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Jeffrey H. Tigay

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# ON SOME ASPECTS OF PRAYER IN THE BIBLE\*

By

JEFFREY H. TIGAY

*University of Pennsylvania*

## I. Prayer and Kingship

The root metaphor of God's kingship appears to have been the most fertile of those applied to God in the Bible. Although this metaphor was commonly applied to deities in the ancient Near East,<sup>1</sup> in Israel it bore unique fruits. The seriousness with which it was taken is manifested in Israel's unique conception of her relation with God as a covenant with a suzerain.<sup>2</sup> Conformably, Israel viewed her title to her land as a grant from the suzerain.<sup>3</sup> Her prophets were pictured as royal messengers or ambassadors.<sup>4</sup> Similarly expressive of God's kingship is the Israelite concept of

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\* See note, p. 379.

1. Cf. M. Buber, *Kingship of God*, chap. 3; T. Jacobsen, "Ancient Mesopotamian Religion: The Central Concerns," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 107 (1963), 479 ff.; "Babylonia and Assyria: Religion," *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1966), vol. 2, 972; M. Smith, "The Common Theology of the Ancient Near East," *JBL*, 71 (1952), 141, n. 25; F. Rothschild, "Truth and Metaphor in the Bible," *Conservative Judaism*, 25/3 (Spring, 1971), 18-21.

2. For recent contributions to the growing literature on this theme see D. R. Hillers, *Covenant: The History of an Idea* (Baltimore, 1969); D. J. McCarthy, *Old Testament Covenant: A Survey of Current Opinions* (Oxford and Richmond, Va., 1972); M. Weinfeld, "Covenant," *EJ*, 5, 1012-22; *berit*, in *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament*, Band I (Stuttgart, 1972), 782-808. Note the remarks of Greenberg, "On the Refinement," above, p. 66, n. 11.

3. Weinfeld, "The Covenant of Grant in the Old Testament and in the Ancient Near East," *JAOS*, 90 (1970), 184-203; cf. Hillers, *Covenant*, p. 79.

4. J. S. Holladay, Jr., "Assyrian Statecraft and the Prophets of Israel," *HTR*, 63 (1970), 29-51.

divine authorship of laws, a role reserved for kings elsewhere in the ancient Near East.<sup>5</sup>

In noting the parallelism of the service of God and the service of a king, M. Greenberg has called attention to the sphere in which the metaphor of God's kingship may have been most pervasive.<sup>6</sup> The temple was called a palace (*hēkāl*),<sup>7</sup> and in it God sat invisibly on a throne of cherubs, with the ark as his footstool.<sup>8</sup> If W. F. Albright's identification of the cherubs is correct, they were winged sphinxes found elsewhere in Syro-Palestinian art flanking royal thrones.<sup>9</sup> Like a king's servants, the priests received their office, revenues, and land from God<sup>10</sup> and ate at his table, and their Service was termed ministry (*šērūt*) and "standing before"<sup>11</sup> God. Malachi (1:7 f.) recognized that sacrificial offerings were analogous to gifts given a political overlord, and certain offerings were in fact known by terms for tribute to a king, such as *minhāh* (cf. I Ki. 5:1; Ps. 72:10; note the verbs *haggēš*, *haqrēb*) and *ma'āšēr* (cf. I Sam. 8:15, 17).<sup>12</sup> Just as a suzerain's subjects were required to pay tribute and appear before him regularly,<sup>13</sup> so

5. M. Greenberg, "Some Postulates of Biblical Criminal Law," in *Yehezkel Kaufmann Jubilee Volume*, ed. M. Haran (Jerusalem, 1960), pp. 9–13; reprinted in J. Goldin, ed., *The Jewish Expression* (New York, 1970), pp. 21–24.

6. "On the Refinement," above, pp. 64–70.

7. Cf. R. de Vaux, *Ancient Israel* (New York, 1961), pp. 282 f.; A. L. Oppenheim, "The Mesopotamian Temple," in *The Biblical Archaeologist Reader*, ed. G. E. Wright and D. N. Freedman (Garden City, 1961), pp. 158 ff., especially p. 164. For the routine of Mesopotamian divine statues being modeled on the daily routine of the royal court see *ibid.* and Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia* (Chicago, 1964), pp. 183–93.

8. M. Haran, "The Ark and the Cherubim: Their Symbolic Significance in Biblical Ritual," *IEJ*, 9 (1959), 30–38, 89–94; cf. de Vaux, *op. cit.*, pp. 299 f.

9. "What Were the Cherubim?" in *Biblical Archaeologist Reader*, pp. 95–97; cf. G. E. Wright, *Biblical Archaeology*, 2d ed. (Philadelphia, 1962), pp. 142 and fig. 41 on p. 74.

10. Weinfeld, "The Covenant of Grant," *JAOS*, 90, 201 f.

11. Cf. *BDB*, 764 top, *sub e*; *AHW*, 409b *sub 2*; A. L. Oppenheim, "Idiomatic Accadian," *JAOS*, 61 (1941), 258.

12. Cf. T. H. Gaster, "Sacrifices," *IDB*, vol. 4, 148 f.; M. Weinfeld, "Tithe," *EJ*, 15, 1156–62; "The Royal and Sacred Aspects of the Tithe in the Old Testament," *Beer-Sheba*, I (1973), 122–31. On God's right to first fruits, etc., cf. Herodotus, *Persian Wars*, VI, 57.

