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Item Type	Article
Authors	Ma, Wonsuk
Publisher	Asia Pacific Theological Seminary
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Download date	2026-11-01 08:45:14
Link to Item	http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12424/236716

[AJPS 11:1-2 (2008), pp. 15-32

THE PRESENCE OF EVIL *AND* HUMAN RESPONSE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT[1]

Wonsuk Ma

The problem of evil has been an important existential question of human kind from the very beginning, as almost every myth regarding the beginning of existence (e.g., creation myths) not only acknowledges evil, but its critical role in human life. Christianity is no exception as a religion, especially when it interacts with other worldviews shaped by cultures and religions through missionary activities. In recent years, the Third Wave advocates have revived or even sensationalized the topic through the spiritual warfare movement. As evil is personalized, and strategies are developed to counter the forces of evil, the presence of evil has received attention in mission discussions.

This present study examines Old Testament evidence of evil, often in the concept of demons, evil spirits, and Satan, and how the people of God understood it and countered its presence. Their understanding certainly reflects their worldview shaped by their religious traditions, with influence from neighboring cultures and religions. It also reflects their own identity as they related to their God Yahweh.

Several groups of relevant passages will be studied in social context if it is discernible, and also in literary context. The former concern is important, although often challenging, because of the developmental nature of any Old Testament concept due to its long period of evolution through various social and religious settings. Also several parallels will be drawn from Israel's surrounding religions/worldviews and general folkloric traditions. On the other hand, recent usage of some Old Testament passages by spiritual warfare strategists will be brought in dialogue as they have encouraged popular interpretations of selected passages. For several obvious reasons, the New Testament will not be included in this discussion or

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[1] The study appears in William K. Kay and Robin Parry, eds., *Exorcism and Deliverance: Multi-Disciplinary Perspectives* (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster. 2009), published with permission of the editors and the publisher.

referencing. There is an in-depth study in the same book on the subject, but more importantly the Old Testament evidence should be interpreted in its own right without any heavy influence of New Testament usage.

Problem of Evil in the Old Testament

The Old Testament presents at least two distinct levels of thought. The first is official theology constructed by the hands of the religious, such as prophets and priests, and social establishments such as scribes. All the major theological ideologies are such official products. The existence of good and evil in this established theology is under God's absolute control, and the lack of any primordial struggle motif in the creation, just as light and darkness, are God's creation. This is, no doubt, part of Israel's constant effort to claim the absolute supremacy of its God Yahweh. The Yahwehist's monotheistic presentations of God leave no room for any spiritual beings other than God and his messengers. In this level, even if the existence of personified evil is admitted, its work comes under God's strict control, and little room is left for any dualistic notion of good and evil, or God and his foe, in conflict.

However, the other important source of Israel's thoughts is folkloric traditions, often freely shared with its surrounding cultures. Evidence of its constant influence to Hebrew theological construct is often found in phraseologies and imageries. Although often 'refined' or appropriated by established theological hands, nonetheless traces of folkloric influence are evident. In many allusions to creation, for example, not only is there such a foe as a deep sea, dragons, and other forces, but also God is presented as having to subdue such before creation properly takes place. It is in this 'popular' level of Israel's thought where a lively interaction with the forces of evil is expected and negotiated. Many Psalms such as Ps. 74 include such popular level beliefs.

> It was you who split open the sea by your power; you broke the heads of the monster in the waters. It was you who crushed the heads of Leviathan and gave him as food to the creatures of the desert (vs. 13-14, NIV).

The most common representation of the evil force is by water, especially deep sea water which sea monsters are believed to inhabit.[2] Deep water is also associated with the idea of darkness and chaos. Often scholars point out a parallel with Mesopotamian creation myths, such as Enuma Elish where Marduk, the creation deity, has to slay Tiamat, the deep sea goddess.[3] However, it was Hermann Gunkel who explored the powerful influence of folklore as perhaps being the oldest form of narratives, to the Old Testament.[4] Folklores by nature are universal or international. This universal commonality sprints from two sources, according to Gunkel: first, striking similarities in story-making and thought process, and secondly similarities in human experiences,[5] such as life's struggles with its surroundings, illness, misfortune, disaster, war and others. Folklores are an expression of such common experiences of life, and so is the problem of evil, as well as human efforts to counter its effect on human life.

