50.

\(^{14}\)Ishai-Rosenboim, “Is יה a Term,” 401.

\(^{15}\)Oswald, “Zukunftserwartung und Gerichtsankündigung,” 19.
support among scholars today. Third, the theme is not limited to texts using the programmatic phrase, but shows up in a whole theological web of interconnected texts. Fourth, the theme may be one of the main organizing themes within the biblical text, most likely so in the Minor Prophets, but perhaps also in the Major Prophets. Fifth, the origin of the theme is still debated among scholars, with at least four main opinions having been offered: enthronement festival, covenant treaties, holy war tradition, 


19 According to LaRocca-Pitts, “The Day of Yahweh,” 310. Everson is more exhaustive here in adding more ideas that have been offered over time such as “world destruction” (Gressmann, Der Ursprung der israelitisch-jüdischen Eschatologie.) and “fatal or omen day” (Černý, “The Day of Yahweh”).


and theophany. Sixth, in the majority of texts there is a dichotomy displayed between the prominent elements of deliverance or blessing (“Heil”) and doom or imprecation (“Unheil”).

Seventh, according to scholars there are at least three major perspective shifts presupposed within the biblical tradition: (1) a shift from an eminent future orientation towards an exclusive future orientation; (2) a shift from an orientation against YHWH’s own nation to the benefit of other nations towards an orientation against other nations for the benefit of YHWH’s nation; and (3) a shift from an oversaturation of wrath language in early texts towards a lack of wrath language in later texts. Eighth, some of the texts making up the theme not only support a prophetic perspective looking into the near future, but also a prophetic perspective looking into the remote future—even eschatological time.

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The Idea of This Thesis

This inundation of scholarly literature, having led to a better understanding of the topic than ever before, makes one wonder about the point and pertinence of this thesis. What else should be said without risking a senseless repetition of (old) scholarly ideas? What would be the significance in taking up this subject one more time? Would it not be because something has not been done which should have been done? In my opinion, indeed one seemingly obvious, but significant approach which would shed more light on the topic of the “Day of YHWH” has not been undertaken before this study. The idea of this thesis is to attempt to bring together all biblical motifs linked to the motif-complex of the “Day of YHWH.” The intention of this thesis is to settle three questions concerning the “Day of YHWH”: (1) Is the “Day of YHWH” a consistent, continuous and critical biblical-theological theme? (2) If it is a theme does it have an overt protological origin in biblical tradition? (3) If it is a theme does it have an ongoing eschatological outlook towards the end of the world?

There has been a lot of work done in the study of the ancient Near Eastern milieu on this topic. A lot of work has been done on the topic as specifically associated to Israelite history. A lot of work has been done in studying it mainly as a topic; and a


lot of work has been done in showing that the topic is a motif-complex or theme; however, all of these studies have lost sight of several motifs because no thorough study of each individual motif on the basis of the biblical text has yet been done. Yet it is exactly this step of investigating the motifs comprising the theme which will be critical for a better understanding of the theme itself. Ultimately this will help to inquire whether the “Day of YHWH” theme is indeed a biblical-theological theme throughout the whole Hebrew Bible and to analyze, assess, and, if necessary, amend the insights concerning it as outlined by other studies.

The Methodology of This Thesis

An Ancient Near Eastern Setting

“The ‘Day of YHWH’ is at hand!”—it is unlikely that any attentive modern reader’s eyes penetrating the prophetic texts of the Hebrew Bible escape to perceive the centrality of “Day of YHWH” passages. The same reasoning rings even truer for the attentive ancient hearer’s ears listening to the proclamation of these same “Day of YHWH” passages. Keeping in mind that the expression is unique within biblical literature, maybe even within ancient Near Eastern classical literature, it is almost impossible to overestimate its impact on the senses of an ancient hearer when it was heralded. It must not be disregarded that in biblical times much more than today the emphasis was on hearing the message rather than reading it likely due to the lack of

interaction with biblical manuscripts for individuals. Moreover, even if an individual had access to a biblical manuscript, it would have been unlikely for him or her to simply read it without reading it out loud at the same time. Thus the impact of hearing the message even when reading it was maintained. This view is supported by the tradition of reciting biblical texts in synagogues even until today resulting in similar effects. Unfortunately, however, the idea of hearing the biblical text and even more so of listening to it, has been very much lost sight of today—even among scholars.

A Holistic Approach to the Biblical Text

It is the intent of this thesis to listen to the biblical text—it will be text-oriented. This is to be implemented by bestowing the biblical text in its final form available today with preeminence and priority in the search, study, and summary of the motifs linked to the “Day of YHWH” theme. The task is neither to illuminate ancient Near Eastern motifs and their influence on the text, nor to illustrate the history of the motifs or the history of the tradition of the text itself, nor to investigate its reception by readers—instead it is a serious biblical-theological study of the text itself, which will be viewed as a whole and studied as such. Since the exact expression יהיִם יָהָהוָה “Day of YHWH” occurs in the prophetic literature only, the study of the “Day of YHWH” theme in the prophetic literature will be given prevalence over the study of the same theme in the Pentateuch and Wisdom Literature. Yet, eventually the study of the Pentateuch and Wisdom Literature will be unavoidable since they may offer important hints to the background, setting and

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origin of the idea of a “Day of YHWH” as well as to the development of its theme within biblical literature, even though they do not utilize the exact expression “Day of YHWH”. To strengthen and support my work, a digital concordance, theological dictionaries,\textsuperscript{35} lexicons,\textsuperscript{36} other scholarly works as outlined above, and a digest of commentaries will be critically consulted in the light of the text.\textsuperscript{37} The specific methodological procedure of this work is to be presented in the subsequent paragraphs, which for reasons of simplification will be divided into the following three sections.

A Basic Battery of Questions to the Text

**How Are the Yom YHWH- Texts Detected?**

The most candid and crucial question is which specific biblical texts are to be investigated and listened to in the search of motifs tied to the theme “Day of YHWH.” There are three basic steps whereby the units dealing with the theme are to be detected: First, all the texts using the exact expression הֵוֺם יֵהוָה “Day of YHWH” shall be identified. These are the actual occurrences of “Day of YHWH” texts (16 in total).\textsuperscript{38} Second, all the texts shall be discerned that use the exact expression הֵוֺם יֵהוָה “Day of YHWH” and insert at most one element in between the basic two elements according to


\textsuperscript{37}Texts investigated include: Karl Elliger and Wilhelm Rudolph, eds., *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1997); *Die Bibel: Elberfelder Übersetzung* (Wuppertal: Brockhaus, 2000).

\textsuperscript{38}Isa 13:6, 9; Ezek 13:5; Joel 1:15; 2:1, 11; 3:4; 4:14; Amos 5:18 (2x), 20; Obad 1:15; Zeph 1:7, 14 (2x); Mal 3:23.
the model יְהוָה X יוֹם “Day of X of YHWH.” The texts meeting this criterion will be called variations no. 1 to the actual “Day of YHWH” texts (11 in total).  

Third, all the texts shall be discerned that use the most elementary element of the exact expression, יוֹם “day,” according to the model X יוֹם “Day (of X).” Thus any texts using synonymic variations to היוֹם “day,” such as עֵת “time,”40 or שנה “year,”41 or any similar terms, are excluded from an examination in the thesis at hand. Yet, in order to limit the scope of this thesis and in order to increase its significance, additional limitations to those texts using the term היוֹם “day” are required:

The term היוֹם “day” must be used in the singular. Thus any texts using phrases such as בְּאַחֲרִית הַטָמִים “in the last days,”42 or יָמִים בָאִים “days are coming,”43 or בַּטָמִים הָהֵם “in those days”)44 are excluded. Additionally, these היוֹם “day” texts must have a divine subject. Thus many texts using the phrase בָּעֵת הַהִיא “in that time,”45

39 Isa 2:12; Jer 46:10; Ezek 7:19; 30:5; Hos 9:5; Zeph 1:8, 18; 2:2, 3; Zech 14:1; Lam 2:22.

40 Therefore, Isa 18:7; 20:2; 39:1; Jer 3:17; 4:11; 8:1; 31:1; 33:15; 50:4, 20; Joel 4:1; Amos 5:13; Mic 3:4; Zeph 1:12; 3:19–20, all texts employing the phrase בָּעֵת הַהִיא “in that time,” are not investigated in this thesis.

41 Jer 11:23; 23:12; 48:44, using the phrase שְנַת פְקֺדָתָם “the year of their visitation” are not investigated in this thesis. However, Isa 61:2, which talks about a שְנַת־רָצוֹן לַיהוָה “a year of favor to YHWH,” and Isa 63:4, which talks about a שְנַת גְאולַי “the year of my salvation” will be investigated in this thesis because they both use the term היוֹם “day” in one and the same passage.


44 Isa 38:1; Jer 3:16, 18; 5:18; 31:29; 33:15–16; 50:4, 20; Ezek 38:17; Joel 3:2; 4:1; Zech 8:6, 23.

are excluded. Moreover, these יּוֹם “day”-texts must use the term “day” in isolation in order to render them a unique status. Thus texts using phrases such as יּוֹם רָעָה “an evil day,”46 or יּוֹם אָנָשׁ “an incurable day,”47 and similar יּוֹם “day” texts are excluded.

Ultimately, these יּוֹם “day”-texts must develop a day theology showing significant textual similarities (in their semantic, syntactical, structural pattern) to the actual “Day of YHWH”-texts, that is, the texts using the exact expression יֵום יְהוָה “Day of YHWH.” Thus most other יּוֹם “day” texts are excluded. The texts meeting all above criteria will be designated as variations no. 2 to the actual “Day of YHWH” texts (8 in total).48 Thus, in total, this thesis will study thirty-five texts that utilize the “Day of YHWH” in one of these three above-mentioned types (actual texts, variations no. 1, variations no. 2).

**How Are the Motifs of the Yom YHWH-Texts Extracted?**

The next question is: How are the biblical motifs within the “Day of YHWH” texts brought to light? In this step the above trisection must be slightly improved. The analysis of the texts is to advance from the limited context to the broader context and this in a chronological-historical manner. To achieve this aim the “Day of YHWH” texts will be rearranged to the biblical books (Isaiah [9 texts], Jeremiah and Lamentations [4 texts], Ezekiel [5 texts], and, for reasons of simplification, the Twelve [11 texts])49 and within


46 Jer 17:17, 18; 51:2; Amos 6:3; Pss 27:5; 41:2; 49:6; 94:13; Prov 16:4; Eccl 7:14.

47 Jer 17:16.

48 Isa 22:5; 24:21–22; 27:1, 7–8; Jer 30:7–8; Ezek 34:12; Ezek 38; Zeph 3:8; Mal 3:1.

these resorted to a trisection differentiating between actual “Day of YHWH”-texts, alterations to “Day of YHWH” texts, and allusions to “Day of YHWH” texts. This will be done in such a manner that each text is attributed to its most appropriate section. In order to avoid mistakes or misunderstanding between the old and new trisection a different terminology will be used for the new trisection: Thus the actual “Day of YHWH”- texts will now be designated as anticipations (or acquaintances) of/with the “Day of YHWH”; variations no. 1 will be entitled as alterations of the “Day of YHWH”; and variations no. 2 will be entitled as allusions of the “Day of YHWH” and studied as they occur in Isaiah, Jeremiah and Lamentations, Ezekiel, the Twelve.

The serious challenge of crystallizing out the biblical motifs is to be tackled by means of an inspection of significant catchwords, semantic clusters and syntactic connections within the biblical texts at large, as well as by an investigation of the imagery and structure used within these specific texts. The crucial criterion for

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deciding whether an envisaged motif is indeed existent is the text itself. Yet, the challenge will be that not only the captions, but even the concepts one attaches to the biblical motifs are ultimately only an abstraction made by the human mind. If one wants to extract the biblical motifs out of the biblical text as they are incorporated in the biblical text itself, one must check and critique one’s own conceptualizations against the concrete evidence offered by the biblical text.

**How Is Objectivity Achieved in the Selection of Motifs?**

The true indicator of an interpreter’s level of textual loyalty in his interpretation of the biblical text is much less the quantity of textual evidence, which may be brought as support of his or her view, than the quality of his or her understanding of the meaning of the biblical text as a whole.\(^{56}\) In order to slightly simplify such an enormous endeavor, only the main motifs, which shape an umbrella for the many possible discretionary motifs, will be investigated in this thesis. The intention of this thesis is to be as objective and open as possible in its effort to portray at best all main motifs—its purpose is not to purport to have identified every single motif belonging to the motif-cluster of the “Day of YHWH” texts or theme within biblical literature.

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\(^{56}\)“Der wahre Indikator für die Texttreue eines Interpreten des biblischen Textes ist viel weniger die Quantität an textlichen Beweisstücken, die er als Beleg für seine Sichtweise anzuführen vermag, als vielmehr die Qualität seines Verständnisses der Bedeutung des biblischen Textes in seiner Gesamtheit.” (My original thought for reasons of exactness expressed in my mother tongue). Such a statement demands the existence of literary meaning—a standpoint I hold because of the self-testimony of the biblical text. This thought points to the hermeneutical problem. However, this thesis neither offers the setting nor enough space or time to treat this important issue in its entirety. Yet, I do not want to neglect to mention other scholars’ intensive treatment of this topic, one from a literary, one from a philosophical, and one from a theological viewpoint: W. L. Harris, *Literary Meaning: Reclaiming the Study of Literature* (New York: New York University Press, 1996); Stanley Rosen, *Hermeneutics as Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987); Kevin VanHoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text? The Bible, the Reader, and the Morality of Literary Knowledge* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2009).
How to Decide if Yom YHWH Is a Biblical Theme?

The last question is: How may it be shown whether the “Day of YHWH” is a biblical-theological theme throughout the Hebrew Bible? To settle this issue, it will be mandatory to maintain a true biblical-theological methodology throughout the study. Therefore, the exegetical and expository investigation of each individual text will be the starting point succeeded by its diachronic and synchronic study. The text will initially be placed into its own diachronic/synchronic context (its own book or literary system), and, ultimately, the text will be evaluated against the diachronic/synchronic context of the other texts (books or literary systems of another time). This strategy will inevitably lead to a critical comparison of the different motifs found in each text with the various different motifs of the other texts. However, the mere sameness or similarity of motifs from different texts does not mean that these motifs are to be equated. The more obvious


58 Using the definitions of synchrony and diachrony suggested by J. Hoftijzer. He defined synchrony as “the approach by which one tries by comparing literary texts of the same period to come to the definition and description of a literary system valid for that period.” And diachrony as “the approach by which one tries by comparing literary systems of different periods to come to a definition and description of the development of these systems in the course of time.” The majority definition of these two terms, however, is very different. Synchrony is “the approach which aims at the definition and description of the structure of a text in the final form in which it is handed down to us.” Diachrony is “the approach which aims at the definition and description of the compositional/redactional history of a text.” J. Hoftijzer, “Holistic or Compositional Approach? Remarks to the Problem,” in Synchronic or Diachronic? A Debate in Old Testament Exegesis: Papers Read at the Ninth Joint Meeting of Het Oudtestamentisch Werkgezelschap in Nederland en Belge and the Society for Old Testament Study Held at Kampen 1994 (ed. J. C. de Moor; Leiden: Brill, 1995), 98. The terms synchrony and diachrony have been introduced into the scholarly world by Swiss linguist F. de Saussure: see F. de Saussure, Course in General Linguistics (New York: Philosophical Library, 1959).
the level of sameness or similarity, the more decisive it will be to outline the textual differences. Thus it may be that even though the same or similar motifs appear in different texts, they should be interpreted differently due to the different use of imagery and/or markers of space or time.

**How Is Intertextuality Impacting Interpretation?**

Whether, to what scope, and in what sense such motifs will be viewed as interrelated is a matter of one’s definition of intertextuality. Intertextuality has become a magic term devoid of meaning due to the unlimited ways in which scholars have used it. Therefore it is wise to either dismiss it totally, or to define it in a very delimited manner, but not to let its impact diverge to infinity. The former option has been taken by M. Fishbane, who is stating that intertextuality should have “internal controls against incautious or fallacious methodological procedures.”

Similarly is the statement by J. D. Nogalski: “‘Intertextuality’ means the interrelationship between two or more texts which evidence suggests (1) was deliberately established by ancient authors/editors or (2) was presupposed by those authors/editors.” This also harmonizes with M. Pröbstle’s view of intentional intertextuality. The latter option, however, has been taken by W. Irwin: “Intertextuality is a term that should be shaved off by ‘Dutton’s Razor,’ the principle that

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60 Nogalski, “Intertextuality in the Twelve,” 102 (Emphasis is original).


jargon that [sic] does not illuminate or elucidate but rather mystifies and obscures should be stricken from the lexicon of sincere and intelligent humanists.”

The subsequent tables summarize the texts which are studied in this thesis: table 1 shows the occurrences, variations, and suggestions; table 2 shows the anticipations, alterations, and allusions ordered according to the biblical books; and table 3 equals table 2, but adds the particular phrases used in the specific texts.

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Irwin, “Against Intertextuality,” 240.
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Table 2. *Yom YHWH* Anticipations, Alterations, Allusions: Overview

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| 12    | Jer 46:10                | קְהַויְם קהֹוהָה לָאָלֹדְיָי יְהוָּהִObjectType: Media Type: Image
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CHAPTER II
ISAIAH

Anticipations of Yom YHWH

Isaiah 2:6–22

The Motif of Space

The introductory vv. 1–5 undoubtedly acknowledge Judah and Jerusalem as the addressees of the divine message through Isaiah (עַל־יְהודָה וִירושָלִָם). This is stressed by the mentioning of the temple mount (הַר בֵית־יְהוָה in v. 2), the house of YHWH (בֵית־יְהוָה in v. 2 and אֶל־בֵית אֱלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב in v. 3), Zion (צִトー in v. 3), and again Jerusalem (ירושָלִַם in vv. 1, 3). This specific setting, however, seems to be broadened in the verses that deal with the “Day of YHWH,” since any allusions to temple mount, holy city, and citadel on the hill are missing.

The subsequent vv. 6–22, including the section on the “Day of YHWH,” visualize a more universal picture where not only Judah is portrayed (3x צֶדֶק in vv. 7–8), but also locations outside of the realm of Judah and Jerusalem such as all the cedars of Lebanon (כָל־אַרְזֵי הַלְבָנוֹן in v. 13), all the oaks of Bashan (כָל־אַלוֹנֵי הַבָשָן in v. 13), and all the ships of Tarshish (כָל־אֳנִטוֹת תַרְשִיש in v. 16). Such viewpoint is also supported by the usage of universal language for the description of humanity (vv. 9–22).
The Motif of Time

Whereas a vague specification of time is indicated in many “Day of YHWH” texts (cf. esp. the usage of the adjective קָרוֹב “close”/“near”/“at hand” in Isa 13:6; Joel 1:15; 2:1; 4:14; Obad 15; Zeph 1:7, 14), such a specification is missing in this text. However, though not explicitly stated, the imminence of the “Day of YHWH” (vv. 6–22) may be implied or inferred by the usage of several imperatives, such as: “House of Jacob, let us walk in the light of YHWH!” (בֵית יַעֲקֹב לְכו וְנֵלְכָה בְאוֹר יְהוָה in v. 5, where the prophet even includes himself in the imperative therefore making himself a part of the people living at his time), “Do not forgive them!” (וְאַל־תִשָא לָהֶם in v. 9, again showing that the prophet was most likely thinking of people living at his own time and about the particular situation of his time), and “Go into the rock and hide yourself in the dust before the terror of YHWH and his splendid majesty” (בוֹא בַצּור וְהִחָמֵן בֶעָפָר מִפְנֵי פַחַד יְהוָה וּמֵהֲדַר גְאֹנוֹ in v. 10, this utterance is the most thrilling when targeted at the people of the prophet’s time). These imperatives in the context of a spoken utterance seem to have the greatest relevance and repercussion viewed from the standpoint of the prophet’s addressed audience.

However, before the heightening of YHWH may happen (vv. 1–5), humanity must be humbled (vv. 6–22). Therefore the events outlined in vv. 1–4 are to be seen as following, instead of foreshadowing vv. 6–22 in time. In the light of this time scale and the usage of the above adduced imperatives it seems as if the “Day of YHWH” section itself (vv. 6–22) is at most painting a picture of a relative eschatological time to be succeeded by the time outlined in the introductory verses of the section, where the significant eschatological indicator בְאַחֲרִית הַטָמִים “in the last days/time” is used (v. 2).
The Motif of Cataclysm

Although not apparent at first sight, Isa 2 has similarities to Ps 29 (such as קַדְמוֹן קְדַמִּים “cedars of Lebanon” in Isa 2:13; Ps 29:5 and יָבוֹם “majesty” in Isa 2:19, 21; Ps 29:4), which has led some scholars to propose that the threat imaged in the text is that of a whirlwind.\(^1\) However, other scholars have suggested that the threat visualized is that of an earthquake similar to the one occurring during Uzziah’s time based on the similarities between Isa 2 and Zech 11:1–3 (the trees mentioned).\(^2\) J. Milgrom believes that the idea of an earthquake might serve as the basis for Isaiah’s “Day of the YHWH” descriptions.\(^3\)

The Motif of Creation

An accumulation of terms linked to creation, specifically to that of humankind (Gen 1–2), is conspicuous in this section: The universal term אדם “humanity” appears five times (Isa 2:9, 11, 17, 20, 22) alluding back to its usage in the creation account (Gen 1:26, 27; 2:5, 7–8, 18–25).\(^4\) Moreover, its specification אדם “humanity” occurs two times (Isa 2:11, 17), echoing its usage in the creation account (Gen 2:23, 24). According to the creation account the creation of humanity is the result of two divine actions—a fact which is also found in Isa 2: On the one hand it is formed out of dust (עָפָר in Isa 2:10, 19; cf. Gen 2:7; 3:19; Pss 22:15; 30:10; 104:29; Eccl 12:7), on the other hand it is awakened to life through the inflowing of life breath (נְשָׁמָה in Isa 2:22; cf. Gen 2:7; 7:22; Job 32:8; 33:4; 34:14) into them, וֹבָא (Isa 2:22; cf. Gen 2:7; 7:22). The logic behind this

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\(^3\)Milgrom, “Did Isaiah Prophesy,” 179.

\(^4\)Cf. V. P. Hamilton, “אדם” (H132), *NIDOTTE* 1:262–266.
is obvious: Humanity is dependent on its Maker and therefore lower in its status. Without his life-spending intervention it is only dead and dry earth—a metaphor of vanity as expressed by the last verse: “Be unconcerned⁵ about humanity, whose breath is in his nostrils—wherefore are you mindful of him?” (חִדְלו לָכֶם מִן־הָאָדָם אֲשֶר נְשָמָה בְאַפוֹ ... in Isa 2:22; cf. also Eccl 12:7).

Yet another evocation of creation language is to be seen in the creation imagery of “their finger’s work” (עָשָׂו אֶצְבְעֹתָיו, in Isa 2:8, almost as in Ps 8:4); however, the imagery is inverted here: What is depicted is not the outcome of divine fingers’ work, but that of human fingers’ work. Humanity’s depravity is detailed by neither worshipping its Maker, nor by worshipping itself as his making, but worshipping its own makings (Isa 2:8).⁶ The situation of bowing down in front of gods will be ironically inverted to the bowing down of humanity into dust.⁷ This perversion of creation is evoked by the creation of a perversion of worship: Instead of living for God as its producer, they live for so-called gods—their own products (v. 8).

In contrast to the creation imperative (Gen 1:26, 28), the land is described as being filled in a fourfold way: filled (מלא) with diviners, that is, false worshippers, instead of true worshippers (Isa 2:6), filled (מלא) with treasures (v. 7), filled (מלא) with horses (v. 7), filled (מלא) with dead idols (vv. 7–8) instead of living beings (cf. Gen 1:22, 20:34).

⁵“ חשש ” in CDCH 135.


⁷Wildberger, Jesaja, 1:103.
they will all be brought low. YHWH is now willing to undo his original blessing of all (כָּל) living beings (cf. Gen 1:22, 27), to let them all (כָּל), the living objects (vv. 12–16), undergo a divine verdict by threatening them with his terror (vv. 10, 19, 21).

The Motif of Fear

A motif of fear is most vividly expressed by the imagery of a divinely induced dread effectuating humanity’s hiding from the majesty of its Maker (vv. 10, 19, 21). The idea of such a horror befalling human beings is not so frequently portrayed in the Hebrew Scriptures: The noun פַּחַד “dread” is used in Exod 15:16 and the Apocalypse of Isaiah: Isa 24:17–18; synonomous אֵימָה “terror” in Exod 23:27–28; Deut 28:67, 32:25; פַּחַד יְהוָה “dread of YHWH” in 1 Sam 11:7; 2 Chr 14:13; 17:10; 19:7; פַּחַד אֱלֹהִים “dread of God” in Ps 36:2; 2 Chr 20:29—most of these sentences are syntactically linked with the preposition עַל “on”/“over” expressing the idea that terror will “befall” humanity, will “fall on or over them”. The verb פַּחַד “to dread” shows up in the blessings and curses lists in Deut 28:66, 67 and in the day of doom for Egypt in Isa 19:16, 17, which may be an allusion to the Day of YHWH.

This imagery may have a positive connotation in the form of causing a human consciousness for the divine (Ps 36:2; 1 Sam 11:15; 2 Chr 17:10; 19:7; 20:29) or negative connotation in form of expulsion, estrangement, or extermination triggered by divinity (Exod 15:16; 23:27–28; Deut 28:67; 32:25; 2 Chr 14:13). It may threaten Israel’s opponents (Exod 15:16; 23:27–28; 2 Chr 17:10; 20:29) or thwart themselves (Deut 32:25; 1 Sam 11:15; 2 Chr 19:7), and it is often used to sensitize humanity of the splendor and

This redundant repetition of the word (מלא) has been entitled as a “drum beat” by Brevard S. Childs, Isaiah (OTL; Louisville, Ky.: Knox, 2001), 33.
supremacy of YHWH—his “terror” on or over (יָרָר) them (Ps 36:2; 1 Sam 11:15; 2 Chr 19:7).

The formulation of this specific idea as found in Isaiah changes the otherwise used construction of the subject “terror” plus the preposition עַל “over” (terror falling over someone) into one of the preposition לפני “before” plus the object “terror” (someone fleeing before terror), which makes this passage unique among all the others (2:10, 19, 21). The imagery of terror as utilized in Isaiah is not only widened in its application by addressing Israel (2:10, 19, 21) and the whole world (cf. 13:9–13; 24:17–19),⁹ conveying a negative connotation for both of them, but also widened in its sense: Twice the mention of a divine coming to cause the terror (בקומו לארץ הארץ in 2:19, 21) is connected to the thrice-occurring motif of the hiding of humanity before the marvelous majesty of YHWH (וצר ובוא וمهر גאון in 2:10, 19, 21), which may mean his heavenly regnal or royal majesty (cf. Pss 21:6; 29:2, 4; 45:4; 104:1; 145:5, 12; Job 40:10).⁰ This stylistic tool is integrated not only to intensify the idea of a divinely induced terror (2:10, 19, 21), but also that of a divine-human “showdown” whose intention is the eventual humiliation of humankind (גַּבְהָות אָדָם שָפֵל וְשַח רום אֲנָשִים / שַח גַּבְהָות הָאָדָם וְשַח רום אֲנָשִים in 2:11, 17) and the sole elevation of YHWH (וְנִשְׂגַב יְהוָה לְבַדוֹ בַטוֹם הַהוא in 2:11, 17).

**The Motif of Judgment**

The aspect of humanity’s humiliation in opposition to the elevation of YHWH harmonizes with an over-arching motif of judgment. It is Israel’s idolatry which has led YHWH to abandon and abhor them (ךָכָי נמשש עם in v. 6). It must not be disregarded

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¹⁰The idea that the mentioned majesty is the regnal or royal majesty of the heavenly king is brought forward by Wildberger, *Jesaja*, 1:112.
that “pride, according to Isaiah, is the root of sin. It leads man to trust in himself. Hence, Isaiah’s obsession with height.”

Significantly, many of these terms meaning “highness”/“loftiness”/“pride” (roots like גאה, רומ, נשא, and גבה in vv. 12–15) usually stand for divine qualities (cf. Isa 6:1; 52:13; 57:15), which, however, are often encroached by human hubris to make them human qualities (cf. Gen 3:5). This, however, is ultimately impossible and leads instead to human self-destruction, once more showing human sinfulness in their striving for something they ought not, may not, and will not attain (cf. Prov 15:25; 16:5, 18, 19; Ps 101; Job 40:9–11). The pride of Israel, however, is not only expressed by traditional terms, but also by terms which should be understood metaphorically such as “mountains and hills” (Isa 2:14; cf. Deut 12:2), “towers and high walls” (Isa 2:15; cf. Gen 11; Deut 9:1), “ships” (Isa 2:16; cf. 1 Kgs 22:49; Isa 23:1, 14; 60:9; Ezek 27:25), which all evoke an idea of elevation or loftiness that must be brought low (Isa 2:11, 17).

The wording of the text implies several ironic wordplays: There is a triple humiliation of humanity: first, the one caused by their idol worship (v. 9); second, the one caused by their hiding under dust and earth because of YHWH’s imminence (vv. 10, 19, 21), and thirdly the one caused by YHWH’s visitation (v. 11 and similarly v. 17 are used in a “refrain-like repetition”); and moreover:

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12 Wildberger, Jesaja, 1:108.
14 Childs, Isaiah, 31.
Ultimately, humanity’s pride (root גאה) will be humiliated (2:12), YHWH’s pride (root גאה), however, will be heightened (2:10, 19, 21).

To accomplish this task an extinction of all forms of idolatry is outlined as absolutely mandatory. The divine tool for such task is an act of radical purgation not limited to that of people. Undoubtedly, the purification of the land by defilement and deportation of all idol images (vv. 7–8; vv. 12–16; וְהָאֱלִילִים כָּלִיל יַחֲלֹף in v. 18 and וְהָאָדָם אֵת אֱלִילֵי כַּסְפוֹ וְאֵת אֱלִילֵי זְהָבוֹ in v. 20; cf. specifically ch. 24:5) shows that the impact of idolatry is not limited to any land’s inhabitants, but even extends to the inhabited land itself (vv. 10, 19, 21; cf. Isa 5:15). Therefore, the reason for the intensity of the divine intervention lies in the radical influence of all these forms of false worship. The severity of their sinfulness is vividly displayed in their provocation of the divine wrath of an otherwise merciful YHWH (v. 6).

Yet it seems as if an even more dramatic and drastic dimension is implied in the somewhat mysterious prophetic outcry to YHWH not to uplift his people (וְאַל־תִשָא לָהֶם in v. 9). This is shocking not only because it supposes that the divine messenger desires the judgment of his own nation, but also that he wishes this judgment of his own nation to be unmingled with divine mercy (וְאַל־תִשָא לָהֶם in v. 9). It is one thing for the nation to know about the inevitableness of impending judgment; however, it is another, if they have a sense of hopelessness predicated on the belief of the impossibility of remorsefully returning to YHWH—but this would seemingly be the inevitable outcome of their own wicked ways. Humanity’s constant endeavor to exalt itself, if not checked, will ultimately lead to their utter humiliation (cf. v. 22).

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15Motyer, Isaiah, 53.
Indeed, if “do not lift them up” is not simply understood as paralleling וְאַל־תִשָא לָהֶם “humble humanity” and וַטִשַח אָדָם “throw them down” in the tripartite phrase וַטִשַח אָדָם וַטִשְפַל אִיש וְאַל־תִשָא לָהֶם “humble humanity, throw them down, do not lift them up,” but is understood as the peak in a progression of intensity, it may not only involve the sense of a lack of uplifting, but a lack of divine forgiveness of sin (viewing the wider semantic spectrum of נשא). In that sense humanity’s stubborn self-exaltation, if unchecked, will inevitably and ultimately even lead to their exemption from divine mercy. The only comfort for the crestfallen men and women would then be that the prophet’s fatal outcry is a product of his own feelings about the situation now, functioning here as a last warning, not as a prolepsis of how things would unavoidably turn out to be—that is, leaving open the option of supernatural mercy.

The Motif of Theophany

This section investigates whether the mentioned coming of YHWH in his majesty is to be understood metaphorically for his working behind the scenes or literally as a theophany. The idea of divine majesty (הדר) is frequently found in the Hebrew Bible and interrelated to synonymic terms (גאה and כבוד). It has been said: “The manifestation of his glory as judgment is the reverse side of the revelation of his salvation.” This image of godly glory is used to describe the divine glory (Job 40:9–14) either in the form of his being (Ps 96:6; 104:1; 145:5, 12) or in the form of his mighty voice (Ps 29:4) or in form of his works (Ps 111:3); however, it may also delineate human glory (Ps 8:6; 21:6; Prov...

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17 Childs, Isaiah, 32.
31:25), either in the sense of their being (Ps 8:6) or in the sense of their works (Ps 90:16), which however is always originating in YHWH (Ps 8:6). Moreover, this image may transport martial (Pss 21:6; 45:3–6; 110:3), cultic (Ps 96:6), creative (Ps 104:1–2), royal (Pss 21:6; 45:4–10; 110:1–3; 145:1–5), and salvific overtones (Pss 111:3–10; 145:12–15). Ultimately, it may be identified with a divine Messiah (Pss 45:4–10; 110:3).

Specifically in Isaiah there are three occurrences that seem intriguing: 35:2; 53:2; 63:1: In Isa 35:2 the divine majesty is promised to be seen, יִרְאו כְבוֹד־יְהוָה הֲדַר אֱלֹהֵינו, implying a theophany for the sake of the salvation and vengeance of his people (v. 4). In Isa 53:2 the Suffering Servant is depicted as having no majesty (לֹא־תֹאַר לוֹ הָדָר), which his people would sense as worthy to look upon, but nevertheless he is the only surety for his people’s salvation. In Isa 63:1 the divine warrior is portrayed as a king and vine dresser appearing for salvation and a verdict on his day of vengeance (v. 4) בִּלְבושוֹ צֹעֶה בְרֹב כֹחוֹ אֲנִי מְדַבֵּר בִצְדָקָה רַב לְהוֹשִיע. Obviously, these three texts share significant characteristics in that divine, majestic, judicial, salvific, and victorious elements, inherent in one being who has come, are climacteric to all of them, thereby strongly implying that they are all about one and the same being: either the Messiah or YHWH himself or Messiah YHWH, but appearing at different moments of time on the time scale.

In Isa 2:6–22 the idea most clearly connected to the the image of majesty is that of a war, which is either initiated by YHWH or led by him. 18 This is apparent not only in the designation of YHWH as YHWH of Hosts (יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת in v. 12) and in attributing supremacy and allegedly victory to him (נִשְׂגַב יְהוָה לְבַד in vv. 11, 17), but also in the usage of two other words, גאה and עֵרֶץ (vv. 10, 19, 21), having military overtones in

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other texts: It is the mighty army of ancient Egypt which was destroyed by YHWH’s majesty (גאה in Exod 15:1, 21)\(^{19}\) and as long as YHWH was on the side of Israel they did not have to fear their fierce enemies (עים in Deut 1:29; 20:3; 31:6),\(^{20}\) moreover in the fiery pillar accompanying them the Israelites had a running reminder of YHWH’s presence among them—a sensational, steady theophany (see Exod 13:21–22; 40:38; Num 9:15–23; Deut 1:33 for this matter).

Yet, though a motif of war seems to be supposed, a more intensive investigation of Isa 2:6–22 shows that despite the strong overtones of theophany in the terms used, a theophany need not be implied by the text: This is because the only verb perhaps bearing a connotation of a divine coming (קומ) seems to be better explained in another sense: The broader semantic spectrum of this verb insinuates an idea of “arising” or “uprising,” the specific use of קז “to arise” with the preposition ל “for”/“to” may imply an uprising for war (Jer 49:14), moreover it may be metaphorically used as meaning “to express or execute a verdict” (Ps 76:10), “to intercede for s. o.” (Ps 94:16) or “to initiate sth.” (see Gen 19:1; 27:43; Exod 32:6; Jonah 1:3). The concept of coming, however, seems only scarcely implied in these texts.

In light of the above survey and the similarity with Zeph 3:8, which also mentions a “Day of YHWH,” it seems logical to understand the utterance קז “to arise” succeeded by the preposition ל “for”/“to” as indicating the idea of initiation of a judgment—here in the sense of a divine terror. The impact of such an understanding is obvious: If YHWH does not come, he consequently does not fight, and if YHWH is not involved in the war, he may only initiate it. This view is in harmony with many texts surrounding Isa 2:6–22


which talk about human armies as a divine tool to inflict a penalty on his own people and to terrify them (3:13–26; 5:13–30; 7:18–25; 10:5–11 and chp. 13). What is left open, however, is the issue whether Isa 2:6–22 may express a double entendre primarily referring to a specific fulfillment in the near future, although at the same time looking telescopically at a universal fulfillment in the remote future including a real theophany at the end of the world (cf. 13:9–13; cf. esp. 24:14–16).

Isaiah 13:1–22

The heart of the text shows a chiastic-concentric structure: first, there is the mention of YHWH’s wrath (in v. 9); second, there is the reference to a cataclysmic catastrophe: the darkening of the luminaries (in vv. 9–10); third, there is divine visitation of sin (in vv. 11–12); fourth, there is the reference to a cataclysmatic catastrophe: the shaking of heaven and earth (in v. 13); and fifth, there is the mention of YHWH’s wrath (in v. 13).  