13. Cf. Luzzatto at Ex. 23:17. Cf. Oppenheim, "Idiomatic Accadian" (above, n. 11), p. 258 top. A number of letters rebuke vassals who have failed to visit the sovereign: *PRU*, IV, 191 (translated by Oppenheim, *Letters*, p. 137); *PRU*, V, no. 60=*UT* 2060; cf. S. E. Loewenstamm, "Ugaritic Gleanings," *Leshonenu*, 30 [1965–66], 89; H. B. Huffmon and S. B. Parker, "A Further Note on The Treaty Background of Hebrew *Yada'*," *BASOR*, 184 [1966], 36–38; *ABL*, 88 [*RCAE*, no. 88=

had all male Israelites to appear thrice annually with gifts to “see the face” of “the sovereign” (*hā’ādōn*) YHWH (Ex. 23:17; 34:23). The gulf between God and man was expressed, especially in later times, by such locutions as speaking or praying not “to” but “before” him (Ex. 6:12; I Sam. 1:12; Neh. 1:4,6; Eccl. 5:1; Targums to Gen. 18:27 ff.; etc.), a locution used in speaking of kings and other important persons (I Sam. 17:31; Dan. 2:6 ff.; Est. 6:1; M. *Yoma* I, 3.)<sup>14</sup>

Given the pervasive recognition of God’s kingship in Israel’s cult, it is worth inquiring whether prayer, too, in the forms in which it was known to the ancient Israelites, was recognizable as a form of service to a (divine) king. When one views prayer as petition, thanksgiving, praise, and affirmation of devotion, counterparts in courtly routine and protocol suggest themselves. In the king’s capacity as chief magistrate, aggrieved citizens turn to him for redress; typically the term is “cry out” (*šā’aq*, II Ki. 6:26; 8:3, 5) and the cry begins *hōšā’ā’* (*’ādōnī*) *hammelek* (II Sam. 14:4; II Ki. 6:26). In the petition found at Yavneh Yam an aggrieved laborer addresses an official: *yīšma’ ’ādōnī haššār ’et dēḅar ’abdo*, “Let my lord the commander hear the case of his servant” (cf. *yīšma’* in II Sam. 14:16).<sup>15</sup> From such cases as these there is little distance to the outcry of aggrieved orphans, widows, and laborers to God (Ex. 22:21 f.; Deut. 24:15); psalms asking God to hear, save, and judge are conceptually related to these petitions. A song of praise to the victorious king and warrior is addressed to Saul and David after the defeat of Goliath (I Sam. 18:6–7). Further praises of the king are found in Ps. 45, which speaks *inter alia* of his splendor and glory (*hōd wehādār*),<sup>16</sup> his love of justice, and his hatred of evil; at the end the psalmist declares to the king: “I shall commemorate your name for all generations, so peoples will praise you for ever and ever” (cf. Pss. 61:9; 67:4,6; 86:12;

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Pfeiffer, no. 154; cf. *ABL*, 1120 (Pfeiffer, no. 196)]; similarly between equals, *PRU*, IV, 228 f. These epistolary rebukes constitute real analogues to the prophetic messages (sometimes referred to as “covenant lawsuits”) rebuking Israel for failure to comply with covenant obligations. Cf. also the historical inscriptions quoted by M. Cogan, *Imperialism and Religion* (Missoula, Mont., 1974), pp. 124 f., § 6, nos. 4–6.

14. See S. D. Luzzatto, *’Ōhēb Gēr* (Cracow ed., 1895; Jerusalem, 1965), pp. 11 f.; M. Kadushin, *The Rabbinic Mind* (New York, 1952), pp. 333 f.; A. Bendavid, *Lešōn Miqrā’ ūLešōn Hōkāmīm*, I (Tel Aviv, 1967), 68, 373 f.; II (1971), 454 f.

15. See *ANET*<sup>3</sup>, 568 for translation and bibliography. J. Naveh, “Canaanite and Hebrew Inscriptions (1960–64),” *Leshonenu*, 30 (1965–66), 69 compares I Sam. 26:19.

16. For the *hōd wehādār* (and related terms) of God and kings see M. Weinfeld, “The Creator God in Gen. 1 and Deutero-Isaiah,” *Tarbiz*, 37 (1967–68), 131 f.

145:1 f.). In Ps. 101 it appears to be the king himself who proclaims his intolerance of evil and declares that slanderers and liars, the haughty and the deceitful, shall neither serve him nor dwell in his house (cf. Pss. 15; 24; Jer. 7:9–11).<sup>17</sup> In Ps. 20:6 the king is told *nerannēnāh bišū'āteka*, "we shall/may we shout for joy in your victory," and in Ps. 21:9–12 he is told that he will wipe out his enemies, whose schemes shall come to nought (cf. Ps. 33:10; 92:8–10). Ps. 72 expresses the hopes that the king's dominion will be universal, that all kings will serve him and pay tribute (*minhāh yāšîbû*, *'eškār yaqrîbû*; cf. Pss. 22:28; 66:4; 68:30–33; 86:9; 102:23).<sup>18</sup> The echoes of these themes in the prayers and hymns to God cited in parentheses are unmistakable. Greenberg's remark (above, p. 71, n. 16) about Ps. 45:18 applies as well to these themes: had they not explicitly been found in royal contexts, who would have guessed that their reference was to an earthly king?

Although Biblical examples of such prayer-like addresses to kings are few, they have many counterparts in the neighboring civilizations of the ancient Near East, where kings were addressed in prayers and were lauded in hymns. While this was naturally true of civilizations which deified their kings, such as Egypt and, in certain periods, Mesopotamia, these practices were not at all limited to *deified* kings. As in Israel, these were natural aspects of courtly protocol and the functions of the monarchy. W. W. Hallo finds the beginnings of Sumerian individual prayer in letter-prayers addressed to gods and deified kings, but also to human superiors.<sup>19</sup> This practice is obviously an outgrowth of letters addressed to superiors,<sup>20</sup> ideally the king,<sup>21</sup> petitioning them for favors and redress. It is true that petitions to human rulers dealt with mundane matters, but so do certain of those addressed to gods. One letter to a deified king asks that the writer's patrimony not be carried off.<sup>22</sup> An Old Babylonian petition, ad-

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17. On Ps. 101 see S. Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship* (New York and Nashville, 1962), pp. 65 ff. To the contents of the psalm itself cf. II Sam. 23:1–7. On Pss. 15 and 24 see S. Spiegel, "A Prophetic Attestation of the Decalogue: Hosea 6:5, With Some Observations on Psalms 15 and 24," *HTR*, 27 (1934), 105–44.

18. On royal songs see O. Eissfeldt, *The Old Testament: An Introduction* (New York and Evanston, 1965), pp. 98–100.

19. W. W. Hallo, "Individual Prayer in Sumerian: The Continuity of a Tradition," *JAOS*, 88 (1968), 71–89.

20. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 77.

21. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 76, nn. 27, 32; 80, n. 78.