Demons and Demonic Presence

The idea of demon(s) is not commonly known to the Old Testament world nor does the word lzEaz"[] provide an undisputed meaning.[6] However, the presence of 'demonic' power is widespread especially in folkloric expressions. They are often associated with darkness, the desert, or death. Their appearance is sometimes presented

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[2] J. Petersen, *Israel: Its Life and Culture* (London: Humphrey Milford, 1926), 1-11, p. 471 argues that the negative view of water is not of Israel's origin.

[3] 'The Creation Epic' found in 'Akkadian Myths and Epics', trans. E.A. Speiser, in *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, 3rd ed., ed. James B. Pritchard (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969), pp. 60-72. The book is henceforth referred to as *ANETOT*.

[4] Hermann Gunkel, *The Folktale in the Old Testament*, trans. Michael D. Rutter with an introduction by John W. Rogerson (Sheffield: Almond, 1987), p. 27.

[5] Gunkel, *The Folktale*, pp. 31-32.

[6] All four appearances are found in Lev 16:8, 10, and 26 in the context of atonement. The word, therefore, refers to a scapegoat. However, C.F. Keil and F. Delitsch, *The Pentateuch*, Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament 2 trans. J. Martin (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956), p. 398 identify this as a desert demon, as the goat is to be sent to `lzEaz"[]`. Book of Enoch uses this for a chief demon (Enoch 8:1; 9:6; 10:4-8).

in the form of animals, especially imaginary ones.[7] Egyptians described such a ghost 'with nose behind him, with his face reversed (or turned backwards)'.' Often when including folkloric elements, such ideas tend to be old. They are perceived to bring minor disruptions such as contamination of water.[9] One passage is examined as a sample reflecting this wide-spread folkloric influence to Hebraic thinking and also the idea of death as another concept commonly shared in the ancient world. They will provide a snap-shot of the popular picture of demonic presence, which ancient people felt surrounded by.

Jacob's Struggle (Gen 32:23-32)

In this saga, where folkloric elements are cast in a historical figure, Jacob wrestles with an unidentified figure through the night. When the unknown figure becomes aware that he cannot overpower Jacob and the daybreak is drawing near, he takes desperate action to rid himself of Jacob's persistence. At the end of the struggle, he pronounces blessing so that he can be released before light appears. This assailant is believed to be a night demon or the demon of the river apparently in a human form (vyai), nonetheless a divine being. This was only later connected with Yahweh (e.g., Hos 12:5 and also Gen 32:30).[10]

Several features illustrate the general perception of the demonic among ancient Israelites. It appears only at night and must disappear before daybreak.[11] It cannot withstand light. This nocturnal orientation of a demon is also found elsewhere (e.g., Gen 19:15-16). Also knowing a name implies control or power over the person and the 'man' refuses to reveal his name. Further, he has something supernatural at his disposal, such as granting a blessing by changing Jacob's name. At the same time, a human can wrestle and gain control over the demon,

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[7] For a useful discussion of various demonic figures and their non-Israelite traces, see Walter Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, trans. J.A. Barker (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1967), vol. 2, pp. 223-24.

[8] This 'Magical Protection for a Child' is found in 'Egyptian Rituals and Incantations', in *ANETOT*, p. 328, col. 1.

[9] 2 Kings 2:19-20. Salt is universally believed as potent against demons and their damages. Theodor H. Gaster, Myth, Legend and Custom in the Old Testament (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), vol. 2, p. 516.

[10] Gunkel, *The Folktale*, p. 86.

[11] The nocturnal nature of mysterious 'men' is found in many places in the Old Testament, e.g., Gen 19:15-16; Exo 12:22.

clearly indicating his inferior state as a divine being. Interestingly, the demonic figure, although hostile to Jacob since his territory is violated, can nonetheless be both benevolent and malevolent.

References to such unknown and mysterious persons abound in the Old Testament. Their actions range from harm to favor. Often referred to as a 'messenger' (of God), they bring destruction to a city (e.g., Gen 19), and at the same time rescue God's people (Gen 19). Often connected with locations such as deserts, rivers, mountains, and the like, they appear to be more malevolent than otherwise.