The Motif of Space

The introductory verse testifies that Babel or Babylon is the target of the divine utterance and wrath (יְהֹוָה בֲּבֶל in v. 1). Some scholars have suggested that the commencing part of the text (esp. vv. 2–5) should be viewed as a reference to the imminent judgment of Jerusalem and only the concluding part of the text (esp. vv. 17–22) should be viewed as relating to the impending judgment of Babel. This view, however, is not substantiated by a thorough reading of the text, which is on the one hand talking

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about the gates of a glorious one, which the approaching armies are invited to walk through (v. 2; bearing strong resemblance to Isa 45:1–2 that mentions a Medan king, the conquering of a city, and the military victory over kingdoms using the same root חלק (‘to open’ Babylon’s gates) and on the other hand talking about many nations,22 even a unification of many military troops to wage war against the unlucky addressed in the text (‘the uproaring sound of kingdoms, a marshalling of nations’ in 13:4; cf. this esp. with בָבֶל צְבִי מַמְלָכוֹת (‘Babel, glory of kingdoms’ in v. 19, where this plurality of peoples is also expressed and addressing Babylon).

This last insight excludes Jerusalem as the addressee since in the light of historical-prophetical interpretation, Jerusalem was never attacked by a conglomerate of nations, but typically by only one nation at a time. The opposite is true for Babel in light of historical-prophetical interpretation, which was attacked by the combined military forces of two empires—the conglomerate of the Medes and Persians, which is also specifically alluded to in the later section of the text mentioning both contenders, Babel and the Medes (vv. 17–19). Ultimately, the language used in the text seems to outline a universal, even worldwide scenario, as envisaged in the image of the opposing armies emerging out of the end of the skies (מִקְצֵה הַשָּׁמָיִם in v. 5), in order to eradicate the whole land (לְחַבֵל כָּל־הָאָרֶץ in v. 5). The emphasis on the incident as impacting everyone (כָּל־לְבַב אֱנוֹשׁ יִםָס in v. 7), the escape of every people to their peoples (אִישׁ אֶל־עַםוֹ יִפְנוּ אִישׁ אֶל־אַרְצוֹ יָנוסו in v. 14). Such a scenario, however, would be much more appropriate in the setting of an overthrow of a world kingdom rather than in that of the little southern kingdom.

22 The same argument is brought by Blenkinsopp, Isaiah, 1:278.
The Motif of Time

When studying the Hebrew Bible in a canonical-chronological manner, this text pops up because it is the principal text to talk about the “Day of YHWH” and time. It is described as קָרוֹב “at hand” (v. 6), but its linkage to time is only sketched, not specified in any way. It is defined as being imminent—when exactly, however, it is to happen is not expressed in the text. What, then, is one to infer from such a statement?

An analysis of the imperatives in the text is helpful in addressing this issue. Initiatory to the oracle, an accumulation of three imperatives is used to summon human troops as military tools in YHWH’s service to wage war against an outstanding metropolis: עַל הַר־נִשְפֶה שְׂאו־נֵס “on a bare mountain lift up a standard” (v. 2), והרימו קול “call them with a loud call” (v. 2) and חָנַף יָד “wave a hand (to them)” (v. 2). Yet another imperative is detected in the dense v. 6 describing a destruction from YHWH: הִילִילו כִּי קָרוֹב יוֹם יְהוָה כְּשֹד מִשַדַי יָבוֹא “Howl—for the ‘Day of YHWH’ is at hand.”

Such an intense use of imperatives would arguably bear the greatest significance for the people of the prophet’s time, to which the prophecy is initially proclaimed. However, such argumentation does not reconcile the fact that the text understands itself not simply as a speech to be delivered, but also as a divine oracle that has been received in a vision (מַשָא בָבֶל אֲשֶר חָזָה יְשַעְיָהו בֶן־אָמוֹץ in v. 1). Based on the text’s internal testimony, there is no rationale for viewing it as a prophecy about a past event of history, conversely there is no obstacle in understanding it as a true prophecy pertaining to a future event in history. In other words, the text talks about a future event in history, even its imminence—how far away it still is does not seem to be decided by the text, but by history: History, therefore, defines the ‘when’, but the text defines the ‘what’.
The Motif of Divine Wrath

In the Hebrew Bible there are only a few texts so much laden with the language of wrath ( Heb: הֵרָאת, עֶבְרַת) as Isa 13:9, 13 about the “Day of YHWH.” (See esp. Pss 69:25; 78:49; 85:4; Jer 25:38.) Most of the other texts showing a similar accumulation of wrath language also belong to the “Day of YHWH” tradition and take up Isaiah’s imagery of an outburst of divine wrath ( יֹם עֶבְרַת יְהוָה in Ezek 7:19–22; Zeph 1:15–18; לִשְפֹךְ עֲלֵיהֶם זַעְמִי כֹל חֲרוֹן אַפִי כִּי בְאֵש קִנְאָתִי in Zeph 3:8; חֲרוֹן and אַף in Nah 1:6; נָבוֹרָה and אַף in Hab 3:8–12; cf. esp. with Deut 31:17–18, 29; 32:22).23

It was Ancient Egypt which experienced the divine wrath to its extreme in the killing of factually all their firstborns ( תְשַלַח חֲרֹנְךָ יֹאכְלֵמוֹ כַקַש in Exod 15:7–8; יְשַלַח־בָם חֲרוֹן אַפוֹ עֶבְרָה וָזַעַם וְצָרָה מִשְלַחַת מַלְאֲכֵי רָעִים in Ps 78:49–50). The destiny of ancient Egypt would thus foretell and foreshadow the ultimate destiny of ancient Babylon, which would suffer a total destruction through the outpouring of divine wrath without any hope (Isa 13:1–5, 17–22; Jer 25:38; 50–51). The Israelite hope trusted, however, that YHWH would ultimately turn away from his wrath and be merciful ( אָסַפְתָ כָל־עֶ בְרָתֶךָ הֱשִיבוֹתָ מֵחֲרוֹן אַפֶךָ in Ps 85:4; יֶשֶף אֱלָה אֲנָבַרְבָּי in Isa 66:14; cf. esp. Joel 2:13–14, 19–21; 4:1). Moreover, the “Day of YHWH” is described as being “fierce” ( אַכְזָרִי in v. 9), which also seems to reflect YHWH’s wrath in requiting the Babylonians’ fierceness with divine fierceness (cf. Jer 6:23, 30:14; 50:42).24 The divine tool used for Babylon’s exemplary extermination would be the Median warriors (Isa 13:3–5, 17–18),


24 Beuken, Jesaja, 2:70.
which in this setting stands for the combined forces of the Medo-Persians as affirmed by classical literature sources.25

The Motif of Cataclysm

YHWH breaks into human’s history on the “Day of YHWH” which leads to a catastrophic cataclysm in the world:26 This time will be a time of destruction, vividly displayed by the assonance of “almighty” and “devastation” in Hebrew (יָוֵם יְהוָה כָשָׁד in v. 6; see Joel 1:15). Moreover, the intensity of this time is manifest in the imagery of earth’s desolation and the eradication of sin (יָוֵם יְהוָה כָשָׁד in v. 9). The supernatural intervention in this time is moreover outlined in the cosmological dimension of the imagery, insinuating not only a darkening of the whole visible universe (כִּי־כִּים הַשָּמַיִם כִּסְיֵיהֶם לֹא יָהֵלוּ אוֹרָם חָשַךְ הַשֶּמֶשׁ in v. 10; for similar language cf. other “Day of YHWH” texts like Joel 2:10; 3:3–4; Amos 5:18–20), but also its partial movement out of its place or its mysterious shaking (יָוֵם יְהוָה כָשָׁד in v. 13; for similar language cf. an allusion to the “Day of YHWH” in the apocalyptic section of Isaiah: Isa 24:17–23 mentioning “the tottering of the world”).

The Motif of Creation

A deeper investigation of the terminology shows that the motif of de-creation is obviously one of the most preponderant in the passage, redirecting one to and reminding one of the language of origins: the image of labor pains and pangs (וֹכַט לוֹדָה יְחִילון in v. 8; 25Beuken, Jesaja, 2:75.

26Blenkinsopp vividly and vigorously writes: “In the third stanza the poem picks up the tempo with images of worldwide devastation evocative of projections of the planet in the aftermath of a thermonuclear war.” Blenkinsopp, Isaiah, 1:279.
cf. Gen 3:16 and 4:1–2), the mention of the earth (הָאָרֶץ in vv. 5, 9, 13; cf. Gen 1:2, 10, 11, 12, 15, 17, 20, 22, 24, 25, 26, 28, 29, 30; Pss 104:5; 136:6; Job 38:4), the heaven or sky (שמים in vv. 5, 13; cf. Ps 8:4; 19:1–3; 104:2; 136:5), darkness (הֹאָשֶׁךְ in v. 10; cf. Gen 1:2, 4–5; cf. Ps 104:20); light (אור in v. 10; cf. Gen 1:3–5; cf. Pss 136:7; 148:3; Job 38:19–24), the sun (שמש in v. 10; cf. Ps 19:5–7; 104:19–20, 22; 136:8; 148:3; cf. Gen 1:16), the moon (ירח in v. 10; cf. Ps 8:4; 104:19–20; 136:9; 148:3; cf. Gen 1:16), the stars (כוכבים in v. 10; cf. Gen 1:16; Pss 8:4; 136:9; 148:3), the Orion (כיסיל in v. 10; cf. Amos 5:8; Job 9:9; 38:31), the mention of gold (cf. Gen 2:11–12) and the gazelle (implied in Gen 1:24–25; 2:19) support such a view. It is, however, specifically the darkening of the luminaries responsible for the functioning of the day-night rhythm which hints at an inversion of creation order in such a way as to impact the whole cosmos.27

Additionally, the universal term אדם (humanity) is used one time (v. 12) alluding back to its use in the creation account (Gen 1:26, 27; 2:5, 7–8, 18–25). Its antiquated synonym אדם (humanity) occurs two times (vv. 7, 12), which, although not used in the creation accounts of the Torah, manifests itself to be the specific term used in the origin accounts of biblical Wisdom Literature (Pss 8:5; 90:3; 103:15; 144:3; Job 4:17; 7:1, 17; 10:5; 25:4, 6; 28:13; 32:8; 33:12). Moreover, the specific term איש (humanity) is detected three times in the text (vv. 8, 14 [2x]; cf. Gen 2:23, 24). Yet even more terminological allusions, though not so strong, lie in the use of the word “likeness” (דְמות

27 „Die Verdunkelung von «Sternen»/«Orions» und Sonne/Mond (Gen 37, 9; Dtn 4, 19; Jer 31, 35; Ez 32, 7; Joel 2, 10; 4, 15; Koh 12, 2; Ps 148, 3), der drei Lichquellen, die über den Rhythmus von Tag und Nacht wachen, bringt die Schöpfung selbst aus dem Gleichgewicht (Gen 1, 14–19).“ “The darkening of ‘stars’/‘Orions’ and sun/moon (Gen 37:9; Deut 4:19; Jer 31:35; Ezek 32:7; Joel 2:10; 4:15 [3:15]; Eccl 12:2; Ps 148:3), the three light sources that rule over the rhythm of day and night, unbalances creation itself (Gen 1:14–19).” Beuken, Jesaja, 2:70-71 (translation mine).
in v. 4; cf. Gen 1:26) and in the particle “all”/“every” throughout the text (כָּל in vv. 7, 15; cf. Gen 1:22, 27; cf. also esp. the usage of the same particle in the previous “Day of YHWH” text Isa 2:12–17 and in other “Day of YHWH” texts such as Joel 1:12, 19; Amos 5:16, 17; and Zeph 1:2, 4, 8, 9, 11, 18; 2:3).

**The Motif of Fear**

The motif of fear becomes visible in the imagery of the horrified shuddering of humankind initiated by the announcing and approaching of the “Day of YHWH” (Isa 13:6)—they are instructed to “howl” (הֵילִילו) an outcry of terror over what is about to impact them, an utterance frequently associated with the “Oracles against the Nations” universally, and the “Day of YHWH” texts specifically (v. 6; cf. 23:1, 6, 14; Jer 4:8; 25:34; 48:20, 39; 51:8; Ezek 30:2; Joel 1:11, 13; Zeph 1:11). Its fear leads humanity to an outward feebleness, כָּל־יָדַיִם תִרְפֶינָה “all hands will sink down,” and inward feebleness, וְכָל־לְבַב אֱנוֹש יִםָס “and every human’s heart will melt,” because everything seems futile in this situation (Isa 13:7).

The rich imagery of the “sinking of someone’s hands” is frequently found in the Hebrew Bible. Most significant for this thesis are those instances where it is used in allusion or reference to the “Day of YHWH” (such as Isa 13:7; 35:3; Jer 50:43; Ezek 7:17; Zeph 3:16). In these texts it may be Israel (Ezek 7:17) or Babylon (Isa 13:7; Jer 50:43) which is depicted as letting its hands sink. It is ironic that Babylon at first causes Israel to be discouraged (Ezek 7:17), before Babylon is finally discouraged by YHWH (Isa 13:7; Jer 50:43). Ultimately, post-exilic Israel would experience a time of encouragement (Isa 35:3 and Zeph 3:16).

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Another vivid metaphor, the “melting of one’s heart,” does not often occur in the Hebrew Bible (Deut 1:28; 20:8; Josh 2:11; 5:1; 7:5; Isa 13:7; 19:1). It may either describe the fear of Israel (Deut 1:28; 20:8; Josh 7:5) or that of their opponents (Josh 2:11; Isa 13:7; 19:1). The reason for such a fear is usually related to human warriors (Deut 1:28, 20:8; Josh 7:5), but may ultimately be related to YHWH himself (Josh 2:11; 5:1; Isa 13:7; 19:1). The melting of one’s heart may, though initially disregarded, cause the total discouragement of one’s own troops (Deut 1:28; Deut 20:8; Josh 7:5) and it may lead to the recognition and confession of the supremacy of YHWH by Israel’s opponents (Josh 2:11). In Isaiah there is once again a stunning similarity outlined between the destiny of Babylon and that of Egypt (Isa 13:1–22; 19:1–15, 16–25).²⁹

Yet the image of fear is even further developed in the alerting announcement of terror, pangs, and sorrow emblematically equated with the panic and pain of a woman in travail (יָכְבַלִּים אֵת אֵלֹהִים אֵת אֵלֹהִים אֵת אֵלֹהִים אֵת אֵלֹהִים אֵת אֵלֹהִים אֵת אֵלֹּהִים אֵת אֵלֹּהִים אֵת אֵלֹּהִים אֵת אֵלֹּהִים אֵת אֵלֹּהִים אֵת אֵלֹהִים in v. 8). The picture of a woman in birth pangs is used several times in the Hebrew Bible as a metaphor for someone suffering great pressure and pain in a time of trouble (יָכְבַלִּים in Ps 48:7; Isa 21:3; 26:17–18; Jer 50:43; Mic 4:9–10; cf. also אַשֶּׁר מְצַרִּים in Jer 48:41; 49:22). It may be

²⁹Isaiah 19:1–25 may also be viewed as an allusion to the “Day of Yhwh,” specifically if one allows for a rerendering of the translation in the light of a strong parallelism likely implied in a non-punctuated Vorlage: וְנִבְהָלוּ צִירִים וְחָבְלִים יֹאַחֵזְהוּ כִּטְוֵלֵדָה יְחִילְּוּ. My suggestion is to understand הבּוֹרֶה עַל בֹּרֶה מַכְּרָה מַכְּרָה as not as a noun, but as a verb, here as an infinitive construct used in a temporal sense with an added suffix, reading, “when He draws near” because the line “the heart of Egypt melted” would not need a signifying object “within them” since in all other instances it occurs without such. Thus I would refer הבּוֹרֶה not to the Egyptians, but to Yhwh, an idea which seems to be supported not only in the light of the parallelism with the previous מקְרָה but also with the previous יהוה רכב על עב קל ובא מצרים. Significantly, this would lead to a Steigerung in the parallelistic structure of the verse, leading to a phenomenon J. Kugel has designated as poetic sharpness. Such a view would also accord with viewing vv. 1–15 as Egypt’s day of doom and vv. 16–25 as Egypt’s day of salvation thus showing the same double-sidedness of other “Day of YHWH” texts. However, what renders my reading unlikely is that הבּוֹרֶה otherwise seems to be invariably used in a substantive sense in the MT (cf. Gen 24:3; Exod 3:20; 10:1; 23:21; Num 11:4, 21; 14:11; Deut 31:16; Josh 24:5; Judg 1:29–30; 1 Sam 25:37; 1 Kgs 3:28; Isa 19:1, 3; 25:11; 29:23; 63:11; Hab 2:19; Zech 12:1; Ps 109:18; Job 20:14).
mentioned in relationship with Israel (Mic 4:9–10; Isa 26:17–18) or Babylon (Isa 21:3; Jer 50:43) specifically or with other nations within the “Oracles against the Nations” in a more universal scope (Jer 48:41; 49:22). “They shall look in amazement one at another; their faces shall be faces of flame” (Isa 13:8 JPS).

The Motif of Judgment

The divine judgment detailed here seems to delineate several judicial divisions:30 Thinking of its addressee, Babylon is envisioned as well as humanity; thinking of its attainment, a punitive side is encompassed as well as a purificatory side; thinking of its scope, a specific sense is expected as well as a universal sense (vv. 3–5 and 17–22 seem to form the former segment; whereas vv. 6–16 seem to form the latter segment). It is therefore reasonable to split these segments and treat them separately.

Turning to vv. 3–5 and 17–22 the approaching of an army (צְבָא מִלְחָמָה) is described, mustered by YHWH himself (אֲנִי צִוֵיתִי and קָרָאתִי in v. 3 and גוֹיִם נֶאֱסָפִים and יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת מְפַקֵד צְבָא מִלְחָמָה in v. 4). Through the usage of the judicial verb פֹּקַד (literally: “to investigate”/“to visit upon”), specifically in linkage with a divine subject, the language of judgment is already insinuated—often that of an investigative judgment.31

The army mustered by YHWH is selected to be his heroes (גִבֹּרַי in v. 3) and a holy tool (מְקֹדֶשֶׁי in v. 3 and וֹכְלֵי זַעְמ in v. 4) of his wrath (לְאַפִי in v. 3) to destroy the

30Cf. Willem A. M. Beuken, who distinguishes between three judicial steps in the divine judgment: first, that of investigation; second, that of verdict; and third, that of outcome. Beuken, Jesaja, 2:71-73.

earth (לְחַבֵל כָּל־הָאָרֶץ in v. 5). The leader of this army, which one may initially think of as being either divine or human, is no one other than YHWH (יְהוָה in v. 5). This will be YHWH’s day (יוֹם יְהוָה in v. 6), a day of destruction (לְחַבֵל כָּל־הָאָרֶץ and כְשֹד מִשַדַי יָבוֹא in vv. 5–6), a day of wrath (וֹבְיוֹם חֲרוֹן אַפ in v. 13). Yet, though already stated in v. 1, it is not until later that Babel is distinctly identified as the victim of the divine wrath (v. 19) and Media as the organ of the divine wrath (vv. 17–19). The kingdom of Babel will suffer the same fate as did Sodom and Gomorrah before (כְמַהְפֵכַת אֱלֹהִים אֶת־סְדֹם וְאֶת־עֲמֹרָה in v. 19) and be turned into a desert, an uninhabited location (vv. 20–22). The simile of Babylon’s destiny with the destiny of Sodom and Gomorrah shows that it is the executive element of judgment which is envisaged here leading to Babylon’s extermination. The radicalness and reason for Babel’s overthrow is implied in its lofty beauty and thus far unshattered hubris (בָבֶל צְבִי מַמְלָכוֹת תִפְאֶרֶת גְאוֹן כַשְׂדִים in v. 19). Significantly, the language of hubris (גאה and synonyms) resounds the message of the other delineation of the “Day of YHWH” in Isa 2:6–22, thus paralleling the two “Day of YHWH” passages in Isa 2 and Isa 13 with each other in an inclusio around the sections about Immanuel (Isa 7–8).

Turning now to the included vv. 6–16 one sees that also a destruction is in view: יוֹם יְהוָה כְשֹד מִשַדַי יָבוֹא (in v. 6). However, here the divine visitation seems to surpass a mere specific scope; the language seems to hint at an eschatological expectation, and a universal scope involving the whole world seems to be viewed (vv. 9–13; cf. esp. Isa 24:1–13). This becomes obvious in a sudden shift in person, number, and perspective:


First, what is envisaged in vv. 9–13 is no longer so much the singularity of an intimate individual (אִישُ אֵלֶּיהָ and and כָּל־יָדַיִם and וְכָל־לְבַב אֱנוֹשִׁים in vv. 7–8; and עֲלֵיהֶם and וְכָל־לְבַב אֱנוֹש and אִישֵׁהִ יִתְמָהו and יִתְמָהו in vv. 14–18) as is the mass of the impersonal universal (הָאָרֶץ and חַחָאֶיהָ; תֵבֵל and רְשָעִים; גְאוֹן זֵדִים וְגַאֲוַת עָרִיצִים; אֱנוֹש and אָדָם in vv. 9, 11, 12). Second, what comes into view is a cosmological disaster encompassing not only the blackening of the stars (כִי־כוֹכְבֵי הַשָּׁמַיִם וכְסִילֵיהֶם לֹא יָהֵלוּ אוֹרָם and חָשַׁךְ הַשֶּׁמֶש בְּצֵאתוֹ וְיָרֵחַ לֹא־יַגִיהַ in v. 10; cf. Joel 2:10–11)—which must be intensive due to the presence of strong pleonastic language (לֹא יָהֵלוּ וּלֹא־יַגִיהַ in Isa 13:10)—but also the desolation (שָׁמַיִם in v. 9) and quaking of the earth (וְתִרְעַש הָאָרֶץ מִמְקוֹמָה in v. 13; cf. 24:18–19; Joel 2:10–11; Hag 2:6), and even the quaking of the universe is implied by the anarthrous use of the word ‘heaven’ here (שָׁמַיִם in Isa 13:13; cf. 34:4; Joel 2:10–11).

Third, unlike the sandwiching text (Isa 13:3–5; 17–22), an intensification of sin vocabulary becomes manifest (חַחָאֶיהָ and רָעָה and רְשָעִים in vv. 9–11), which seems to involve not only an escalation and expansion, but also a universalization of the scope in view. Fourth, unlike initially, an intensification of wrath vocabulary becomes visible (אַכְזָרִי וְעֶבְרָה וַחֲרוֹן אָף in v. 9 and בְעֶבְרַת יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת ובְיוֹם חֲרוֹן אָף in v. 13), which seems to serve not only as an enlargement, but again a universalization of scope.

Fifth, unlike vv. 3–5 and 17–22, YHWH’s role here is highlighted as being active, which becomes obvious in a shift from vocabulary of indirect delegation (צִוֵיתִי and קָרָאתִי and מְפַקֵד in v. 3; and וֹ בָאִים מֵאֶרֶץ מֶרְחָק מִקְצֵה הַשָּׁמַיִם יְהוָה וכְלֵי זַעְמ in v. 5, which, however, may be understood in the passive sense of an overseer rather than that of a skirmishing participant) to that of direct involvement (פָקַדְתִי and וִיסְבֶתִי אָף and אַשְפִיל in v. 12–13) seem to be much more

Undoubtedly, the reason for this depiction of divine visitation is the prevalence of sin among seemingly all people (cf. vv. 11–12). The strongest manifestation of human sin is to be seen in their selfishness according to the biblical text (וְהִשְבַתִי גְאוֹן זֵדִים and גַאֲוַת עָרִיצִים אַשְפִיל in v. 11). The sentence not only forms a functional chiasm, placing the verbs in its outside (וְהִשְבַתִי and אַשְפִיל), and the double construct chain of nouns in its inside (גְאוֹן זֵדִים and גַאֲוַת עָרִיצִים), but even a powerful pleonasm to even more strongly emphasize the central position and problem of pride. This language reminds one of ch. 2, again building an impressive terminological bridge (in the words: גְאוֹן זֵדִים and גַאֲוַת עָרִיצִים) between the two “Day of YHWH” sections here, Isa 2 and Isa 13. The predominance of the language of pride in Isa 13 is preparing the way for its preponderance in the succeeding Isa 14.

To solve the radical problem of sin, the operation of a divine verdict is required which according to the text has two sides to it: on the one hand it leads to the purification of the land by the divine punishment of the majority of the people, which implies their extinction (וְחַחָאֶיהָ יַשְמִיד in v. 9); on the other hand it leads to the divine purification of a minority of the people by their purgation—which here insinuates their being saved (אוֹקִיר אֱنوֹש מִפָז וְאָדָם מִכֶתֶם אוֹפִיר in v. 12). That the root of יֵכַר may include an idea of preciousness resulting from the divine offering of a purificatory ransom procuring the rescue of human life and implying their salvation is obviously seen in biblical Wisdom Literature: כִי־יַצִיל אֶבְיוֹן מְשַוֵעַ וְעָנִי וְאֵין־עֹזֵר לוֹ and מִתוֹךְ ומֵחָמָס יִגְאַל נַפְשָם וְיֵיקַר דָמָם בְעֵינָיו in Ps 72:12, 14;

Oswalt, Isaiah, 306.
There are only few things in the Hebrew Bible which are valued as being more precious than refined gold, even than the rare gold of Ophir: among these are the people surviving the “Day of YHWH” (Isa 13:12; cf. Mal 3:1–3) and divine wisdom (Job 28:12–16).

**The Motif of a Remnant**

The linkage of the “Day of YHWH” with the divine willingness to save, as displayed in biblical Wisdom Literature (cf. esp. Job), includes an option for the wicked to be willing to turn towards wisdom and leave wickedness (book of Job), similar to that of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrha (Isa 13:19), where the loyal ones have been spared from extinction, leads one to the climactic conclusion that the “Day of YHWH,” independently from whether it is envisaging only Babylon or indeed the whole world, but more likely the latter in this section, does not bear an idea of judgment isolated from salvation of those willing to be saved. It is specifically the survival of a small remnant (Isa 13:12) the divine is depicted as being desperately looking for, which demonstrates that the divine judgment is not a blind judgment poured out over the world. Though divine judgment is inevitable and impacts all humans, it does not cause the extinction of all humans,\(^\text{36}\) for “a remnant will return” (Isa 7:3; cf. Isa 13:12). Thus the judgment of the “Day of YHWH” not only has an executive side to it in the extermination of people, but also an investigative side in the expiation wrought for people.

\(^{35}\)In contrast to what William A. Beuken believes, Beuken, *Jesaja*, 2:73. A context of judgment, however, does not preclude an idea of purification as one of its subelements. The outcome of the obliteration of sin from the world, seems to have to imply that only the already pure or purified will survive. Though this thought is definitely not very developed in Isa 13:12, it seems to reckon on its later resumption in Mal 3:19.

\(^{36}\)Also mentioned by Blenkinsopp, who, however, does not pursue this track: Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah*, 1:279.
The Motif of Scattering

The simile about the people fleeing like a flock indicates their flight is out of the ordered framework of society. Its linkage with the motif of fear through several illustrations of how the fleeing is to happen (in vv. 14–16) establishes a new motif, which may be designated as the motif of scattering and which is distinct from the motif of summoning that appears in the beginning of Isa 13, but also specifically that of Israel.37

The Motif of War

The motif of war is outlined through various imagery: The erection of a standard of war on a mountaintop (עַל הַר־נִשְפֶה שְׂאוּ נֵס in v. 2), in the divine summoning of war heroes as holy instruments of the divine wrath (אֲנִי צִוֵיתִי לִמְקֹדָשָי גַם קָרָאתִי גִבוֹרַי לְאַפִי in v. 3), in the dreadful uproar and war cry of the soldiers (קוֹל הָמוֹן בֶהָרִים and קֹול שְאוֹן in v. 4), in YHWH being their military leader (בָאִים מֵאֶרֶץ מֶרְחָק מִקְצֵה הַשָמָיִם יְהוָה וְכָל־לְבַב אֱנוֹש יִמָּס in v. 5) and in the specific language of war (כָל־יָדַיִם תִרְפֶינָה וְכָל־לְבַב אֱנוֹש יִמָּס in v. 7; נִבְהָלו “being dismayed,” צִירִים “pangs,” חֲבָלִים “pain,” אִיש אֶל־רֵעֵהו יִתְמָהו “horror,” and פְנֵי לְהָבִים פְנֵיהֶם “facing each other” in v. 8; יָנוסו “fleeing” in v. 14; יְרֺחְשו “dashing to pieces,” פְנֵי לְהָבִים פְנֵיהֶם “facing each other,” פְנֵי לְהָבִים פְנֵיהֶם “facing each other,” קָרָאתִי גִבוֹרַי לְאַפִי “killing by sword” in v. 15; וְכָל־הַמִסְפֶה “piercing the fugitives,” and יִפְלִימו “plundering,” and פְנֵי לְהָבִים פְנֵיהֶם “facing each other,” יָנוסו “fleeing,” and לֹא יְרַחֵמו “no mercy,” and לֹא־תָחוס “no sparing” in v. 18) which foreshadows a most fierce scenario of holocaust leaving Babel almost without memory (cf. vv. 19–20; cf. also esp. the parallels between Isa 13 and Joel 2 which share several motifs).

Alterations of Yom YHWH

37Beuken, Jesaja, 2:74.
Isaiah 22:1–14

The Motif of Space

The oracle’s setting is the “Valley of Vision,” which may equal the “Valley of Jehoshaphat” mentioned in Joel 4:2, 12, 14, which may be identified with the “Valley of Hinnom” as suggested by Blenkinsopp. It addresses the “daughter of my people” (in Isa 22:4), a compassionate chiffré for Jerusalem and Judah as later becomes obvious (Jerusalem: vv. 9–10; Judah: v. 8).

The Motif of Time

The text is about the disastrous effects of the occurrence of the “Day of YHWH.” However, since vv. 1–14 are not arranged in chronological order, it is difficult to make statements about the time setting of the text.

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38 Blenkinsopp, Isaiah, 2:333.

39 See Blenkinsopp, Isaiah, 2:333.

40 “The language is specific enough to suggest events in the not too distant past.” This might then visualize the past siege of Jerusalem by the Assyrians under Sennacherib in 701. Thus Blenkinsopp, Isaiah, 2:333. Yet it may also be that the biblical text talks about an occurrence of the “Day of YHWH” but looks at it as if it had already happened and therefore takes the perspective of the past. This might then visualize the prospective siege of Jerusalem by the Babylonians under Nebuchadnezzar II. See Blenkinsopp who also mentions this option though he does not necessarily believe that it stems from Isaiah, which might then imply a vaticinium ex eventu for him. Blenkinsopp, Isaiah, 1:334.

41 Beuken, Jesaja, 2:263.
The Motif of a City

See vv. 9–10.

The Motif of Fear

A motif of fear may be ironically implied by the mention of terms of tumult (תְּשֹאָה and חָמָה in v. 2). "tumult" may stand for the sound of exultation evoked by the presence of many people (esp. v. 5 due to linkage with עָלִיָּה "exulting"; cf. also Zech 4:7), or sometimes for the roar of the marketplace and traffic (Job 39:7), but in other texts for the roaring of a storm (Job 30:22 Ketib) or thunder (Job 36:29) triggered by the divine. חָמָה "tumult" may have the semantic range of "tumult" when there are many people present (1 Kgs 1:41), also that of tumult in the marketplace and traffic (Prov 1:21), but in the prophets especially it may stand for an outcry of war (Isa 17:12; Jer 6:23) or moaning (Isa 16:11; 59:11; Jer 4:19).^42

The motif of fear, however, does not become more obvious until later, when terms from the semantic field of sounds are used to outline a scenario of terror in a parallelistic structure (מְקַרְקַר קִר וְשוֹעַ אֶל־הָהָר in v. 5). In light of recent research the previous phrase should be understood as referring to sounds^43 rather than to walls as was often assumed before^44 and therefore read as "there is a crying shout and a cry for help on the hills" instead of "there is breaking down of walls and a cry for help on the hills." Thus not only is the parallelistic structure of the verse preserved in its existing form, but also the phonological play on the similar sounding terms used for the sounds of shock bears its

^42See Beuken, Jesaja, 2:250-251.

^43קרר, "CDCH 406.

^44קרר, "HALOT 3:1148–1149.
full significance (viz. the redundant repetition of “ק” and “ר” consonants in connection with the *patach*-vowel).

**The Motif of Judgment**

A motif of judgment is implied in the text by the divine act of punishment of his own people as outlined in Isa 22:5 (כִּי יָוֵם מְהוֹמָה וּמְבָשָׁה וּמְבּוֹכָה לַאֱדֹנָי יְהוִה צְבָאוֹת). It is moreover insinuated by the people’s notorious negligence to be mindful of YHWH, literally “to see him” or “to watch him,” the maker of everything, even of themselves (לֹא הִבַּטְתֶם אֶל־עֹשֶׂיהָ וְיֹצְרָה מֵרָחוֹק לֹא רְאִיתֶם in v. 11). Instead, they trust in human selfishness, strength, and support (cf. vv. 9–12). Ultimately, it is suggested by the stark contrast between the prophetic call for weeping and the people’s phlegma to obey as outlined in vv. 12–13 which are to be seen in light of the impending “Day of YHWH.”

Instead of crying, lament, fasting in ashes and sackcloth (וַטִּקְרָא אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה צְבָאוֹת בַּטוֹם הַהוא לִבְכִי ולְמִסְפֵּד ולְקָרְחָה וְלַחֲגֹר שָׂק in v. 12), the people are sketched as merry and joyful (וְהִמֵּה שָׂשׂוֹן וְשִׂמְחָה in v. 13), slaughtering cattle and flock for their feasts (הָרֹג בָּקָר וְשָחֹט צֹאן in v. 13), eating meat and drinking wine (אָכֹל בָּשָׂר וְשָתֹת יָיִן in v. 13). Since they do not believe in their salvation any more, they have given up their hope, even in YHWH—drinking and eating, enjoying life seems to be the best way for them to ignore their utmost misery (אָכֹל וְשָתוֹ כִּי מָחָר נָמות in v. 13).

Therefore it does not seem strange that YHWH shows himself as unwilling to purge the people from their guilt, since they have in a sense not only loaded guilt on

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themselves in not obeying him, but also in not turning towards him now: עַד־תְּמֹתון אָמַר אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה צְבָאוֹת “If only this guilt of yours would be purged until you die says the Lord YHWH Zeboath” (v. 14). This is also why the “Day of YHWH” (vv. 5, 8, 12) is described in such a dark light.48

The Motif of War

The mysterious location addressed and aimed at גֵיא חִזָיוֹן “Valley of Vision” in the introduction is suffering from a catastrophic and almost cataclysmic event (in v. 1).49 It is not until later that the initial uncertainty of the reader about the mentioned location, the character of the catastrophe, and its origin are resolved: What is envisaged is a town—even Jerusalem (גַגוֹת “house rooftops” in v. 1, עִיר “town” in v. 2, עִיר דָוִד “town of David” in v. 9, קְפִים רֹזֵרל “walls” in vv. 10, 11, עִיר־דָוִד “houses of Jerusalem” in v. 10), the catastrophe is a cruel war (vv. 6–12), its origin lies with YHWH (יוֹם מְהומָה וְמְבוסָה ומְבוכָה לַאדֹנָי יְהוִה צְבָאוֹת “a day of utmost confusion, uproar from YHWH” in v. 5; very similar to this triplet is יְשַׁלֵּח יְהוָה בְךָ אֶת־הַמְאֵרָה אֶת־הַמְהומָה וְאֶת־הַמִּגְעֶרֶת “YHWH will throw upon you fear, confusion and threat” used in the blessings and curses lists: Deut 28:20).

War imagery is visualized by the text’s portrayal of the people standing on rooftops (כִּי עָלִית כֺלָךְ לַגַגוֹת in v. 1),50 the highlighting of its losses, people slain without sword (וְלֹא מֵתֵי מִלְחָמָה in v. 2), the mention of its leaders, who having intended to run away into the remoteness of the land have already been trapped

48Beuken, Jesaja, 2:264.
The Motif of Weeping

The prophet’s weeping over the disaster and destruction experienced by the town equals that of a dirge\(^52\) (cf. Amos 5), but only weakly seems to reflect an allusion to divine weeping over this situation. YHWH is longing for the repentance of his people, his repining is mirrored in his messenger testimony that there is no turnaround.\(^53\) In total the prophet utters three laments over his people as soon as is understood that his message is mainly a spoken message (cf. מַשָא ―speech‖ in v. 1): “Therefore I say: ‘Do gaze away from me, for I am bitter and cry, do not come near to comfort me regarding the destruction of the daughter of my people’” is the first lament of the prophet (v. 4). That YHWH indeed is weeping himself and would like to be remembered and returned to is implied by the second lament: “But you do not look unto your Maker, your Shaper from old you do not see” (in v. 11) as well as it is by the third lament: “If only this guilt of yours would be purged until you die says the Lord YHWH Zebaoth” (v. 14).