22. Hallo, *JAOS*, 88 (1968), 76.

dressed to the moon god and possibly placed at the foot of his image,<sup>23</sup> protests against a fraud and false oath which have been perpetrated upon the writer, who pleads "judge my case (*dīni dīn*) . . . let (the god) arise, let (two other gods) judge my case, and let me see the greatness of the gods" (cf. Pss. 7:7, 9; 43:1; 80:3; 85:8).<sup>24</sup> Though mundane, these concerns were also typical and recurrent, which may account for the fact that several such petitions were recopied in scribal schools as part of the curriculum. In a form-critical analysis of these letter-prayers, Hallo finds numerous structural and thematic elements which parallel later penitential psalms, both Mesopotamian and Biblical.<sup>25</sup>

Hymns to the Mesopotamian kings are presumed to stem from "courtly ceremonial rather than temple cult" since, unlike cultic psalms, they lack liturgical notations.<sup>26</sup> Among these hymns are self-praises of the king listing his achievements.<sup>27</sup> These have no known royal counterpart in Israel,<sup>28</sup> but parallel the first-person self-laudations of God in Second Isaiah (such as chaps. 45 and 48).<sup>29</sup> Second-person hymns to the Sumerian king include thanks for his favors (cf. Isa. 63:7; Pss. 31:22; 86:13) and ask him to look graciously upon the speaker or the land (cf. Isa. 63:15; 64:8; Pss. 13:4; 80:15), express the hope that his land will revere him (cf. Pss. 64:10; 67:8; 102:16), aver that all lands praise and look to him (cf. Pss. 65:3, 6, 9; 113:3; 104:27; 145:15), that his name is famous to the heavens (cf. Pss. 8:2, 10; 76:2; 135:13), that he is mighty in battle (cf. Ex. 15:3; Ps. 24:8), that his kingship and shepherdship bring joy to all (cf. Pss. 23:1; 96:11-13; 97:1; 98:8-9), and exclaim "who is like you?" (cf. Ex. 15:11).<sup>30</sup>

In later times the sentiments addressed to kings are best represented

23. Cf. *ibid.*, 79 and n. 74, and Hallo, "The Royal Correspondence of Larsa: I. A Sumerian Prototype for the Prayer of Hezekiah?," n. 19 and accompanying text, in the forthcoming jubilee volume in honor of Samuel Noah Kramer.

24. *UET* 6/2, no. 403, studied by C. J. Gadd, "Two Sketches from Life at Ur," *Iraq*, 25 (1963), 177 ff.

25. Hallo, *JAOS*, 88, 71-89; cf. "The Cultic Setting of Sumerian Poetry," in *Actes de la XVII<sup>e</sup> Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale* (1970), p. 119 with nn. 6, 7.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 117.

27. *ANET*<sup>3</sup>, pp. 584-86; *SAHG*, pt. 1, no. 28, A. Sjöberg. "Ein Selbstpreis des Königs Hammurapi von Babylon," *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie*, 54 (1961), 51-70; cf. the prologue and epilogue to the laws of Hammurapi (*ANET*<sup>3</sup>, pp. 164 f., 177 f.).

28. Cf. Eissfeldt, *The Old Testament*, pp. 58 f., 98 f.

29. Cf. *SAHG*, pt. 1, no. 7.

30. *Ibid.*, nos. 25 and 26.

in letters to them, which express themes also found in prayers and hymns to gods. Already in the Mari letters one finds proclamations of loyal servitude to the king (cf. Ps. 116:16).<sup>31</sup> One letter from Mari reports on a vision seen by a type of prophetess in the temple: some soldiers were shouting to king Zimri-Lim, "Kingship, [sce]pter and throne, the upper and lower *region*, have been given to Zimri-Lim," and others answered, "To Zimri-Lim alone have they been given" (for the vision cf. Isa. 6:1-3, and for the proclamation, Ps. 22:22 and I Chr. 29:11).<sup>32</sup>

The Amarna letters typically begin with the author, a vassal, bowing verbally to the king of Egypt and declaring himself dust at the king's feet (cf. Gen. 18:27).<sup>33</sup> These letters are filled with stereotyped protestations of loyalty and devotion to the sovereign.<sup>34</sup> "I carry the word of the king in my heart and on my back," writes one vassal (cf. Pss. 16:8; 18:23; 40:9; 119:11,16).<sup>35</sup> Another avers that "I hold my head high and my eyes shine when I hear the word (Oppenheim: command) of the king" (cf. Ps. 19:9b).<sup>36</sup> "Our eyes look to you," writes another (cf. Ps. 123:1-2, cited by Greenberg),<sup>37</sup> who continues poetically: "Whether we ascend to heaven or descend to the netherworld, our lives are in your hands" (cf. Ps. 139:7 f.).<sup>38</sup> Another poetic passage proclaims the good fortune in store for those who obey the king and the ill fate of those who disobey (cf. Pss. 31:20; 128).<sup>39</sup> If A. L. Oppenheim's understanding of the passage is correct, the writer of this letter calls attention to himself as an example of the good fortune of the obedient; on the other hand, an Egyptian inscription of Ramses II has the defeated Ashkelon proclaiming the same, but belatedly learned, lesson on the basis of its own experience: "Happy is he who acts in fidelity to thee, (but) woe (to) him who transgresses thy frontier"<sup>40</sup> (cf. Jer. 17:5-8; Ps.1). Many letters plead for

31. *ARM* 5, no. 66 (Oppenheim, *Letters*, p. 100).

32. *ANET*<sup>3</sup>, 631a; cf. p. 450c.

33. *ANET*<sup>3</sup>, 483-90.

34. Cf. *EA* 296 (Oppenheim, *Letters*, p. 126), on which see F. Böhl, "Hymnisches und Rhythmisches in den Amarnabriefen aus Kanaan," in his *Opera Minora* (Groningen, 1953), pp. 375 f.

35. *EA* 147 (Oppenheim, *Letters*, pp. 123-25; *ANET*<sup>3</sup>, p. 484).

36. *EA* 144:16-18 (Oppenheim, *Letters*, pp. 126 f.).

37. "On the Refinement," above, pp. 68 f.; cf. *SAHG*, p. 122 top.