Death in Popular Belief

As in any culture, death is an unknown, thus often-feared realm of reality. Egyptians perceive such a spirit in the form of a ghost who comes to 'kiss', 'silence', 'injure' or 'take away' a child.[12] Eichrodt, for example, believes that the concept of a demon is closely associated with the dead, as the spirit of a deceased does not belong either to heaven or earth.[13] The word ~yJiai (Isa 19:3), appearing only once, brings a strong connect with death: It is commonly translated as 'ghosts or spirits of the dead' (NIV, NRSV), although the KJV renders it as 'charmer'. However, because of the general reverence to ancestors both living and deceased in the ancient world, death is not completely dismissed. Such spirits are consulted in times of crisis. Also a good burial for unjustly murdered countrymen is considered an act of honor as seen in Tobit's story, which is generously rewarded by God. In ancient Israel, and many ancient civilizations such as Egypt, the continuing existence after death is recognized. And the dead are believed to be confined in an underworld, often called Sheol. Therefore, it is not difficult to assume that necromancy is a common practice in the ancient world.[14] However, Israelites have been sternly warned and Saul himself strictly administers this rule (1 Sam 28:9).

In the scripture, there is no evidence that the spirits of the dead are an 'evil' force, although they are not to be disturbed as seen in the story of the witch of Endor. Sheol, their abode, is believed to be a nether land

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[12] 'Magical Protection for a Child', in *ANETOT*, p. 328, col. 2.

[13] Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, vol. 2, p. 223.

[14] Helmer Ringgren, *Israelite Religion*, trans. David *E*. Green (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1966). p. 242

and this is clearly separate from the land of the living.[15] They are believed to know what the living may not, and can give out such knowledge to the living. This process requires the assistance of a medium who calls the dead from Sheol and communicates with him. Thus, the medium of Endor calls Samuel, but Samuel's appearance is concealed to her clients. She has to describe the appearance of Samuel to ascertain his identity (1 Sam 28:14). Nowhere throughout the passage is there any evidence that the gaminess of Samuel's identity and his words are questioned. Although strictly prohibited among Israelites, this leaves a strong impression that such a practice was widespread in the ancient world, including ancient Israel.

There is little to learn about the origin of evil or human measures to counter misfortunes. However, this brief survey reveals an aspect of the ancient thought-world, where they feel surrounded by mysterious forces.

Evil and Malevolent Spirits

There are several expressions of the 'spirit' associated with God, particularly of a malevolent nature. If we isolate ones with a clear reference to an entity, they are the 'evil spirit' placed between Abimelech and people of Shechem (Judg 9:23), also one upon Saul (1 Sam 16:15, 16, 16:23; 18:10; 19:9); and the 'lying spirit' upon the mouth of Ahab (1 King 22:22, 23; 2 Chr 18:21, 22). Other references such as a 'spirit of judgment' and a 'spirit of fire' (Isa 4:4), a 'spirit of dizziness' (Isa 19:14), and a 'spirit of prostitution' (Hos 4:12, 5:4) lack a reference to a distinct entity. Among them, two passages deserve a closer look as they have sufficient details for discussion.

The Evil Spirit upon Saul (1 Sam 16; 18-19)

The coming of the evil spirit upon Saul coincides with the departure of God's Spirit from him (1 Sam 16:14), as well as the coming of the Spirit upon David (1 Sam 16:13).[16] This strongly suggests that the nature and function of the Spirit here is not life-giving, but of leadership or royal, status. Therefore, the coming of the evil

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[15] More- on Sheol, see Luis I. J. Stadelmann, *The Hebrew Conception of the World* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1970), pp. 165-176.

[16] Throughout the study, God's spirit is capitalized to distinguish it from other spirits, although using the lower case may be more accurate as the Old Testament has not yet attained the concept of Trinity.

spirit is not a natural consequence of the departure of God's Spirit from Saul. The fact that the evil spirit is from Yahweh requires our attention. The Hebrew word taeime ('from within' in a Literal sense) strongly suggests the evil spirit's close link with Yahweh. It comes from God's presence. In 1 Sam 18:10, the link between God and the evil spirit is even closer by calling it h['Ûr" ~yhi'l{a/ x:Wr, 'evil spirit of God'. One useful parallel may be found in the discussion of the 'lying spirit' as seen below, although other interpretations may be possible.