\(^{51}\) Cf. Beuken, Jesaja, 2:254-256.

\(^{52}\) Beuken, Jesaja, 2:252-256.

\(^{53}\) Beuken, Jesaja, 2:262.
The Motif of Space

The “Day of YHWH” as outlined in Isa 34:1–17 addresses all nations universally, excluding Israel (vv. 1, 2). However, it is especially aimed at Israel’s brother Edom (vv. 5, 9). The prophetic utterance is divided into two parts: the former and shorter section (vv. 1–4) deals with the divine judgment against all nations; the latter and much longer section (vv. 5–17) deals with the divine judgment against Edom. These two sections have similarities: both are about a ban (v. 2 and v. 5), both are about slaughter (v. 2 and v. 6), both are about bloodshed illustrating the loss of lives (v. 3 and vv. 6–7), and both are initiated by the divine (v. 2 and vv. 5–7). Inspite of these similarities, it is only Edom’s destiny and doom that is intensively treated. It seems that due to the above similarities, the divine judgment of Edom serves as an example for the divine judgment of all the other nations also addressed by the text.

The Motif of Time

Initially it seems opaque with regard to how soon and long the “Day of YHWH” will be. Yet, the language seems to show that the occurrence outlined will be an imminent one to be unexpectedly and vehemently unleashed on its victim. The divine ban seems to have almost been executed (vv. 2 and 4), the divine sword in heaven is almost depicted as being in motion and about to strike Edom (הִמֵּה in v. 5).

The Motif of Cataclysm

Specifically in the beginning of the chapter a cataclysmic scenario is envisaged: this is visualized first in the speech’s initial direction and imperatives (קִרְבוּ . . . הַקְשִיבוּ “come close [to hear] . . . and listen” in v. 1) against all the earth, all its inhabitants, and
what sprouts on it (הָאָרֶץ and וְמְלֹאָה תֵבֵל וְכָל־צֶאֱצָאֶיהָ in vv. 1–2); second, in the mention of the melting of mountains because of bloodshed (וְנָמַקו כָּל־צְבָּא הַשָּׁמַיִם in v. 3), the rotting of the host of heaven, and the rolling away of heaven like a scroll (Rev 6:14) likened to the withering of a fig tree (cf. Matt 24:29) and vine (וְנָמַקו כָּל־צְבָּא הַשָּׁמַיִם וְנָגֹלו כַןֵפֶר v. 4); and third, in the abundant mention of fauna and flora as being impacted (in vv. 11–16).

The imagery of blood leading to the melting of mountains is very intense and almost seems surreal.54 A melting of the mountains is not often visualized in the Hebrew Bible and it shows up only in very few texts which are always linked with a theophany and very often with the motif of divine wrath either against his people or against all people (Ps 97:5 [cf. also Ps 49]; cf. Job 30:22; but see esp. those texts which may be allusions to the “Day of YHWH” tradition such as רַאָסִי יְהוָה הַצְּבָאוֹת הַמּוֹגֵעַ בָּאָרֶץ וַתָמוֹג וְאָבְלו — “it is the Lord YHWH of Hosts, who touches the earth and it trembles” in Amos 9:5–6 [v. 5 cited]; וְנֶהֶפְכו נְחָלֶיהָ לְזֶפֶת — “hills are melting under him” in Mic 1:2–5 [v. 4 cited]; וְהָרִים רָעֲשו מִמֶמו וְהַגְבָעוֹת הִתְגַוָגו — “mountains tremble because of him and hills melt” in Nah 1:3–7 [v. 5 cited]).

The Motif of Curse

The motif of curse is conspicuous in the miraculous transformation of Edom’s streams into pitch (לְבָדְיוֹת בֹּקֶבֶת לְגוּלֵת in Isa 34:9), its dust into brimstone (לְבָדְיוֹת בֹּקֶבֶת לְגוּלֵת in v. 9), and its land into burning sulfur (לְבָדְיוֹת בֹּקֶבֶת לְגוּלֵת in v. 9). Moreover, the burning fire is depicted as burning daily (לַיְלָה וְיוֹמָם in v. 10), as being absolutely unquenchable (לֹא תִכְבֶה לְעוֹלָם in v. 10), and as emitting smoke for all time (יַעֲלֶה עֲשָנָה 54 Willem A. M. Beuken, Isaiah (2 vols; HCOT; Leuven: Peeters, 2000), 2:294. in v. 10).
The Motif of Divine Wrath

The divine wrath is directed against all nations (כִּי קֶצֶף לַיהוָה עַל־כָּל־הַגוֹיִם in v. 2) and his “heat” against all their troops (וְחֵמָה עַל־כָּל־צְבָאָם in v. 2) to banish them (הֶחֱרִים in v. 2; cf. also וְעַל־עַם חֶרְמִי in v. 5). The day of YHWH’s vengeance (כִּי יוֹם נָקָם לַיהוָה in v. 8), the year of his requital (שְנַת שִלומִים in v. 8), and his zealous lawsuit for Zion are approaching (לְרִיב צִטוֹן in v. 8). Though this sentence as stated here is unique among the “Day of YHWH” texts, its basic idea is resounded in similar utterances such as Isa 61:2 (“the day of divine revenge”); and Isa 63:4 (“the day of my revenge and the year of my recompense”); and eventually that of Jer 46:10 (“a day of revenge to revenge”). This divine wrath visualized here in such vivid language like “fury,” “heat,” and “rage” is not “an unseemly emotion or utterance of aggression which admits of no excuse on the part of God. . . . The semantic field surrounding these concepts, however, makes it clear that they stand for God’s reaction to Israel’s sin . . . and that of the nations . . . as well as for YHWH’s determination to restore social order and his bond with humanity.”

55 The topic of YHWH’s ‘vengeance’ “implies a sovereign intervention by YHWH, rooted in his concern for justice and his engagement on behalf of his people, whereby he restores the damaged legal order between nations (Num 31:2; Deut 32:35, 43; Judg 11:36; 2 Kgs 9:7; Isa 35:4; 47:3; Jer 15:15; 50:28; 51:36; Ezek 25:12-17; Ps 79:10; 149:7).” Beuken, Isaiah, 2:298.

56 Beuken, Isaiah, 2:293. See also the subsequent texts he adduces: against Israel: Deut 9:22; Isa 64:4; Ps 38:4; 2 Kgs 22:13; Jer 4:4; Ps 89:47; against the nations Jer 10:10; 50:13; 63:3; 6; Ezek 30:15; Mic 5:14; as instrument to restore his bond with humanity: Isa 54:9; Zech 1:2; Lam 5:22; Deut 29:46; Ezek 20:13, 21 and his ultimate statement: “The Scriptures themselves evaluate God’s anger positively as a means to establish his just dominion (Pss 59:14; 79:6).
The Motif of Judgment

A motif of judgment is visualized in the summoning of the nations by YHWH.⁵⁷ His divine wrath leads YHWH to wage war with them. This scenario is vividly envisaged by the mention of a divine sword⁵⁸ (כִי־רִוְתָה בַשָּמַיִם חַרְבִ in v. 5), which is not only directed against Edom, but implicitly against all nations (הִמֵה עַל־אֱדוֹם תֵרֵד in v. 5). Moreover, the idea of divine ban, divine war, and divine wrath are not only inextricably linked with each other but also with the motif of judgment (cf. esp. vv. 2–3; 5–7). They are therefore to be seen as the subcategories of divine judgment in this text. The victims⁵⁹ of this divine judgment are stated to be slaughtered as if they were sheep⁶⁰ (vv. 6–7). The root שפט “to judge” appears among the subsequent “Day of YHWH” texts: Isa 61:8; Ezek 7:3, 8, 23, 27; 30:14, 19; Joel 4:2, 12; Amos 5:15; Obad 21; Zeph 2:3; Mal 3:22 and also among allusions to the “Day of YHWH” such as Hos 2:21 and Zeph 3:5, 8, 15).

Yet the divine judgment is also visualized in YHWH’s strife to succeed in jurisprudence and justice for all of his people (כִי יוֹם נָקָם לַיהוָה שְנַת שִלומִים לְרִיב צִטוֹן in Isa 34:8). The root ביר “to strive” appears only in Isa 34:8 among the “Day of YHWH” texts, and in Isa 27:8, which may be seen as an allusion to the “Day of YHWH”: בְּרֵשָׁת בְּשַלְחָה תְרִיבֶמָה הָגָה בְּרֵיחוֹ הַקָשָה בְיוֹם קָדִים “By scaring them and sending them away you will strive with them, he has expelled them by his severe blast on the day of

⁵⁷Beuken, Isaiah, 2:292.
⁵⁸Beuken, Isaiah, 2:294.
⁵⁹Cf. Beuken, Isaiah, 2:293.
⁶⁰Beuken, Isaiah, 295.
eastwind.” The combined usage of the roots ריב and שפט is, among other texts, found in the famous text of YHWH’s lawsuit for his own in Mic 6:1, 2, 8. The idea of judgment is moreover implied in YHWH’s utterance of curses over Edom and the world’s inhabitants (see motif of curse above).

The Motif of War

A motif of war is depicted in the mention of a divine-military ban (in Isa 34:2), which is even impacting the mountains, turning them into a “theatre of war” (v. 4; cf. 5:25; 13:4; 14:25; 18:3, 6; 30:17). Moreover, YHWH is dramatically depicted as fighting against Edom with a heavenly sword, a sword striking down from heaven itself (כִי־רִוְתָה בַשָמַיִם חַרְבִי הִמֵה עַל־אֱדוֹם תֵרֵד וְעַל־עַם חֶרְמִי לְמִשְפָט׃ in v. 5; cf. חֶרֶב לַיהוָה in v. 6).

Moreover, a motif of war is not only visualized through the mention of a divine ban (root חֶרֶב in vv. 2, 5), but also in that of slaughter (root חֶרֶב in vv. 2, 6 and related חָרַב in v. 6), slain (פִגְרֵיהֶם in v. 3), corpses (פִגְרֵיהֶם in v. 3), sword (root חֶרֶב in vv. 5, 6), blood (root דם in vv. 3, 6, 7), and fat (root חֲלָב in vv. 6, 7). Ultimately, the land will be turned into an uninhabited wasteland (תֶחֱרָב לְנֵצַח נְצָחִים אֵין עֹבֵר בָה in v. 10).

Isaiah 61:1–3

This passage may be divided into the following five parts: first, there is a section told from the perspective of a first person (vv. 1–3); second, there is a section told from the perspective of a third person (vv. 4–7); third, there is a section told from the perspective of a first person (vv. 8); fourth, there is a section told from the perspective of a third person (vv. 9); and fifth and finally, there is section told from the perspective of a

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62 Beuken, Isaiah, 2:294.

63 Beuken, Isaiah, 2:294.
first person (vv. 10–11). The structure created by these five speeches is a chiastic structure, placing the divine speech כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה אֹהֵב מִשְפָט שֹׂנֵא גָזֵל בְעוֹלָה וְנָתַתִי פְעֺלָתָם “Because I, YHWH, who loves justice, but hates the robbery of injustice, will give (them) their wage truthfully and make an eternal covenant with them” (v. 8) into its center and most important position, framed by the impressive inclusio of the other two first-person speeches. These three first person speeches show the subsequent similarities: They all deal with justice or righteousness (vv. 3, 8, 11). The two framing first-person speeches show even more parallels: They are both about righteousness (vv. 3, 11), they both mention the full title of Lord YHWH (vv. 1, 11), and they both talk about a headdress in the form of a turban (vv. 3, 10). The scenario envisaged is one of salvation leading out of trial.

The Motif of Space

The “Day of YHWH” as silhouetted in Isa 61 aimed at those weak and weary in order to bring them strength, hope, and salvation (vv. 1–3).

The Motif of Time

There is no indicator of time as to illustrate when the “Day of YHWH” of Isa 61 is to happen. It seems even unclear whether this blissful time belongs to the past, the future, or the present, which largely depends on whom one understands to be the speaker of this utterance—a priest, YHWH himself, or the prophet? The structural link between the first-person speeches, the subject of the first-person speeches, as well as the majority of the instances of first person speeches in Isaiah seem to show that it is a Messiah who is speaking in all three of them. Therefore, though there is no marker of time to indicate when this Messiah is to appear, there is a marker of uniqueness to the identity of this
Messiah who is to appear—it is no one else than YHWH himself (cf. 35:4; 59:20; 60:16; 62:11, 63:1).

**The Motif of Joy**

A motif of joy is expressed by a divinely induced transformation. The divine messenger’s task is to bring good news, even salvation to the meek (אָתִי לְבַשֵּׁר עֲנָוִים in Isa 61:1), to proclaim a year of YHWH’s favor for all bound people (לִקְרֹא שְנַת־רָצוֹן in v. 2), to comfort those who have cause to mourn (לְנַחֵם in v. 2), to anoint them with the oil of exultation instead of mourning (שֶמֶן שָׂשֹׂוֹן תַחַת אֵבֶל in v. 3), and to hand over to them garments of splendor instead of a spirit of mourning (מַעֲטֵה תְהִלָה תַחַת רוחַ כֵהָה in v. 3). “The effect of the prophetic proclamation on the servant’s offspring is the outpouring of joy and praise, occasionally expressed in the language of the Psalter: ‘oil of gladness’ (Ps. 45:8; cf. 23:5; 133:2) ‘planting of the LORD’ (92:13).”

**The Motif of Judgment**

Whether a motif of judgment is implied in the text is dependent on a textual and theological decision every exegete is confronted with: The textual decision concerns the translation of the root נָקָם (usually translated as “revenge”), which may either be translated traditionally as “revenge” or as “salvation” as has been suggested by some scholars. The theological decision concerns whether to view divine judgment as only incorporating an executive or punitive side or whether room should be left for a broader

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view, which also includes an exculpating or positive side. However, it seems that both issues may be resolved by the immediate context of the text.

In regard to the former the context hardly fits an atmosphere of vengeance (see esp. the parallel placing of רָצוֹן (“divine goodwill”)66 and נָקֵם (“vindication”)).67 However, salvation fits well (in the context of comfort, celebration, and new cloth, just as outlined in my section on the above motif of joy).

In regard to the latter the context shows how judgment,68 especially jurisprudence and justice (see the declaration of the meek as righteous (וְקֹרָא לָהֶם אֵילֵי הַצֶּדֶק in Isa 61:3), divine love of righteousness, his hate of injustice ( אני יְהוָה אֹהֵב מִשְפָט שֹׂנֵא גָזֵל in v. 8), and the sprouting of righteousness (יַצְמِיחַ צְדָקָה in v. 11) are explicitly envisaged in the text and thus opting for a broader understanding of judgment.

Therefore, the unavoidable conclusion seems to be that judgment and salvation are inextricably linked in this text about the “Day of YHWH” as is the case in apparently all the other texts about the “Day of YHWH” (see esp. Joel 2:12–17; Amos 5:6; Obad 15–21; Zeph 2:1–3; Zech 14:3–5; Mal 3:17–24).

The Motif of Messiah

A messianic motif is implied in the text by the mention of an “I”, who is anointed by YHWH (מָשַח יְהוָה אֹתִי in Isa 61:1), filled with his Spirit (רְוחַ אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה עָלָי in v. 1), and achieves divine favor (שְנַת־רָצוֹן לַיהוָה in v. 2)—all features strongly likening him to

66 רָצוֹן, CDCH 429.

67 Suggested by Blenkinsopp, Isaiah, 3:225.

Moses, David, and Saul on the one hand (Num 11:25; 1 Sam 10:1; 16:13; 2 Sam 12:7), and on the other to the divine servant of Isaiah mentioned in the respective songs (cf. esp. Isa 42:1: “Behold, my servant, whom I support, my select one, in whom I delight—I have put my spirit upon him”). Moreover, there are seven infinitives in Isa 61:1–3, which may be taken as another hint to a messianic interpretation (cf. 11:2). This Messiah is not only sent out to proclaim a message of salvation (‘להבש ענוה’ in Isa 61:1), but to perform salvation for the poor to set them free (‘לקור לשבויים’ in v. 1). He will pronounce this time to be the time of YHWH’s dear kindness and salvation (‘ליקר סנת רצון’ in v. 2), a message agreeing with the utterance of the time of Jubilee (cf. Lev 25:8–13). Ultimately, he will proceed to turn the fate of the feeble into that of exulting people (Isa 61:3).

The Motif of Salvation

As is obvious, the motif of judgment, the motif of joy, and the motif of salvation significantly overlap in this text. The motif of salvation here consists of two elements: first in the proclamation of salvation, and second in the performance of salvation. The former is apparent in the Messiah’s mission to bring good news to those burdened down or meek (‘להבש ענוה’ in v. 1), to proclaim liberty to those bound (‘לקרו’ in v. 1),

69Koole, Isaiah, 3:269.

70Cf. Blenkinsopp, Isaiah, 3:220; Childs, Isaiah, 504–05.


72“The poor are, above all, those who seek YHVH (Ps 22:27; 69:33), and to seek God is, in these texts, the essence of true religion.” Blenkinsopp, Isaiah, 3:224.
to proclaim a year of YHWH’s grace and goodwill, termed in the language of the Jubilee Year (לִקְרֹא שְנַת־רָצוֹן לַיהוָה in v. 2; cf. Lev 25:10–12; Ezek 46:47), to proclaim them to be righteous terebinths before YHWH for his own glory (וְקֹרָא לָהֶם אֵילֵי הַצֶּדֶק מַחַע יְהוָה in Isa 61:3; tree imagery is used in the Hebrew Bible to describe the righteous and unrighteous: Ps 1; Dan 4; Ezek 16, etc.).

The latter becomes visible in the Messiah’s mission to heal the wounded hearts (לַחֲבֹש לְנִשְבְּרֵי־לֵב in Isa 61:1), to give solace to those mourning (לְנַחֵם כָּל־אֲבֵלִים in v. 2; in stark contrast to the comfortless imagery of Lam 1, Lam 2, and Eccl 4:1), and to change the clothes of the lost into that of saved (אֵפֶר שֶמֶן שָׂשׂוֹן תַחַת אֵבֶל מַעֲטֵה תְהִלָה תַחַת רוח כֵהָה in Isa 61:3). Similar imagery of imparting of vestments of salvation is used in Isa 59 and Zech 3:1–5.

Isaiah 63:1–6

The Motif of Space

The “Day of YHWH” as outlined in Isa 63 has occurred to the disaster of Edom.

The Motif of Time

The timing of the “Day of YHWH” in Isa 63 is not indicated in the text.

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73 Childs, Isaiah, 505.

74 “Eichen des Heils’; ‘Eichen wie sie sein sollen’ (oaks of authenticity; oaks as oaks ought to be)” has been suggested by Paul Volz, Jesaja (2 vols; KAT 9:1-2; Leipzig: Deichertsche, 1932), 2:253. Quoted in Blenkinsopp, Isaiah, 3:226.

75 That is, literally “the brokenhearted.” See Blenkinsopp, Isaiah, 3:224.

76 “In fact, Edom is introduced not as the victim of the violence described, not exclusively at any rate, but as the scene of the apocalyptic scenario, the final, annihilating judgment.” Blenkinsopp, Isaiah, 3:249.
The Motif of Divine Wrath

The motif of divine wrath is ubiquitous in the text and linked to divine vengeance. YHWH is said to tread on his opponents (אָדְרְכֵם בְּאַפִי in v. 3) and to trample on them in his “heat” (הָרְמֵסֵם בַחֲמָתִי in v. 3). The time of his vengeance is here, which may be viewed as a “mirror image”77 of the “Day of YHWH” (כִי יוֹם נָקָם בְּלִבִי in v. 4; see Isa 34:1-17). This time is also described as the time of blood-revenge (שְנַת גְאֹלַי בָּאָה in Isa 63:4).78 His “heat” is stated to have been his support (וַחֲמָתִי הִיא סְמָכָתְנִי in v. 5). He trampled the peoples in his anger (וְאָבְרֵם בְאַפִי in v. 6) and made them drunk with his “heat” (וַאֲשַכְרֵם בַחֲמָתִי in v. 6).

In the Hebrew Bible a combination of the three terms אַף “anger,” חֵמָה “heat,” and נָקָם “revenge” in one chapter is not frequently found: It occurs mainly in the blessings and curses lists (Lev 26:16, 24, 25, 28, 39, 40, 41, 42, 44), in the Song of Moses (Deut 32:22, 24, 33, 35, 41, 43), and in this section here (Isa 63:3, 4, 5, 6). However, it also appears in other texts (cf. esp. Nah 1:2, 3, 6, 7, which may be another allusion to the “Day of YHWH.” See also esp. Ezek 25:12, 14, 15, 17 since it is also directed against Edom; besides these texts see Mic 5:14 and Ps 58:3, 5, 11).

The Motif of Judgment

Once more it is the the divine desire for justice, as visualized in the motif of divine wrath, which evokes a divine judgment (Isa 63:1). That judgment not only implies an executive or punitive side,79 but also an expiatory or salvific side is visible in the

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77 Blenkinsopp, Isaiah, 3:248.
78 מַדָּא, “HALOT 1:169.
respective utterance: “It is I who speaks in righteousness and who is rich in salvation” (v. 1). The judgment as displayed in the text is an executive judgment accomplished by YHWH’s war against his enemy Edom, which is waged without any support from others (cf. vv. 1–5).

The Motif of Salvation

A motif of salvation becomes most evident in the declaration: כִי יוֹם נָקָם בְלִבִי וָשְנַת גְאולַי בָאָה “There has been a day of vindication in my heart, and the year of salvation has approached” (v. 4). Obviously it must be attributed to a people different from the peoples that YHWH is waging war with and it is likely that his own people are in view here and that the year visualized is a Jubilee Year (cf. Lev 25:10–12; and esp. Isa 61:1). It is debatable whether the root נָקָם “to take vengeance” should be translated as implying salvation instead of vengeance and whether the root גָאָל “take blood revenge”/“redeem” should be treated in a similar manner (Isa 63:4). In the light of a broader view of judgment, which includes salvation as well as vindication, the original translation may easily be maintained (cf. Isa 61:1–3; 63:1–6).

Ultimately, YHWH is outlined as achieving a victory of salvific dimension against the enemy helping himself out—an idea unique to Isaiah in the Hebrew Bible: וַטַרְא כִי־אֵין אִיש וַטִשְתוֹמֵם כִי אֵין מַפְגִיעַ וַתוֹשַע לוֹ זְרֹעוֹ וְצִדְקָתוֹ הִיא סְמָכָתְהו He saw that there was nobody, he marveled because there was nobody to meet with, then his own arm saved him and his righteousness was his support” in Isa 59:16 and וְאַבִיט וְאֵין עֹזֵר [אָבּיָא לֶאָר] [81]

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80 Blenkinsopp, Isaiah, 3:251.

81 There is an “intimate link between vengeance and redemption . . . , because the redeemer (gō’ēl) was the person among one’s kin (bēnē ‘ammēkā, Lev 19:18) who assumed the role of protector and vindicator by executing vengeance.” Blenkinsopp, Isaiah, 3:251.
Then I looked, but there was no helper, I marveled, but there was no supporter, then my own arm saved me and my wrath was my support” in 63:5.

These verses may be seen as parallel in their syntax—it seems significant, however, that despite the many similarities, Isa 59:2 is speaking from the distant perspective of a third person using abstract language (צדקתי “his righteousness”), whereas 63:5 is speaking from the intimate perspective of a first person using anthropomorphistic language (חמתי “my wrath”). This structural juxtaposition of “righteousness” and “wrath” seems to imply that the biblical writer of these texts was not having trouble in thinking of these terms in one and the same accord. Therefore for the biblical writer the accomplishment of the righteousness of YHWH may under certain conditions be spoken of as an acting out of YHWH’s wrath.

The Motif of War

The motif of war is insinuated by YHWH as being visualized as a divine warrior. His vesture has turned red by being sprinkled and defiled with grape juice (נאם טלחומיו בגדים in v. 1 and מדורש אדם ללבושו ובגדיו בגדיהך in v. 2 and מדו אדם ללבושך ובגדך כדרך בגדך in v. 3)—a metaphor for the blood of his opponent. He trod the grapes in the vintage alone (פוריך לבדי ומעם אין איש אתי v. 3), which is a metaphor for his having fought solely, having helped himself since nobody was fighting with him (לアイ אתדים וחלות לי אדם אחד ואתית אליהם v. 5). He made the red grape juice, which is another metaphor for the blood of his opponent, be hurled down to the ground (ואור כדוריה נ集装ץ in v. 6). In this text there is a wordplay on the root אדם.

82Cf. Blenkinsopp, Isaiah, 3:249.
“Edom”—on the one hand it stands for the divine opponent (v. 1) and on the other it stands for the red or red-like color of the divine vestment (v. 2). That YHWH’s return from Edom is a victorious return is shown by his red vestments which indicate that Edom’s blood was shed in war.\(^8^3\)

**Allusions to Yom YHWH**

Isaiah 24:14–23

Table 4 offers an analysis of Isa 24 as it alludes to actual “Day of YHWH” texts. The verse with the strongest similarities to these is listed as the key verse. Moreover, it indicates which biblical motifs may be isolated from this section by showing what terms or themes are utilized and where they occur.

Isaiah 27:1, 8–9

Table 5 offers an analysis of Isa 27 as it alludes to actual “Day of YHWH” texts. The verse with the strongest similarities to these is listed as the key verse. Moreover, it indicates which biblical motifs may be isolated from this section by showing what terms or themes are utilized and where they occur.

Isaiah 29:1–8

Table 6 offers an analysis of Isa 29 as it alludes to actual “Day of YHWH” texts. The verses with the strongest similarities to these are listed as key verses. Moreover, it indicates which biblical motifs may be isolated from this section by showing what terms or themes are utilized and where they occur.

\(^{8^3}\) “The fact that Edom, like its northern neighbor Moab, was well known as a center of viniculture (cf. Isa 16:8–10) may also have contributed to the rather ghastly metaphor of treading people like grapes into pulp in the wine press.” Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah*, 3:250.
Table 4. Isaiah 24:14–23 JPS

**Key Verse: v. 21**
In that day the Lord will punish the host of heaven in heaven and the kings of the earth on earth

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Biblical Motif</th>
<th>Terms/Themes</th>
<th>Verses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cataclysm</td>
<td>Terror, pit, trap</td>
<td>v. 17–18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Trembling of the earth</td>
<td>v. 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Breaking, crumbling, tottering</td>
<td>v. 19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Shaking, splitting, weighing down, falling and no uplifting of the earth</td>
<td>v. 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sun and moon ashamed</td>
<td>v. 23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judgment</td>
<td>Against the host of heaven and also against the kings on earth</td>
<td>v. 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gathering of the wicked in prison</td>
<td>v. 22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Visitation of the wicked after a long time in prison</td>
<td>v. 22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salvation</td>
<td>YHWH will reign on Mount Zion and also in Jerusalem</td>
<td>v. 23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>His self-revelation</td>
<td>v. 23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worship</td>
<td>Voices worshipping YHWH</td>
<td>vv. 14–16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5. Isaiah 27:1, 8–9 JPS

**Key Verse: v. 1**

In that day the Lord will punish with his great, cruel, mighty sword Leviathan the elusive serpent—Leviathan the twisting serpent; He will slay the Dragon of the sea

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Biblical Motif</th>
<th>Terms/Themes</th>
<th>Verses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Divine Wrath</td>
<td>Led into exile</td>
<td>v. 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judgment</td>
<td>The serpent visited and killed</td>
<td>v. 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Altar stones of idolatry are destroyed</td>
<td>v. 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salvation</td>
<td>Sin purged</td>
<td>v. 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Guilt removed from sinners</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6. Isaiah 29:1–8 JPS

**Key Verses: 5–6**

And suddenly, in an instant, she shall be remembered of the Lord of Hosts with roaring, shaking, and deafening noise, storm, tempest, and blaze of consuming fire

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Biblical Motif</th>
<th>Terms/Themes</th>
<th>Verses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cataclysm</td>
<td>Woe, Ariel</td>
<td>v. 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judgment</td>
<td>Oppression of Ariel</td>
<td>v. 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Humanity humbled</td>
<td>v. 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Visitation, Roaring and shaking, Deafening noise, Storm, tempest, Devouring fiery flame</td>
<td>v. 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A nasty nightmare come true</td>
<td>v. 7–8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>War</td>
<td>Divine warrior besieging Ariel</td>
<td>v. 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Enemies as many as the sand on the seashore</td>
<td>v. 5, 7–8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Multitude of nations wages war against Mount Zion</td>
<td>v. 7–8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER III

JEREMIAH AND LAMENTATIONS

Acquaintances with *Yom YHWH*

Lamentations 1:1–22

Because the Book of Lamentations does not look forward to a “Day of YHWH” as a future event, but looks at it as an event of history, I would like to entitle it not as an anticipation of the “Day of YHWH,” but as an acquaintance with the “Day of YHWH.” This, however, does not exclude an investigation of theological motifs; to the contrary, such an investigation will illuminate these motifs because it deals with facts of the past instead of prophecies of the future, which are harder to understand. In such sense, the study of the past “Day of YHWH” may be a key to unlock the mysteries of the prophetic “Day of YHWH.”¹

The Motif of Space

This lament is a lament over the divine city (vv. 1, 19), about Judah (vv. 3, 15), Jerusalem (vv. 8, 17), and Zion (vv. 4, 17).

The Motif of Time

The text is about the disastrous effects of an occurrence of the “Day of YHWH.”

¹Cf. esp. the introduction of Everson, “The Day of Yahweh.”
The Motif of City

See vv. 8, 17, 19.

The Motif of Covenant

Jerusalem’s and Judah’s sin as depicted in the Book of Lamentations is a commotion against YHWH, a breaking of the divine-human covenant (in Lam 1:18). Moreover, it is to be viewed as an uprising against YHWH, because כִי פִיהו מָרִיתִי in v. 18 should be translated as “for we have rebelled against his mouth (YHWH’s mouth).” The key terms פֶה “mouth” and מָרָה “to rebel” in v. 18 are reminiscent of covenant language (the covenant is confirmed by YHWH’s mouth: כי עַל־פִי הַדְבָרִים הָאֵלֶה כָרַתִי אִתְךָ בְרִית and יִשְׂרָאֵל in Exod 34:27; the breaking of the commandments illustrates the breaking of the covenant: ...וְאֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל and פֶּתַח הַבְרִית in Deut 9:7, 15, 17, 23, 24 (quoting vv. 15, 17, 24).

Disobedience to YHWH’s mouth implies death (כִי עֲלֵי פִי־יְהוָה יִחְיֶה הָאָדָם in Deut 8:3 and ...) and уבְרֵיה וְיִשְׂרָאֵל in 9:8, see also vv. 7, 8, 15, 17, 23, 24 and 32:1). Whether Israel’s destiny is blissful or not is dependent on their careful keeping of the covenant (28:1, 15) and their mindfulness of the Song of Moses (הַאֲזִינו הַשָמַיִם וַאֲדַבֵרָה וְתִשְמַע הָאָרֶץ אִמְרֵי־פִי in 32:1) telling the Israelites about their fatal history of future unfaithfulness (32). The severity of sin is moreover 2

The reference to Judah’s inability to find a “resting place” has many resonances: it mirrors the plight of the weeping goddess in the Mesopotamian laments and the personified city elsewhere in the Old Testament (e.g., Isa. 23:12); it is one of the treaty-curses threatened should Israel fail to live up to her covenant obligations (Deut. 28:65); it is that which is denied to those who are suffering (e. g., Jer. 45:3; Job 3:26), it comes to women through marriage (cf. Ruth 1:9); and it was one of the chief promises made by God to Israel (e.g., Exod. 33:14; Deut. 3:20; Josh. 1:13, 15; 22:4).” F. W. Dobbs-Allsopp, Lamentations (Interpretation; Louisville, Ky.: Knox, 2002), 59.
visualized as an “abundance of defiant sinning” (רֹב־פְשָעֶיהָ in Lam 1:5): “Jerusalem (and Judah) have grievously sinned” (חֵטְא חָטְאָה יְרושָלִם in v. 8), and they are “defiled” or “impure” (טֺמְאָתָה בְ_SOLֶיהָ in v. 8), “impurity is on their skirts” (טֺמְאָתָה בְ_SOLֶיהָ in v. 9), they bear the heavy “yoke of defiant sins” (עֹל פְשָעָי in v. 14), and they have “radically rebelled” (מָרו מָרִיתִי in v. 20).

Yet, it is not only they who are wicked, but their opponents are wicked as well (ךָתָבֹא כָל־רָעָתָם לְפָנֶי in v. 22), and the divine wrath is not likely to spare them for long as the psalmist pleads with YHWH to act against the opponents as he has previously acted against all the rebelliousness of his people (עֹלֵל לָמוֹ כַאֲשֶר עוֹלַלְתָ לִי עַל כָּל־פְשָעָי in v. 22; cf. 2:18–21; Ps 73).

The Motif of Divine Wrath

The breaking of the divine-human covenant by his people precluded YHWH from pouring out his passionate love for them. Instead it provoked his wrath.3 “YHWH acted severely with me and made me suffer on the day of his wrath” (עוֹלַל לִי אֲשֶר הוֹגָה יְהוָה בְיוֹם חֲרוֹן אַפוֹ in Lam 1:12). YHWH’s wrath is visualized in his sending of fire from heaven into the bones of his people (מִמָרוֹם שָלַח־אֵש בְעַצְמֹתַי in v. 13), his trampling of his people (טִרְדֶמָה in v. 13), his spreading of a trap-net (פָרַשׂ רֶשֶת לְרַגְלַי in v. 13), his hurling down of his people (הֱשִיבַנִי אָחוֹר in v. 13), his bringing desolation (נְתָנַנִי שֹמֵמָה in v. 13), his delivering into the hands of the opponents (נְתָנַנִי אֲדֹנָי בִידֵי לֹא־אוכַל קום in v. 14), his rejection of his own heroes (סִלָה כָל־אַבִּירַי in v. 15), his setting a time against his

own (אֲדֹנָי בְּקִרְבִי קָרָא עָלַי מָוֵד in v. 15), his breaking of the youth (לִשְׁבֹר בַחורָי in v. 15), and his treading of the winepress (גַת דָרַךְ אֲדֹנָי in v. 15; cf. Isa 63:1–6).  

The Motif of Judgment

The motif of executive judgment is depicted by the motif of covenant, the motif of divine wrath, and the motif of war. It entails humiliation through compulsory labor and servitude (vv. 2, 3, 16), captivity (vv. 3, 5, 18), persecution (vv. 3, 6), utter destruction (vv. 7, 20), deprivation (vv. 7, 10), desecration (v. 10), the lack of home (v. 7), the lack of a helper (v. 7), the lack of a quiet or resting place (vv. 3, 5), the turning of friends into foes (v. 2), and the mockery of the opponent (vv. 7, 9, 11, 21).

The Motif of War

The motif of war is ubiquitous in the text; however, it is the result of a lost war that is highlighted rather than of a memory of the war itself: “outside deprives me the sword, inside it is like death” (מִختص שִכְלָה־חֶרֶב בַבַיִת כַםָוֶת in Lam 1:20). The southern kingdom, princess of the province, has been fiercely forced into slavery due to defeat in war (כֹהוּ שָׂרָתִי בַםְדִינוֹת הָיְתָה לָמַס in v. 1). Its friends have become its foes (כָל־רֵעֶיהָ בָגְדוּ בָהּ in v. 2). It has been led into exile (גָלְתָה יְһוֹדָה in v. 3) and slavery (עֲבֹדָה in v. 3), and has been hunted (כָל־רֹדְפֶיהָ הִשִיגוּהוּ in v. 3). YHWH is depicted as a divine warrior who has turned against it (v. 4). Its opponents are prospering and victorious (הָיוּ צָרְיהָ לְרֹאש אֹיְבֶיהָ שָלוּ in v. 5). Its children have been led into captivity by the enemy

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5 Renkema, Lamentations, 106–08.
6 Hillers, Lamentations, 104.
There is no strength to withstand the opponent (בְּלֹא־כֹחַ לִפְנֵי רוֹדֵף in v. 6). 7

Moreover, there is homelessness (מְרוֹדֶיהָ in v. 7) and mockery of the opponent (צָרִים שָׂחֲקו in v. 7), ostentation of the oppressor (הִגְדִיל אוֹיֵב in v. 9), robbery of treasure (שׂיָדוּ פָרַצָר עַל כָּל־מַחֲמַדֶיהָ in v. 10), defilement and profanation of holy precincts including the sanctuary (הָיִיתִי זוֹלֵלָה in v. 11), offspring is lost (הָיוּ בָנַי שוֹמֵמִים in v. 16), the enemy is triumphant (גָבַר אוֹיֵב in v. 16), neighbors became opponents (סְבִיבָיו צָרָיו הָיְתָה in v. 17), Jerusalem was turned into impurity (יְרושָלִַם לְנִדָה בֵינֵיהֶם in v. 17), virgins and men were brought into bondage (בְתולֹתַי ובַחורַי הָלְכוּ בַשֶּבִי in v. 18), and priests and wise men died in town (כֹּהֲנַי וזְקֵנַי בָעִיר גָוָעו in v. 19), and the enemy exults having heard about the tragedy of YHWH’s own (כָּל־אֹיְבַי שָמְעוּ רָעָתִי שָׂשְׂו in v. 21)—there is wickedness (רָעָה in v. 22). 8

The Motif of Weeping

Though there is no explicit motif of repentance in the text, a motif of lament or weeping seems to be in view: The very first verse of the book starts with the very same word which has lent itself as its title: אֵיכָה “how is it that . . . ?” (heading, Lam 1:1).