38. *EA* 264:14-19 (Oppenheim, *Letters*, p. 127), on which see Böhl, *op. cit.*, p. 375.

39. See n. 35. Cf. W. F. Albright, "The Egyptian Correspondence of Abimilki," *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*, 23 (1937), 197-99.

40. *ANET*<sup>3</sup>, 256d. Cf. the text quoted by Cogan, *Imperialism and Religion*, p. 45.

help from enemies, who are numerous (cf. Pss. 3:2; 25:19).<sup>41</sup> One from Jerusalem invokes the fact that the king has set his name (*šakan šumšu*) in Jerusalem and will therefore never abandon her (cf. Jer. 14:9).<sup>42</sup> Many of these letters tell of a longing to come and “see the face of” the king.<sup>43</sup>

The Assyrian royal correspondence of the late eighth to late seventh century contains similar themes. The writers address the king with strings of epithets, such as “just, martial, friend (lit. lover, *rāmu*) of the people (cf. Ps. 18:2–3).<sup>44</sup> The writers themselves are the “servants” of the king<sup>45</sup> and often describe themselves as dead or as having been so, crediting their hoped-for or past revival to the king (cf. Ps. 30).<sup>46</sup> They thank him profusely for his innumerable kindnesses (cf. Isa. 63:7; Pss. 86:13; 31:22; 145:7),<sup>47</sup> which extend to the ends of the earth (cf. Pss. 48:11; 103:11)<sup>48</sup> and are unprecedented “ever since men have existed” (cf. Deut. 4:32–34);<sup>49</sup> these kindnesses include appointing the writers to important positions (cf. II Sam. 7:18 ff.) and treating them as a father treats his sons (cf. Ps. 103:13). The writers hope that the king’s dominion will extend to all countries (cf. Pss. 22:28; 66:4; 68:30–33; 86:9; 102:23).<sup>50</sup> They long to see the king and stand in his presence and bow before him profusely (cf. Pss. 27:4; 42–43; 63:2; 84:3–5; 95:6).<sup>51</sup> They refer to wrongful accusations or suffering, such as imprisonment, confiscation of property, and lack of friends (cf. the Biblical laments of the individual).<sup>52</sup> They deny guilt (cf. Ps. 7:3 ff.)<sup>53</sup> and remind the king that he is merciful (*rēmānu*; cf. Ps. 86:15)<sup>54</sup> and that he has often pardoned even the guilty and released the imprisoned, that the ill have re-

41. See n. 36.

42. *EA* 287:60 (*ANET*<sup>3</sup>, 488c); cf. S. Dean McBride, “The Deuteronomic Name Theology” (unpublished Harvard thesis, 1969).

43. See n. 35; *EA* 286 (*ANET*<sup>3</sup>, 487d).

44. *ABL*, 6 (Pfeiffer, no. 161).

45. For several examples see *CAD* A., 251c.

46. *ABL*, 499, 756, 880; R. C. Thompson, *The Reports of the Magicians and Astrologers of Nineveh and Babylon* (London: Luzac, 1900), no. 158, quoted by Oppenheim, “Divination and Celestial Observation in the Last Assyrian Empire,” *Centaurus*, 14 (1969), 117.

47. *ABL*, 6, 358 (Pfeiffer, nos. 161, 162).

48. *ABL*, 499 (Pfeiffer, no. 172).

49. *ABL*, 358 (Pfeiffer, no. 162).

50. *ABL*, 435 (Pfeiffer, no. 164; Oppenheim, *Letters*, p. 151).

51. *ABL*, 80, 435, 880.

52. *ABL*, 2, 353, 416, 530.

53. *ABL*, 885.

54. Cf. Thompson, *Reports*, no. 170, cited by Oppenheim, *Centaurus*, pp. 14, 116.



covered, the hungry have become sated and the poor rich (cf. I Sam. 2:1-10; Pss. 68:6 f.; 113).<sup>55</sup> They put their trust in the king (cf. Ps. 25:2).<sup>56</sup> They beg to be saved (cf. Ps. 7:2; etc.),<sup>57</sup> not to be cast off (cf. Pss. 27:9; 51:13)<sup>58</sup> or put to shame (cf. Ps. 25:2), that their ill-wishers be given no cause to gloat (cf. Ps. 25:2), and that a sign of their status as the king's servant might be given, so that they would not be treated with contempt (cf. Deut. 28:10; Ps. 86:17).<sup>59</sup> They wish to witness the king's greatness (cf. Pss. 80:3; 85:8), and they will then revere him and sing his praises (cf. Ps. 9:15; etc.).<sup>60</sup> One letter waxes poetic in describing the bliss of life under Assurbanipal: law and order, fertility, and good prices prevail; old men dance, young men sing, women give birth easily (cf. Ps. 147).<sup>61</sup>

These letters illustrate ways of addressing and speaking about the king which must have had counterparts in Israel, to judge from the Biblical passages cited at the outset. It is fair to ask whether Israelites would have recognized some of the more far-reaching predications of God as appertaining to his *kingship*, given the more modest and human dimensions of kingship as they knew it in Israel.<sup>62</sup> But these dimensions notwithstanding, one finds little reticence on the part of Israelites addressing or speaking of kings. Prophets mention in the same breath seeking and serving God and "David" (Jer. 30:9; Hos. 3:5); wisdom literature combines revering the king with revering God (Prov. 24:21);<sup>63</sup> and law juxtaposes reviling

55. *ABL*, 2 (Pfeiffer, no. 160; Oppenheim, *Letters*, 149 f.), 530.

56. *ABL*, 498.

57. *ABL*, 166.

58. *ABL*, 885; Thompson, *Reports*, nos. 73 and 158, quoted by Oppenheim, *Centaurus*, 14, 116, 117.

59. *ABL*, 2 (above, n. 55), 283 and 793 (Oppenheim, *Letters*, p. 152); Rš 20.16, a letter to the king of Ugarit, quoted by E. Weidner, "Neue Entdeckungen in Ugarit," *AfO*, 18 (1957-58), 169.