The work of the evil spirit is quite clear from the verb used. The piel form of t[B means 'to temfy', while its niphal form means 'to be overtaken by sudden terror' as seen in Dan 8:17. The forcefulness of its movement and effect is evident. The effect of the presence of the evil spirit is both internal as well as external. Internally it torments Saul (1 Sam 16:15) requiring an urgent relief (16:16, 23). The belief that mental disturbance is caused by an evil spirit or demon is a widespread notion throughout the ancient Near East.[17] For example, headache is often attributed to the activity of an evil spirit throughout the ancient Near East.[18] The external manifestation of its presence is also interesting. The first is to cause Saul 'to prophesy' (18:10) so that the hithpael form of abn has a strong reference to an external and behavioral aspect of spirit-possession, thus, meaning 'to have prophetic ecstasy'.[19] A similar behavior is reported in 1 Sam 19:23-24, although it is caused by the Spirit of God: 'But the Spirit of God came upon him [Saul], and he walked along prophesying (hithpael form) until he came to Naioth. He stripped off his robe and also prophesied (again, hithpael form) in Samuel's presence'. The evil spirit also urges Saul to kill David (19:9). In his emotionally heightened, disturbed and uncontrollable state, he is prompted to take a spear to pin David to the wall.

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[17] E.g., 'The Legend of the Possessed Princess' in *ANETOT,* p. 30, col. 1 records that the wise man found the princess 'in the condition of one possessed of spirits'... and he 'indeed found an enemy with whom to contend'.

[18] In a Hittite inscription, we see the following incantation, 'Loosen the evil tension of [his] head, his hands (and) his [feet]. Give it to (their) wicked adversaries!' 'Purification Ritual Engaging the Help of Protective Demons' found in 'Hittite Rituals, Incantations, and Description of Festivals', trans. Albrecht Goetze, in *ANETOT,* p. 348, col. 1.

[19] Robert R. Wilson, 'Prophecy and Ecstasy: A Reexamination', *Journal of Biblical Literature* 98 (1979), pp. 321-37.

Although the exact nature of the evil spirit remains to be further explored, a few things are quite clear. First, its role is to bring mental disturbance and even urges the actions of harm and evil. The evilness is at least its intention and effect, but it is difficult to conclude that the spirit itself is evil. It is interesting that Saul's courtiers recognize the presence of the evil spirit immediately (16:15). Secondly, the presence and activity of the evil spirit is immediately recognized by people around Saul. Mental disturbances are easily attributed to the work of a spirit in the ancient world. Third, there is evidence that not only the effect of the evil spirit's presence can be reduced or soothed, but also the very presence of the evil spirit can be eliminated by human effort. As soon as Saul is found to be affected by the evil spirit, his courtiers recommend that Saul search for a skillful harp player who can calm and sooth his disturbed mental state (16:16). David is able to sooth the disturbed mental state of Saul, and in fact, on one occasion, the evil spirit leaves (16:23). Fourth, related to the preceding discussion, the role of music as a cultic element is a common feature throughout the ancient world. The association of various musical instruments with the coming of God's Spirit is particularly relevant (1 Sam 10:5), as music plays an important role in the activity of the spirit, be it God's Spirit or an evil spirit. There are several musical instruments that appear more often than others, such as lyres, tambourines, flutes and harps (10:5), although others such as the trumpet are also mentioned.

The Lying Spirit upon Ahab's Prophets (1 Kings 22:22-23//2 Chro 18:21-22)

This may be the most useful passage in answering several important questions, if this can be considered as a typical representation of Israelite worldview. In this detailed conflict between Micaiah a lone prophet of God and the four-hundred court prophets of Ahab, the whole narrative is extremely entertaining as each group claims to be a true prophet(ic group). A true prophet is marked by a true prophecy, and true prophecy is tested by the presence and activity of God's Spirit (22:24). The prophetic possession of a god or a spirit and the disclosure of a secret through a prophetic utterance are widespread phenomena throughout the ancient Near Eastern world, as well attested by the Wen-Amon's journey report.[20]

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[20] 'The Journey of Wen-Amon to Phoenicia' found in 'Egyptian Myths, Tales, and Mortuary Texts', trans. John. A. Wilson, in ANETOT, pp. 25-29.

Micaiah's claim for genuine prophet hood stems from his own witness to the heavenly council scene, an extremely common literary imagery of the ancient Near East.[21] Although not part of the council itself, the prophet is allowed to observe the proceeding.[22] This experience, for Micaiah, sets him as the messenger of God's true word apart from the multitude and elaborately cultic prophets of Ahab.