What is lamenting here is the city, personified as a woman 9 protesting over her loneliness

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7 Renkema, Lamentations, 124–25.

8 Hillers, Lamentations, 108.

9 “The personification of a city as a woman is a common image in prophetic literature, with possible antecedents in Mesopotamian literature and successors in Greek literature—but nowhere is it developed more effectively than in the personification of Jerusalem in this chapter.” Adele Berlin, Lamentations (OTL; Louisville, Ky.: Westminster, 2002), 47. Cf. Dobbs-Allsopp, Lamentations, 50–53.
and widowhood. The princess of the province is subjected into slavery (יָשְבָה בָדָד in v. 1). In vivid poetic language the crying of this woman, who has no comforter, is portrayed (כְּאַלְמָנָה and שָׂרָתִי בַםְדִינוֹת הָיְתָה לָמַס in v. 1). It is even the components of the city, here the streets, which are personified as mourning over the missing of fasting, feasting and people—the gates are windy, the priests are sighing, the virgins are sorrowful, and the town is indeed desperate (דַרְכֵי צִטוֹן אֲבֵלוֹת מִבְלִי בָאֵי מוֹעֵד כָּל־שְעָרֶיהָ שוֹמֵמִין כֹּהֲנֶיהָ נֶאֱנָחִים בְתולֹתֶיהָ מוגוֹת וְהִיא מַר־לָה in v. 4; cf. Deut 28:64–65). Moreover, the rhetorical question is raised whether there is any pain imaginable worse than the one witnessed here (כְּשֶׁר אוֹר אָכְרָה מְנַחֵם לֶחֱיָה in v. 12).

The woman is weeping over the outcome of the outpouring of YHWH’s wrath, bitter tears are rolling down her cheeks, but there is no comforter to comfort (אֲנִי בוֹכִטָה עֵינִי עֵינִי יֹרְדָה םַיִם כִי־רָחַק מִם־מְנַחֵם מֵשִיב נַפְשִי in v. 16). What is more, she is full of anguish and angst, her intestines are boiling, and her heart is turning within herself.

10 „Der Doppelschlag aus Verlust der Nachkommen und Witwenschaft, den Babel für sich als unmöglich erachtete, hat Jerusalem getroffen und es damit schutz- und wehrlos gemacht.“ “The double dilemma of loss of offspring and widowhood, which Babel thought of as impossible for itself, has now hit Jerusalem and deprived it of any protection and power.” Ulrich Berges, Klagelieder (HThKAT; Freiburg i. Br.: Herder, 2002), 97.

11 Berlin, Lamentations, 49. “‘Suffering’” (Exod. 3:7, 17; 4:31) and ‘hard servitude’ (Exod. 1:14; 2:23; 5:11; 6:6) comprise two of the dozen or so allusions to the Egyptian captivity in this poem.” Dobbs-Allsopp, Lamentations, 59.

12 Berlin, Lamentations, 49.

13 Berlin, Lamentations, 52.

14 Berlin, Lamentations, 57.

because of her transgression (כִי־צַר־לִי מֵעַי חֳמַרְמָרו נֶהְפַךְ לִבִי בְּקִרְבִי כִי מָרוֹ מָרִיתִי in v. 20). Her sighing is heard, but she is all alone, having no comforter to console her (שָמְעוּ נֶאֱנָחָה אָנִי אֵין מְנַחֵם לִי in v. 21). There is a longing for righteousness and retribution, a desire that the divine wrath will not spare the oppressors (v. 22), but will visit them in an equal manner. The sighings are many, the heart is sick (כִי־רַבוֹת אַנְחֹתַי דַוָי וְלִבִי in v. 22). Yet the silence of YHWH seems to hush the voice of weeping.

Lamentations 2:1–22

The Motif of Space

This lament is a lament about Judah (vv. 2, 5), Jerusalem (vv. 13, 15), Zion (vv. 1, 4, 6, 8, 10, 13, 18), and “the daughter of my people” (v. 11).

The Motif of Time

The text is about the effects of a late occurrence of the “Day of YHWH.”

The Motif of City

See vv. 13, 15.

The Motif of Covenant

The disturbing lack of a king as a political leader (מַלְכָה וְשָׂרֶיהָ בַגוֹיִם in v. 9), of proper instruction (אֵין תוֹרָה in v. 9), and prophecy (גַם־נְבִיאֶיהָ לֹא־מָצְאו חָזוֹן מֵיְהוָה in v. 9) may well be seen as a consequence of the breaking of the divine-human covenant. To be sure, prophets are left, but their prophecies do not prove themselves to be true. Instead of revealing and reprimanding the people’s culpability (וְתָפֵל וְלֹא־גִלו עַל־עֲוֺנֵךְ in v. 14) in order to make them remorsefully return to a covenant with YHWH (לְהָשִיב), they are

prophesying lies. Ultimately, they are inducing a breaking of the covenant by leading away from YHWH (فشאאת ישא אفرنساים יתוהו ל in v. 14).

Moreover, the breaking of the divine covenant becomes visible in the passionate triumph of the enemies over YHWH’s people (v. 15)—a scenario outlined in the covenant blessings and curses (cf. Deut 26–28, “you will become a desolation, a saying and a taunt among all people” in 28:37) as well as in the Song of Moses (לולח טעט אויב אנהר, “but for fear of the taunts of the foe” in Deut 32:26–29, quote from v. 27 JPS).

The Motif of Cult

Perhaps one of the most perplexing implications of the “Day of YHWH” is the divine deed to let cultic institutions of space and time be forfeited or forgotten and cultic officers be rejected as insinuated by the motif of the cessation of cultic worship:17 YHWH has destroyed his sanctuary (שכחת מז.Module), has turned his feasts and Sabbath into oblivion (שכחת יוה מז.Module), has spurned king and priest (מאנך מז.Module), has renounced his altar (מנחא מקדש.Module), repudiated his sanctuary (מנחא מקדש.Module), and let his temple be profaned by foreign people (ḳול נחן בבות יוה יומ ע in v. 7).18 This scenario has already been outlined in the Torah (cf. Lev 11:44; 20:3; Num 19:13) and has been pointed out several times before in prophecy (cf. Ezek 5:11–17; 10:18; 22:26–31; 23:38; 43:7–9).

17Berlin, Lamentations, 69.

18There is the option that YHWH “destroyed his once lovely temple (=Eden) as he destroyed the once gardenlike (or Edenlike) Sodom. The implication is that the destructive force used against the temple is like the force used against Sodom, and that the loss of the temple is the loss of the mythical center of the cosmos (Eden) that the temple represents.” Berlin, Lamentations, 70. Cf. Dobbs-Allsopp, Lamentations, 85.
However, YHWH is not to be understood as proactively profaning his own sanctuary, but as passively perceiving that his own people have profaned not so much the sanctuary, but he himself. If YHWH is profaned by his people, he leaves the sanctuary (Ezek 10:18). If YHWH is profaned by his own people, how much more then must the sanctuary be profaned, after being abandoned by its holy inhabitant. If the sanctuary is profaned, it is not because YHWH ultimately precipitated it, but because he permitted people’s freewill and the consequences that follow. Yet, YHWH would not leave the situation like this without reacting and retaliating by the outpouring of his wrath over those ignorant: בְתִמָם סִפָם אֶת־סִפִי ומְזوظָתָם אֵצֶל מְזֻזָּתִי וְהַקִּיר בֵּינִי וּבֵינֵיהֶם וְטִם אֶת־שֵם קָדְשִי בְתוֹעֲבוֹתָם אֲשֶר עָשׂו וָאֲכַל אֹתָם בְּאַפִי (Ezek 43:8; cf. 5:31; 22:31).

The Motif of Divine Wrath

The people’s breaking of the covenant and blasphemy of the cult provoke the outpouring of divine wrath, which is mentioned seven times in the text, thus making it one of the key terms: At this time YHWH shames his town in his wrath (אַךְ יָעִיב בְאַפִי אֲדֹנָי אֶת־בַת־צִトーֹן in Lam 2:1), thrusts its majesty down (הִשְלִיךְ מִשָמַיִם אֶרֶץ תִפְאֶרֶת יִשְרָאֵל in v. 1), does not radically remember his footstool (לֹא־זָכַר הֲדֹם־רַגְלָיו in v. 1), destroys without showing mercy (בִלַע אֲדֹנָי וְלֹא חָמַל [Qere] in v. 2), destroys its strongholds in his wrath (הָרַס בְּעֶבְרָתוֹ מִבְצְרֵי בַת־יְיהוֹדָה in v. 2), and he tears down and profanes its political leaders and power (הִגִיעַ לָאָרֶץ חִלֵל מַמְלָכָה וְשָרֶיהָ in v. 2).

YHWH withdraws power from Israel in his wrath (גָדַע בְחֳרִי אַף כֹל קֶרֶן יִשְרָאֵל in v. 3), withdraws his protection (הֵשִיב אָחוֹר יְמִינוֹ מִפְנֵי אוֹיֵב in v. 3), wrestles it in the fiery

fury of his wrath (בִּשְׂפַּךְ כָּאֵשׁ קַעַבְלָה אָכָלָה כִּנְבָּר, כִּנְבָּר) in v. 3,20 and outpours his wrath over them (שָפַךְ כָּאֵשׁ) in v. 4. He dismisses its political leaders and power in the rage of his wrath (טִנְאַץ בְּזַעַם־אַפוֹ מֶלֶךְ וְכֹהֵן, in v. 6), slays them on the day of his wrath without mercy (הָרַגְתָּ בְיוֹם אַפֶךָ טָבַחְתָּ לֹא חָמָלְתָּ, in v. 21), and leaves no remnant on the day of the wrath of YHWH (לֹא הָיָה בְיוֹם אַף־יְהוָה פָלִיט וְשָׂרִיד);21

The Motif of Judgment

The motif of executive judgment comes to expression in the motif of covenant, the motif of divine wrath, the motif of cult, and that of divine warrior.22 It involves YHWH’s destroying (vv. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 17), ravaging (vv. 2, 3, 4, 6), rejecting (vv. 2, 6, 7), fighting (vv. 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9), forgetting (vv. 6, 7, 8, 9), fulfilling his word (v. 17), showing no mercy (vv. 2, 17, 21), and leaving no survivor (v. 22).23

The Motif of War

The text highlights YHWH as a mighty warrior in several instances: He bent his bow like an enemy (דָּרַךְ קַשְתוֹ כְאוֹיֵב, in v. 4),24 he has uplifted his right hand like an opponent (נִצָּב יְמִינוֹ כְצָר, in v. 4), he defeated every desirable thing (וַטַּהֲרֹג כָּל מַחֲמַדֵי־עָיִן, in v. 4), he has become like an opponent (הָיָה אֲדֹנָי כְאוֹיֵב, in v. 5), he devours Israel (בִּלַּע יִשְׂרָאֵל, in v. 5), he devours their palaces and property (בִּלַּע כָּל אַרְמְנוֹתֶיהָ, in v. 5), he


21“Here, though, the emphasis is on God’s anger and destructiveness, so the stronger, more provocative ‘make loathsome’ seems a better interpretation.” Berlin, Lamentations, 68.


23Renkema, Lamentations, 226–32.

destroys their strongholds (שִחֵת מִבְצָרָיו in v. 5), he destroys his tabernacle (וֹשִחֵת מוֹעֲד in v. 6), he leaves his city to their opponents (הִסְגִיר בְיַד־אוֹיֵב חוֹמֹת אַרְמְנוֹתֶיהָ in v. 7), he tears down every single wall (חָשַב יְהוָה לְהַשְחִית חוֹמַת בַת־צִטוֹן נָטָה קָו לֹא־הֵשִיב יָדוֹ מִבַלֵעַ וְטַאֲבֶל־חֵל וְחוֹמָה יַחְדָו אֺמְלָלו in v. 8), and he tears down every single gate (טָבְעו בָאָרֶץ שְעָרֶיהָ אִבַד וְשִבַר בְרִיחֶיהָ in v. 9).

**The Motif of Weeping**

The motif of weeping becomes visible in the acts of the city’s inhabitants as well as in the city itself: The elders silently sit on the earth (יֵשְבו לָאָרֶץ יִדְמו זִקְנֵי בַת־צִטוֹן in v. 10), they have thrown dust on their heads (הֶעֱלו עָפָר עַל־רֹאשָם in v. 10), they have dressed themselves with sackcloth (חָגְרו שַׂקִים in v. 10). The virgins grievingly bow their heads to the ground (הוֹרִידו לָאָרֶץ רֹאשָן בְתולֹת יְירושָלִם in v. 10).²⁵

Moreover, in a powerful personification, the tears of a crying city are visualized (כָלו בַדְמָעוֹת עֵינַי in v. 11) through the glowing of its intestines (חֳמַרְמְרו מֵעַי in v. 11), the outpouring of its liver (ךְנִשְפַלָאָרֶץ כְבֵדִי in v. 11), its rhetorical questioning to whom it should be compared to (ךְמָה־אֲעִידֵךְ מָה אֲדַמֶה־לָהַבַת יְירושָלִם in v. 13), by whom it should be comforted (מָה אַשְוֶה־לָךְ וַאֲנַחֲמֵךְ בְתולַת בַת־צִטוֹן in v. 13), and by whom it should be eventually healed (ךְמִי יִרְפָא־לָ in v. 13).²⁶ There is the exultation of their enemies, who are whistling and waving their heads (ךְסָפו עָלַיִךְ כַפַיִם כָל־עֹבְרֵי דֶרֶ in v. 15), there is the triumphant outcry of victory of their opponents (ךְפָצו עָלַיִךְ פִיהֶם כָל־אוֹיְבַי שָרְקו in v. 16).

²⁵“The mourning of the populace is total and is conveyed through a merismus—the extremes of the spectrum encapsulate everything between them: the elders and the maidens symbolize the old and the young, the men and the women, the mature and the inexperienced.” Berlin, *Lamentations*, 71.

²⁶“The potential healers are rejected one by one in vv. 14–16: the prophets have already failed in their mission and have prophesied falsely; the passerby, neutral observers, will only express amazement or mockery (see below); and the enemy will gloat at its accomplishment.” Berlin, *Lamentations*, 73.
Anticipations of *Yom YHWH*

Jeremiah 46:2–12

**The Motif of Space**

The “Day of YHWH” as visualized in Jer 46 is a day of doom for Egypt (v. 1), and a day of vengeance for YHWH (v. 10), signified by war (vv. 3–9). Babylon is described as a divine tool used to wage war with Egypt (vv. 2, 10, 13). The Babylonians’ military inflicted severe casualties among the Egyptians in their first clash—however the critical deathblow is depicted as being delivered in a future clash (v. 10).

**The Motif of Time**

There is no indicator of time in Jer 46 to illustrate when exactly the “Day of YHWH” is to happen. However, since it is linked with a disastrous past military conflict between the Babylonians against the Egyptians (v. 2), one may infer that the decisive military campaign is to occur sooner than later (cf. esp. vv. 13–28). The Babylonian military is metaphorically likened to an army of locusts in Jer 46 (v. 23) in a similar manner to that of the army in Joel 2 (v. 5). Thus it may be that these two texts are speaking about one and the same event.

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27 “The message of the poetry’s fabric of allusion here: Zion is not likely to fare any better in God’s hands than she would in the hands of the previously mentioned prophets, passerby, and enemies. But this irony is twisted and deepened further in 2:18–19, for it is precisely to God whom Zion is instructed to turn for help and healing!” Dobbs-Allsopp, *Lamentations*, 97.
The Motif of Fear

A motif of fear is expressed in the description of the Egyptians: They are dismayed (הֵםָה חַתִים in Jer 46:5), turn backward (נְסֹגִים אָחוֹר in v. 5), are smashed (גִבֹרֵיהֶם יֺכַתו in v. 5), flee away from their opponent (נָסו in v. 5), and do not turn back (וְלֹא הִפְנו in v. 5). Indeed there will be terror all around (מָגוֹר in v. 5)—a “signature term” in the book (Jer 6:25; 49:29)—but no helper (Jer 46:11), even though the Egyptians’ outcry is sounding throughout the whole land (וְצִוְחָתֵךְ מָלְאָה in v. 12).

The Motif of Judgment

A motif of judgment becomes evident in Egypt’s hubris, which through simile is likened to the overflowing of waters (מִצְרַיִם כַיְאֹר יַעֲלֶה וְכַמְהָרוֹת יִתְגֹעֲשו מָיִם in v. 8) and consists of its military uprising to cover the earth and to destroy its inhabitants (אַעֲלֶה in v. 8).


29―Gleich fünf Aussagen beschreiben das Wanken des äg. Heeres beim Zusammenprall in der Schlacht. Die ersten beiden sind im Part., wobei das vordere die innere Bestürzung (‘mutlos oder erschreckt’), das zweite die äußere Reaktion wiedergibt (‘zurückweichen,’ schon 38, 22). Der Grund liegt darin, daß sogar Ägyptens ‗Helden‘ (bisher 5, 16; 26, 21, aber für andere Völker) ‗zerschlagen‘ oder ‗zersprengt‘ werden (קָהָה, auch Ijob 4, 20 für Menschen). Dieser Ausdruck dramatisiert zusammen mit der Ich-Perspektive das allgemeine Verb ‗schlagen‘ aus der Überschrift in V. 2. Die letzten zwei Verbalsätze schildern doppelt die allseitige Flucht. Zunächst intensiviert die Wiederholung der Wurzel סָנָה “fliehen; Zuflucht” diese Bewegung, vor dem Feind davonzulaufen. Dann beschreibt nicht ‗wenden‘ (מָנוֹס Hiphil, gleichfalls V 21; 47, 3; 49, 24 ohne direktes Objekt) die unaufhaltsame Flucht.” “There are even five expressions that describe the stagger of the Egyptian army in its military clash with its opponent. The first two are participles, the former expressing inner trepidation (‘being discouraged or scared’), the latter outward reaction (‘to retreat,’ cf. 38:22). The reason for this is that even Egypt’s heroes (cf. 5:16; 26:21, but for other people) are being ‘shattered’ or ‘scattered’ (קָהָה Hiphal, also Job 4:20 for humans). This term in linkage with the first-person perspective dramatizes the verb ‘to hit’ from the title in v. 2. The last two verbal clauses delineate flight in a two-fold sense: The repetition of the root סָנָה ‘to flee’ intensifies the movement of running away. The utterance of ‘not turning around’ (מָנוֹס Hiphil, also in v. 21; cf. 47:3; 49:24 without direct object) outlines irresistible flight.” Fischer, *Jeremia*, 2:473 (translation mine).

The Motif of War

A motif of war becomes visible in the divine imperative to the Egyptians to arrange all their shields (עִרְכָּה מָגֵן וְצִימָה in v. 3), to approach the scene of war (גְּשֹֹנָם in v. 3), to harness their horses (אִסְרֹר הַנוֹסִים in v. 4), to mount the horse riders (וַעֲלָה הַפָּרָשִים in v. 4), to establish their position (וְהִתָּיְצְבוּ in v. 4), to put on their helmets (בְּכֹבָעִים in v. 4), to polish their spears (מִרְקוּ הָרְמָחִים in v. 4), and to wear their armors of war (לִבְשֵׁו הַנִּרְיֹנֹת in v. 4). Instead, their heroes are depicted as being defeated and fleeing away from the scene (וְגֵיבֹרֵיהֶם יָכַתוּ וְמָנוּס נָסוּ in v. 5), however, their escape will be unsuccessful (אַל־יָנֵס הַקַּל וְאַל־יִמְלָלֵה הָגִיבֹר in v. 6).

The Egyptians will fall regardless of whether they fled or not (כָּשֹׁלוּ וְנָפְלוּ in v. 6 and כָּשֹׁלוּ יַחְדָּיו נָפְלוּ in v. 12); additionally, it becomes clear that it will be a time of slaughter through martial references: Horses (יָסְרִים in v. 9) and chariots (רֶכֶב in v. 9), warriors (גִּבֹּרִים in v. 9), the bow of war (קָשֶׁת in v. 9), and the sword that will devour...
and be satisfied, drunk with blood (וְאָכְלָה חֶרֶב in v. 10; cf. Jer 12:12; 47:6; 49:37; Deut 32:41–42; Judg 7:20; Isa 27:1; 31:8; 34:5–6; 66:16; and Zech 13:7). This biblical writer metaphorically likens the victims of the slaughter to sheep (כִי זֶבַח לַאדֹנָי יְהוִה צְבָאוֹת in Jer 46:10). There will be no healing for them, illustrating the idea that there will be no hope for them on the “Day of YHWH” (לַשָוְא הִרְבֵית רְפְאוֹת תְעָלָה אֵין לָךְ in Jer 46:11 Qere). 35

**Allusions to Yom YHWH**

Jeremiah 30:7–8

Table 7 offers an analysis of Jer 30 as it alludes to actual “Day of YHWH” texts. The verse with the strongest similarities to these is listed as the key verse. Moreover, it indicates which biblical motifs may be isolated from this section by showing what terms or themes are utilized and where they occur.

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Table 7. Jeremiah 30:7–8 JPS

**Key Verse: 7**
Ah, that day is awesome; there is none like it! It is a time of trouble

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Biblical Motif</th>
<th>Terms/Themes</th>
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<td>An incomparable day of trouble as it has never been before in history</td>
<td>v. 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salvation</td>
<td>They will be delivered</td>
<td>v. 7</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Exile will be ended, freedom is to be gained for them</td>
<td>v. 8</td>
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CHAPTER IV

EZEKIEL

Anticipations of Yom YHWH

Ezekiel 13:1–16

The Motif of Space

This divine word about an imminent “Day of YHWH” addresses Israel, meaning Judah (vv. 4, 9 [2x]), “my people” (vv. 9, 10), particularly its prophets (vv. 1, 16).

The Motif of Time

Though there is no specification of time in the text, the occurrence of the “Day of YHWH” is imminent as becomes obvious through the divine imperative to Ezekiel to prophesy regarding his verdict against the prophets of the land (vv. 1, 11). He is to make them hear the divine message (v. 2), a divine word dealing with the present situation and pronounced in this very moment (in vv. 3, 8 [2x], 13, 16). He is to show them that there is no peace at this point of time (in vv. 10, 16) and repeatedly refers to walls that are arguably erected to protect from an imminent war (in vv. 10, 12, 14, 15).

The Motif of Cataclysm

A motif of cataclysm is envisaged in the metaphors of overflowing downpour (תָפֵל וְיִפֹל הָיָה גֶשֶם שוֹטֵף in v. 11), the falling of hailstones (וְאַתֵנָה אַבְנֵי אֶלְגָבִיש תִפֹלְנָה in v. 11), and the outburst of a windstorm that splits the wall (וְרוחַ סְעָרוֹת תְבַקֵעַ in v. 11, cf.
“a triad of destructive elements.”

The expression employed for rain (גֶשֶם) is also used for the rain of the diluvial flood, when the windows of heaven were opened (Gen 7:12; 8:2; cf. Isa 24:18), and for the heavy rain watering the land after the heavy drought in Elijah’s time (1 Kgs 18:45), as well as for the strong rain to be poured out over Gog from Magog (גֶשֶם exactly as in Ezek 13:11, 13; 38:22). The terminology utilized for the hailstones in this prophecy is the same as in the Gog from Magog prophecy (אַבְנֵי אֶלְגָבִיש in Ezek 13:11, 13; 38:22).

The storm highlighted here “is no ordinary meteorological phenomenon”—it is a personalized and powerful instrument of YHWH’s wrath. A similar scenario is outlined in the prayer to be protected from the windstorm (מֵרוחַ סֹעָה מִןָעַר in Ps 55:9), as well as in a psalm about the passing of a windstorm (רוחַ סְעָרָה in 107:25), and in the psalms about the windstorm as a divine tool praising YHWH and performing his will (רוחַ סְעָרָה עֹשָׂה דְבָרוֹ in 148:8), and in Ezekiel’s viewing YHWH in a mighty windstorm-theophany (וָאֵרֶא וְהִמֵה רוחַ סְעָרָה באָה מִן־הַצָּפוֹן in Ezek 1:4). The term for whirlwind itself (סְעָרָה) is used in the story of Elijah’s ascension into heaven (2 Kgs 2:1, 11), and may be implied in the “Day of YHWH” prophecy against the proud ( Isa 2:6–22), in the Ariel prophecy in Isaiah, which may be understood as an allusion to the “Day of YHWH” ( Isa 29:6). The divine whirlwind is stated to overcome the wicked (Jer 23:19–20; 30:23–24), which

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2 Daniel I. Block, Ezekiel (2 vols; NICOT; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1997), 1:408.

3 Block, Ezekiel, 1:408.

4 Milgrom, “Did Isaiah Prophesy,” 164–82.
seems to be an illustrative motif for an approaching army sent by the divinity (Jer 25:32–38).

There are five allusions to a “Day of whirlwind” in the Hebrew Bible: First, in the Ammon-prophecy of Amos portraying a scenario similar to that of the “Day of YHWH” (Amos 1:14); second, in the story of Jonah, where a whirlwind threatens the sailors (Jonah 1:4, 11, 12, 13); third, in the whirlwind-theophany incorporated in the messianic prophecy about the arrival of a divine king riding on a donkey, which may be seen as another allusion to the “Day of YHWH” (Zech 9:9–14); fourth, in a psalm praying for the divine whirlwind to panic and pursue the opponent (Ps 83:16); fifth, in the renowned response of YHWH to Job out of a whirlwind-theophany (see Job 38:1; 40:6).

The Motif of Covenant

The utterance "יתדעת כי אני יְהוָה", “you will know that I am YHWH,” occurring two times in Ezek 13 (vv. 9, 14), and around 130 times in Ezekiel in total, reminds one not only of the future covenant outlined by YHWH (Ezek 11:18–20; 16:59–63; 34:23–31; 36:26–27; cf. 37:21–28), but it also echos the often forfeited covenant spoken by YHWH on Mount Sinai (Deut 7:9–12; cf. 30:17–18).

The Motif of Divine Wrath

The whirlwind splitting the wall is sent since YHWH’s wrath has been stirred up (יִפְקַע רוחַ־סְעָרוֹת בַחֲמָתִי in Ezek 13), as is the overflowing rain (גֶשֶם שֹטֵף בְאַפִי in v. 13) and the hailstones (אַבְנֵי אֲלָגָבִישׁ בְחֵמָה in v. 13). YHWH’s wrath will lead to the destruction of the wall, built to defend the city from the coming oppressor, as well as the
extinction of the falsely prophesying prophets (כִלֵיתִי אֶת־חֲמָתִי בַקִיר ובַחָחִים in v. 15 and נְבִיאֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל הַנִבְאִים in v. 16).5

The Motif of Judgment

The judgment prophesied here is addressed against the foolish and false prophets (עַל־הַמְבִיאִים הַמְבָלִים in v. 3; cf. vv. 4, 16):6 They follow their own spirit instead of the spirit of YHWH (הֹלְכִים אַחַר רוחָם in v. 3). They have not seen visions (לְבִלְתִי רָאו in v. 3), and they prophesy lies and voidness (חָזו שָוְא וְקֶסֶם כָזָב in v. 6, 8, 9). They have not entered the breaches to intervene for their people (v. 5 JPS; cf. Ezek 32; Ps 106:23).8 They speak although YHWH has not spoken (אֲמַרְתֶם וְאֹמְרִים נְאֺם־יְהוָה וַאֲנִי לֹא דִבַרְתִי in vv. 6, 7). They have not been sent by YHWH (יְהוָה לֹא שְלָחָם in v. 6) and they will not be in the assembly of YHWH’s people, nor be inscribed in the book of the House of Israel, nor will they rejoicingly return to the land (לֹא־יִהְיו ובִכְתָב בֵית־יִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא יִכָתֵבו וְאֶל־אַדְמַת יִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא יָבֹאו in v. 9).9

5Cf. Block, Ezekiel, 1:408-409.

6„In solchem Gericht über die eigenmächtige, pflichtvergessene Prophetie aber wird sich wiederum Jahwe selber in seinem Persongeheimnis erweisen – als der Herr, welcher der Herr bleibt und seines Wortes nicht spotten läßt. ““However, in this verdict of arbitrary and negligent prophecy Yhwh will manifest himself in his own mysteriousness—as the Lord, who remains Lord and the one who does not allow his Word to be mocked.” Zimmerli, Ezechiel, 1:293 (translation mine).

7„Unter Verwendung der Gottesspruchformel reden die falschen Propheten scheinbar in Vollmacht, in Wirklichkeit aber ohne Sendung, und erwarten dabei gar noch, daß ihr Wort eintreffe. ““Using the legitimizing formula the false prophets seem to speak with authority, but in truth without being sent. They even expect the realization of their words.” Zimmerli, Ezechiel, 1:291 (translation mine).

8Greenberg, Ezechiel, 1:279-280.

Instead of preparing their own people for the future war, they lead them astray (לא עליכם בקרבה in v. 10) and erect walls to survive the future war (בנה ת-ref ח AppModuleצע את in v. 5 and שהגנה גמר עלברית ישראל לעמד במלכדות בים זויה in v. 10). YHWH will exclude these prophets from his people and expel them from the land of Israel (לארבעיםجبכם בחריתשראלה לא בקמדן ולאאשמות ישראל in v. 9). Ultimately the motif of judgment is expressed by the disastrous language employed against them in vv. 11–16.11

The Motif of War

The “Day of YHWH” viewed here will historically manifest itself as a day of war (במגלותה ביוו in v. 5). Though peace is proclaimed, peace is not present, but war is at hand (לאמר שלום ואין שלום in v. 10 and שלום ארי שלום לאמר in v. 16). It is not only that the “Day of YHWH” is viewed as a day of war in this text, but even YHWH is described here like a warrior—the powerful enemy of his own people:13 He will lift his hand against these problematic prophets (הָיְתָה יָדִי אֶל־הַמְבִיאִים in v. 9), he will send as his companions catastrophies leading to destruction (רוחַ־סערות בחמתו גשם שטף באפיי יהו in v. 13), he will turn down the wall, forfeit it to its foundation, and make its founders fall (וְהָרַסתי אֶת־הַקִיר אֲשֶר־טַחְתֶם תפל ויהגיתו אֶל־הארץ ויגלה יסדו ונפלו וכלוּם in v. 14; cf. Deut 28:52).14


13Block, Ezekiel, 2:402.

14Zimmerli, Ezechiel, 1:294-295.
Ezekiel 30:1–9

The Motif of Space

This divine utterance is directed against specific nations, among which are Egypt (vv. 4 [2x], 6, 8, 9) and its neighboring nations such as Cush (vv. 4, 5, 9), Put and Lud (v. 5), and others (also v. 5).

The Motif of Time

The “Day of YHWH” as outlined in this text is said to be “at hand,” a statement which for the reason of emphasis is even repeated (v. 3). Though this is not very specific, there is a hint in the text pointing towards a point of time in the near, rather than in the remote future. The imminence of the event seems to be indicated by the use of the phrase הִמֵּה בָאָה “behold, it is coming” in the last line of the oracle, expressing the idea of something that is already coming and therefore in a sense to come soon (v. 9).

The Motif of Cataclysm

A motif of cataclysm is inferred from the imperative הֵילִילו “wail!”, the proclamatory particle הָה “alas!”, and the dramatic idea of עָנָן “darkness” linked with a “Day of Egypt”/“Day of YHWH” immediately impending upon Egypt (vv. 1, 9). The emphasis on the immediacy is expressed by an otherwise redundant-seeming repetition: כִּי־קָרוֹב יוֹם וְקָרוֹב יוֹם לַיהוָה “because a day is at hand, even a “Day for YHWH” is at hand” (v. 3). “The prophet’s excited words blurt from his lips in short disjointed exclamations whose increasing length and specificity create an ascending climax.”

There is only one text in the “Day of YHWH” tradition, which stresses the idea of the

15Cf. Block, Ezekiel, 2:157. He highlights that the language has an “ominous tone.”

16Block, Ezekiel, 2:157.
suddenness of the “Day of YHWH” more intensively by adding a verb of time qualified by the presence of an elative particle of quantity to the already existing adjectives leading to: קָרוֹב יוֹם־יְהוָה הַגָדוֹל קָרוֹב וַמַּהֵר מְאֹד “at hand is the great ‘Day of YHWH,’ at hand, and it hastes greatly” (Zeph 1:14).

The Motif of Covenant

The promise of the knowledge of YHWH to people is connected with the motif of covenant as already shown. What is intriguing, however, is that in this instance the promise is directed at pagan Egypt, obviously not a nation originally chosen by covenanting to belong to YHWH as Israel. How then is this to be explained? Is the covenant opened here? Will Egypt eventually be saved? Indeed, there are texts in the Hebrew Bible showing that the covenant between Israel and YHWH was not closed in the sense of preventing other people from entering it (Gen 14:18–20; 41:50; Josh 2).

Moreover, there are texts talking about turning Assyria and Egypt into worshippers of YHWH ( Isa 19). Yet, what seems to be displayed here in Ezekiel is not an integration of Egypt into Israel, nor its induction into the covenant, nor its incredible conversion, but its mere acknowledgment of YHWH as the highest God, which does not denote their acceptance of YHWH as their own highest God (v. 8). This seems obvious, on the one hand, in light of similar language about the Egypt of the Exodus, and on the other when one observes that the knowledge-of-YHWH sentences do not always necessitate a conversion, but a cognition.
The Motif of Fear

Trembling will be in Ethiopia and Egypt (הָיְתָה חַלְחָלָה in vv. 4, 9), standing in alliteration with חֶרֶב and חָלָל (וָבָאָה חֶרֶב בְּמִצְרַיִם וְהָיְתָה חַלְחָלָה בְּכֻשּׁ בִּנְפֹל חָלָל), “a sword will come over Egypt and there will be trembling in Ethiopia when the slain fall in Egypt” in v. 4). The “Day of YHWH” is linked with defeat and destruction.18

The Motif of Judgment

The motif of judgment is ubiquitous in the text. The means of judgment is war. “The day of Yahweh [here] identifies the frightening day of his visitation in judgment.”19

The Motif of War

YHWH’s sword is about to slay all Egyptians (vv. 4, 5)—“a metonymic expression for war in general,”20 and his fire of fury will burn down all her support (v. 8).

Alterations to Yom YHWH

Ezekiel 7:1–27

The Motif of Space

The “Day of YHWH” of Ezek 7 is targeted at Israel, meaning Judah (v. 1).

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17 „Zittern« oder »sich winden« vor Angst ist kaum stark genug als Weidergabe dieses (reduplizierten) Derivats von der Wurzel חלל »zucken, sich krümmen, kreisen«, was im Zusammenhang mit Geburtswehen vorkommt (Jes 21, 3).” Greenberg, Ezechiel, 2:301. “‘Trembling’ or ‘anguish’ does not do justice to this powerful derivative (by reduplication) of ħwāl ‘writhe, be convulsed,’ associated with the throes of childbirth (Isa 21:3).” Moshe Greenberg, Ezekiel (2 vols; AB 22-22A; Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1964-1997), 2:621.

18 Block, Ezekiel, 2:158-161.

19 Block, Ezekiel, 2:157.

20 Block, Ezekiel, 2:158.
The Motif of Time

The “Day of YHWH” as shaped in Ezek 7 is said to be at hand and imminent, casting a huge shadow on its victim (v. 7), but not only that, it is stated that its calamity is already commenced to strike its victim (vv. 3, 8).21

The Motif of Covenant

The reference to the Israelites’ recognition of who YHWH is clearly unearths covenant language (וִידַעְתֶם כִי־אֲנִי יְהוָה in vv. 4 and 9 slightly varied to וְיָדְעו כִי־אֲנִי יְהוָה in v. 27). The threefold repetition of this “recognition formula” (thus Terence E. Fretheim22 in NIDOTTE; cf. esp. Walther Zimmerli23 on its usage) only underscores its importance for the text (vv. 4, 9, 27). On a similar note, the notion that YHWH radically refuses to show sympathy to his own nation (וְלֹא־תָחוֹס עֵינִי עָלַיִךְ וְלֹא אֶחְמוֹל literally: “my eye will not pity for you and I will not pity either” in vv. 4, 9) “against” his true nature (Exod 34:6, 7) proves that the conditions for the divine-human covenant have been broken and YHWH is no longer acting as their covenant partner—to the contrary, he has turned into their opponent because they have left his way in order to follow their own ways of wickedness (ךְָדָרָכַי in vv. 3, 4, 8, 9, 27).

Israel’s turning to a wrong way as a motif for forsaking the divine covenant is not only an idea frequently found in Ezekiel (3:18–19; 11:21; 13:22; 16:27, 31, 43, 47, 61; 21:249.

21“The opening Now (‘attâ) highlights the imminence of the coming doom. The construction of the following phrase, haggēs ʿālayik, ‘The end is upon you,’ . . . makes ‘the end’ seem almost concrete, like some enemy about to attack. Similarly, the use of the verb ʿillah ‘to release,’ with ʿap ‘anger’ treats the divine anger as if it were an arrow to be shot (cf. 5:16), or an envoy to be commissioned.” Block, Ezekiel, 1:249.