60. *ABL*, 716 (Oppenheim, *Letters*, pp. 179 f.), 756 (Pfeiffer, no. 174), cf. 1261 (Pfeiffer, no. 180). Cf. *ANET*<sup>3</sup>, 249b and n. 40 of the present paper. For an early example of such a promise addressed to a god as an inducement to save his city, see the letter from Sin-iddinam to Utu cited by Hallo in the article mentioned above, n. 19.

61. See n. 55; this part of the text is translated in *ANET*<sup>3</sup>, 626. Cf. *LKA* no. 31, translated by E. Weidner, "Assurbanipal in Assur," *AfO*, 13 (1939-41), 210-13; cf. I Macc. 14:4-15.

62. Cf. Eissfeldt, *The Old Testament*, p. 99; E. Sellin-G. Fohrer, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Nashville and New York: Abingdon, 1968), pp. 277 f.

63. Cf. Akkadian *palāḫ ilī u šarri* (an example is cited by S. Paul, "Sargon's Administrative Diction in II Kings 17:27," *JBL* 88 [1969], 73); cf. a similar phrase in W. G. Lambert, *Babylonian Wisdom Literature* (Oxford, 1960), p. 63; cf. also Eccl. 8:2.

the king with reviling God (I Ki. 21:10, 13; cf. Ex. 22:27). The king is called God's son (by adoption,<sup>64</sup> II Sam. 7:14; Pss. 2:7-8; 89:27-28). He is thought to be enveloped in a Godlike halo,<sup>65</sup> and his throne is called "God's throne" (I Chr. 29:23; cf. Ps. 45:7 in the *NJV*). The Tekoite woman credited David with wisdom and discernment like an angel's (II Sam. 14:7, 20).<sup>66</sup>

The upshot of the material surveyed here is the likelihood that at least certain aspects of prayer were recognizable as one more manner of relating to a king. How self-evident this perception must have been to people who lived in an age of monarchy is underscored in I. Ziegler's *Die Königsgleichnisse des Midrasch* (1903), which lists at least two dozen midrashim comparing prayer, hymns, shofar blasts, and sacrifice to petitions, hymns, fanfares, and gifts of human servants to kings of flesh and blood.<sup>67</sup> Psalmists in Biblical times similarly seized upon modes of addressing and approaching human monarchs as a natural way to express adoration, allegiance, and submission to God. Given the roots of Israelite psalmography in the ancient Near East,<sup>68</sup> it is conceivable that many of the themes surveyed above were already present in the psalmodic traditions Israel took over from others.<sup>69</sup> But for present purposes the source of these motifs is less important than the question whether Israelites would have been able to recognize them as appertaining to (God's) kingship. There is no way of knowing how familiar psalmists or common Israelites were

64. Cf. Tigay, *EJ*, 2, 300.

65. See n. 16.

66. Cf. *ABL*, 3, rev. 7, "that which the king, my lord, has said is as perfect as (the word) of a god" (thus *CAD* I/J, 91c). Cf. the remarks of A. van Selms, "H<sup>a</sup>lō in the Courtier's Language in Ancient Israel," *Fourth World Congress of Jewish Studies. Papers*, vol. I (Jerusalem, 1967), 138.

67. Ziegler, § I, nos. 68-70, 75, 76, 81, 82, 93, 105, 107, 109, 111, 112, 114; § III, 58; § IV, 37; § V, 1, 25, 31, 32, 47, 65, 77; § VI, 19; § XI, 48. See also Exodus Rabbah 15:12 (S. Lieberman, *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine* [New York, 1962], pp. 4 f.); Midrash Aggadah 27:1, cited by L. Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews*, III (Philadelphia, 1954), 148 f. Note the statement of R. Sheshet: "Earthly kingship is like heavenly kingship" (T.B. *Berakot* 58a). My colleague, Prof. Judah Goldin, calls my attention to Abot de-Rabbi Natan A, chap. 15 (ed. Schechter, p. 61; see J. Goldin, *The Fathers According to Rabbi Nathan* [New Haven, 1955], pp. 80 f.) and S. Lieberman, *qls qylwsyn in Alei Ayin: The Salman Schocken Jubilee Volume* (Jerusalem, 1948-52), pp. 75-81.

68. E. Sellin-G. Fohrer, *Introduction*, pp. 256-60; see also the works cited in nn. 15, 19, 69, 79, 80, and 86 of the present paper.

69. Cf. perhaps *UT* 68:10 (*ANET*<sup>3</sup>, 131a) and Ps. 145:13.

with the ways their neighbors spoke of their own kings. But the Biblical passages cited above (pp. 364 f. and 370 f.) suggest that Israelites often spoke of theirs similarly. It remains to be determined whether in Israel these were merely forms of courtly speech or were part of a liturgy, regularly or irregularly addressed to and perhaps partly recited by the king.<sup>70</sup>

In underscoring the perception of prayer as a form of relating to a king, I do not wish to obscure what is distinctive about prayer to God, especially in what Greenberg calls its "peak" form. Readers of the letters to ancient Near Eastern kings have always been struck by their sycophantic and self-serving tone. The love and enthusiasm and the proud and altruistic desire to broadcast the beloved's qualities, which Greenberg has noted in the Psalms,<sup>71</sup> are not evident in the royal correspondence I have surveyed. These attitudes may owe more to other metaphors and conceptions applied to God in the Bible (father, lover), though it stands to reason that at least certain kings may have inspired such attitudes in some of their subjects. But letters to kings do reveal a sense of total dependence on him.<sup>72</sup> The courtier knows how dependent he is on the king. And just as the gifts of Joseph's brothers to the Egyptian vizier (Gen. 43:11) could not have been more than a token of respect and submission,<sup>73</sup> neither could the gifts of kings' courtiers.<sup>74</sup> In other words, the Biblical denial that the cult has absolute value to God is aptly paralleled in the tokens of a courtier's servitude to the king (as distinct from payments of tribute, on which the king literally lived).

## II. On the Composition and Adaptation of Prayers

That the worshiper often expressed himself through the words of others<sup>75</sup> may be due to several factors, such as the general conservatism of religion and a literary taste, which gave prominence to stereotyped for-

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70. Occasions for such a liturgy might have been the king's coronation (cf. Pss. 2 and 72), marriage (cf. Ps. 45), birth of a child (cf. Isa. 9:5 f.), going forth to battle (cf. Ps. 20), and victorious return (cf. I Sam. 18:6-7). Cf. Eissfeldt, *The Old Testament*, pp. 98 f., and Hallo, "The Cultic Setting" (above, n. 21), pp. 117-19.