In the heavenly council scene, the courtiers are called 'spirits' in this passage. The agenda was to determine a strategy to entice Ahab to begin a war to recapture a 'no man's land' in the northeastern region of Ramoth Gilead. The plan was to lead to Ahab's final defeat and death. In this council meeting, among other suggestions, a member (or a 'spirit') proposes to become an 'evil spirit' in the mouths of Ahab's prophets so that Ahab can be enticed to go for a war (22:22-23). Two things become immediately clear. First, 'enticing' in 22:20 (or 'fooling', 'deceiving' or 'seducing' as the meaning of the piel form of htP) is not viewed as morally negative, thus, justifying this decision of God. Its later parallel by the Chronicler (2 Chro 18:21-22) does not significantly differ. Second, in the same vein, one of God's 'spirits' now becoming a 'lying spirit', does not pose any moral dilemma in the ancient Hebrew mind. The net result is that the lying spirit is not lying by its own nature but by simple 'assumption' or 'assignment'. This neutral view of demons and spirits was widely shared in the ancient world. For example, Volz argues that such a neutral view of demons is the origin of Israel's concept of God's Spirit.[23] This is in accordance with the preceding discussion where everything, both good and evil, belongs to God.

Summary

Whether this case of the lying spirit can be stretched to explain other experiences such as the 'evil spirit of/from God' upon Saul or the 'evil spirit' that God placed between Abimelech and the Shechemites, at least a tentative conclusion can be made: The 'evil spirit' is not evil

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[21] There are many studies available, e.g. R.N. Whybray, *The Heavenly Councilor in Isaiah xl 13-14: A Study of the Source of the Theology of Deutero-Isaiah* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1971).

[22] Sometimes, the observer forgets his invited status and participates in the proceeding, e.g. Isa 6.

[23] Paul Volt, Der Geist Gottes und die verwandten Erscheinungen im lAlten Testament und im anschliessenden Judentum (Tiibingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1910), pp. 2-4.

by nature but by assumptionlassignment. The spirit is indeed 'of/from God' as it proceeds from Yahweh's council.

Now when it comes to exorcism, there is little evidence of any effort to deal with this lying spirit. If exorcism is human measure or attempt to counter malevolent activities of presumably malevolent spiritual forces/beings, there are two problems in applying the concept to this case. First, it is God's plan or a 'divine conspiracy' one is dealing with. Therefore, even if it is the 'lying spirit' it is still God whom one needs to deal with, not a demon or Satan. Second, in the case of Ahab's prophet, their priority task appears to be to ascertain that the Spirit of God was upon them, not on Micaiah, as the source of prophecy, which may require discernment or detection. Often 'blinding' or 'deafening' is a part of God's deliberate plan for an individual's or a group's demise.

However, in the case of the evil spirit upon Saul, there is an active response to counter the effect or even the presence of the evil spirit. David's skillful playing of the harp not only soothes Saul's mental state, but also causes the evil spirit to leave him (1 Sam 16:23). Although the inherent quality of good music is recognized in calming minds, its spiritual value as a cultic element cannot be ignored especially in 'spiritual warfare'. Music may be viewed as being representative of worship, thus, worship is a counter measure against the work and presence of any force bringing evil and harm to humans.

Gods of the Nations

There is a group of passages in the Old Testament which refers to spiritual beings connected to non-Israelite entities. Various national deities such as Baal can be included here; however, the present discussion is limited to two representative passages: one on the non-Israelite practice of cursing and the other on a spiritual being connected to a territory or domain.

Balaam (Num 22-24)

As the Israelites approach the Jordan, Balak, King of Moab, hires Balaam for a great fee to curse the advancing Israelites (22:6). Balaam, a non-Israelite seer, is known for his effectiveness as a Mesopotamian diviner to bless or curse a group of people. Cursing is a regular part of the ancient world, be it against an individual or a nation. For example, many magical inscriptions are found among ancient Egyptian materials that impose a curse upon their enemies like kings, such as 'the ruler of

Jerusalem...and all the retainers who are with him'[24] and evil forces. Often such names are inscribed in a piece of pottery and then it is smashed, believing that the power of their enemy is broken.[25] In this case, Balaam is to invoke the name of his or Balak's god to curse Israel. However, he is so quickly overcome by Yahweh, Israel's God, that he calls him 'Yahweh my God' (22:18). He further declares, 'I must speak only what God puts in my mouth' (22:38). Balaam never succeeds in cursing Israel; instead, he blessed them.