22T. E. Fretheim, “ירִחְי” (H3359), NIDOTTE 2:409-414.

18:23, 25, 29, 30; 20:30, 43, 44; 22:31; 23:13, 31; 24:14; 28:15; 33:8, 9, 11, 17, 20 etc.; cf. also opposite texts: the survivors keep the divine way in Ezek 14:22–23), but also and specifically brought to view in the Torah where the conditions for the functioning of the divine-human covenant are laid out in the blessings and curses lists. In these YHWH expects Israel to walk in his way which stands metaphorically for loyalty to the divine law (רָצוּ לוֹ לְאֵל הָאָדָם in Deut 28:9). Intrinsically the same idea is expressed in the Song of Moses, where Israel’s falling is foreseen (כִי יָדַעְתִי אַחֲרֵי מֽוֹתִי כִּי־הַשְחֵת תַשָחְתוּן וְסַרְתֶם מִן־הַדֶרֶךְ אֲשֶר צִוִיתִי אֶתְכֶם in Deut 31:29) due to Israel’s infidelity to walk the divine way, that is, to be loyal to the divine law and truth by steadfastly trusting in YHWH as their only salvation and strength (כִּי כָל־דְרָכָיו מִשְפָט אֵל אֱמֹנָה in Deut 32:4).

The Motif of Divine Wrath

A motif of divine wrath is vividly displayed in YHWH’s sending of his anger against his own (ךְוְשִלַחְתִי אַפִי בָ in v. 3; cf. Exod 15:7; Ps 78:49), the pouring out of his “heat” over his people and his destructive anger (ךְאָשֵפֹךְ חֲמָתִי עָלַיִךְ וְכִלֵיתִי אַפִי בָ in v. 8), the outbreaking of his anger against the multitude (כִי חָרוֹן אֶל־כָּל־הֲמוֹנָה in vv. 12, 14), and the inability of one’s treasure to save oneself on the day of YHWH’s wrath (כָסְפָם וזְהָבָם לֹא־יוכַל לְהַצִילָם בְיוֹם עֶבְרַת יְהוָה in v. 19).25

24 „Das Ende ist nun über dir! . . . werde meinen Zorn . . . loslassen. Die nächsten Parallelen zu diesem ungewöhnlichen Ausdruck finden sich in Ex 15, 7 (Schilfmeerlied) und Ps 78, 49. Gottes Zorn wird hier als eigene Person vorgestellt. Vgl. 5, 15–17; 14, 19–21; 28, 23, wo die Objekte des Verbums die unheilvollen Werkzeuge Gottes sind.“ Greenberg, Ezekiel, 1:181. “The end is now upon you! . . . let loose my anger. Closest analogous to this unusual phrase are Exod 15:7 (Song of the Sea) and Ps 78:49. God’s anger is here given a personality apart from him; cf. 5:15–17; 14:19–21; 28:23, in which the objects of the verb šilāḥ are baleful agents and appurtenances of God.” Greenberg, Ezekiel, 1:147.

The Motif of Fear

“Within the prophetic tradition the announcement ‘the end has come’ [v. 2] represents a standard prophetic formula that should have sent shivers of terror down the spine of any who heard it (see Gen. 6:13; Jer. 51:13; Lam 4:18; Amos 8:1-2).”

The motif of fear comes to expression in the consecutive mention of imagery of fear and fright: All the people’s hands will sink down, which is a metaphor for having no hope (כָּל־הַטָדֵי תִרְפֶּנָה in v. 17; cf. Isa 13); all the people’s knees will turn to water, which is a metaphor for their shivering (וְכָל־בִרְכַיִם תֵלַכְנָה םָיִם in v. 17), horror will surround them.

26 Block, Ezekiel, 1:248.

27 Cf. Esp. “Knie werden von Wasser triefen. G »Schenkel werden mit Nässe befleckt werden«, d.h. von Wasser, das man vor Entsetzen nicht halten kann. Vgl. »Wer das Brüllen des Hrons hört und sich entsetzt, das Schmettern der Schilde und sich entsetzt, das Blitzen der Schwerter, und Wasser fließt (רָשֵׁתִים) über seine Knie« (bSota 44b). Vgl. Damit und mit dem Vorhergehenden die assyrische Beschreibung flüchtender Feinde: »Ihre Herzen schlagen wie die einer flügge gewordenen Taube, die verjagt wurde; sie verloren heißen Urin.« (ARAB II, 128 und Anm. 1, korrigiert durch CAD, Art. ṣarāpu). Zum hebräischen Sprachgebrauch vgl. »unsere Augen fließen (יָרַדְנָה, wörtl. laufen herunter) vor Tränen« (Jer 9, 17; Lam 1, 16); »Hügel sollen fließen (לִלָכְנָה, wörtl. gehen) von Milch« (Joel 4, 18). Unser Satz lokalisiert den Urin vielleicht deshalb an den Knien, weil die Infantrie knielange Röcke trug. Andererseits weist Ehrlich zu Recht auf den Unterschied zur oben zitierten Talmudstele in Sifre zum Deuteronomium §192 hin. Dort heißt es: »Wasser fließen herunter zwischen (בין) seinen Knien«. Demgegenüber vermutet G. R. Driver, Some Hebrew Medical Expressions: ZAW 65, 1953, 260, daß ברכים wie akkadisch birku als Euphemismus der Bezeichnung des Penis dient. Der Ausdruck begegnet sonst nur noch in 21, 12. Aufgrund der dortigen Verbindung mit dem »schmelzenden« Herzen (vgl. Jos 7, 5: das Herz wurde zu Wasser) und dem »verzagten« Geist sowie der Verbindung von schlaffen Händen und zusammenbrechenden Knien in Jes 35, 3 (s. die Häufung solcher Ausdrücke in den Hodayot voom Qumran IV 33f.; VIII 34) wurde der Ausdruck übersetzt mit »Knie wurden zu (oder: wurden schwach wie) Wasser«. Jedoch dürfte es sich dabei um eine euphemistische Umschreibung der ursprünglichen Bedeutung handeln.” Greenberg, Ezechiel, 1:186-187. “Knees shall run with water. ‘thighs shall be defiled with moisture,’ that is, from urine passed in fright. Cf. ‘One who hears the blare of horns and recoils in fright, the clash of shields and recoils in fright, the flashing of swords and water flows (šwtyyn) upon his knees’ (BT Sotah 44b). With this and the preceding image compare this Assyrian description of enemies in flight: ‘Their hearts beat like that of a fledging dove chased away, they passed hot urine’ (Luckenbill, ARAB II, p. 128 and fn. 1, corrected by CAD s.v. ‘ṣarāpu’). For the Hebrew idiom, cf. ‘our eyes flow (trdnh, lit. run down) with tears’ (Jer 9:17; Lam 1:16); ‘hills shall flow (tlknh, lit. go) with milk’ (Joel 4:18). Our phrase locates the urine on the knees perhaps because it would appear there on infantry wearing knee-length skirts (the common dress of Egyptian and Assyrian soldiers; see, e.g., ANEP #311, #369, #370). On the other hand, Ehrlich aptly adduces the variant ending to the talmudic passage cited above: ‘water runs down between (byn) his knees’ in Sifre to Deuteronomy, § 192, while G. R. Driver (“Some Hebrew Medical Expressions,” ZAW 65 [1953]:
(וְכִֽנְתָּה in v. 18), and the hands of the people will tremble (DCH) (וְכִֽנְתָּה in v. 27).

The Motif of Judgment

A motif of judgment becomes visible in the initial outcry “An end! The end has come!”—a standardized phrase of doom prophecy” (cf. Gen 6:13; Amos 8:2; Lam 4:18).28 “The anarthrous form of the first qēṣ and the absence of the anticipated verb (cf. v. 6) reflect the urgency of the pronouncement and contribute to its rhetorical force.”29

Moreover, it becomes visible through the utilization of judgment terminology and sin terminology in the text: YHWH is stated to judge his people (ךְּשְפַטְתִיךְ כִדְרָכָיִ in vv. 3, 8) and to requite them for their abominations (ךְּוַתָּה אֵת כָּל־תוֹעֲבֹתָיִךְ in vv. 3, 8; כְּוַתָּה אֵת כָּל־תוֹעֲבֹתָיִךְ in v. 4; and כְּוַתָּה אֵת כָּל־תוֹעֲבֹתָיִךְ in v. 9). YHWH declares a divine utterance of doom upon doom (כֹה אָמַר אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה רָעָה אַחַת רָעָה הִמֵּה in v. 5). However, this all will be brought to an end—it will be terminated by YHWH.30

260) suggests that birkayim here serves as a euphenism for penis, like Akkadian birku. The phrase appears again only in 21:12; owing to its connection there with ‘melting’ heart (cf. Josh 7:5, ‘heart turned into water’) and ‘fainting’ spirit, and the further combination of limp hands and collapsing knees in Isa 35:3 (see the heaping up of such phrases in Qumran Hodayot iv 33f.; viii 34), it has been rendered ‘knees turn to (or: weak as) water’ (RSV, NJPS). But this seems to be a euphemistic skewing of the primary source (Freedman, privately).” Greenberg, Ezekiel, 1:152.


29Block, Ezekiel, 1:248.

30„Über das Gottesvolk, das im Pfand des Landes die gewissermaßen sakramentale Vergewisserung seiner Berufung erhalten hat, kommt in der Ankündigung des über die Welt gehenden Tages Gottes die radikale Bedrohung zu stehen. Härter als mit dem Wort „Ende“, das hier ein Wort voll schwerer Inhaltlichkeit ist [. . . ], kann diese Bedrohung nicht mehr ausgesprochen werden.“ “About the people of God, that in the mortgage of the land has somehow earned sacramental assurance of its calling, comes the announcement of the threatening Day of God visiting the whole world. The utterance of this threat could not be more severe than in the employment of the term ‘end.’” Zimmerli, Ezekiel, 1:171 (translation mine).
Moreover, there is perverseness of pride (פָרַח הַזָדוֹן in v. 10; cf. Isa 2 and 13), lawlessness has turned into a staff of wickedness (הֶחָמָס קָם לְמַחֵה־רֶשַע in Ezek 7:11), there is lots of guilt (עֲוֺנ in vv. 13, 16 and עֲוֺנָם in v. 19), the earth is full of bloodshed and the town full of violence (כִי הָאָרֶץ מָלְאָה מִשְפַט דָמִים וְהָעִיר מָלְאָה חָמָס in v. 23), the lofty pride of the powerful will be terminated (וְהִשְבַתִי גְאוֹן עַזִים in v. 24; cf. Isa 2 and 13), there will be disaster upon disaster (הֹוָה עַל־הֹוָה תָבוֹא in v. 26), and prophecy will be sought for in vain (ובִקְשו חָזוֹן מִמָבִיא in v. 26); but the priests will have no instruction (וְתוֹרָה תֹאבַד מִכֹהֵן v. 26), even elders will remain without advice (וְעֵצָה מִזְקֵנִים in v. 26).  

The Motif of Repentance/Weeping

A motif of weeping becomes obvious in the usage of the imagery of sackcloth (וְחָגְרו שַׂקִים in v. 18), the shaving of the head-hair (וְבְכָל־רָאשֵיהֶם קָרְחָה in v. 18), the king’s mourning (הַםֶלֶךְ יִתְאַבָל in v. 27), and the prince’s metaphorical vesting himself in desolation or doom (וְנָשִׂיא יִלְבַש שְמָמָה in v. 27).  

The Motif of War

The motif of a deadly war is visualized by the absence of any survivors among the multitude, the seller will never return to what he sold, no one will be able to hold to his life (כִי הַםוֹכֵר אֶל־הַםִמְכָר לֹא יָשוב וְעוֹד בַחַטִים חַטָתָם כִי־חָזוֹן אֶל־כָל־הֲמוֹנָה לֹא יָשוב וְאִיש בַעֲוֺנוֹ חַטָתוֹ לֹא יִתְחַזָקו in v. 13), the war trumpet has sounded but no one wages war (תָקְעו in v. 13).}


32 Cf. Block, Ezekiel, 1:261-262.
If indeed someone did survive the war he will flee to the mountains and moan like a dove over his sins (וֹוֲפָלְטוֹ פְלִיטֵיהֶם וְהָיוּ אֶל־הֶהָרִים כְיוֹנֵי הַגֵּאָיוֹת in v. 16). Men and women will dismiss their silver and gold (in v. 19; cf. Isa 2:20), 34 they themselves will become spoil to strangers, even to the wicked and thus will be defiled (וַהֲסִiboֹתִי פָּנַי מֵהֶם וְחִלְלָו אֶת־צְפֹּנִי in v. 22; cf. chs. 13 and 30). 35

**Allusions to Yom YHWH**

Ezekiel 34:12

Table 8 offers an analysis of Ezek 34 as it alludes to actual “Day of YHWH” texts. The verse with the strongest similarities to these is listed as the key verse. Moreover, it indicates which biblical motifs may be isolated from this section by showing what terms or themes are utilized and where they occur.

Ezekiel 38–39

Tables 9 and 10 offer an analysis of Ezek 38–39 as they allude to actual “Day of YHWH” texts. The verse with the strongest similarities to these is listed as the key verse. Moreover, it indicates which biblical motifs may be isolated from this section by showing what terms or themes are utilized and where they occur.

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Table 8. Ezekiel 34:12 JPS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Biblical Motif</th>
<th>Terms/Themes</th>
<th>Verses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cataclysm</td>
<td>A day of cloud and gloom</td>
<td>v. 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Messiah</td>
<td>As a shepherd seeks out, his flock, his flock, so I will search out my flock</td>
<td>v. 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salvation</td>
<td>I will rescue my flock from all places to which they were scattered</td>
<td>v. 12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key Verse: v. 12
A day of cloud and gloom
Table 9. Ezekiel 38:14–23 JPS

**Key Verse:** v. 19
I have decreed in my indignation and in my blazing wrath: on that day, a terrible earthquake shall befall the land of Israel

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Biblical Motif</th>
<th>Terms/Texts</th>
<th>Verses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Cataclysm      | A terrible earthquake will occur in Israel  
Moutains will be overthrown,  
cliffs will topple,  
walls will fall down | vv. 18–19  
v. 20 |
| Creation       | Fish of the sea,  
Birds of the sky,  
Beasts of the field,  
Creeping things,  
Every human being on earth | v. 20 |
| Divine Wrath   | My anger shall emerge,  
I speak in my indignation and in the fire of my wrath | vv. 18–19 |
| Judgment       | Gog and many nations are emerging from the utmost north to wage an ultimate war against Israel  
Sent by YHWH to show his holiness before the nations  
I will summon a sword, everybody will fight against each other  
There will be bloodshed, pestilence, torrential rain, hailstones, sulfurous fire | vv. 15–16  
v. 21  
v. 22 |
Key Verse: v. 19

I have decreed in my indignation and in my blazing wrath: on that day, a terrible earthquake shall befall the land of Israel

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Biblical Motif</th>
<th>Terms/Texts</th>
<th>Verses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Peace</td>
<td>Israel already living in security and <em>shalom</em></td>
<td>v. 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theophany</td>
<td>I will show my holiness</td>
<td>v. 16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I will show my holiness and greatness and make myself known among them</td>
<td>v. 23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>War</td>
<td>Gog is mustering a large army</td>
<td>v. 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Horses</td>
<td>v. 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sword against sword</td>
<td>v. 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Blood</td>
<td>v. 21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 10. Ezekiel 39:1–8 JPS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Biblical Motif</th>
<th>Terms/Texts</th>
<th>Verses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cataclysm</td>
<td>I will send fire against Magog</td>
<td>v. 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curse</td>
<td>You will become food to the carrion birds and beasts and will lie in the open field</td>
<td>vv. 4–5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judgment</td>
<td>I will drive you from the far north to the mountains of Israel</td>
<td>v. 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I will wage war with you and you will fall to the ground</td>
<td>vv. 3–4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Behold, it has come, it has happened, declares YHWH—this is the day I decreed</td>
<td>v. 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theophany</td>
<td>I will make myself known</td>
<td>v. 7 (cf. c. 38)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>War</td>
<td>Magog has arrows and bow</td>
<td>v. 3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER V
THE TWELVE

Anticipations of Yom YHWH
Joel 1:13–15

The Motif of Space

Without doubt this word is directed against all the inhabitants of the land (in vv. 2, 14; ch. 2:1) and its elders (in 1:2, 14; chs. 2:16 and 3:1) who are identified as the people of YHWH (בֵית יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם “the House of YHWH, your God” in 1:14 and בֵית אֱלֹהֵינו “the House of our God” in v. 16; cf. also אלהים “your God” in ch. 2:13, 14, 23, 26, 27; חוסה יְהוָה עַל־עַםֶ “Oh YHWH, pity your people“ in ch. 2:17; יְקַמֵא יְהוָה לְאַרְצוֹ וַטַחְמֹל עַל־עַםוֹ “YHWH was zealous for his land and pitied his people” in ch. 2:18; וַיְקַמֵא יְהוָה וַטֹאמֶר לְעַםוֹ “YHWH responded and said to his people” in ch. 2:19). They have become victim of a recent locust plague (ch. 1), which ravaged through the land, only to foretell and foreshadow an even greater event to happen soon (1:15; 2:1–11). If one views the Book of Joel as a unified whole, it is obvious that it is Judah and Jerusalem that are addressed by the divine word (cf. esp. chs. 2:1 and 4:1).

The Motif of Time

The “Day of YHWH” as announced in 1:15 and 2:1–17 seems to envisage one and the same event of history, which is why I want to look at both of them together and treat them here as a unit. The “Day of YHWH” is depicted as being “at hand” (cf. 1:15;
and the usage of the participle בָא “to be approaching” (2:1) once more presupposes the imminence of the event anticipated and its impending occurrence—it is indeed to be expected soon. The text of Joel 2:1–17 shows an abundant accumulation of imperatives (13 in total) such as תִּקְעו “blow a trumpet” (v. 1), הָרִיעו “shout” (v. 1), יָדְשֵׁב “return” (v. 12), הָרִיעו “return” (v. 13), תִּקְעו “blow” (v. 15), קַדְשִׁי “sanctify” (v. 15), רַחֵמ “call” (v. 15), קִרְאו “gather” (v. 16), קַדְשֵׁי “sanctify” (v. 16), קִבְצו “gather” (v. 16), אִסְפו “gather” (v. 16), and חָוָה “sympathize” (v. 17). Though the time schedule of the event of the “Day of YHWH” is once more not specified, it seems as if one is to suppose that it is to occur within the lifetime of the people addressed by the prophet since his message shows strong interest in them as is obvious in the above-mentioned imperatives (esp. those mentioning a gathering of the people in the light of the gloom impending on them, vv. 15–16).

The Motif of Cataclysm

The utterance כִּי קָרוֹב יוֹם יְהוָה וּכְשֹד מִשַדַי יָבוֹא “for the Day of YHWH is at hand and comes like a destruction from the Almighty” in Joel (1:15) echoes its use in Isaiah (13:6). In Isa 13:6, however, it is directed against Babylon, while in Joel 1:15, it is directed against Judah. Isaiah 13:6 and Joel 1:15 show that the essence of the “Day of YHWH” may be the same throughout history, but the victim(s) of the “Day of YHWH” may be exchanged. The disaster depicted is typically the result of a raging army, who is yet to appear on the scene (cf. Isa 13; Jer 48:3; Joel 2).


2Cf. Crenshaw, Joel, 126.

The Motif of Weeping

There is a reiterated invocation for repentance since the “Day of YHWH” is impending and soon. It is to be commenced with the priests and concluded with the people (Joel 1:13–15). The officiating priests are to weep over the withholding of meal offerings from the temple (הֵילִילוּ מְשָרְתֵי מִזְבֵּחַ and כִּי נִמְנַע מִבֵית אֱלֹהֵיכֶם מִנְחָה וָנָסֶךְ in v. 13); they shall be dressed with belts (חִגְרוֹ in v. 13) and in sackcloth even when sleeping (בֹּאו לִינוּ בַשַּׁקִּים מְשָרְתֵי אֱלֹהָי in v. 13); they shall sanctify a fasting and a feast of repentance at the temple (קַדְשֵׁם צוֹם קִרְאוּ עֲצָרָה and אִסְפוּ זְקֵנִים כֹּל יֹשְׁבֵי הָאָרֶץ in v. 14), to which all shall be assembled from the elders up to every inhabitant of the land (כִּי־בָא יוֹם יְהוָה כִּי קָרוֹב יוֹם חֹשֶׁךְ וַאֲפֵלָה יוֹם עָנָן וַעֲרָפֶל in v. 14). The goal of this undertaking is to plead and pray for divine gracious so that there will be a turnaround of the situation (זַעֲקוּ אֶל־יְהוָה in v. 14; cf. Joel 2:15 for the same idea).

Joel 2:1–11

The Motif of Space

The motif of space has been dealt with above, “Joel 1:13–15.”

The Motif of Time

The motif of time has been dealt with above, “Joel 1:13–15.”

The Motif of Cataclysm

One of the most obscure scenarios of the “Day of YHWH” is described in this text of the Book of Joel:כִּי־בָא יוֹם יְהוָה כִּי קָרוֹב יוֹם חֹשֶׁךְ וַאֲפֵלָה יוֹם עָנָן וַעֲרָפֶל (Joel 2:1–4)

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5 John Barton, Joel and Obadiah (OTL; Louisville, Ky.: Knox, 2001), 60.
2), only to be surpassed by an even more shocking depiction in the Book of Zephaniah: יְום עֶבְרָה חֹזֶה וָּהוָּה יְום שָׁרָה וָּמְצָוָה יְום שָׁאָה וָּמְשָׁוָה יְום חֹשֶׁךְ וַאֲפֵלָה יְום עָנָן (1:15). The quadruple enumeration of such dim vocabulary of darkness enlisted here is unsurpassed in the Hebrew Bible and cannot fail to catch the reader’s attention and his acknowledgment of it to be highly relevant to understanding. Indeed, this dense language does not disappoint in denoting not only the image of impact, but also a strong theophanic timbre. Significantly, whenever a varying accumulation of this language is used in the Hebrew Bible, the picture thus portrayed almost always seems to have two sides to it: a side of gleam of hope and a side of gloom of hopelessness separated from each other by an impenetrable curtain of clouds (Exod 10:22; 14:20; Deut 4:11; 5:22–23; Isa 5:30; 29:18; 58:10; 59:9; 60:2; Jer 13:16; Ezek 34:12; Amos 5:18–20; Ps 97:2; cf. Ps 139:12. See especially the Sinai theophany).  

The imagery associated with the described approaching army is that of death, disaster, and destruction: A devouring fiery flame is preceding and also pursuing them (לְפָנָיו אָכְלָה אֵש וְאַחֲרָיו תְלַהֵט לֶהָבָה and כְּקוֹל לַהַב אֵש אֹכְלָה קָש in v. 3, 5); it is turning paradisiac places upside down (כְגַן עֵדֶן הָאָרֶץ לְפָנָיו וְאַחֲרָיו מִדְבַּר שְמָמָה in v. 3), it even

Here “an echo can be heard of the ancient account of the locust plague that struck Egypt on Moses’ initiative (Exod 10:15), wattehesak ha’ares, “so the land was dark,” cf. 10:22, hosek- ‘apela, which describes the following plague, darkness). The exact phrase occurs in Zeph 1:15b (yom hosek wa’apela yom anan wa’arapel) and is followed by yom sopar ute’arapé.” Crenshaw, Joel, 119.

Crenshaw, Joel, 119; Duane A. Garrett, Hosea, Joel (NAC 19A; Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman & Holman, 1997), 335.

Ancient theophanic imagery animates this account of YHWH’s army being preceded by fire (cf. Pss 50:3; 97:3). The second of these royal psalms associates divine judgment with images derived from the Sinaitic theophany (darkness and clouds, cf. Deut 4:11–12; 5:22–26; Exod 19:16–18).” Crenshaw, Joel, 120.

The tradition about a delightful garden, gan ʾédén, plays a limited role in the Hebrew Bible. It occurs in Genesis (2:8, 10, 15; 3:23, 4:16), which also mentions a garden of YHWH (13:10), resembling
makes the earth shake (לְפָנָיו רָגְזָה אֶרֶץ in v. 10) and the heavens tremble (רְדַשְׁנֵי השֶׁמיִים in v. 10—a terminological inversion of Isa 13); and even makes the sun, moon and stars, the luminaries of the universe, encapsulate their light (הָלָכוּ יֵשָׁבָה יָשָׁשָׁש [וְרָה שבת] in v. 10). Surviving this time of visitation is stated as impossible or doubtful (גַם פְלֵיטָה לֹא־הָיְתָה לוֹ and מִי יְכִילֶמו in vv. 3, 11). Yet this is not the last word on the topic for there is a glimmer of hope left over which is made apparent in the motif of repentance and the motif of salvation later (vv. 12–17).

The Motif of Fear

The text draws a literary link between the shaking of the people (v. 1) and the shaking of earth, heaven, and the luminaries (v. 10) in light of this incomparable approaching army (רָגָר is used in both verses). The idea is obvious: If the heavens are shaking, how much more humans will be shaking. They will quake (יִרְגְזו כֹל יֹשְֹבֵי in v. 2), they will hear the scary sounds of war wagons (כְּקוֹל מַרְכָּבוֹת in v. 5) and sense the sound of fire and fury (כְּקוֹל לַהַב אֵשׁ אֹכְלָה קָש in v. 5), and will shudder, people’s faces will wax pale (מִפָנָיו יָחִילו עַםִים כָּל־פָנִים קִבְצו פָארּה in v. 6).

The well-watered Egypt. A garden also features prominently in the Song of Songs, where it provides a setting for the lovers. The mythological notion of paradise gains momentum in Ezekiel’s fertile imagination (28:13; 31:9, 16, 18). “Crenshaw, Joel, 120.

10The ideas themselves—earth’s quaking at YHWH’s coming, darkened luminaries, and YHWH’s thunderous shout—are associated with YHWH’s day in the thought of Amos, Jeremiah, Nahum, Zephaniah, and Habakkuk, in varying degrees (cf. Amos 1:1; 8:8–9; 9:1; Jer 10:10; Nah 1:5–6; and Hab 3:6, 10 for earth’s trembling; Amos 5:18–20; Zeph 1:15–16 for emphasis on darkness. But see Hab 3:4, for the opposite notion, the dazzling light accompanying a victorious YHWH). Certain theophanic psalms also emphasize these ideas (e.g., Pss 18:8–10, 13, 16 [7–9, 12, 15] and 77:17, 19 [18, 20], where both verbs, rgz and rṣ occur).” Crenshaw, Joel, 127.
The Motif of War

The motif of war is ubiquitous in the language of the text and becomes obvious in the description of an army in the metaphor of locusts.\(^1\) War cries are to be shouted\(^2\) (נָהִירָה in v. 1); an innumerably large and incomparably lustful army of people\(^3\) is portrayed as awaiting its instructions to start overflowing the land\(^4\) (כָּמַר אַהֲוֹת בּוֹ הָעָמִּים כָּלֵּם נַחַלָּם in v. 2); it is displayed as agile, speedy, and strong\(^5\) (כְּכַרְאֵה סַוסִים וּכְפָרָשִים כֵּן יְרַכְּזִין in v. 4), it seems made up of war wagons\(^6\) (כְּקוֹל מַרְכָּבוֹת in v. 5)—thus the text is adding audial expressions to the abundance of visual imagery.\(^7\)

The approaching army is moreover depicted as vigorous and victorious, waiting to wage war\(^8\) (כִּמְשָׂם הַעָרֵזוּ מָלַקְתָּם הַבּּתֵּן לֹא מְלַמְּדִינֵיהּ in v. 5), they are heroes\(^9\) (כְּגִבֹּרִים in v. 7), humans of war\(^10\) (כְּאָנָשִׁים מִלְחָמָה in v. 7), scaling the walls\(^11\) (יַעֲלוּ חוֹמָה in v. 7), an organized mass\(^12\) (וְאִישׁ בִּדְרָכָיו יֵלֵכִון וְלֹא יְעַבְּתוּ נָפְלַתָם in v. 7), not hindering itself\(^13\) (אִישׁ אָחִיו לֹא יִדְחָקִון in v. 8), they each march their own way\(^14\) (גֶּבֶר בִּמְסִלָתוֹ יֵלֵכִון in v. 8), hit by a weapon they remain unhurt\(^15\) (וְבְעַד הַשֶּׁלַח יִפְּלוּ לֹא יִבְצָעו in v. 8), rushing into the city\(^16\) (בָּעִיר יָשֶׁקו in v. 9), running upon its walls\(^17\) (בַּחוֹמָה יְרַכְּזִין in v. 9), entering into the houses through the windows like a thief\(^18\) (בַּבַּתִּים יַעֲלוּ בְּעַד הַחַלוֹן in v. 9), and cunning as thieves\(^19\) (יָבֹאוּ כְּגַמְבָּה in v. 9).\(^20\)

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\(^1\)Crenshaw, Joel, 117.

\(^2\)Cf. Crenshaw, Joel, 117, 127; Garrett, Hosea, Joel, 343.

\(^3\)Crenshaw, Joel, 121.

\(^4\)“The short, staccato rhythm of this verse enhances the realistic description of locusts invading Jerusalem like foreign soldiers. The comparison of their mode of entering houses invokes yet another source of dread in the ancient world, thieves climbing through the windows essential for natural light.” Crenshaw, Joel, 124–25.
The Motif of Space

The scope of the “Day of YHWH” is no longer limited to Israel or Judah—it shows a much wider scope: The divine Spirit is to be outpoured upon all flesh (מֵעַל־כָל־בָשָׂר in 3:1 [2:28]), not only sons and daughters (בְנוֹיֵיכֶם וּבְנָתֵיכֶם in 3:1 [2:28]), but even male and female servants (עַל־כָל־בָשָׂר in 3:1 [2:28]). There is no longer a differentiation between Jew and non-Jew, but all who call upon the name of YHWH will be saved (יִמָלֵט יְהוָה בְשֵם אֲשֶר־יִקְרָא כֹל in 3:5 [2:32]). However, salvation will outflow exclusively from Jerusalem—not from any other Jewish or non-Jewish location (יִמָלֵט יְהוָה בְשֵם אֲשֶר־יִקְרָא כֹל בֵּי־ירושָלִַם in 3:5 [2:32]).

The Motif of Time

Of all the “Day of YHWH” texts, it is in the Book of Joel that the “Day of YHWH” is portrayed not only as a single historical event, but as an event taking place on multiple occasions throughout history (past, present, and future). This becomes obvious when one views the Book of Joel as a unified whole and investigates its different elements of time. The “Day of YHWH” chronology mentioned in chs. 1–2 cannot be the same as that of chs. 3 (2:28–32) and 4 (3:1–21) because the events in chs. 1–2 occur at a different time than those of chs. 3 (2:28–32) and 4 (3:1–21). See especially the usage of the adverbial construction then ‘afterwards’ in ch. 3:1 (2:28).16

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15The chapter and verse references in brackets or parentheses apply to English translations deviating from the chapter and verse references of the Hebrew Bible.

16It links this section with either 2:12–17 or 2:24–27 and must therefore not be seen as an independent unit. Hans-Walter Wolff, Joel und Amos (BKAT 14/2; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1969), 78; Crenshaw, Joel, 163–64.
Though again no specific time-scale is mentioned in the text, there is an indicator of when the time will be: signs in the sky and on earth (וְנָתַתִי מוֹפְתִים בַשָמַיִם in 3:3 [2:30]), such as blood, fire, and pillars of smoke (דָם וָאֵשֶׁת הָעָם רְאָיָתָה in 3:3 [2:30]), such as the darkening of the sun and the turning of the moon into blood (יִהְיוּ חָלְקֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְיִכְלְלוּ הַמֶּשֶׁךְ in 3:4 [2:31]), which will occur before the great and terrible “Day of YHWH” (יְהוָה הַגָדוֹל וְהַמוֹרָא in 3:4 [2:31]). The differentiation of the description of cosmic signs as a major element of the “Day of YHWH” in Joel 2, 3 (2:28–32), and 4 (3:1–21) seems crucial: This portentous and powerful language, almost reaching apocalyptic overtones, speaks towards an eschatological time setting, but this is so only when it is not used in a metaphoric sense.

The Motif of Blessing

The outpouring of the divine spirit over all, the aged, the young, and the servants, may be viewed as a divine blessing (אֶשְפוֹךְ אֶת־רוּחִי עַל־כָּל־בָשָׂר in Joel 3:1–2 [2:28–29]). This event of divine endorsement will not only signal that they belong to YHWH and are blessed by him, but that his presence will be with his people in a manner unlike ever before (רוּחַ in vv. 1–2). The effect of this endorsement will be that the gift of prophecy will suddenly be shared among all people and no longer be limited to prophets only. They will have the privilege of prophecy, dreams, and visions

17 Whether one entitles this as apocalyptic or eschatological is dependent on one’s definition of the two: Prinsloo, The Theology of the Book, 85–86.

18 “The ancient expression of Moses’s desire that YHWH would endow everyone with prophetic gifts (Num 11:29) and the subsequent promise of a new heart (Jer 31:33–34) and spirit (Ezek 11:19–20; 36:26–27) have prepared the way for Joel’s use of this tradition. The closest text to Joel’s promise of YHWH’s gift of the rūah is Ezek 39:29.” Crenshaw, Joel, 164.
The Motif of Cataclysm

The motif of blessing will be accompanied and affirmed by the manifestation of wonders in heaven and on earth (נָתַתִי מוֹפְתִים בַשָּמַיִם ובָאָרֶץ in 3:3 [2:30]). There will be blood and fire and pillars of smoke (דָם וָאֵש וְתִימֲרוֹת עָשָן in 3:3 [2:30]), which seems to be explained in the next verse: the sun will be turned into darkness (הַשֶּׁמֶש יֵהָפֵךְ לְחֹשֶךְ in 3:4 [2:31]), the moon into blood (הַטָרֶחַ לְדָם in 3:4 [2:31]), which should be understood as crucial cosmic indicators for the closeness of the coming of the great and terrible “Day of YHWH” (לִפְנֵי בוֹא יוֹם יְהוָה הַגָדוֹל וְהַמוֹרָא in 3:4 [2:31]).20 These signs are frequently found in the Hebrew Bible in the context of and in connection to theophany (Gen 15:17; 19:36).

20 H.-W. Wolff sees these signs as indicators of a war or the eruption of a volcano: „Die „Wahrzeichen im Himmel und auf der Erde“ werden in chiasischer Reihenfolge entfaltet, zuerst die auf Erden: „Blut, Feuer, Rauchpilze“ stehen für verblutende Menschen und in Brand aufgehende Städte; also ist an Krieg und vielleicht auch an Vulkanausbruch gedacht.” Wolff, Joel und Amos, 81. Cf. Crenshaw, Joel, 171. “The ‘portents in the sky and on the earth’ are developed in chiasmic sequence. Those on earth are noted first: ‘blood, fire, and mushrooms of smoke’ stand for people bleeding to death, and for cities going up in flames; thus the thought is of war and perhaps also of volcanic eruptions.” Wolff, Joel and Amos, 68. However, there is no indicator in the text why these signs should be understood in a metaphorical or metonymic sense.

The Motif of a Remnant

The utterance כל אֲשֶׁר־יִקְרָא בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה יִםָלֵט כִּי בְּהַר־צִトーּן ובֵיוֹרָלִַם תִּהְיֶה פְּלֵיטָה כַּאֲשֶׁר אָמַר יְהוָה ובַּשְּרִידִים אֲשֶׁר יְהוָה קֹרֵא “All who will call on the name of YHWH will be rescued, for on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there will be rescue, as YHWH has said, and [rescue] among the survivors whom YHWH has summoned” (3:5 [2:32]) seems to imply that despite the offer of rescue to all, those who will be rescued will only be indeed a remnant. In this verse there is an accumulation of vocabulary of redemption and rescue causing one to infer that the “Day of YHWH,” according to the biblical text, must be one of the most decisive events in history.

There are only a few events in biblical history where the idea of rescue in its radicalness is as highlighted as here: מָלֵט is a leitwort in the story of Sodom and Gomorrah in Gen 19, occurring five times (in vv. 17 [2x], 19.20.22); שריד is a leitwort in the story about the long day in Josh 10, occurring seven times (in vv. 20, 28, 30, 33, 37, 39, 40). The rarity of such an accumulation of rescue language also holds true for events portrayed in biblical prophecy (Isa 10:20; Amos 2:14–15; Obad 14, 17, 18).

An additional insightful reading for the crucial subordinate clause ובַּשְּרִידִים אֲשֶׁר יְהוָה קֹרֵא “and among the survivors, whom YHWH calls” (3:5 [2:32]) is suggested by the translators of the German Elberfelder (ELB) Translation, leaving biblical scholars with at least three potential renderings: Either one agrees with NASB interpretations “among the

21Crenshaw, Joel, 167–69.