71. Greenberg, "On the Refinement," pp. 71-75. Cf. R. Akiba in *Mekhilta Beshallah*, chap. 3 (ed. Horovitz-Rabin, p. 127: 10 ff., translated in J. Goldin, *The Song at the Sea* [New Haven, 1971], pp. 115 ff.).

72. Cf. Oppenheim, *Centaurus*, 14, 116.

73. Greenberg, "On the Refinement," p. 69.

74. Cf. D. J. Wiseman in D. Winton Thomas, ed., *Documents from Old Testament Times* (New York, 1961), 49 sub (c).

75. Greenberg, "On the Refinement," pp. 88 f.

mulas<sup>76</sup> and *topoi*,<sup>77</sup> and patterns in ancient Near Eastern literature. In later times a view of Biblical literature as classical<sup>78</sup> led to the imitation of its language in liturgical and other texts.<sup>79</sup> But the worshipers' own feelings of inarticulateness and the religious leadership's recognition of those feelings surely played a role in the growth of a fixed liturgy. Jesus' disciples asked, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples" (Luke 11:1), and he taught them what came to be known as the Lord's Prayer. The rabbis both composed prayers for their followers and formulated rules of liturgical protocol, such as: "One should always recite the praises of God, and (only) afterwards pray (for his own needs)" (T.B. *Abodah Zarah* 7b–8a; *Berakot* 32a, end; cf. 34a). Men were not, to be sure, incapable of composing short prayers spontaneously. Moses blurted out a five-word (albeit chiasmic) plea for Miriam's recovery: "O God, pray heal her" ('*el nā reṣpā' nā lāh*, Num. 12:13). The Talmud tells of a shepherd named Benjamin, who recited his own brief Aramaic blessing, "Blessed is the (Merciful One,) master of this morsel" (*b'rik̄ [rāḥ'mānā] mārēh d'hai p̄tā*, T.B. *Berakot* 40b). There must have been prayers spontaneously composed by common men and women which have not survived in liturgical texts, such as the Psalter, because they were specific to particular situations and thus of limited appeal; they were not needed by later generations (*lō hūsreḳū laddōrōt̄*), as the rabbis might have put it. But we should not overestimate the extent to which such spontaneous lay prayers are likely to have been composed. Certain Biblical narratives suggest that the individual in need was likely to resort to the stereotyped vow formula, as did Jacob, Jephthah, and Hannah (Gen. 28:20–22; Jud. 11:30 f.; I Sam. 1:11).<sup>80</sup> More important is the testimony of narratives which quote

76. R. Culley, *Oral Formulaic Language in the Biblical Psalms* (Toronto, 1967), though formulaic composition as such does not necessarily imply oral composition, as we know that scribes were trained in the use of formulae.

77. Hallo, "New Viewpoints on Cuneiform Literature," *IEJ*, 12 (1962), 19 f.

78. M. Smith, *Palestinian Parties and Politics that Shaped the Old Testament* (New York, 1971), pp. 78 f., 149.

79. C. W. F. Smith, "Prayer," *IDB*, vol. 3, top of 861; H. L. Ginsberg, "The Dead Sea Manuscript Finds," in *Israel: Its Role in Civilization*, ed. M. Davis (New York, 1956), pp. 49 f.; J. Goldin, *The Jewish Expression*, pp. xii–xiv; J. A. Sanders, "Cave 11 Surprises and the Question of Canon," in *New Directions in Biblical Archaeology*, ed. D. N. Freedman and J. C. Greenfield (Garden City, 1971), pp. 117, 127. The ultimate development of this type in the Jewish prayer book is the *Pesuke de-Zimra*, on which see L. Liebreich, "The Compilation of the *Pesuke de-Zimra*," *PAAJR*, 18 (1948–49), 255–67.

80. See H. L. Ginsberg, "Psalms and Inscriptions of Petition and Acknowledgment," in *Louis Ginzberg Jubilee Volume* (New York, 1945), p. 164, n. 14.

thanksgiving hymns. Unlike the Book of Psalms, which was naturally designed to have general appeal, narratives might have been expected to report hymns which fit closely the situations of those who recite them (as in the cases of Ex. 15 and Jud. 5, and the prayer of Num. 12:13). But, as Kaufmann has noted,<sup>81</sup> in Hannah's hymn, and (partly) in Jonah's, this is not the case. To suggest that a narrator or redactor erred in attributing this hymn is indeed to miss the point: the writer expects his audience to accept without quibble Hannah's recitation of a psalm which corresponds but little to her personal situation, and this can mean only that said audience would find such a use of psalms normal.<sup>82</sup> The narrator appears to presume that his readers will recognize this as something like a standard hymn to be recited upon giving birth (and perhaps other occasions), just as later generations accepted Psalms 30 and 92 as, respectively, house/temple-dedication and Sabbath psalms (cf. also the titles of Pss. 24; 29; 38; 48; 92-94; 96; and 97 in the Greek), and still later generations accepted all sorts of other psalms into the liturgy of occasions with which they had nothing to do.<sup>83</sup>

Greenberg has noted how the adaptability of psalms is paralleled in the adaptability of commemorative festivals.<sup>84</sup> Rashi neatly dovetailed these parallel phenomena in his comment on Chronicles' statement that Jeremiah's lament for Josiah was recited in later generations (II Chr. 35:25): "When they have any occasion for sorrow and weeping . . . they recall this sorrow along with it, just as we recite laments on the Ninth of Av for those slaughtered under the decrees of our own time," i.e., during the Crusades.<sup>85</sup>

Instructive parallels to the adaptability of psalms are found in the histories of certain cuneiform liturgical compositions. Such histories have much to teach the student of Biblical literature. They are traceable without resort to literary-critical hypotheses, since we have multiple copies and editions of these compositions stemming from various relatively datable

81. Cited by Greenberg, "On the Refinement," p. 88.

82. Cf. Y. Kaufmann, *Toledot ha-'Emunah ha-Yisre'elit* (Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, 1955), II, 505 f.; *The Religion of Israel* (Chicago, 1960), pp. 310 f.