22Cf. Marvin A. Sweeney, The Twelve Prophets (2 vols; Berit Olam; Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical, 2000), 2:175.
survivors, whom the LORD calls” or with the JPS interpretation “anyone who invokes the LORD will be among the survivors” or with the ELB interpretation “among the survivors is the one whom YHWH calls.” There are several difficulties that each of these translations is struggling with, and it is not easy to decide between them.23

The Motif of Salvation

In this text a motif of salvation is intrinsically linked to the “Day of YHWH” or a time shortly after the “Day of YHWH”: First, a salvific idea is already alluded to by YHWH’s initiative to outpour his spirit over men and women, and slaves (3:1 [2:28]).24 Second, it is implied in the triple usage of the first person with verbs linked with YHWH (3:1–3 [2:28–30]).25 Third, the awesome signs envisaged here are not linked with divine wrath as usual, but with salvation (3:3 [2:30]; clear contrast to ch. 2).26 Fourth, all creatures calling upon the name of YHWH will be saved (3:5 [2:32]). Fifth, there will be rescue on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem (3:5 [2:32]) and those invoking YHWH will be among the survivors on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem (3:5 [2:32]; clear contrast to 2:3). The imagery of survivors meeting on Mount Zion is uncommon in the Hebrew Bible. However, when it does occur it often shows up in linkage with a “Day of YHWH” (Isa 2, Obadiah, Mic 4, etc.).

23 „Der Schluß des Verses ist schwierig.“ Wolff, Joel und Amos, 82. “The conclusion of the verse is difficult.” Wolff, Joel and Amos, 68.


The Motif of Space

This last “Day of YHWH” incidence mentioned in the Book of Joel impacts the people of YHWH as well as all other people leading to the salvation of the former and the judgment of the latter by YHWH taking the side of his own as a divine judge, savior, warrior, and ultimately king (cf. 4:1, 2, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 18, 20, 21 [3:1, 2, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 18, 20, 21]). Though chs. 3 (2:28–32) and 4 (3:1–21) show several terminological and thematic similarities (both delineate the situation before a “Day of YHWH,” both mention its cataclysmic impact, and both underline Jerusalem role as that of a place of salvation), the scene of ch. 3 (2:28–32) seems to be surpassed by that of ch. 4 (3:1–21) in its tenor (a worldwide scenario), the motif of space (the latter having more impact) as well as in the motif of time (the latter apparently occurring later). Thus it seems that ch. 3 (2:28–32) and ch. 4 (3:1–21) are not envisaging one and the same “Day of YHWH.”

The Motif of Time

The “Day of YHWH” texts as outlined in Joel 2, 3 (2:28–32), and 4 (3:1–21) show significant similarities, even though they all seem to speak about separate events of history. The “Day of YHWH” in Joel 2 seems to occur before the day in Joel 3 (2:28–32). The former is about Judah’s doom, whereas the latter is about its salvation, the latter is set later in time by the use of the adverb of time “afterwards” in 3:1 [2:28]), and the day in Joel 3 (2:28–32) seems to occur before the day in Joel 4 (3:1–21), although chs. 3 (2:28–32) and 4 (3:1–21) may refer to one and the same day. It is significant to recognize

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27 The chapter and verse references in brackets or parentheses apply to English translations deviating from the chapter and verse references of the Hebrew Bible.
that only Joel 2 and 3 (2:28–32) are signifying it to be “great and terrible” (2:11; 3:4 [2:31]), while only Joel 2 and 4 (3:1–21) specify that it will be “at hand” or “imminent” (4:14 [3:14], cf. 2:1). Once again the day’s imminence does not help clarify when specifically it will occur on the time line in an absolute sense, but rather it is used as an approximate orientation mark in a relative sense. Yet independently of this, it is significant to note that the time envisaged in Joel 4 is taken to be eschatological time by most exegetes based on the introductory expression אָשִיב אֶת־שְׁבֵּתוֹת, “I will turn their slavery” (4:1 [3:1]).

What truly indicates how imminent the “Day of YHWH” is, is the use of specific indicators that mention what has to happen before this day’s invasion in time. One of these indicators is the cataclysmic motif showing the impossibility of the “Day of YHWH” to occur before these characteristic cosmic signs have manifested themselves. The cataclysmatic motif is used in Joel 2:10, Joel 3:3–4 (2:30–31), and 4:15–16 (3:15–16). This motif is more vividly articulated in ch. 4 (3:1–21) than in chs. 2 and 3 (2:28–32). Joel 2:10 seems to be a metaphor; while Joel 3:3–4 (2:30–31) is non-metaphoric (only seeming to imply the luminaries). Joel 4:15–16 (3:15–16) is not only non-metaphoric, making the luminaries suffer temporary dysfunction, but makes their very environment undergo a most dreadful tremor (v. 16). This, appearing after Joel 2:1–11 and Joel 3:1-5, and if distinct from both, would make Joel 4:14 the last reference to a “Day of YHWH” on the relative time scale as revealed through the Book of Joel, even though there is no remark indicating that it is “great and terrible” as in the others (and as in Mal 3:23).

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The Motif of Blessing

A motif of blessing becomes apparent in three divine promises: first, the divine promise to reverse the captivity of his people (כִּי הִמֵּה בַטָמִים הָהֵםָה ובָעֵת הַהִיא אֲשֶר אָשִיב את־שְבות יְהודָה וִירושָלִָם in 4:1 Qere [3:1]); second, the divine promise to let them know that YHWH is their God living among them in their city, and not simply “any” God (וִידַעְתֶם כִי אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם שֹכֵן בְצִטוֹן הַר־קָדְשִי in 4:17 [3:17]); and third the divine promise to turn them into his consecrated people consisting of true Israelites only (וְהָיְתָה יְירושָלִם קֹדֶש וְזָרִים לֹא־יַעַבְרו־בָה עוֹד in 4:17 [3:17]). Moreover, in that time (כִּי הִמֵּה בַטָמִים הָהֵםָה in 4:18 [3:18]), the mountains are said to drip with sweet wine (יִחְפוּ הֶהָרִים עָסִיס יְרוּשָלָם in 4:18 [3:18])—a metaphoric image of blessing and bounty, the hilltops to overflow with milk (הַגְבָעוֹת תֵלַכְנָה חָלָב in 4:18 [3:18]), the watercourses to overflow with water (כָל־אֲפִיקֵי יְהודָה יֵלְכוּ מָיִם in 4:18 [3:18]), and there will spring forth a stream from the House of YHWH to water the Wadi Shittim (ומַעְיָן מִבֵית יְהוָה יֵצֵא וְהִשְקָה אֶת־נַחַל הַשִחִים in 4:18 [3:18]). Both Judah and Jerusalem will be eternally inhabited (יהודָה לְעוֹלָם תֵשֵב וִירושָלִם לְדוֹר וָדוֹר in 4:20 [3:20]), unlike before their blood will stay unpunished by YHWH, and YHWH himself will indeed live in Zion (לֹא נִקֵיתִי דָמָם נִקֵיתִי לֹא־נִקֵיתִי וַיהוָה שֹכֵן בְצִטוֹן in 4:21 [3:21]; cf. Ezek 48:35; Obad 21; Mic 4:7; Zech 14:16–18).31

30Greenberg, Ezechiel, 1:186.

31Cf. Crenshaw, Joel, 197.
The Motif of Cataclysm

Once more the “Day of YHWH” is linked with a motif of cataclysm consisting of a darkening of sun and moon (שֶמֶש וְיָרֵחַ קָדָרו in Joel 4:15 [3:15]), an eclipse of the stars (כֹּכָבִים אָסְפו נָגְהָם in 4:15 [3:15]), YHWH’s roaring out of Zion and his shouting out of Jerusalem (יהוָה מִצִּトーַן יִשְאָג ומִירושָלִַם יִתֵן קוֹלוֹ in 4:16 [3:16]), and a trembling of heaven and earth (רָעֲשוּ שָמַיִם וָאָרֶץ in 4:16 [3:16]). This imagery is often used in linkage to the “Day of YHWH” (Isa 13:10; Joel 2:10; 3:3–4 [2:30–31]; 4:16 [3:16]).

The Motif of Covenant

The motif of covenant should be more accurately entitled as “The Motif of Exodus” because of several places where the text evokes the language of the exodus of Israel: First, there is the idea of a turnaround from the state of captivity to a state of one chosen by YHWH, leading to the freedom of Israel/Judah (אֶתְכֶם לִי לְעָם וְהָיִיתִי לָכֶם לֵאלֹהִים in Joel 4:1 [3:1]); second, the covenant formula about the cognition of YHWH (וִידַעְתֶם כִי אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם in both texts; cf. Exod 6:7 and Joel 4:17 [3:17]; cf. Exod 16:12; 29:46; Ezek 28:26; 34:30; 39:28); third, in both instances the importance of a mountain as YHWH’s location for the ratification of a covenant including his residing with his covenant people is highlighted (cf. Exod 19 and Joel 4:17 [3:17]); fourth, in both instances a motif of theophany is mentioned involving a shaking of the earth (cf. Exod 19:18 and Joel 4:15–16 [3:15–16]); fifth, in both instances the image of YHWH himself living among his people is portrayed (cf. Exod 25:8, 40 and Joel 4:21 [3:21]).

Yet there are also differences between these two events: The former exodus had a powerful leader in Moses, the second exodus is looking forward to the Messiah, who however is not explicitly mentioned in this text, but may be elsewhere implied in the text.
The Motif of Creation

A paradisial setting is evoked by the use of the motif of paradisial eschatology, which itself alludes back to the origin account: This motif becomes obvious in the mention of mountains oozing with sweet wine (4:18 [3:18]), hills flowing with milk (4:18 [3:18]), the watercourses overflowing with water (4:18 [3:18]), and a stream of life flowing out from the temple mount (4:18 [3:18]) and meandering into the Wadi Shittim (4:18 [3:18])—which also seems to be a theological symbol rather than a topographical location. The intention of the utilization of such imagery is to outline the total transformation awaiting YHWH’s own.

The Motif of Judgment


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32 Term used by Prinsloo, The Theology of the Book, 118.

33 Thus Prinsloo, The Theology of the Book, 118. He agrees with Ernst Sellin, Das Zwölffprophetenbuch (KAT 12; Leipzig: Deichert, 1929), 177.

34 Prinsloo, The Theology of the Book, 118. “Diese Bilder sind entsprungen aus dem Glauben, daß dem allmächtigen Gott alle Wege und Wunder des gesamten Schöpfungsbereichs zur Verfügung stehen; sie sind gleichzeitig die endgültige Offenbarung seiner Wundermacht in Verbindung mit seinem gnädigen Heilswillen und binden so Anfang und Ende der Welt zusammen in dem eindrucksvollen Hymnus auf die Macht der Gnade Gottes.” “These images originate in the belief, that all ways and wonders of the whole creation story are available for use to the almighty God; at the same time they are the ultimate revelation of his miraculous might in linkage with his merciful willingness to save; they bind together the beginning and the end of the world in an impressive hymn about the might of the grace of God.” Artur Weiser, Das Buch der zwölf kleinen Propheten (ATD 24/1; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1967), 126. Quoted in Prinsloo, The Theology of the Book, 118–19.

35 Crenshaw, Joel, 174.
YHWH states to gather all nations together to lead them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat, that is translated as the valley of judgment (קִבַצִתִי אֶת־כָּל־הַגוֹיִם וְהוֹרַדְתִים אֶל־עֵמֶק יְהוֹשָפָט in 4:2 [3:2]). Thus, there is a vertical dimension to the scene, the low position of the valley of judgment (אֶל־עֵמֶק יְהוֹשָפָט in 4:2 [3:2]), into which the nations are led by YHWH is sharply contrasted to the high position of the holy mountain of salvation (בְצִトーּן הַר־קָדְשִי in v. 17) to which Judah has been led by YHWH. Thus the “promise of salvation to God’s people provides the springboard for a judgment of the gôjîm.”

Having been gathered together like into a nutshell, the nations are going to be judged by the divine himself (this idea is implied here by the passivum divinum and by the divine being the last subject in the verse) because of and on behalf of his people who suffered slavery among these (נִשְפַטִי עִםָם שָם עַל־עַםִי וְנַחֲלָתִי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶר פִזְרו in 4:2 [3:2]). YHWH will now cause a turnaround; the former captivity of Judah will become the captivity of the nations, the former miserable fate of Judah will become the miserable fate of the nations—thus Judah will witness divine recompense or retaliation on the nations for what they subjected them to (cf. esp. בְרָאשׁוֹת אָשִיב גְמֳלְכֶם בְרֹאשְכֶם in 4:4 [3:4] and the very similar נַשְׂבֵּת גְמֳלְכֶם בְרֹאשְכֶם in 4:7 [3:7]; cf. also 4:8 [3:8]).

Ironically, not only will there be an exodus of Judah, but also an exodus of the nations; the former will lead to salvation, the latter to judgment (the use of the exodus keyword עליה on both occasions, Exod 33:1 and Joel 4:12 [3:12], is especially intriguing). The valley of Jehoshaphat is not simply the location of the judgment of the nations, but it is the location of the eschatological judgment itself (4:12 [3:12] and also 4:15–16, 20 [3:15–16, 20]). Significantly, the metaphor of the sharp sickle to harvest a boiling

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harvest (שִׁלְחוּ מַגָּל כִּי בָּשַׁלְּקָצִיר in 4:13 [3:13]) and the passionate imperative to come and tread the wine press thoroughly (רָדֵּה אַֽמְלָ֑ה מִן in 4:13 [3:13]) seem to contribute to an even greater overflow of an already overflowing wine press (נֹֽלְכְּהַ֑יְמֶנֶת in 4:13 [3:13]) as an illustration for the extent of wickedness (רֵֽבָּה בְּרָעָתָם in 4:13 [3:13]). This intensity is not frequently found in the Hebrew Bible, and seems to be a unique occurrence in eschatological texts (cf. Isa 63:1–6). Ultimately, this valley is called the valley of decision. It will be the valley of the ultimate executive judgment likely used in the sense of a theological symbol rather than a topographical location, once more evoking the idea of an eschatologically outstanding event, which may be understood as a divine lawsuit against the world (עֵמֶק הֶחָרְצִים in 4:14 [3:14]).


40 The root חָרְצָן also shows up in other texts, which may be viewed as allusions to the “Day of YHWH”: thus in Isa 10:22–23 and 28:22. The former text is envisaging the survival of only a remnant among Israel, which will be spared from the divinely decreed destruction executed by the raging Assyrian army and superpower. The latter text is outlining a divinely decreed destruction to be outpoured over the whole land of Judah, to be executed by allegedly another, here unmentioned, tool of YHWH’s wrath. The expectance of a Messiah in Isa 28:16–17 may enlarge its scope into a more universal scope stunningly similar to that outlined in Dan 9:24–27. Significantly, in the context of both texts the coming of Messiah (the cornerstone may be understood as a metaphor for a leader (see Köhler-Baumgartner and Wildberger BK 10:702)), the implementation of righteousness, a decreed destruction of Jerusalem, as well as an overflow of something, are obviously in view tying both texts together. What is even more intriguing is the linguistic similarity of the term “decision” חָרְצָנֶֽה used in Joel 4:14 and the term ‘moat’ חָרְצָנֶֽה used in Dan 9:25, which, though different in meaning, are derived from the same root ‘to cut, to determine, to carve’ חָרְצָן (I) according to Köhler-Baumgartner and therefore may be semantically related. Even stronger is the relation between Joel 4:14 and Dan 9:26–27, where again the same term חָרְצָן derived from the same root חָרְצָן (I) is used twice, this time, however, exactly in the same semantical sense. Both texts use the term twice (Joel 4:14 [2x]; Dan 9:26, 27). Both texts are talking about determined destruction, about the destruction that is to come over Jerusalem (Dan 9:26), and about the destruction, that is to come over the destructor of Jerusalem (Dan 9:27; Joel 4:14). It is specifically Dan 9:27 which seems to have strong
The Motif of Salvation

While initially there is no technical vocabulary that would indicate it, the opening verses of Joel 4 indeed incorporate a divine speech (see 4:8 [3:8]: כִי יְהוָה דִּבֵּר — “for YHWH speaks”), which make a motif of salvation most obvious to its hearers, who recognize that it is not the prophet but YHWH himself who is powerfully promising his people their salvation and security (the promise is in 4:1 [3:1] and 4:8 [3:8]). That these introductory verses definitely show a divine person speaking on behalf of his own people is proven on the one hand by the frequent use of the first person as a subject (7 times: אָשִיב, קִבַצְתִי, הוֹרַדְתִי, נִשְפַטְתִי, אָשִיב, הֲשִבֹתִי, מָכַרְתִי in 4:1–8 [3:1–8]), and, on the other, by the frequent use of the first-person possessive pronoun (7 times: עַםִי, נַחֲלָתִי, אַרְצִי and עַםִי, כַסְפִי, זְהָבִי, מַחֲמַדַי in 4:1–8 [3:1–8]), which in the ultimate sense may only be imputed to YHWH as implicitly suggested by the use of ‘divine heptads’ above and as irrefutably shown by 4:16 [3:16] (וַיהוָה מַחֲסֶה לְעַםוֹ ומָעוֹז לִבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל — “but YHWH will be a refuge for his people and a stronghold to the Israelites”).

Moreover, YHWH is not only displayed as speaking on behalf of his own, but he is even intervening on behalf of his own.41 The text states that he will roar from Zion (יהוָה מִצִּטוֹן יִשְאָג in 4:16 [3:16]; cf. Amos 1:2) and shout out loud from Jerusalem (וֹמִיירָשָׁם יִתֵן קוֹל in Joel 4:16 [3:16]; Amos 1:2) against the other people, so that even heaven and earth will tremble (רָעֲשו שָמַיִם וָאָרֶץ in Joel 4:16 [3:16]), but to his own people he will be a refuge (וֹוַיהוָה מַחֲסֶה לְעַם in 4:16 [3:16]), even a stronghold for the eschatological connotations and thus critical implications for the relationship of Joel 4:14 and Dan 9:27, not lastly because of its tight bond with Dan 11:36 (where the term appears one more time). Might this imply that the Daniel texts are also talking about a “Day of YHWH”?

Israelites (מָאוֹז לִבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל in 4:16 [3:16]). Whereas earlier the divine shouting was directed against his people (יָדָיוֹן קְרֵאָה in 2:11), it is now uttered in favor of his other people (ניִירָארֵי לֹא קְרֵאָה in 4:16 [3:16]). Whereas earlier heaven and earth were said to be shaking because YHWH was fighting against his people (רָגָן שָמַיִם וָאָרֶץ in 2:10), they are said to be shaking because YHWH is fighting for his people (רָגָן שָמַיִם וָאָרֶץ in 4:16 [3:16]), in order to perfect the turnaround as promised in the beginning of this text (4:1 [3:1]). This implies judgment of their opponents, but salvation for the formerly oppressed—the divine city has a dual purpose: “on the one hand it is the seat from which Yahweh avenges his wrath on the nations, on the other it is a place of security and salvation for his people by virtue of being his abode.”

Significantly is the stylistic interplay between heaven and earth in 4:15–17 [3:15–17] which form a formidable unit in the Hebrew text: First, there is the darkening of the luminaries affecting the heavens (שֶמֶש וְיָרֵחַ אָסְפו נָגָהם in 4:15 [3:15]), followed by the roaring and shouting of YHWH, which apparently affects the whole earth (וֹוֹוֹה מִצִּיטֶן יִשְאָג ומִירושָלִַם יִתֵן קוֹל in 4:16 [3:16]); second, there is the trembling of heaven and earth suddenly influencing both spheres (וְרָעֲשו שָמַיִם וָאָרֶץ in 4:16 [3:16]), followed by refuge and stronghold, which apparently affect the earth (וּוֹוֹה מַחַּסֶה לְעַם וֹמָאוֹז לִבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל in 4:16 [3:16]); third, there is a ‘heavenly enlightening’ of people’s understanding resulting in a true recognition of YHWH dwelling on his earthly holy mount (וְזָרִים לֹא יִעַבְרֵי בָה עוֹד וְהָיְתָה יְירושָלִַם קֹדֶש in 4:17 [3:17]), leading to the holiness of its town (וְזָרִים לֹא יִעַבְרֵי בָה עוֹד in 4:17 [3:17]). This macrostructure may be seen as staircase parallelism (4:15–17 [3:15–17]) stressing its highest and last unit (4:17 [3:17]), which is the recognition of YHWH’s holiness leading

42Prinsloo, The Theology of the Book, 112 (emphases are his).
to the holiness of his people by their purification from all enemies, impurities, and sins (4:17 [3:17]).

Once more J. Kugel’s explanation of the Hebrew parallelistic verse pattern as a stylistic device of *sharpness* seems to hold true, although it seems somewhat adapted to these verses’ particular structure: 4:15 [3:15] about the subtraction of light and 4:17 [3:17] about the metaphorical “shedding of light” build an inclusio with 4:16 [3:16]. The five poetic lines of 4:16 [3:16] form an internal chiasm. The first couplet (“YHWH roars from Zion”//“His voice shouts from Jerusalem”) places more emphasis on the first line: יִשְאָג “roaring” vs. וֹיִתֵן קוֹל “shouting” and מִצִּטוֹן “Zion” vs. מִירושָלִַם “Jerusalem.” The last couplet (“YHWH is a refuge for his people”//“A stronghold for Israel”) places more weight on the last line: מָעוֹז “stronghold” vs. מַחֲסֶה “refuge” and לִבְנֵי יִשָּרְאֵל “Israelites” vs. וֹלְעַם “people.” The center of the chiasm is רָעֲשו שָמַיִם וָאָרֶץ “the heavens and earth will shake.” Thus an internal microstructure is shaped within the larger macrostructure.

The Motif of War

The *Gattung* of this text is a “Aufforderung zum Kampf”. This gathering of all the nations by YHWH into the valley of Jehoshaphat is a military gathering in order to wage war against them (וְקִבַצְתִי אֶת־כָּל־הַגוֹיִם וְהוֹרַדְתִים אֶל־עֵמֶק יְהוֹשָפָט “he will gather all nations and lead them down to the valley of Jehoshaphat” in v. 2). This line of argumentation is especially supported by the imperative of v. 9: קִרְאו־זֹאת בַגוֹיִם קַדְשו מִילְחָמָה הָעִיר הַגִיבוֹרִים יִגְשו יַעֲלו כֹל אַנְשֵי הַמְּלָכָה “Proclaim this among the nations: consecrate yourselves for war, arouse you warriors, let all the men of war come and come...

near.” Moreover, the plowshares shall be hammered into swords (כל החנית בחרבות in v. 10), pruning hooks into spears (וְמַזְמְרֹת לִרְמָחִים in v. 10), and the weak man shall say ‘I am strong’ (הַחַלָש יֹאמַר גִבוֹר אָנִי in v. 10). In vv. 13–14 the idea of war is visualized in the imagery of reaping and summoning.

This scenario is the exact inversion of the one detailed and displayed in Isa 2:1–5 (וַחֲנִיתוֹתֵיהֶם לְמַזְמֵרוֹת וְכִתְתו חַרְבוֹתָם לְאִתִים in v. 4). Yet here the instruction is more extended: “Hasten and come all you nations from all around and gather there, there lead down your warriors, YHWH” (Joel 4:11 [3:11]). There will be multitudes upon multitudes (of armies) in the valley of decision and YHWH himself and his time will be at hand in the valley of decision—to wage war (הֲמוֹנִים הֲמוֹנִים בְּעֵמֶק הֶחָרָעָן כִּי קָרוֹב in 4:14 [3:14]).

Amos 5:18–20

The Motif of Space

The “Day of YHWH” as envisaged in the Book of Amos is directed against Israel as memorably and morbidly displayed in the imagery of a prophetic dirge about the situation of his own people (cf. 4:1, 2, 3, 4, 25). The divine word is specifically disturbed

44 „Vom Geschrei beim Keltertreten (Jes 16,10; Jer 25,30; 48,33; 51,14) ist in der Topik der Völkerkampfschilderungen der Weg nicht weit zum Getöse des Schlachtengewühls (vgl. 1 Kô 20 13. 28), das auch in den Jahwe-Tag-Schilderungen oft wiederkehrt: . . . Jes 13,4; Ez 7,11–13; 30, 4.10.15; vgl. Ez 39, 11.15. “ Wolff, Joel and Amos, 97. “In the thematic portrayal of the battles of the nations, the scene easily shifts from the shouting that accompanies the treading of the grapes in the press to the tumult of the battle itself (cf. 1 Kgs 20:13, 28), a motif which also recurs frequently in the descriptions of the Day of Yahweh.” Wolff, Joel and Amos, 81.

45 “This verse introduces a note of grim irony, although hidden momentarily. It reverses the utopian vision of a time when everyone can relax at home without fear of invasion from soldiers (Isa 2:2–4; Mic 4:1–4). Every conceivable weapon will be forged from whatever implement is available, even agricultural tools like the iron tip of a wooden plow and the cutting device used in vineyards.” Crenshaw, Joel, 188–89.

about the lack of true worship and therefore targets the locations of false worship—Bethel, Gilgal, and Beersheba (vv. 5–6). In the text, true worship is linked with life; false worship, however, with death (vv. 4, 6, 14).

The Motif of Time

There is no specification of time in the text, but the description of the situation implies that the shocking disaster is at hand. Obviously, the prophet portrays the disastrous outcome of his own people’s perverse way. He sees what has not yet happened, but what will shortly become reality unless repentance leads to a turnaround. The prophet’s call to his people to commit themselves to YHWH is expressed by several imperatives showing the imminence of the dreadful scenario impending on them (vv. 1, 4, 6, 14, 15). The present time is labeled as an evil time by the prophet (v. 13), and the people are alerted to the fact that the persistence of evil will lead to the absence of YHWH (v. 14). Averting the approaching tragedy will not be possible. The people have to decide whether they want to experience the time of tragedy with or without their merciful savior YHWH, which is dependent on whether they choose to commit themselves to him and turn away from their wicked ways or not (v. 15).

The Motif of Cataclysm

The expectation of the people for peace to be brought by the “Day of YHWH” is dramatically inversed in a prophetic point: נָּחַ֖יוֹדְתָּם אֱלֹהֵי יְהוָ֣ה לֵ֑בֶן יְהוָ֖ה הוא—חֹשֶׁךְ וְלֹא־אוֹר׃ —Woe unto you, who desire the “Day of YHWH” ⁴⁷—what shall it be

⁴⁷ „Das Wehe zeigt diejenigen auf lebensgefährlichen Abwegen, die sich den Tag Jahwes ebenso gierig herbeiwünschen, wie Hungrige nach Speise (Nu 11,34), Durstige nach Wasser (2 S 23,15) und Gierige nach Leckerbissen verlangen (Prv 23,3,6). In allen Fällen steht הָギャ htpw. Wolff, Joel und Amos, 299, “The ‘woe’ depicts as being embarked on a perilous byway those who as eagerly wish for the Day of Yahweh to come as hungry persons crave for food (Nu 11:34), thirsty ones water (2 Sam 23:15) and greedy
for you?—the “Day of YHWH” will be darkness and not light” (v. 18). This verse (v. 18) forms a formidable inclusio with the last verse of the section (v. 20): הֲלֹא־חֹשֶךְ יוֹם יְהוָה וְלֹא־אוֹר וְאָפֵל וְלֹא־נֹגַה לוֹ׃ “Will the ‘Day of YHWH’ not be darkness, rather than light, not darkest gloom, rather than any dazzling glimmer?” (thus v. 20).48

The curse of v. 19 stands in the center of the inclusio highlighting the inevitableness, intensity, and impact of this day of destiny by means of a triple image of misfortune: A man is depicted as fleeing from a lion only to encounter a bear, escapes into a house only to be bitten by a snake: כַאֲשֶר יָנוס אִיש מִפְנֵי הָאֲרִי ופְגָעוֹ הַדֹב ובָא הַבַיִת וְסָמַך יָדוֹ עַל־הַקִיר ונְשָכוֹ הַמָחָש. The message is crystal clear: The impact of the “Day of YHWH” seems inevitable and irremediable.49 Its essence and imagery show similarity to the curse of Isa 24:21–22, where another triple image of misfortune is used.

48 „Finsternis und Dunkel sind die Chiffren tödlichen Verderbens, gehören zum Traditionsgut des heiligen Krieges und bleiben es seit Amos für den Jahwetag (vgl. Zeph 1,15; Jes 13,10; Jl 2,2; 3,4). . . . Bei ihm selbst mag die Schärfe der Antithese und dabei das Gegensatzpaar Finsternis-Licht der weisheitlichen Tradition entstanden (vgl. Jes 5,20), aber mindestens ננגה scheint besonders stark in solchen Texten verwurzelt zu sein, die Jahwes Epiphanie zur Rettung vor den Feinden besingen (Jes 9,1; Ps 18,13,29; Hab 3,4,11; Jes 13,10).“ Wolff, Joel and Amos, 302. “Darkness and gloom are code words for fatal devastation; they belong to the traditional material of holy war and, from the time of Amos on, remain part of the concept of the Day of Yahweh. Amos himself may have derived the practice of using a sharp antithesis, and thereby the contrast between darkness and light, from the wisdom tradition (cf. Is 2:20 [sic]). On the other hand, at least the term ‘gleam, brightness’ (ננֵגַה) seems to be rooted especially strongly in those texts which sing about Yahweh’s epiphany to effect deliverance from enemies.” Wolff, Joel and Amos, 256–57. Cf. Shalom M. Paul, Amos (Hermeneia; Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress, 1991), 185.

49 „Die Erzählung berichtet knapp einen Fluchtweg. Die Kette der perff. conss. und die einmalige Nennung des אִיש sprechen eindeutig dafür, daß es sich nicht um zwei Erzählungen handelt (der vor dem Löwen Fliehende wird vom Bären gestellt, der ins Haus Flüchtende wird von der Schlange gebissen, so BrSynt § 41k), sondern um eine einzige (so Joüon, Gr. § 119q). Sie besagt: Einer, der vor einem Löwen fliehen muß, sieht sich plötzlich einem Bären gegenüber, dem mindestens ebenso gefährlichen Tier (vielleicht liegt sogar eine kleine Steigerung vor, vgl. Hos 13,7f.). Aber auch dieser Lebensbedrohung kann er entrinnen und isch soagr in ein Haus retten. Dort stützt er seine Hand an die Wand, ebenso erschöpft wie beruhigt; da beißt ihn die nicht wahrgenommene Schlange. Offenbar ist an tödliche Folge gedacht. Die Schlange ist ja im Alten Testament der Todfeind des Menschen (Gen 3,15; Nu 21,6; Jer 8,17).“ Wolff, Joel und Amos, 301. “The simile is a brief tale about someone trying to flee. The chain of consecutive perfects
The Motif of Space

The “Day of YHWH” as anticipated in the Book of Obadiah is initially specifically levelled at Edom (cf. vv. 1 [2x], 6, 8, 9; cf. Num 24), but ultimately universally targeted at all nations (cf. Obad 15, 16)—never, however, at Israel or Judah. The past “Day of YHWH” as a day of doom for Judah but of triumph for the nations is outlined as passé (cf. vv. 11–14); instead, the reverse is now true. The prospective “Day of YHWH” as a day of salvation for Judah but doom for the nations is outlined as pending (cf. vv. 17, 18). This latter situation will lead to the divine kingship of YHWH over his own (v. 21).

The Motif of Time

It has become obvious that besides the Book of Joel, the Book of Obadiah is a biblical book intensively devoted to the “Day of YHWH,” which likely does not outline one single event of history, but multiple events of history. Initially the “Day of YHWH” is directed against the people of YHWH, but ultimately, in an inversion, against all peoples. Their destiny is thus turned around: Initially the “Day of YHWH” is an event of doom for the people of YHWH, but of triumph of the other peoples; however, ultimately it is an event of salvation for the people of YHWH, but a dooming verdict against the other peoples. Significantly, both the day or event of doom for the people of

and the single reference to ‘someone’ (אִישׁ, literally ‘a man’) speak unequivocally in favor of there being here one single story. This little story tells of someone who, in having to flee from a lion, suddenly finds himself confronted by a bear, an animal at least as dangerous as a lion. However, the one pursued is able to escape this threat to his life as well, even managing to flee into a house. There he leans his hand against the wall, as much from exhaustion as from relief, only to have an unnoticed snake bite him. The story obviously implies that the outcome was fatal. Indeed, in the Old Testament the serpent is the deadly enemy of man.” Wolff, Joel and Amos, 255–56.

YHWH, and the day or event of salvation for the people of YHWH are described as being קָרוֹב “at hand,” “as imminent,” “as impending” (קָרוֹב in the day of doom in Joel 1:15; 2:1; cf. Zeph 1:7, 14 and קָרוֹב in the day of salvation in Obad 15), though the former occurs before the latter on the time scale. Thus it is once more obvious that these texts are not about absolute, but relative time.

The Motif of Blessing

When the “Day of YHWH” turns against all nations as it initially turned against Israel and Judah (vv. 11–14 and כִּי־קָרוֹב יוֹם־יְהוָה עַל־כָּל־הַגוֹיִם in v. 15), Jacob and Joseph, symbolizing the southern kingdom (vv. 17–18), will be spared and conversely experience a divine blessing. The Hebrew text in v. 17 may be understood in two ways, which, however, apparently do not alter its meaning, but only its outlook: וְיָרְשוּ בֵית יַעֲקֹב אֵת מָורָשֵיהֶם. First, מָורָשֵיהֶם may be understood as a verb; if read as a verb it is the defective or shortened Hifil participle form of מִשְׂיֵהֶם מָורִישֵיהֶם, which is supported by some Wadi Murabbat manuscripts (see BHS apparatus criticus). This interpretation is utilized by BHS (see BHS apparatus criticus), Köhler-Baumgartner51, and JPS that read “They will dispossess those who dispossessed them.” Second, מָורָשֵיהֶם may be understood as a noun, which is supported by the Codex Leningradensis and the majority of other Hebrew manuscripts (see BHS apparatus criticus). This interpretation is utilized by NASB, NIV, and NKJV that read “They will possess their possessions.” The former perspective (the verbal translation) would primarily highlight the judgment against the other people; the latter perspective (the substantival translation) would primarily highlight the blessing of one’s own people. Yet the outlook would be the same: a transfer

51HALOT 2:561.
of goods from one party to another party through an act of YHWH. The reading of the
MT can be supported on reasonable grounds and it therefore does not have to be altered.52

The idea of YHWH’s people taking into possession property of foreign peoples is
elaborated on in vv. 19–20: They are to inherit from the Edomites, Mount Esau (אֶת־הַר
עֵשָׂו); from the Philistines (אֶת־פְלִשְׁתִים); from Ephraim, the fields of Ephraim (אֶת־שְׂדֵה
אֶפְרַיִם); from Samaria, the fields of Samaria (אֶת־שְׂדֵה שֹמְרוֹן); and from Gilead
(אֶת־הַגִלְעָד). Ultimately, even the exiled forces of the children of Israel will inherit from
the Canaanites (וְגָלָת הַחֵל־הַזֶה לִבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶר־כְנַעֲנִים עַד־צָרְפַת), and the exiled of
Jerusalem will inherit from the South (וְגָלֹת יְרושָלִם אֲשֶר בִּסְפָרַד יִרְשָׁאָל אֵת עָרֵי הַמֶגֶב). The
scene envisaged here is viewed as a direct result of the “Day of YHWH,” which brings
reconciliation. Exiled Israel and Judah will not only experience the divine blessing again,
but also, in an implied sense, their reunification under the supremacy of king YHWH
(ֲהָיְתָה לַיהוָה הָםְלוכָה) in v. 21.53

This crucial concept of divine kingship on behalf of Israel and Judah is so
ubiquitous in the Hebrew Bible that a whole web of texts is intertwined with it. Among
all these texts may be stronger or weaker allusions and aspirations to the “Day of
YHWH” when YHWH will appear as Israel’s and Judah’s savior. This event is to occur
after the “Day of YHWH” in which YHWH appeared as Israel’s and Judah’s opponent
Mic 4:7–8; Zeph 3:15; Zech 9:9; 14:9, 16:17; cf. also Mal 1:14 in connection with Mal
3:1–5 and 3:19–24 [BHS]). Moreover, what these texts demonstrate is the close
connection between the “Day of YHWH” theme with the creation of a new covenant as

52 Johann Renkema, Obadiah (HCOT; Leuven: Peeters, 2003), 201–03.

53 Renkema, Obadiah, 205–20.
visualized in Jer 31:31–40. Thus it may be stated that the judicial “Day of YHWH” happens because the divine-human covenant has been broken by the human side. However, the salvific “Day of YHWH” happens in order to reestablish this covenant by initiative of the divine side.

Yet, it must be kept in mind that this differentiation of several aspects within the “Day of YHWH” theme is somewhat artificial, because there are uncertainties involved. These may influence the outcome of the “Day of YHWH” not only to an individual degree, but even to a more or less universal degree. This must be explicated a bit more: The biblical “Day of YHWH” teaching seems to instruct men and women alike to rethink and restart their relationship with YHWH in order to experience its inevitable event as a blessing, in harmony with the divine will and not in opposition to it. The prophetic teaching has great impact and intensity because people have to make their decision to reinitiate this relationship before the dawn of this day of decision and not during it or even after it. Ultimately, what the prophetic teaching has in mind is not a limited scope of warning, but a world-wide scale as is obvious in the message of Obadiah where the “Day of YHWH” is entitled as a day against all nations (כִי־קָרוֹב יוֹם־יְהוָה עַל־כָּל־הַגוֹיִם in v. 15; cf. Zech 14:1–21).