83. See N. M. Sarna, *EJ*, 13, 1318 f.; L. I. Rabinowitz, *ibid.*, 1323-26; S. Spiegel, "On Medieval Hebrew Poetry," in L. Finkelstein, ed., *The Jews: Their History, Culture, and Religion* (Philadelphia, 1960), I, 859-62; reprinted in J. Goldin, ed., *The Jewish Expression*, pp. 180-83.

84. "On the Refinement," above, p. 89.

85. Cf. S. D. Goitein, *Iyyunim ba-Miqra* (Tel Aviv, 1963), pp. 274 f.

stages in their histories.<sup>86</sup>

An example from the genre of divine hymns may have implications for the study of psalms. One hymn to the goddess Nisaba is first attested in the form of a stone tablet from Lagash from around the latter half of the twenty-second century B.C.E.; next, from about three hundred years later, in four tablets from Ur; and finally in a prism from perhaps fifty years later than that (1749–1712). Hallo compared the earlier and later versions and pointed out a number of modifications of theological and cultic significance. In the course of this study he noted that the Lagash stone tablet is in fact monumental in character, and suggested that the divine hymns in general, like some other genres, originated in monumental form.<sup>87</sup> In an earlier study,<sup>88</sup> Hallo traced private individual prayer from early monumental form in votive objects and inscriptions, through the archival form of Neo-Sumerian letter prayers (Old Babylonian period), then a Middle Babylonian transitional phase, and finally the penitential psalms (*eršahungas*) of the first millennium. In the course of this study he noted changes in form and content as well as *Sitz im Leben*.

The monumental origin of these liturgical compositions and genres may call to mind a 1945 study by H. L. Ginsberg,<sup>89</sup> subsequently followed up by D. R. Hillers<sup>90</sup> and J. C. Greenfield,<sup>91</sup> calling attention to parallels between certain Biblical and other ancient Near Eastern votive inscriptions. Ginsberg noted that Isa. 38:9 (the *miktāb* of Hezekiah)<sup>92</sup> and the oldest recorded interpretations of *miktām* in the superscriptions of certain psalms imply that Biblical psalms, too, could take monumental form. While these studies have had perforce to combine evidence from diverse cultures, with no clear developmental pattern visible—some of the inscriptions are later than the psalms—the cuneiform material shows a clear

86. Cf. W. W. Hallo, *IEJ*, 12, 13–26; J. Tigay, "An Empirical Basis for the Documentary Hypothesis," *JBL*, 94 (1975, in press), especially n. 9.

87. Hallo, "The Cultic Setting" (above, n. 25).

88. See n. 19.

89. Above, n. 80; the full study covers pp. 159–71.

90. "Ritual Procession of the Ark and Psalm 132," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, 30 (1968), 48–55.

91. "Scripture and Inscription," in H. Goedicke, ed., *Near Eastern Studies in Honor of William Foxwell Albright* (Baltimore, 1971); "The Zakir Inscription and the Danklied," *Proceedings of the Fifth World Congress of Jewish Studies*, 1969 (Jerusalem, n. d.), 174–91; H.-J. Zobel, "Das Gebet um Abwendung der Not und seine Erhöhung in den Klageliedern des AT und in der Inschrift des Königs Zakir von Hamath," *VT*, 21 (1971), 91–99.

92. Contrast the article of Hallo cited above, n. 19.

linear development within a single literary tradition. Although this does not confirm a monumental origin for these Biblical psalms or their genre within Israel, it enhances the possibility, and even if it is not ultimately borne out, we may at least gain some understanding of the parallels between the psalms and the monuments.

For the genre of congregational laments, or laments over public disasters, R. Kutscher has recently reconstructed and studied the recensional history of the Sumerian lamentation "O Angry Sea" (a-ab-ba ḥu-luḥ-ḥa).<sup>93</sup> He has traced various developments in length, structure, mood, and *Sitz im Leben* (the latter established for some periods from ritual texts and entries in liturgical calendars) from the Old Babylonian to the Seleucid period. The earliest such laments (such as those published in *ANET*<sup>3</sup>, pp. 455–63, 611–19) were filled with references to specific events, and therefore, in their original forms, hardly corresponded to the experiences of later generations. Laments such as these fell out of liturgical usage and survived only in scribal academies as exemplars for writing. Other laments, such as "O Angry Sea," survived in liturgical usage through adaptation to more recent events by means of changes in the names of cities, gods, and the like. In its latest form, "O Angry Sea" became so general in its allusions that it could be used for practically any public disaster.<sup>94</sup>

Similar adaptation of a šu-íl-la ("lifting of the hands") prayer has been demonstrated by J. S. Cooper.<sup>95</sup> Comparing five Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian manuscripts of one hymn originally composed for Marduk, Cooper shows that in the Nimrud manuscript the hymn was adapted for the god Nabu by the *insertion* of *additional* references to that god and his city, Borsippa, with the original parts of the hymn remaining mostly unaltered; in a fragment from Assur the hymn was apparently adapted for that city's god by the *substitution* of references to Assur and his cult for the original references to Marduk and his cult. On the basis of liturgical calendar references Cooper suggests that hymns could even be adopted for different gods—i.e., sung in their temples—outright, with no modification at all.<sup>96</sup>

93. a-ab-ba-ḥu-luḥ-ḥa: *The History of a Sumerian Congregational Lament* (New Haven: Yale Near Eastern Researches, no. 6, 1975).

94. Cf. W. W. Hallo, "Sumerian Hermeneutics," in *Perspectives in Jewish Learning*, 5, ed. B. Sherwin (Chicago, 1973), 7 f.

95. "A Sumerian ŠU-ÍL-LA from Nimrud with a Prayer for Sin-šar-iškun," *Iraq*, 32 (1970), 51–67.

96. This last point assumes that a hymn sung in a particular god's temple is *ipso facto* dedicated to that god; this is not certain.

The adaptability of liturgical compositions, such as laments and *su-šl-la* prayers, for use in the cults of different gods is similar to what has been presumed for Ps. 29: that it was originally a Canaanite psalm to Baal, which was borrowed with some modification for use in the cult of YHWH; it still retains a number of features appropriate to Baal.<sup>97</sup>

A final cuneiform example illustrates that reliance on prototypes did not always stifle creativity and personal expression. In a study of an incantation to the gods of the night, A. L. Oppenheim compared several versions of one particular incantation. He found that the redactor of one version had lent it a new, personal meaning by shifting the order of the standard structural elements, changing one key sentence, and introducing several new elements in order to accommodate the changes he had made.<sup>98</sup>

While such case histories are plentiful in cuneiform studies, they are not entirely out of the question in Biblical literature.<sup>99</sup> To the extent that the doubly transmitted psalms may be datable with respect to each other, they may serve as cases in point. The Elohist reworking, in Book Two of the Psalter, of psalms which are Yahwistic in Book One constitute examples of adaptation by the change of divine names, such as illustrated in the Akkadian hymns studied by Cooper. In I Chr. 16:8–36 we have a psalm which Chronicles says was recited when David brought the ark to Jerusalem. The psalm is actually a composite of Ps. 105:1–15 plus most of Ps. 96 and a few scraps from Ps. 106, including the doxology from the end of the fourth book of the Psalter.<sup>100</sup> The text shows various divergences from the presumed originals in the Psalter, and both these and the very principles which facilitated the join promise significant literary-historical rewards to those who can explain them. To my knowledge, this psalm has not been taken into account in investigations of the composite

97. H. L. Ginsberg, *Kitbê 'Ugarît* (Jerusalem, 1936), 129–31; "A Phoenician Hymn in the Psalter," *Atti del XIX Congresso Internazionale degli Orientalisti* (1935), 472–76; T. H. Gaster, *Thespis*, 2d ed. (Garden City, 1961), 443–46; M. Dahood, *Psalms I* (Anchor Bible; Garden City, 1966), 174–80. A brief dissent is registered by Mowinckel, *The Psalms*, II, 190, n. 101, and a fuller one by R. Gordis, "On Methodology in Biblical Exegesis," *JQR*, 61 (1970), 94 f. and especially 100 f.; against the latter's strictures regarding channels of transmission note what Mowinckel says on p. 189.

98. Oppenheim, "A New Prayer to the 'Gods of the Night,'" *Analecta Biblica*, 12/III (1959), 282–301.

99. Cf. Tigay, cited above, n. 86.

100. Prof. J. Sanders has called my attention to a similar composite in a Qumran Psalms scroll; see p. 117 of his article cited above, n. 79.



psalms. Most significant for the purposes of the present discussion is the fact that the psalm praises God in general cosmic and historical terms and shows not the slightest connection with the event at which it is said to have been recited. Perhaps the use of this psalm was intended to take the reader and/or worshiper beyond the immediate situation and help him view that situation as but a specific manifestation of God's enduring qualities. In this way prayer moved—to use M. Kadushin's terminology—beyond the phenomenal to become meditative.<sup>101</sup>

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101. M. Kadushin, *Worship and Ethics* (1964), pp. 71–81.

## NOTE

This paper was originally presented in a slightly different form at the AJS Regional Conference at Duke University in March 1974, as a response to M. Greenberg's "On the Refinement of the Conception of Prayer in Hebrew Scriptures," which appears in this volume, pp. 57-92.

The following abbreviations are employed:

<i>ABL</i>	R. F. Harper, <i>Assyrian and Babylonian Letters Belonging to the Kouyunjik Collection of the British Museum</i> , I-XIV (London and Chicago, 1892-1914) (citations from <i>RCAE</i> or, where noted, Oppenheim, <i>Letters</i> , or Pfeiffer)
<i>AHw</i>	W. von Soden, <i>Akkadisches Handwörterbuch</i> (Wiesbaden, 1965- )
<i>Afo</i>	<i>Archiv für Orientforschung</i>
<i>ANET</i> <sup>3</sup>	James B. Pritchard, <i>Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament</i> , 3rd ed. (Princeton, 1969)
<i>ARM</i>	<i>Archives royales de Mari</i> (Paris, 1946- )
<i>BASOR</i>	<i>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research</i>
<i>BDB</i>	F. Brown, S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs, <i>A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> (Oxford, 1959)
<i>CAD</i>	<i>The Chicago Assyrian Dictionary</i> (each volume is cited by the letter(s) of the alphabet it covers, thus <i>CAD</i> B, etc.; Chicago, 1956- ).
<i>EA</i>	J. A. Knudtzon et al., <i>Die El Amarna Tafeln</i> (Vorderasiatische Bibliothek 2, Leipzig, 1915) (frequently cited from <i>ANET</i> <sup>3</sup> or Oppenheim, <i>Letters</i> )
<i>EJ</i>	<i>Encyclopaedia Judaica</i> (Jerusalem, 1972)
<i>HTR</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
<i>IDB</i>	<i>The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible</i> (New York and Nashville, 1962)
<i>IEJ</i>	<i>Israel Exploration Journal</i>
<i>JAOS</i>	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JQR</i>	<i>Jewish Quarterly Review</i>
<i>NJV</i>	New Jewish Version (the new Bible translations of the Jewish Publication Society, which have been appearing since 1962)
Oppenheim, <i>Letters</i>	A. Leo Oppenheim, <i>Letters from Mesopotamia</i> (Chicago, 1967)
<i>PAAJR</i>	<i>Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research</i>
Pfeiffer	R. H. Pfeiffer, <i>State Letters of Assyria and Babylonia</i> (New Haven, 1935)
<i>PRU</i>	<i>Le Palais Royal d'Ugarit</i> (Paris, 1936- )
<i>RCAE</i>	L. Waterman, <i>Royal Correspondence of the Assyrian Empire</i> (Ann Arbor, 1930)
<i>SAHG</i>	A. Falkenstein and W. von Soden, <i>Sumerische und Akkadische Hymnen und Gebete</i> (Zürich/Stuttgart, 1953)
<i>UT</i>	C. H. Gordon, <i>Ugaritic Textbook</i> (Rome, 1965)
<i>VT</i>	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>

Translations, especially of Biblical passages, are frequently my own, and are intentionally literal when the aim is to emphasize verbal similarity with a parallel being illustrated.