The Motif of Judgment

The “Day of YHWH” in Obadiah’s view will be a time of recompense or retaliation, when YHWH will deal with the nations according to their deeds (כִּאָשֶׂר עָשִׂיתָ יֵעָשֶׂה לָךְ גְּמֻלְךָ יֵשָׁב בְּרוֹאשֶׁךָ “As you have done, so it shall be done unto you, I will return your requital on your own head” in Obad 15). It is true that the addressee is in the singular, but the introductory line of this verse and the next verse is ample evidence that
what is encompassed here is of universal scope including not only one nation, but all nations (כִי־קָרוֹב יוֹם־יְהוָה עַל־כָּל־הַגוֹיִם in v. 15; cf. v. 16).

The idea of retribution does not sound strange at all to a hearer acquainted with the message of the Twelve since it already appeared in another “Day of YHWH” section (ַסְתָּה שַׁלָּחֵי בְּרֹאשְׁכֶם בְּרֹאשְׁכֶם in Joel 4:4 [3:4]) and in Joel 4:7 [3:7]. Though this terminology is indeed unique to the three above “Day of YHWH” texts, the biblical idea of retaliation does not stem from the Prophets, but from the Torah (see the lex talionis texts Exod 21:23–25; Lev 24:19–20; and esp. וַעֲשִׂיתֶם לוֹ כַאֲשֶׁר זָמַם לַעֲשׂוֹת לְאָחִיו in Deut 19:16–21; quoting from v. 19).

The imagery of the drinking of the divine cup as employed in the Hebrew Bible is an imagery with antipathetic associations to illustrate the outpouring of YHWH’s wrath either over his own people or over foreign people (cf. Isa 51:17–23; Jer 25:15–17, 28; 49:12; 51:7; Ezek 23:31–33; Lam 4:21–22). The severity of the image in Obadiah is expressed in the threefold statement of “drinking” (שתה), which leads to the extinction of its “drinker” (כָּל־הַגוֹיִם) as a radical result. This idea is expressed in a marvelous wordplay in the Hebrew text: והיו כְּלוֹא הָיו (v. 16). The reference to הַר קָדְשִי “my holy mountain” is not a reference to Mount Sinai, but usually to Mount Zion (Isa 11:9; 56:7; 57:13; 65:11, 25; 66:20; Ezek 20:40; Pss 2:6; 48:2; 99:9; Dan 9:16). However, it may also allude to YHWH’s heavenly mountain as his abode (mostly so in the Psalms: 3:5; 15:1; 43:3) and is used several times in “Day of YHWH” texts (Joel 2:1; 4:17; Obad 16; Zeph 3:11).54

Sometimes a motif of fire is linked with the “Day of YHWH texts (e.g., Ezek 30:8, 14, 16; Lam 1:13; 2:3, 4; Joel 2:3, 5; 3:3; Obad 18; Zeph 1:18; 3:8; Mal 3:19–24; cf. also Isa 26:11; Mal 3:2). This image most often should be understood metaphorically:

“He sent fire down into my bones” (שָלַח־אֵש בְעַצְמֹתַי in Lam 1:13); “he devoured like flaming fire” (כְאֵש לֶהָבָה אָכְלָה in Lam 2:3); “he poured out his wrath like fire” (ךְשָפַכְאֵש חֲמָתוֹ in Lam 2:4); “before them is consuming fire, after them is devouring fire” (לְפָנָיו אָכְלָה וְאַחֲרָיו תְלַהֵט לֶהָבָה in Joel 2:3); “a noise like consuming fire” (כְקוֹל לַהַב אֹכְלָה in Joel 2:5); “the house of Jacob and the house of Joseph will be fire” (וְהָיָה בֵית־יַעֲקֹב אֵש ובֵית יוֹסֵף לֶהָבָה in Obad 18); “the fire of his passion” (ובְאֵש קִנְאָתוֹ in Zeph 1:18); “the fire of my passion will eat the whole earth” (בְאֵש קִנְאָתִי תֵאָכֵל כָל־הָאָרֶץ in Zeph 3:8); “he is like a smelter’s fire” (כְאֵש מְצָרֵף in Mal 3:2). The house of Esau, however, will be straw and burnt up by Jacob and Joseph (וְהָיְתָה לַיהוָה הַםְלוכָה in v. 21), so that nothing will be left over. This leads to its nullification (ולא־יִהְיֶה שָׂרִי לְבֵית in Obad 18), signifying a total fulfillment of the divine verdict.

The judgment of Esau will not only be a divine activity, but, at least to some degree, also a human activity in the sense that YHWH will hand over some of his judicial authority to his own people to let them be members of the judgment (וְעָלוּ מֹשִעִים בְּהַר צִּיטְוִן לִשְפֹט אֶת־הַר עֵשָׂו וְהָיְתָה לַיהוָה הַםְלוכָה in v. 21). This privilege of partaking in the divine verdict, however, is not granted to the people in general, but to some people in specific, that is, a subgroup of those who are entitled as מֹשִעִים “saviors” and will execute the divine verdict on the holy mountain (וְעָלוּ מֹשִעִים בְּהַר צִּיטְוִן מִשְפָּט אֶת־הַר עֵשָׂו וְהָיְתָה לַיהוָה הַםְלוכָה in v. 21). This does not mean that these saviors are to be understood as the Savior, which becomes obvious when one sees how the biblical writer details that they have to walk up the mountain (וְעָלוּ מֹשִעִים בְּהַר צִּיטְוִן in v. 21) on which YHWH is
king to show that they are totally dependent on him. This handing over of some of YHWH’s power to his people does not limit his own authority, but to the contrary only underlines his authority, which will then be made manifest in his ultimate kingship (יהוהighthouse יִהְיֶה לְיָדָו in v. 21). To my knowledge this idea of merged divine-human judgment is unique to the Book of Obadiah.55

The Motif of Salvation

There is a dichotomy in Obadiah between the judgment against Esau on the one hand and the salvation in Judah on the other (cf. esp. vv. 15–17). Ironically, the loss of Mount Esau and the victory of Mount Zion are juxtaposed to each other (esp. v. 21), demonstrating the importance of the mountain motif in the Hebrew Bible (cf. in the “Day of YHWH” texts in Isa 2:14; 13:2, 4; Ezek 7:7, 16; Joel 2:1, 2.5; 3:5; 4:17, 18; Obad 16, 17, 19, 21; Zeph 3:11; Zech 14:4, 5; and in the “Day of YHWH” allusions: Isa 24:23; 25:6, 7, 10; 27:13; 34:3; Ezek 39:2, 4, 17; Amos 9:13; Mic 4:7). On Mount Zion there will be פְלֵיטָה ―escape,‖ “rescue” or “rescued ones,” or “survivors” (בְהַר צִטוֹן תִּהְיֶה פְלֵיטָה in Obad 17). Whether this term is to be understood in the abstract or concrete sense here seems initially unclear.56

Independently from these thoughts, the term shows up in other “Day of YHWH” texts, where it is usually linked with the idea of deliverance from an army (cf. Gen 32:8; Jer 50:29; Joel 2:3; Obad 17; Dan 11:42), or a disaster (Gen 45:7; Exod 10:5; Isa 10:20; Joel 3:5). It may be used in a negative sense (“no rescue” in Gen 32:8; Exod 10:5; Jer 50:29; Joel 2:3; Dan 11:42) or a positive sense (“rescue” in Gen 45:7; Isa 10:20; Joel 3:5; 55Cf. Renkema, Obadiah, 215–19.

56Renkema, Obadiah, 198–201.
Obad 17). Due to its military denotation it primarily bears the meaning of physical rescue (cf. Gen 32:8; 45:7; Exod 10:5; Isa 10:20; Joel 3:5; Obad 17) and only secondarily a meaning of theological rescue in the sense of salvation, which, however, may not be excluded from its semantic range (this idea seems to be included in the holiness concept of Obadiah as I will later explain).

Significantly, there is a close parallel between Joel 3:5 and Obad 17 in the promise that there will be rescue on Mount Zion, as has been observed by many exegetes. Joel has the slightly longer version in adding Jerusalem as apposition to Mount Zion, which is missing in Obadiah (cf. Joel: בְהַר צִトーֹן וּבִירושָלִַם תִהְיֶה פְלֵיטָה and Obadiah: בְהַר צִトーֹן תִהְיֶה פְלֵיטָה). Joel, however, is stating that he is referring to something well-known (Joel: כַאֲשֶר אָמַר יְהוָה), a remark that is totally missing in Obadiah, which perhaps makes him Joel’s Vorlage, but not necessarily so. Moreover, Joel mentions that there will not only be rescue on Mount Zion, but also among the survivors summoned by YHWH (Joel: ובַשְרִידִים אֲשֶר יְהוָה קֹרֵא), an idea that is again totally missing in Obadiah. On the other hand Obadiah mentions the concept of holiness in connection with the rescue on Mount Zion while this idea seems to be missing in Joel (שָׁמַיִם פְלֵיטָה וְהָיָה קֹדֶש).

The idea that Mount Zion will be holy due to the preeminence and presence of YHWH dwelling on its top is significant and unique to Obadiah as shown (שָׁמַיִם פְלֵיטָה וְהָיָה קֹדֶש in v. 17), though mentioned elsewhere in “Day of YHWH” texts (Joel 2:1; 4:17; Obad 16–17) and “Day of YHWH” allusions (Isa 27:13; Zeph 3:11; Zech 2:16–17). In the majority of these texts, however, Mount Zion is already described as holy (Joel 2:1; Obad 16; Isa 27:13), whereas the idea that Mount Zion will become holy in the sense of changing its status is unique to Obadiah.
in Obad 17). This latter idea is elsewhere only implied in the sense of the holiness of the city on the crest of the mountain (קדש ירושלם ככני in Joel 4:17).

The concept of holiness in the Hebrew Bible is closely connected to the idea of a wall against sin (cf. Exod 3:5; 15:11, 13; 22:30; Lev 20:3, etc.; Isa 35:8; 52:1; 58:13; Ezek 20:39–40; 22:26) as well as a purification from sin (cf. Exod 29:31–37; 30:10; Lev 16:16, 21; 30–34; etc.; Ezek 36:25–27). It seems that the concept of holiness linked with the idea of rescue in Obadiah implies salvation. That the text is indeed saturated with salvation language is supported by the mention of the term מושיעים “saviors” used for the saviors who are going up to the divine mountain. This word’s stem is often used in the canon of the Hebrew Bible to convey an idea of salvation (in “Day of YHWH” texts in Isa 61:11; 63:1; Jer 30:7, 10.11; 46:27; in “Day of YHWH” allusions in Isa 25:9; 26:1; Hab 3:13, 18; Zeph 3:17, 19).

Zephaniah 1:1–18

The Motif of Space

The “Day of YHWH” as depicted in the Book of Zephaniah as a day of doom (vv. 7, 14) is targeted at Judah and Jerusalem (cf. vv. 1, 4, 12), specifically its idolatry, treachery, and unfaithfulness (cf. vv. 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 12). Ironically, though the Book of Joel as well as the Book of Zephaniah mention a day of doom for Judah, the former invites the victims to shout out loud (Joel 2:1), whereas the latter summons the victims to be silent (Zeph 1:7). This, however, does not exclude the fact that both are talking about one and the same day because the shouting is directed against humans as an alarm (cf. Joel 2:1), whereas the silence is directed towards YHWH as to engage in serious soul-


searching (cf. Hab 2:20). Yet, if the Book of Joel and the Book of Zephaniah are indeed describing one and the same imminent event, the latter even more intensively emphasizes this imminence (‘The great ‘Day of YHWH’ is at hand, is approaching most swiftly’ in Zeph 1:14).

**The Motif of Time**

Among all the texts talking about the imminence of the “Day of YHWH” (Isa 13:6; Joel 1:15; 2:1; Obad 15; Zeph 1:7; 1:14), Zeph 1:14 is the one that highlights it in the strongest language. As with the other texts, the mentioned time element is indeed unspecific; it is not to be understood as being placed in an absolute position, but in a relative position on the time scale. This tool seems to be utilized in order to highlight the importance of the preparation of the people for the imminent event, which in light of its impending proximity leaves no space for an attitude of laziness, lukewarmness, or lethargy towards it.

**The Motif of Cataclysm**

The “Day of YHWH” will be a day of utmost darkness, as expressed through the quadruple mentioning of words belonging to the semantic field of darkness envisaging a day of disaster (‘ם חותך ותהל יום הנום’ in v. 15).  

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60Cf. Adele Berlin, *Zephaniah* (AB 25A; New York: Doubleday, 1994), 90; Spieckermann, “Dies Irae,” 199–204. offers the idea to understand this imagery of darkness as standing for bad luck or bad omen utterances.
The Motif of Creation

The mention of an approaching end for the earth (אָסֹף אָסֵף כֹּל מֵעַל פְּנֵי הָאֲדָמָה in v. 2), humans (אָסֵף אָדָם and וְהִכְרַתִי אֶת־הָאָדָם מֵעַל פְּנֵי הָאֲדָמָה in v. 3), beasts (בְּהֵמָה in v. 3), birds of the heavens (אָסֵף עוֹף־הַשָּׁמַיִם in v. 3), and fishes of the sea (ודְגֵי הַטָּם in v. 3) evokes creation language (cf. esp. Gen 1–2)—here its undoing. However, not only is creation seriously perverted, but also one place which symbolizes creation (v. 4)—the temple. “Overall, the reversal of creation portrayed in these verses presupposes the perversion of the Temple by cultic apostasy.”

The Motif of Divine Wrath

The “Day of YHWH” is depicted as a day of divine wrath (יוֹם עֶבְרָה הַטוֹם הַהוא in Zeph 1:15), even as a day of the burning anger of YHWH to devastate the whole land (יוֹם אַף־יְהוָה בְּאֵש קִנְאָתוֹ in v. 18). This intensive use of wrath language is again used a little later in the same text: בְּטֶרֶם לֹא־יָבוֹא עֲלוֹךְ אַף־יְהוָה בְּטֶרֶם לֹא־יָבוֹא (2:2); and בְּיוֹם אַף־יְהוָה (2:3); and לִשְפֹךְ עֲלֵיהֶם זַעְמִי כֹּל חֲרוֹן אַפִי כִּי בְאֵש קִנְאָתִי תֵאָכֵל כָּל־הָאָרֶץ (3:8).}


63 Sweeney, The Twelve Prophets, 2:501.

The Motif of Fear

The motif of fear is vividly displayed in vivid imagery: the alarming outcry from the fish gate ( giọng קול צעקה משער הדגים in 1:10); the howling from the mishneh ( ויללה מיתא in v. 10); the hearing of a tremendous crashing coming from the hills ( ושבר גדול מגה ב in v. 10); the imperative to the people of machtesh to howl ( הילילו יושבי המכתש in v. 11); the description of the day as “a bitter day” ( יום יוהו מרב in v. 14); the screaming of even the warriors ( יום יוהוってしま ב in v. 14); the description of the day as one of utmost distress ( יום צרה ומצוקה in v. 15), as one of the sounding of the shophar, the war-horn ( יום שעוף in v. 16); and the sounding of warcries ( יום שעוף ותרועה in v. 16); the divine scaring of people ( והצבת ליהוה איצרו in v. 17); the description of the day as one of “terror” ( כיה כליה איצרו in v. 18).

The Motif of Judgment

The people’s treachery will make YHWH pronounce a judgment on them by means of his own hand ( ונתתי יד עלי יהודה ו العليים ב in v. 4), which evokes the language of the ten Egyptian plagues, leading to the elimination of all forms of idolatry ( והכרת מגרס נוה אל שאר שלום ב in v. 4). The idolatry visualized is syncretism ( על יזרעאל התנשמת לוהו גלוי in v. 5 and המלטים לוהו גלוי in v. 9), insolence ( ואת מגוים אחר יהודה ואחר לא חשו אסתרה להו in v. 6, and המלטים בחר אסתרה להו in v. 9), false worship ( על יזרעאל התנשמת in v. 9), treachery ( המלטים ברת אדריכים תומכיה in v. 9), and the belittlement of YHWH ( המלטים אל אריה ישו תומכיה in v. 12). Shortly, sin will be extinguished ( כי ליהוה род in v. 17) by the extirpation of the people performing it—the sinners or wicked.

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65Sweeney, The Twelve Prophets, 2:501.
The Motif of War

The motif of war is vividly brought into view in the quadruple imagery of the perishing of everything living in this world—flora, fauna, and humanity (and יִכְשְלוֹת אֶת־הָרְשָעִים in v. 3), and in the description of the “Day of YHWH” as a day of his “sacrifice” (וְיִכְרַתִי מִן־הַמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה אֶת־שְאָר הַבַּעֲל אֶת־שֵם הַכְּמָרִים עִם־הַכֹּהֲנִים in v. 7–8)—a metaphorical image for Judah itself:66 “those who have long despised the sacrifice that God provides become the sacrifice their sin merits.”67

It is moreover stated to be the day of his “visitation” (וְפָקַדְתִי עַל־הַשָּׁרִים וְעַל־בְּנֵי הַמֶלֶךְ וְעַל כָּל־הַלֹּבְשִם מַלְבֹּש נָכְרִי׃ וְפָקַדְתִי עַל כָּל־הֹדוֹלָג עַל־הַמִּפְתָּן בַּטֹּם הַהוא in v. 8–9), the destruction and devastation of everything (כִי נִדְמָה כָּל־עַמָּם כְּנַעַן נִכְרְתוּ כָּל־נְטִילֵי כָּסֶף in v. 11), the image of thievery (וְהָיָה חֵילָם לִמְשִּׁן in v. 13), the sounding of the war-horn and other war-sounds (יוֹם שׁוֹפְרָה ותְרועָה in v. 16),68 the shedding of human blood and fat like excrements (ךְָו שֶפֶד כְּעָפָר וְלְחָמִים כַּגְלָלִים in v. 17), and the utter extinction (כִּי כָּלָה אַך־נִבְהָלָה יַעֲשֶׂה אֵת כָּל־יֹשְבֵי הָאָרֶץ in v. 18).69

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66Berlin, Zephaniah, 79.


68“The ‘ram’s horn,’ was used in battle and to give an alarm within a city. Cf., for example Jer 20:16; Hos 5:8; Amos 3:6. Here it seems to refer to the blast of the enemy in preparation for an attack.” Berlin, Zephaniah, 90.

Zechariah 14

The Motif of Space

In Zech 14 one discovers another “Day of YHWH” text demonstrating that the concept of the “Day of YHWH” is not a single event of history, but that of multiple events of history which are consecutive and arguably culminate in one unsurpassed, universal, and ultimate “Day of YHWH” (cf. Isa 2:6–22; 13:1–21; Joel 2:1, 11; 3:4; 4:14; Obad 8, 11–13, 15). Ironically, although all these “Days of YHWH” are ultimately manifestations of his actions, they either may be marked by his absence leading to doom or by his presence leading to salvation (Isa 2:6–22; Joel 1:15), thus underscoring the immense impact of YHWH taking sides.

Yet, the absence of YHWH does not mean his complete absence, but only that he, so to speak, seems to be for the other team. It is significant, but strange, however, that YHWH’s presence with his people (his playing on their team) does not necessarily exclude the occurrence of their tribulation, although this does not exclude their salvation. The mention of a time of trouble before a blissful turn is not unusual (cf. Isa 13:12; see esp. the usage of יֵדֹעַ “who knows?” in Joel 2:13–14, and יָרָא “maybe” in Amos 5:15; Zeph 2:3, which both indicate hope rather than incertitude as is proven by the positive outlook of these texts in Joel 2:18–27; Amos 5:17; Zeph 2:6–7; and esp. the subsequent texts in Joel 4:18–21; Amos 9:11–15; Zeph 3:11–20). Amos 5:18–20; Isa 2:12–17; Joel 1:15; 2:1, 11; and Zeph 1:7, 14; 2:1–3 talk about the “Day of YHWH” as a day of doom for Israel or Judah. Joel 3:4; Joel 4:14; and Obad 15, however, transform this day of gloom into that of a day of salvation, which is to occur after the time of trouble.

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70 Cf. Amos 7:8; 8:2; cf. also Exod 11:4, 6; 12:12, 23, 29, 30; Lev 26:6; Deut 29:15; Josh 1:11; 24:17.
The Motif of Time

The “Day of YHWH” as imaged in the Book of Zechariah encompasses both an element of doom to occur first and an element of salvation to occur last (14:1–2; 3–5). Yet there is no indicator of time in the text as to when these are to occur.

The Motif of Blessing

On a specific day that is known to YHWH, it will neither become day nor night, yet it will become light in the evening (יְהוָה יִוָדַע לְיהוָה לֹא יוֹם וְלֹא לָיְלָה וְהָיָה לְעֵת עֶרֶב יִהְיֶה אוֹר in v. 7). This time, however, will not only be distinguished from others by the shining of such marvelous and mysterious light, but also by fresh water flowing out of Jerusalem into the Eastern Sea and Western Sea, uninterruptedly during the whole year, even in winter (וְהָיָה בַטוֹם הַהוא יֵצְאו מַיִם חַטִים מִירושָלִַם חֶצְיָם אֶל־הַטָּם בַקַיִץ ובָחֹרֶף יִהְיֶה in v. 8; cf. also Gen 1:14; 2:10–14; 8:22; Ezek 47:1–12; Hab 3:9–11). “The cessation of summer and winter again indicates the transformation of the natural order of the seasons.”

YHWH will have the eminent and exclusive kingship over the whole world (וְהָיָה יְהוָה לְמֶלֶךְ עַל־כָל־הָאָרֶץ in Zech 14:9). The significant difficulties to translate יִנָּב כָל־הָאָרֶץ כָעֲרָבָה in v. 10 seem to be resolved in the light of its Ugaritic background which offers the option to translate it as “to turn in,” resulting in “the whole land will be turned into desert,” which then seems to make much more sense than the literal reading “the whole land will go around like the desert.” What still seems awkward, however, is the sudden shift in the text from the language of blessing to that of desertification (כָּעֲרָבָה in v. 10).

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71 Sweeney, The Twelve Prophets, 2:701; Tigchelaar, Prophets of Old and the, 231–34.
Ultimately, Jerusalem will be exalted (יִנְוֹב כָל־הָאָרֶץ כָעֲרָבָה מִגֶבַע לְרִםוֹן נֶגֶב in v. 10) and its inhabitants will live safely (וְיָשְבו בָה in v. 11). Significantly, “insofar as the Exodus is intended to bring the people to YHWH’s sanctuary in the sight of the nations (Exod 15:13–18), the portrayal of the nations’ spoil that is to be offered to YHWH at Sukkoth recapitulates the Exodus motif of YHWH’s world-wide power and sovereignty” (see esp. Zech 14:14–15). In contrast to the blessing of the saved, the opponents of YHWH will suffer from a deadly curse (vv. 12–15).

The Motif of Cult

The divine victory over all people on his day of battle, the “Day of YHWH” (Zech 14:1), a day of war, will lead to the initiation of a special Feast of Tabernacles (חַג הַןֺכוֹת). Three times the Feast of Tabernacles is mentioned in the text (vv. 16, 18, 19), where all the remnant peoples who survived the war will pilgrimage to Jerusalem year after year in order to worship YHWH, God of all Hosts (וְהָיָה כָל־הַמוֹתָר מִכָל־הַגוֹיִם in v. 16). The peoples who will not pilgrimage to the feast of Tabernacles, and thus will not be participants in it, will be punished by plagues like a drought (לֹא־יִעֲלֶה מִשְפָחוֹת הָאָרֶץ אֶל־יְרושָלִַם לְהִשְתַחֲוֺת לְמֶלֶךְ יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת וְלֹא עֲלֵיהֶם יִהְיֶה הַגָשֶם in v. 17). The punishment of Egypt, not only one of the ancient enemies of Israel but also one of its eschatological enemies, is specifically mentioned (וְאִם־מִשְפַחַת מִצְרַיִם לֹא־תַעֲלֶה וְלֹא בָאָה וְלֹא עֲלֵיהֶם תִהְיֶה הַמַגֵפָה אֲשֶר יִגְפוֹ יְהוָה אֶת־הַגוֹיִם אֲשֶר לֹא יַעֲלו לָחֹג אֶת־חַג הַןֺכוֹת in v. 18).

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Yet, there will be a punishment for all opposing people (יָצָא חֲצִי הָעִיר בַגוֹלָה וְיֶתֶר הָעָם לֹא יִכָרֵת מִנ־הָעִיר in v. 19).

Independently from that, the horses will be holy to YHWH in that time (בַטוּם הַהוא יִהְיֶה עַל־מְצִלוֹת הַנִוָּרָה לַיהוָה in v. 20), all the cooking pots will be regarded as sacrificial containers (כְבֵית יְהוָה כּהֲלִיתָם לִפְנֵי הַמִזְבֵחַ וְהָיָה הַנירָות i in v. 20), and all cooking pots of Jerusalem and Judah will be regarded as holy (כֹּל־סִיר בִירושְלָם וּבִיהוּדָה קֹדֶש לַיהוָה צְבָאוֹת in v. 21). Ultimately, in that time the temple of YHWH will be purged and pure from all vendors (וְלֹא־יִהְיֶה כְנַעֲנִי עוֹד בְבֵית־יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת בַטוּם הַהוא in v. 21).

The Motif of Judgment

When all nations will be summoned by YHWH to wage war against Jerusalem (vv. 1–2), they will indeed conquer the holy city, raid its treasures, rape its women, and lead half of the people into captivity (v. 2). “Verses 1–5 portray the disaster that will once again overtake Jerusalem as the city is prepared for YHWH’s ultimate triumph.”

However, YHWH himself will not only be the one bringing these people up against his own people, but in the end he will be the one who liberates his people from these peoples in order to demonstrate himself as the true victor (vv. 3–5).

This seems to imply that a double or even triple judgment is visualized in the text: First, there is a divine judgment against his own people supposedly to purge his people from all wickedness leading to the extinction of half of the people (וְיָצָא חֲצִי הָעִיר בַגוֹלָה וְיֶתֶר הָעָם לֹא יִכָרֵת מִנ־הָעִיר in v. 2). Second, there is a divine judgment against all the peoples who have supposedly sinned by waging war against YHWH’s holy remnant.

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74 Sweeney, The Twelve Prophets, 2:698.
people leading to their extirpation, which is implied by the imagery of a plague—again somewhat evoking the language of the ten Egyptian plagues, leading to the decaying of their body outside as well as inside (וְיָצָא יְהוָה וְנִלְחַם בַגוֹיִם in v. 3 and vְזֹאת תִהְיֶה הַמַגֵפָה אֲשֶר יִגֹף יְהוָה אֶת־כָל־הָעַםִים אֲשֶר צָבְאו עַל־יְרושָלִָם in v. 12; cf. the decaying of the host of heaven as mentioned in Isa 34:4).

Third, if one will, the mentioned plague will not only strike humanity, but also to some degree the animal kingdom, again similar to the ten Egyptian plagues. Of these, however, it is mainly horse-like species, but also other species that are hit, in each instance species with some military associations will be stricken for reasons unknown to the reader (וְכֵן תִהְיֶה מַגֵפַת הַןוס הַפֶרֶד הַגָמָל וְהַחֲמוֹר וְכָל־הַבְהֵמָה אֲשֶר יִהְיֶה בַםַחֲנוֹת in Zech 14:15).

Moreover, in his divine judgment, YHWH will generate a great confusion among the peoples so that they will be finally stirred up to fight each other (וְהָיָה בַטוֹם הַהוא תִהְיֶה מְהומַת־יְהוָה רַבָה בָהֶם וְהֶחֱזיקו אִיש יַד רֵעֵהו וְעָלְתָה יָדוֹ עַל־יַד רֵעֵהו in v. 13). As strange as it may seem, even Judah will fight against Jerusalem instead of only foreign people fighting against foreign people (כֵּסֶף וָכֶסֶף בוֹטָם הַהוא בִירוּשָלַם לֹא־תַעֲלֶה וְלֹא בָאָה וְלֹא עֲלֵיהֶם תִהְיֶה הַמַגֵפָה אֲשֶר יִגֹף יְהוָה אֶת־הַגוֹיִם אֲשֶר לֹא יַעֲלו לָחֹג אֶת־חַג הַנִּכּוֹת in v. 18) or other nations following Egypt’s example should not pilgrimage to the Feast of Tabernacle to worship YHWH. This is evoking Exodus thought, specifically the thought

75Sweeney, The Twelve Prophets, 2:703.
The Motif of a Remnant

Significantly, the motif of a remnant appears twice in a historical-military sense:

First, there is a remnant half of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, who will not only survive the attack by the nations, but who will be spared from being led into exile (וְיֶתֶר הָעָם לֹא יִכָרֵת מִן־הָעִיר in v. 2). Second, there is a remnant of the nations, who will outlive YHWH’s war against the nations and who will pilgrimage to Jerusalem to worship him, adding a theological dimension to this motif (וְהָיָה כָל־הַמוֹתָר מִכָל־הַגוֹיִם הַבָאִים עַל־יְרושָלִָם וְעָלו מִדֵי שָנָה בְשָנָה לְהִשְתַחֲוֺת לְמֶלֶךְ יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת in v. 16). In both instances the typical Hebrew term for the idea of a remnant is used: the verb יתר “to be left over”/“to remain.” This verb, among all the traditional “Day of YHWH” texts, occurs only here, though the motif of a remnant itself is detected elsewhere in the “Day of YHWH” texts (בֵּיתוֹ in Joel 3:5; Obad 17).

When the motif of a remnant appears in the “Day of YHWH” allusions it may refer to different situations. It may describe: A remnant that will return (שְאָר יָשוב שְאָר in Isa 10:19–22, quoting v. 21); a remnant of humanity outliving earth’s troublesome last time (וְנִשְאַר אֱנוֹש מִזְעָר in Isa 24:6); a remnant of Israel that YHWH will bring back to their homeland after the eschatological war against the enemy Gog of Magog (וְכִמַסְתִים עַל־אַדְמָתָם וְלֹא־אוֹתִיר עוֹד מֵהֶם שָם in Ezek 39:28); a tenth of Israel that will survive (לְבֵית יִשָּׂרָאֵל נָשִיָּר מֵאָה וְהַטוֹצֵאת מֵאָה תַשְאִיר עֲשָׂרָה לְבֵית יִשָּׂרָאֵל in 76 Sweeney, The Twelve Prophets, 2:705.)
Amos 5:3), the remnant of Joseph (אולַי יֶחֱנַן יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי־צְבָאוֹת שְאֵרִית יוֹסֵף in Amos 5:15), the remainder of Judah (לִשְאֵרִית בֵית יְיהוָה in Zeph 2:7 and לִשְאֵרִית בֵית יְיהוָה in Zeph 2:9), and the remnant of Israel in a universal sense (וְהִשְאַרְתִי בְקִרְבֵךְ עַם עָנִי וָדָל וְחָסוּבֵם יְהוָה׃ שְאֵרִית יִשְׂרָאֵל in Zeph 3:12–13 which might be echoing Joel 3:5 and/or Obad 17).

The Motif of Salvation

A motif of salvation is implied in the imagery of YHWH successfully fighting for the sake of his own precious people, the remnant (וְיָצָא יְהוָה וְנִלְחַם בַגוֹיִם הָהֵם כְיוֹם הִלָחֲמוֹ in Zech 14:3), in the prophet’s personal invocation of YHWH as “YHWH, my God” (יְהוָה אֱלֹהַי in v. 5), the mention of all his holy ones being with him (כָל־קְדֹשִים עִםָךְ in v. 5), and the outline of his kingship (וְהָיָה יְהוָה לְמֶלֶךְ עַל־כָּל־הָאָרֶץ בַטוֹם הַהוא יִהְיֶה יְהוָה אֶחָד ושְמוֹ אֶחָד in v. 9). Verses 1–11 show many similarities to Ps 74:12–17, where YHWH is also highlighted as king, victor over Leviathan, the sea serpent and the sea, and lord over the luminaries as well.77 Ultimately YHWH is portrayed as being worshipped by all people, his own people as well as foreign peoples (וְהָיָה כָל־הַמוֹתָר מִכָּל־הַגּוֹיִם הַבָּאִים עַל־יְרוּשָלִָם וְעָלו מִדֵי שָנָה בְשָנָה לְהִשְתַחֲוֺת לְמֶלֶךְ יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת וְלָחֹג אֶת־חַג הַנָכוֹת in Zech 14:16), which does not imply that all these people are saved, but only that they acknowledge him as the only Savior, and he is also pictured as receiving sacrifices (וָאוֹ בָאוּ כָּל־הַזֹּבְחִים in v. 21).

The Motif of Theophany

The motif of theophany is silhouetted in the text by applying anthropomorphically language to the account of the appearance of YHWH: first, he is moving out (וְיָצָא יְהוָה) in

77Tigchelaar, Prophets of Old and the
v. 3) to wage war against the people who fought against his people (וְנִלְחָם בַגּוֹיִם הָהֵם in v. 3); his feet will come to stand on the Mount of Olives, which will cause its splitting (וְעָמְדוּ רַגְלָיו בַטוֹם הַﬠוֹן אֲשֶר עִלָּיְם וְקִפַּאוּן אֲשֶר יִהְיוּ מִצְמָחִים וּנְבָאָה מִרְיָם in v. 4), and he will come with all his holy ones (וְנֶבֶא הַיְהוָה אֶל־כָּל־הַקַּדְשִים נְפֶשׁ in v. 5). Yet the motif is moreover evoked through cataclysmic cosmic language highlighting the darkness of this day due to the congealment of the luminaries by inverting creation order78 (וְהָיָה בַطوֹם הַﬠוֹן meaning “to congeal”/“to freeze”/“to become rigid”) reminiscent of other “Day of YHWH” texts (Isa 13; Joel 2; 3; 4; Amos 5; Zeph 1).

The Motif of War

Though harvest language is expected in connection to the Feast of Tabernacles,79 a motif of war manifests itself to be ubiquitous in the text. It is visualized through the mention of military booty (ךְּבָא יָבֹא לַיְהוָה וְחֽלַק תְּלָלְךְּ בְּקִרְבֵּךְּ in v. 1), a divine summoning of nations to wage war (וְאָסַפְתִי אֶת־כָּל־הַגּוֹיִם אֶל־יְרוּשָׁלַיִם לַמִלְחָמָה in v. 2), the conquering of the city (בָּלְכַדְתָה הָעִיר in v. 2), the marauding of the town (וְנָשַנְתָה הַבָּתִים in v. 2), the violation of women (וְהַמָשִים תִשָכַבְנָה in v. 2), the leading into exile of half of the city’s inhabitants (וְיָצָא חֲצִי הָעִיר בַגּוֹלָה in v. 2), the moving out of YHWH to wage war himself (וְיָצָא יְהוָה וְנִלְחָם בַגּוֹיִם הָהֵם in v. 3), the divine “day of battle” (כְיוֹם הִלָחְמֹו בְיוֹם קְרָב in v. 3), and the fighting forces of the opponents (אֶת־כָּל־הָעַמִים צָבָא עַל־יְרוּשָׁלַיִם אֲשֶר בַגּוֹלָה הָהֵם in v. 12).

78Sweeney, The Twelve Prophets, 2:700.

79Sweeney, The Twelve Prophets, 2:698.
Malachi 3:17–24 (3:17–4:6)⁸₀

Independent from all suggestions for a redactorial reworking of this last section in the Book of Malachi (3:13–24 [3:13–4:6]), as proposed by many theologians, it is vital to visualize that there are significant terminological and thematic parallels in this text that not only strongly support its conceptual unity, but also its character as one original speech, which will be outlined here. This utterance incorporates two sections: The longer section of 3:17–21 (3:17–4:3), in which 3:17, 21 (3:17; 4:3) are formidably framing a divine utterance in an inclusio (see אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת לַטוֹם אֲשֶׂר אֲנִי עֹשֶׂה in v. 17 and בַطوֹם אֲשֶׂר אֲנִי עֹשֶׂה אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת in v. 21) and the shorter section of vv. 22–24, which is to be considered a continuation of the anterior divine speech as indicated through the uninterrupted usage of the first-person pronoun, as in the previous passage.

There are significant terminological and thematic parallels between both sections: First, the imminence of a divine day is predominant ( ámb in 3:17, 19 [3:17; 4:1] and 3:21, 23 [4:3, 5]). Second, the usage of the leitwortבוא―to come‖ is preponderant (occurring twice in both sections: 3:19 [2x] (4:1) and 3:24 [4:6]). Third, the usage of the rootעבד―to serve‖/―to be a servant‖ is relevant to both and likewise used in the beginning of both sections (3:17, 18 and 3:22 [3:17; 18 and 4:4]). Fourth, the rootשוב―to turn to‖ is found (3:18 and 3:24 [3:18 and 4:1]). Fifth, the rootירא―to fear‖ is found (3:20 and 3:23 [4:2, 5]). Sixth, the idea of destruction is vital to the endings, or second halves, of both sections (3:19, 21 and 3:24 [4:1, 3 and 4:5]), the former about a definite destruction, the latter about a conditional destruction.

⁸₀The chapter and verse references in brackets or parentheses apply to English translations deviating from the chapter and verse references of the Hebrew Bible.
Seventh, a contrast between two conflicting groups is either indicated or implied (3:18, 19, 20, 21 and 3:22, 24 [3:18; 4:1, 2, 3 and 4:4, 6]). Eighth, a theophany is implied (3:19 and 3:22 [4:1, 4]). Ninth, both passages are prophetic witnesses to each other, leading people to prepare themselves for a future event. The former has already historically fulfilled its character of warning in the message borne by Malachi; the second still is to historically fulfill its character of warning in the message borne by the future Elijah. Tenth, the messages of both sections speak about a matter of life or death (3:19, 20 and 3:22, 24 [4:1, 2 and 4:4, 6]). Eleventh, both sections employ rich terminological links to the life and/or teachings of historical Moses (3:17, 21 [3:17, 4:3]) and Elijah (3:19, 23–24 [4:1, 5–6]). Twelfth, both sections highlight the image of a relationship or reconciliation between a father and his child (3:17 and 3:24 [4:1, 3]); thirteenth, the first section may be understood as the illocutionary part, and the latter section may be understood as the perlocutionary part of a cohesive divine utterance according to speech-act theory.

The implications of these significant parallels seem inevitable. They not only make one infer that both often unjustifiably separated sections are to be understood as a unified whole of one single speech, that both are envisaging one and the same message of either doom or salvation, but that they both are dealing with the specific message of the “Day of YHWH” as their main interest. The main characteristics of this message are clearly brought to view in the dichotomy between doom and salvation, both of which merge under the umbrella of the motif of judgment, which might either have a damnatory or a salvific side—depending on the reaction of the hearers, they will receive a blessing or a curse. The last chapter of Malachi in the MT thus forms a formidable capstone to the
teaching of the “Day of YHWH” in the Hebrew Bible in recapitulating, summarizing, and underscoring once more its two-sidedness.

**The Motif of Space**

The “Day of YHWH” as outlined in Mal 3 is directed against all the proud people in order to turn them into stubble to be consumed by the coming fire (3:19 [4:1]).

**The Motif of Time**

There is no specific indicator of time in Mal 3 as to illustrate when the “Day of YHWH” is to occur. However, there is an unspecified indicator integral to the text: The approach of Elijah must occur before the approach of YHWH (3:23 [4:5]).

**The Motif of Blessing**

A motif of blessing becomes perspicuous in the promise uttered in the last verse: וְהֵשִּיב לֵב־אָבוֹת עַל־בָּנִים וְלֵב בָּנִים עַל־אֲבוֹתָם פֶּן־אָבוֹא וְהִכֵּיתִי אֶת־הָאָרֶץ חֵרֶם — “He (meaning Elijah mentioned in 3:23 [4:5]) will reconcile the heart of the fathers with their children, and the heart of the children with their fathers, lest I come and devote the whole earth to destruction” (3:24 [4:6]). The idea is one of reconciliation between two parties. Three different proposals have been made in regard to which parties may be in view here:

First, it may be the literal fathers and literal children of Malachi’s time. The reconciliation would then be mainly one in an educational sense. Second, it may be the literal forefathers (all ancestors up to Abraham) and the literal children of Malachi’s time. The reconciliation would then be mainly one in returning to the ancestor’s manner of religion and worship. Third, it may be the spiritual father YHWH and his spiritual children. The reconciliation would then be mainly a spiritual return to YHWH in the sense of a conversion of the children’s hearts. Independent of this, the transformation
mentioned bears a spiritual dimension and is viewed as a preparation of the people for the pending “Day of YHWH” (the parallelism between the coming “Day of YHWH” and the coming YHWH in 3:23–24 [4:5–6] is telling; see the use of the Hebrew verb בֹּא “to come” in both verses: בֹּא אֲלֵי בֹּא יָהֲעָה הָעַדָּר in 3:23 [4:5] and בֹּא אֲלֵי הָאָרֶץ חֵרֶם in 3:24 [4:6]).

**The Motif of Cataclysm**

The eschatological “Day of YHWH” is depicted by the image of a burning oven (בֹּא כַתַמור in 3:19 [4:1]). As speedily as a fiery furnace inflames stubble thrown into it (קַש וְלִהַט אֹתָם in 3:19 [4:1]) and as thoroughly as it burns up trees thrown into it (לֹא־יַעֲזֹב לָהֶם שֹרֶש וְעָנָף in 3:19 [4:1]) leaving them neither branch nor root, so this day will inflame and burn up the wicked without leaving anything behind. The idea is obvious: This day will lead to the utter extinction of the wicked (v. 19).

The term מַהְר “oven” appears only rarely in the Hebrew Bible: Besides its common usage in the sense of a baking oven (thus in Exod 7:28 [the Egyptian plagues]; Lev 2:4; 7:9; 11:35; 26:26), it may be conceptually used as a divine or human instrument of destruction (former: Isa 31:19 [against Assyria]; latter: Hos 7:4–7), but it may also be used as a divine instrument in the context of a theophany (Gen 15:19 and Ps 21:9–10). It is this last usage which makes the most sense for Mal 3:19 (4:1). This becomes evident in the usage of the verb בֹּא “to come” as a leitwort in the text of Mal 3. Thus it is indicated that what will come is not simply any day, or even the day of YHWH, but YHWH himself (see 2x in 3:1, 3:2, 3:10; 2x in 3:19 [4:1]; 3:23 [4:5]; 3:24 [4:6]).

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81 Cf. “Unlike most other prophets, Elijah had been successful.” David L. Petersen, Zechariah 9-14 and Malachi (OTL; Louisville, Ky.: Knox, 1995), 228–31.

82 תַמור, HALOT 4:1763.
The second term לָהֵט “to ignite” occurs also only rarely in the Hebrew Bible:

Besides its common usage in the sense of ignition (Exod 7:11 [the Egyptian plagues]; Ps 57:5), it may be conceptually utilized to describe the angel guarding the gate of Eden with his fiery sword (Gen 3:24), or it may describe the divine vanguard (Ps 97:3–4) or servants (Ps 104:4), or it may designate a divine instrument of destruction (Ps 83:15; 106:18), or it may be used as a symbol of divine wrath (Deut 32:22; Isa 42:25; and esp. Joel 1:19; 2:3). In light of the text of Mal 3, the meaning of a divine instrument of destruction seems to make the most sense; however, at the same time it may also stand as a symbol for divine wrath.

The third term בער “to burn/to burn down” is more frequent and occurs a little less than fifty times in the Hebrew Bible: Besides its common usage in the sense of burning, it may be conceptually utilized to designate fire as a divine or human instrument of destruction (former: Nah 2:14; latter: Ezek 39:9–10 [Gog-Magog prophecy]). In light of the setting of Mal 3 it is best understood as a divine tool of destruction. This short study of these three key terms (תַמור “oven”; להט “to ignite”; בער “to burn”) shows, that their biblical usage as a divine tool of destruction wonderfully harmonizes with the imagery’s emphasis on the utmost extinction of the wicked. Though the main stress of Mal 3 lies on apostate Israelites, the usage of the hendiadys כָל־זֵדִים וְכָל־עֹשֵׂה רִשְעָה “all proud and all who do wickedly,” meaning all wicked,\(^\text{83}\) as well as the usage of the three key terms (תַמור “oven”; להט “to ignite”; בער “to burn”) in linkage with the destruction of Israel’s archenemies (Egypt, Assyria, Gog from Magog), shows that ultimately a universal sense of the word “wicked” is in view here.

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\(^{83}\)This Hebrew trope expresses an idea of totality here: “All proud” stands for all who think selfishly or wickedly, whereas “all who act wickedly” stands for all who do selfishly or wickedly. Such a unification of thought and deed stands for totality in Hebrew thought leading to the meaning “all wicked.”
The Motif of Judgment

The “Day of YHWH” will be a day of judgment, where in a demonstrative judgment YHWH will bring to view the difference between the righteous and the unrighteous (לְרָשָע צַדִיק בֵין in 3:18), between those serving YHWH and those not serving YHWH (אֱלֹהִים לְאָשֶׁר בֵין in 3:18), and between the humble and the proud (כָּל יִרְאֵי שְמִי בֵין in 3:20 [4:2]) in an unfailing verdict. The idea of a differentiation between the humble and the proud is preponderant in several “Day of YHWH” texts such as Isa 2:10, 19, 21 (זֵד “proud”/“presumptous”) and Isa 13:11; Ezek 7:20, 24; 30:6; Zeph 2:10 (האג “proud”/“presumptous”) and “Day of YHWH” allusions such as Isa 22:2; Zeph 2:15 (עליז “proud”). Moreover, it is not only that YHWH will differentiate between the humble and the proud, but humanity itself will be able to discern and understand the difference (ורְאִיתֶם בֵין צַדִיק לְרָשָע in Mal 3:18).

The reason why humanity will be able to discern the difference lies in the radical nature of the “Day of YHWH,” which will lead to an unalterable outcome: This time will be a time burning like an oven (כִּי־הִמֵּה הַטוֹם בָא בֹעֵר כַתַמור in 3:19 [4:1]) and all the proud and wicked will be turned into stubble (וְהָיו כָּל־זֵדִים וְכָל־עֹשֵׂה רִשְעָה קַש in 3:19 [4:1]) to be completely consumed in this burning oven (וְלִהַט אֹתָם הַטוֹם אֲשֶׁר לֹא־יַעֲזֹב לָהֶם שֹרֶש וְעָנָף צְבָאוֹת in 3:19 [4:1]). The humble and righteous, however, will obviously remain untouched by this devouring oven. The last line mentioning that the humble and righteous will trample the proud and wicked under their feet is likely not to be understood literally, but metaphorically since otherwise the image of the fire destroying them hardly seems to fit with their being tread upon. However, if this last
imagery is an illustration for the victory (cf. Gen 3:15; Ps 110:4) of the humble over the proud, then this obvious problem would be solved.84

**The Motif of Salvation**

It is at the eschatological end when the difference between those who have served YHWH and those who have not served YHWH will become visible like never before (v. 18): Those who have served him YHWH will not only regard as his own property, stylistically expressed by an extreme hyperbaton of seven interposed words (הרי לי אמר יהוה צבאות בכלים אשר אני עשוהי סגולה in Mal 3:17; cf. Exod 19:5; Deut 7:6; 14:2; 26:8), but also he will show pity for them like a father shows pity for his child (יחמלו עליהם каֶשֶר יָמָל אֵלֶי וַיָּעַבְדֵּךְ אַחֲרֵי in Mal 3:17). Although in other “Day of YHWH” texts one may receive the impression that there is no divine pity (Ezek 7:4, 9; Lam 2:17), this text here among others demonstrates that the divine pity is dependent on people’s relationship with YHWH and not on his disposal (Ezek 36:21; Joel 2:18; Mal 3:17). To those reverent to YHWH the sun of righteousness will rise (かどう כך ירא שלמה שמש צדקה in 3:20 [4:2]) with healing in its wings (ומרפא בכנפיה in 3:20 [4:2]) and will cause them to come forth and to frisk about like little calves (ורפשו ואיצאוה והשחטו כשנאים in 3:20 [4:2]).85

**Alterations to Yom YHWH**

Hosea 9:1–9

Though this section seems to match a “Day of YHWH” pattern outwardly (only the word חַג inserted between יוֹם and יָהָה in v. 5), it does not seem to harmonize with it

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inwardly, and therefore should be understood as an allusion to the “Day of YHWH” rather than an alteration of the “Day of YHWH” passages. The decisive question here is whether the phrase יַחַג־יְהוָה “Day of the Feast of YHWH” (in v. 5) is to be understood metaphorically or literally. Independently of this, there seems to be no doubt that חַג is to be viewed as a cultic term due to its usage as one of the default levitical terms for feast or festival (Exod 23:15, 16, 18; Lev 23:6, 34, 39, 41; Num 28:17; 29:12). One could argue that in Zephaniah, where another cultic term זֶבַח “sacrifice” is part of a similar phrase יוֹם זֶבַח יְהוָה (v. 8), the phrase is to be understood metaphorically since the term זֶבַח otherwise never pertains to human sacrifices in the Hebrew Bible.

Zephaniah 2:1–3

This text has already been dealt with under the section of Zeph 1:1–2:3 and will not be taken up again here. It is one of many texts among the “Day of YHWH” tradition (besides Zeph 1 and 2, cf. Isa 2:12 and 2:17, 20; Isa 13:6, 9 and 13:13; Ezek 30:2 and 30:9; Joel 4:14 and 4:18; Obad 8 and 15; Zech 14) demonstrating that the transition from what has been termed “Anticipations of the Day of YHWH” to what has been termed “Alterations of the Day of YHWH” and to what has been termed “Allusions to the Day of YHWH” may be rather vague, so vague that sometimes no differentiation between these three should be made.

Allusions to Yom YHWH

Zephaniah 3:8

Table 11 offers an analysis of Zeph 3 as it alludes to actual “Day of YHWH” texts. The verse with the strongest similarities to these is listed as the key verse.
Moreover, it indicates which biblical motifs may be isolated from this section by showing what terms or themes are utilized and where they occur.

Malachi 3:1–5

Table 12 offers an analysis of Mal 3 as it alludes to actual “Day of YHWH” texts. The verse with the strongest similarities to these is listed as the key verse. Moreover, it indicates which biblical motifs may be isolated from this section by showing what terms or themes are utilized and where they occur.
Table 11. Zephaniah 3:8 JPS

**Key Verse: v. 8**
But wait for me—says the Lord—for the day when I arise as an accuser; when I decide to gather the nations, to bring kingdoms together, to pour out my indignation on them, all my blazing anger. Indeed, by the fire of my passion all the earth shall be consumed

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<tr>
<th>Biblical Motif</th>
<th>Terms/Themes</th>
<th>Verses</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cataclysm</td>
<td>All the earth shall be consumed</td>
<td>v. 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creation</td>
<td>All the earth</td>
<td>v. 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divine Wrath</td>
<td>My indignation, My blazing anger, My passion</td>
<td>v. 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judgment</td>
<td>I will arise as an accuser</td>
<td>v. 8</td>
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<td></td>
<td>To pour out all my wrath on the kingdoms and nations</td>
<td>v. 8</td>
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<td></td>
<td>With my fire I shall consume all the earth</td>
<td>v. 8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Salvation</td>
<td>But wait for me</td>
<td>v. 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summoning</td>
<td>I will gather all kingdoms and nations together</td>
<td>v. 8</td>
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Table 12. Malachi 3:1–5 JPS

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Biblical Motif</th>
<th>Terms/Themes</th>
<th>Verses</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blessing</td>
<td>I am sending my messenger</td>
<td>v. 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Lord will come to his temple suddenly</td>
<td>v. 1</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The angel of covenant is already coming</td>
<td>v. 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Covenant (broken)</td>
<td>They practice sorcery, commit adultery, swear falsely, cheat labors, subvert the widow, orphan, and stranger</td>
<td>v. 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Judgment</td>
<td>Who can endure?</td>
<td>v. 2</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Who can hold out?</td>
<td>v. 2</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The day is like smelter’s fire and like fuller’s lye</td>
<td>v. 2</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Purification of the sons of Levi to present them as offerings in righteousness</td>
<td>v. 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>So that they will be pleasing</td>
<td>v. 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>But first I will be an accuser against you</td>
<td>v. 5</td>
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CHAPTER VI

A SUMMARY

A Summary of the Books

Isaiah

The “Day of YHWH” as delineated in the Book of Isaiah is first of all a day of judgment directed against Judah (Isa 2; 22; 29), but also against its direct enemies Babylon (Isa 13) and Edom (Isa 34; 63). Ultimately, it is a day of divine judgment of the whole world (Isa 13) and universe (Isa 24:21–22; 27:1). That the day of judgment encompasses an executive aspect of judgment is seen by the motif of fear mentioned in many instances (Isa 2; 13; 34; 63). That the day of judgment, however, may also encompass a vindicatory aspect of judgment is seen in the motif of salvation (Isa 34; 61; 63). What is more, the day of judgment in Isaiah may include an investigative aspect of judgment (Isa 13:11; 24:21, 22; 27:1) and even comprise a covenant lawsuit (Isa 34:8)—an idea unique to Isaiah among all “Day of YHWH” texts.

In these multiple judicial aspects of the “Day of YHWH” as a day of judgment it becomes manifest that judgment accompanies salvation and does not at all obviate it. The divine intent to save and to spare from impending tragedy is specifically visualized in the heartfelt prophetic outcries to his people to turn around (Isa 2; 22) as well as in the motif of the divine Messiah willing to save (Isa 34; 61; 63). Whereas the Messiah is willing to save all afflicted people universally (Isa 61), he is only willing to wage war on behalf of his own people specifically (Isa 34; 63). That the divine judgment is driven by
the divine wrath is true, but its ultimate essence is its intention to implement justice in the world (Isa 13; 24:21–22). Though indeed difficult to understand, divine wrath leading to destruction and divine wrath leading to deliverance only show the two ends of one and the same spectrum of the implementation of justice in the world (Isa 59; 63).

At last, the “Day of YHWH” as outlined in the Book of Isaiah is a decisive eschatological event of ultimate and universal dimension (alluded in Isa 2; specific in Isa 13, 24–27 and 61)—it is the day of the last judgment. It is then, when the destiny of all humans will be displayed (Isa 13; 24). This is metonymically illustrated by the two opposing cities Babylon and Jerusalem. The elimination of the wicked city par excellence, Babylon, is paralleled with the elevation of the wonderful city par excellence, Jerusalem (Isa 13; 25). The upheaval of Babylon and uplifting of Jerusalem in eschatological time (Isa 13; 25) signifies the termination of the dominion of human world powers and the transferral of dominion to YHWH (Isa 24). The ultimate judgment will accompany an ultimate theophany unlike ever before in history (Isa 24).

The last judgment, however, not only envisages the ultimate theophany, but the initiation of apocalyptic and therefore transcendent time (Isa 13; 24). Though theophanic elements are visualized in several texts (Isa 2; 13; 34), especially when cataclysms or curses are in view (Isa 2; 13; 34), a true theophany seems nowhere necessarily implied except where explicitly mentioned (Isa 13:6–13; see esp. 24–27; 61). The ultimate theophany will impact not only the whole world (Isa 24:21–24), but the whole universe (Isa 13; 24:21–24; 27:1)—an idea unique to Isaiah among the “Day of YHWH” texts. This idea is vividly visualized in the vanishing of the whole world known as well as in the vindication of YHWH over the host of heaven and the enemy par excellence—the twisted serpent (Isa 27:1). The vanishing of the whole world induced by YHWH implies
the vanishing of immanent time; the vindication of YHWH over the host of heaven and
the twisted serpent implies the invasion of an apocalyptic, transcendent time, as is
supported by several parallels between the Book of Daniel and the Apocalypse of Isaiah.
These accomplishments allow for the initiation of an unimaginable time of ultimate
beauty and bliss under the kingship of YHWH himself (Isa 24).

Taking a biblical viewpoint, the biblical texts most strongly echoed in Isaiah are
the Genesis tradition (Gen 19; Isa 13), the Exodus tradition (Exod 7–11; 15; Isa 13), the
Deuteronomic tradition (the blessings and curses lists in Deut 28–29; Isa 2; 22; 34; 63 as
well as the Song of Moses in Deut 32; Isa 13; 34; 63), the prophetic tradition (esp. other
“Day of YHWH” texts), and the Wisdom Literature (esp. Psalms; Isa 2; 13).

Jeremiah and Lamentations

The “Day of YHWH” as described in the Books of Jeremiah and Lamentations is
also a day of judgment, this time, however, specifically overshadowing past and present
with its victims being Judah (Lam 1 and 2) and Egypt (Jer 46). The day of judgment as
described by Jeremiah may either entail an executive aspect of judgment (Lam 1 and 2;
Jer 46), a vindicatory aspect of judgment (Jer 46:10), or even a salvific aspect of
judgment (Jer 30:7–8). In opposition to Isaiah, Jeremiah displays the people of YHWH
as the victim of divine wrath (Lam 1 and 2), whereas the people oppressing them do not
seem to be linked with it (Jer 46). Yet, independent of this, both of them are victims of a
divinely induced war (Lam 1 and 2; Jer 46). The lament of Jerusalem, in which she is
personified as a lonely widow, seems unsurpassed in ancient Near Eastern literature. It
expresses the ironic idea to turn to YHWH nonetheless—even if he used to be an
opponent. Unimpressed by her situation she believes that his mercies are renewed every
morning.
The biblical texts most strongly echoed are again the Exodus tradition (esp. Exod 7–11; 15) as well as the Deuteronomic tradition (blessings and curses lists in Deut 28–29 and the Song of Moses in Deut 32), underscoring the similarities and differences between the destiny of Judah and Egypt. The former has broken the divine-human covenant, has lost its cultic worship location, and is now sending out its outcry, lament, and weeping to YHWH—the latter, however, seems to remain indifferent.

Ezekiel

The “Day of YHWH” as described in the Book of Ezekiel is also a day of judgment, this time, however, particularly prospective, targeting Judah (Ezek 7; 13), Egypt (Ezek 30), and Gog from Magog (Ezek 38–39). The day of judgment as depicted in Ezekiel entails the executive aspect of judgment (Ezek 7; 13; 30) as well as the vindicatory aspect of judgment (Ezek 38–39). It is specifically Ezekiel that is insisting on the implications involved in condemning the divine-human covenant. The idea that judgment implies an end of everything to those juggling apostasy from and allegiance to YHWH is nowhere else so much stressed among the “Day of YHWH” texts. This idea is most vividly visualized in the motifs of cataclysm, war, and curses, echoing the covenant curses which hit their victims very hard (Ezek 7; 13; 30).

The dichotomy between the exclamation of doom envisaging an exile of the people of YHWH (Ezek 7; 13) and the exclamation of deliverance envisaging an exodus of the people of YHWH (Ezek 34) is specifically significant to Ezekiel. The dark side of doom is visible in the delineation of the motif of wrath (Ezek 13), while the bright side of deliverance is visible in the delineation of the motif of Messiah (Ezek 34). Once more the divine wrath seems only to aim at the people of YHWH (Ezek 7; 13), not the people oppressing them (Ezek 30). Yet, in a similar sense the motif of Messiah seems only to
aim at the people of YHWH, not at those opposing them (Ezek 34:12). The Messiah
YHWH will bring his people back to their land and defend them successfully even
against the eschatological enemy Gog from Magog on an ultimate “Day of YHWH”
(Ezek 38–39).

The biblical texts most strongly echoed are the Deuteronomic tradition (blessings
and curses lists in Deut 28–29 and the Song of Moses in Deut 32). Ultimately the “Day
of YHWH,” as outlined in Ezekiel, is brought into an eschatological outlook in the
imagery of the divine Messiah-Shepherd to save his own (Ezek 34:12) and the ultimate
war to be waged against all opponents of YHWH (Ezek 38–39).

The Twelve

The “Day of YHWH” as depicted in the Book of the Twelve is first of all a day of
judgment directed against Israel (Amos 5), Judah (Joel 1 and 2; Zeph 1 and 2; Zech 14),
Edom (Obadiah), Egypt (Zech 14) and ultimately all nations and the wicked (Obadiah;
Zech 14; Joel 4; Zeph 3; and Mal 3). In the Twelve the outlined dichotomy between
blessings and curses becomes very obvious: The most dominant motifs are these of
blessing (Joel 3 and 4; Obadiah; Zech 14; Mal 3), cataclysm (Joel 1–4; Amos 5; Zeph 1
and 2; Zech 14; Mal 3), salvation (Joel 2 and 4; Zeph 3; Zech 14; Mal 3), war (Joel 1 and
2; Zeph 1 and 2; Zech 14) and theophany (Joel 4; Obadiah; Zeph 3; Zech 14). The
outlook of the “Day of YHWH” as outlined in Isaiah and the Twelve shows many
similarities—even so many that one wonders whether the former is not the foundation of
the latter. In the Twelve, a specific (Joel 1 and 2; Amos 5; Zeph 1 and 2) and a universal
(Joel 4; Obadiah; Zech 14; Mal 3), a non-eschatological (Joel 1 and 2; Amos 5; Obadiah;
Zeph 1 and 2), as well as an eschatological setting (Joel 2 and 3 and 4; Obadiah; Zeph 3;
Zech 14; Mal 3) are visualized and often overlap (Obadiah; Zech 14; Mal 3).
The biblical texts most strongly echoed are the Exodus tradition (Exod 7–11), Deuteronomic tradition (blessings and curses lists in Deut 28–29 and the Song of Moses in Deut 32), and Wisdom Literature (Psalms). In the Twelve a potpourri of the motifs, metaphors, and models linked to the “Day of YHWH” is visualized, which shows strong similarities with Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel.

A Summary of Motifs, Metaphors, Microstructures, and Parallels

The Most Prominent Motifs

The Motif of Cataclysm

The motif of cataclysm is a crucial element of the “Day of YHWH.” In most instances the motif of cataclysm is linked with cosmic language to illustrate the strong impact of the “Day of YHWH” (Isa 13; Joel 2; 3; Amos 5; Zeph 1; 2; Zech 14). It is used in two very different senses and often it is difficult to differentiate between the two in detail: It may be employed either in a metaphoric sense (Joel 2; Amos 5; Zeph 1), or in a literal sense (Isa 13; 24; 34; Joel 3; Ezek 13). The catastrophic and cosmic metaphoric manifestations may include: Bad luck (Amos 5), disaster (Joel 2), terror (Zeph 1), destruction (Zeph 2), and wrath (Zeph 3). The catastrophic and cosmic literal manifestations of the “Day of YHWH” may incorporate the darkening of the luminaries (Isa 13; Joel 3; Zech 14), the movement of the luminaries out of their place (Isa 24; Joel 4), earthquake (Ezek 13), fire (Ezek 39), hailstones (Ezek 13), and storm (Ezek 13). The intensity of these signs seems to increase over history, culminating and concluding with the eschatological and ultimate “Day of YHWH” (Isa 24). The motif of cataclysm shows many similarities to the Egyptian plagues mentioned in Exodus.
The Motif of Divine Wrath

The motif of divine wrath is very often linked with the “Day of YHWH,” be it explicitly or implicitly (metaphorically). It seems to accompany the motif of judgment. Though anthropomorphic language is used to describe it, it manifests itself to be unlike anthropological wrath. It is not an uncontrolled, unjustified, or unreasonable outburst of divine emotions as might be assumed, but it must be seen in light of the divine-human covenant and its conditions (blessings and curses as in Deut 28–29), in light of divine patience (as in Exod 34:6, 7), in light of prophecy (as in the Song of Moses in Deut 32), and in light of the tension between divine mercy and righteousness—that is, theodicy (as in Exod 34:6, 7; Ezek 38–39; Zech 14). Ultimately, righteousness accompanies wrath in the sense that they are the two sides of one spectrum: They show that YHWH is patient, but very passionate not only about his people, but about all people (Isa 59; 63).

The Motif of Judgment

The motif of judgment is the most dominant of all theological motifs linked to the “Day of YHWH.” It may well serve as the overarching motif subsuming many of the other mentioned motifs as long as it is understood in a holistic sense. It may have either a specific (Isa 2; 29; 63; Lam 1; 2; Jer 30; 46; Ezek 7; 13; 30; 34; Joel 1; 2; 3; Amos 5; Zeph 1; 2) or a universal scope (Isa 13; 24; 34; 61; Ezek 38–39; Joel 4; Obad; Zech 14; Mal 3). Independent from its scope it seems as if mainly the collective rather than the individual character is envisaged (Isa 2; 13; 34; Jer 46; Ezek 7; 13; 30; Joel 2; Amos 5; Zeph 1; 2; Zech 14; Mal 3). Since the “Day of YHWH” as a day of judgment shows many manifestations throughout history with changing addressees and associations, there are several sides of judgment involved: there may be an aspect of executive judgment (Isa 13; 34; 63; Jer 46; Ezek 7; 13; 30; 38–39; Joel 1; 2; Amos 5; Obad; Zeph 1; 2; Mal 3),
there may be an aspect of investigative judgment (Isa 24; 27; Zeph 1; 2; Mal 3), and there may be an aspect of vindicatory judgment incorporated (Isa 34; 63; Ezek 38–39; Zech 14). Though the “Day of YHWH” shows strong linkages to the context of the divine-human covenant, this does not exhaust its essence. The most significant difference seems to be that the “Day of YHWH” is unconditional—it seems impossible to avert or avoid it (Joel 2; Amos 5; Ezek 7); however, its outcome may vary for the individual dependent on his/her decision to turn to YHWH before or not (Joel 2; Amos 5; Zeph 2). The eschatological and ultimate “Day of YHWH” shows similarities to the “Day of Atonement” (Lev 16) in its purifying side (Isa 13 [?]; Mal 3:1–5) and in its punitive side (Isa 13; Mal 3:19–21), as well as its emphasis on theodicy (Isa 24:21–24; 27:1, 8–9; Zeph 3; Zech 14; Mal 3).

The Motif of Salvation

The motif of salvation is strongly linked with the “Day of YHWH” manifestations. Though the picture painted of the “Day of YHWH” seems rather dark and dim, there is some glimmer of light intermingled with it. Therefore divine judgment does not obviate divine salvation for those willing to be saved. This is visualized in the divine “maybe” thus opening the option of survival (Joel 2; Amos 5; Zeph 2). That this “maybe” may be realized is shown by the motif of a remnant that is stated to survive the “Day of YHWH” (Isa 13; Joel 3; Zeph 2; Zech 14). The other motif showing the divine willingness to save is the motif of lament (Lam 1 and 2), which supports the idea to turn to YHWH nonetheless, even if he used to be one’s enemy. The other motif strongly supporting this view is the motif of a Messiah YHWH who is stated to save the lost, which shows the idea that it emphatically lies within YHWH’s nature to save (Isa 61; 63; Ezek 34; Zech 14).
The Motif of War

The motif of war shows up several times in the “Day of YHWH” manifestations. It may be either specific or universal in its scope. Thus it may be targeted at either YHWH’s own people (Isa 22; Ezek 7; 13; Joel 2; Zeph 1; Zech 14), at people opposing them (Isa 34; Jer 46; Ezek 30; Obad), or at all/several other people opposing them (Isa 34; Obadiah; Ezek 38–39; Zech 14). Similar to the motif of cataclysm, the motif of war may be understood either metaphorically or literally. Though most scholars appear to assume the opposite view, YHWH does not seem to be waging war before the eschatological “Day of YHWH” (Ezek 38–39; Zeph 3; Zech 14). Therefore he must be understood as the initiator of war, as the leader behind the scenes, not as a warrior involved in war itself. Thus human armies are the divine tool utilized in waging war until YHWH will ultimately wage war himself on a universal scope.

The Most Prominent Metaphors

Metaphors of Cataclysm

The metaphors of cataclysm appearing in the “Day of YHWH” texts are: The darkening of the luminaries (Isa 13; Joel 2; 3; Amos 5; Zeph 1), the movement, shaking, and tottering of the luminaries or universe (Isa 13; 24; Joel 2; 4), the shame of sun and moon (Isa 24), the devouring fiery flame (Isa 29; Joel 2), the melting of mountains (Isa 34), the rotting of the host of heaven (Isa 34), the rolling away of the sky like a scroll (Isa 34), torrential rain (Ezek 13; 38), the whirlwind (Ezek 13), the darkening of the sky (Ezek 34), pillars of smoke (Joel 3), and the turning of the moon into blood (Joel 3).
Metaphors of Fear

The metaphors of fear detected in the “Day of YHWH” texts are: Birth pangs (Isa 13), the sinking of hands (Isa 13; cf. Ezek 7), knees turning to water (Ezek 7), the melting of the heart (Isa 13; cf. Ezek 7), and a body that is like a fiery flame outside and inside (Isa 13; Lam 1).

Metaphors of Judgment

The metaphors of judgment employed in the “Day of YHWH” texts are: The darkening of the luminaries (Joel 2; Amos 5; Zeph 1), YHWH’s roaring like a lion (Joel 4), the treading of the wine press (Isa 63; Lam 1; Joel 4; Zech 14), and a reaping sickle (Joel 4).

Metaphors of Pride

The metaphors of pride used in the “Day of YHWH” texts are: Trees (Isa 2), beauty (Isa 13), ignorance (Isa 22); luminaries (Obad), and walls (Ezek 13).

Metaphors of War

The metaphors of war utilized in the “Day of YHWH” texts are: The drinking or devouring sword (Isa 27; 34; Jer 46), a human sacrifice (Jer 46; Zeph 1), and superhuman warriors (Joel 2).

The Most Prominent Microstructure

The most prominent microstructure is: כִּי קָרוֹب יוֹם יְהוָה “for the day is at hand . . .” which appears only seven times throughout the whole Hebrew Bible, six of which are “Day of YHWH” texts (Deut 32:35; Isa 13:6; Ezek 30:3; Joel 1:15 [cf. 2:1]; 4:14; Obad 15; Zeph 1:7).
The Most Prominent Parallels

The most prominent biblical parallels stem from the Exodus tradition (Exod 7–11; 15; 34), the Deuteronomic tradition (Deut 28–29; 32) and Wisdom Literature (Psalms). Inspite of the many similarities, the “Day of YHWH” texts remain unique among all biblical texts and ancient Near Eastern texts.
CHAPTER VII

YOM YHWH AS A BIBLICAL-THEOLOGICAL THEME

In light of this study of the major motifs, metaphors, and microstructures linked with the “Day of YHWH” texts, it has been clearly concluded that the “Day of YHWH” theme indeed manifests itself to be one of the major biblical-theological themes. Though there are many linkages to ancient Near Eastern texts, the “Day of YHWH” theme seems to show itself as absolutely unique among ancient world literature. Its uniqueness holds even true among biblical literature, where the crucial concept of a “Day of YHWH” only seems to be employed in the prophetic utterances of the Prophets (and Writings). It is exactly this last insight that makes one wonder if there is not any single utterance/text in the Torah that may serve as the biblical background to the “Day of YHWH” theme. Indeed, it seems as if there is such an utterance/text in the Torah—even a prophetic utterance/text—which, however, to my knowledge has not been referred to in this concrete context and therefore remained unnoticed in the scholarly world.

The Song of Moses in Deut 31–32 may be seen as a prophetic covenant lawsuit proleptically anticipating the later prophetic oracles arranged according to the lawsuit pattern.¹ However, this special song not only anticipates these later prophetic oracles

according to the lawsuit pattern, but also and specifically so the prophetic “Day of YHWH” texts. This is so because it shows strong similarities with the later occurring “Day of YHWH” texts. These similarities can clearly be seen in its usage of one and the same unique microstructural key formula (כִי קָרוֹב יוֹם “for the day is at hand . . .”) as well as in its usage of one and the same metaphors and motifs of cataclysm, judgment, and war. Yet, one could argue that the blessings and curses lists are also prophetic utterances/texts (Deut 26–28) sharing one and the same metaphors and motifs of cataclysm, judgment, and war with the “Day of YHWH” texts and should therefore be seen as on a par with the Song of Moses.

However, the differences between these are decisive and must not be overlooked. The covenant blessings and curses lists (Deut 26–28) seem to be transcended by the Song of Moses (Deut 31–32) ultimately because of at least three reasons: First, the latter is in truth not the Song of Moses, but of the “Song of YHWH.” What Moses sings to Israel is what YHWH has instructed him and what YHWH has apparently sung before (see Deut 31:19, 21, 22, 30). In its emphasis on the divine subject, the “Song of YHWH” shows a strong similarity with the “Day of YHWH” undetected in the blessings and curses lists. Second, the unique microstructural key formula is employed in the “Song of YHWH” as well as in the “Day of YHWH” texts, but not utilized in the blessings and curses lists. Third, in its articulate announcement of a day of decision (32:15), the “Song of YHWH” shows at least one element that is not conditional on the covenant, whereas all the single elements of the blessings and curses lists (Deut 26–28) are conditional on Israel’s standpoint concerning their covenant with YHWH.

Therefore, it seems much likelier that the “Day of YHWH” theme has its biblical background in the “Song of YHWH” much more than in any other text of the Torah.
Both articulately announce the imminence of a day of decision/doom. Both see this day in the context of a covenant setting. Both imply that this specific day belongs to YHWH. Both use one and the same metaphors and motifs of covenant, judgment, and war to describe this day. Both view it as ultimately unconditional. This last insight does not imply an invalidation of the covenant, whose basis is its conditions. To the contrary, it demonstrates that what is truly conditional is not the coming of the day of decision/doom, which is unconditional, but its corollary for the individual. Ultimately, this “Song of YHWH” shares the most important element of the “Day of YHWH”: The true issue for the importance of the “Day of YHWH” does not lie so much in its literary uniqueness, but within its own essence, impacting not only history, humanity, and time, but even the eschatological destiny of the individual.

Therefore, the ultimate decision with which the announcement of the approaching “Day of YHWH” seems to leave its trembling listener is on whose side he or she wants to stand on that specific day of history: On the side of transcendence with YHWH or on the side of transitoriness without YHWH.2

2That it is its transcendence, which makes YHWH’s ultimate day so unique among the announcement of other days in the ancient Near East is also elaborated on by Roy Gane, “Genre Awareness and Interpretation of the Book of Daniel,” in To Understand the Scriptures: Essays in Honor of William H. Shea (ed. D. Merling; Berrien Springs, Mich.: The Institute of Archaeology/Siegfried H. Horn Archaeological Museum Andrews University, 1997), 144.
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