This provides a window into the ancient practice of cursing, and although numerous rituals are offered, they are not to place a curse against Israel, but are to receive an oracle from God or to obtain his permission.[26] Ancient records reveal an endless array of ritual prescriptions and prayers used to place a curse or to counter one, and to invoke the help of protective spirits. In spite of various objects used to represent the target of a curse, the power of incantation and prayer stands out. The collection of eight prayers of blessing and curses from the Sakkarah pyramid of the pharaoh Unis (25th century B.C.) is a fine example.[27] The power of such an oracle is also exemplified in a curse against such curse oracles including 'every evil word, every evil speech, every evil slander, every evil thought, every evil plot...all evil dreams, and all evil slumber'.[28]

In the current passage, there is no evidence of any action taken by the Israelites, if they ever even know of this plot, to counter Balaam's curse. The inclusion of the Balaam episode is intended to demonstrate Yahweh's sovereignty over all the nations and their gods.

Prince of Persia (Daniel 10)

This chapter has raised serious questions as Third Wave thinkers construct the idea of territorial spirits using this chapter. Even a casual reading of the chapter would reveal that the word 'prince' (rf;) appears often (5 times, in vs. 13, 20 and 21). In a visionary encounter with the

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[24] 'The Execration of Asiatic Prince' in *ANETOT*, p. 329, col. 1

[25] John A. Wilson's comment on 'The Execration of Asiatic Princes', in *ANETOT*, p. 328, col. 2.

[26] Philip J. Budd, *Numbers*, Word Biblical Commentary (Waco, TX: Word, 1984), p. 264.

[27] 'Curses and Treats' found in 'Egyptian Rituals and Incantation', in *ANETOT*, pp. 326-28.

[28] 'The Execration of Asiatic Princes', in *ANETOT*, p. 329, cols. 1-2.

divine world, Daniel is told by an angelic being that his prayer was heard by God at the moment of utterance and the messenger was immediately dispatched (10:12). However, the messenger was detained for 21 days as the prince of Persia resisted him. It was only through the intervention of Michael that the messenger is now in Daniel's presence (10:13). It is evident that the word 'prince' is used here, not in an earthly sense. The same word is used for both the (spiritual) authority of Persia and God's angelic beings.

Here, we have an explicit reference to a direct and active opposition of a spiritual force against God and his angels. Ancient minds perceived an earthly event as a reflection of a parallel heavenly occurrence. A war between Israel and its enemy was easily understood as a battle between Yahweh and the god of the enemy. Therefore, Israel's unlikely victory is credited to the work of Yahweh (e.g., Num 10:35-36; Judg 5:19-20). What is unique in this passage, however, is the presence of supernatural beings that are not under God's total control. In fact, there is a force actively opposing Yahweh and his people. The twenty-one day struggle of Daniel is described in 10:2-3, and is now explained in a heavenly term, 'Since the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to them. But the prince of the Persian kingdom resisted me twenty-one days. Then Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, because I was detained there with the king of Persia' (10:12-13). The exact nature of this conflict is not clear. Goldingay presents three possible interpretations: 1) a verbal/legal conflict with the Persian representative, 2) a warrior halting a messenger,[29] or 3) a literal struggle between supernatural armies.[30]

Related to the discussion is the identity of the 'prince of Persia'. Israel claims the absolute supremacy of Yahweh, and other national deities are reduced to serving Yahweh. As the same word rf; is used for God's angels (v. 13) as well; it is natural to apply the same meaning to the 'Persian prince', a spiritual force. It is Yahweh who assigned them their territory of domination (Deut 4:19; 32:8-9; Ps 89:6), and this leads to the conclusion that the 'prince' is the national deity of Persia. This supreme rule of God over the nations, however, does not rule out the

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[29] A presence of God's angel to oppose Balaam's way (Num 22:21-35) may be compared to this passage.

[30] John E. Goldingay, Daniel, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, 1987), p. 292.

possibility of their rebellion and conflict. Regardless of the exact nature of the conflict, it is a conflict between two heavenly powers. The opposition of the prince of Persia was successful for 21 days. The supremacy of Yahweh is never questioned, but it is his 'prince' who counters this opposition. Their evil rule or opposition to God's authority will be punished, such as Nebuchadnezzar's destruction (Dan 4:14).

In this scene of a heavenly conflict, is there any role for a human (in this case, Daniel) to play? The passage reveals that the first day when Daniel prayed, God's messenger was deployed (10:12), and only delayed by the hindrance of the prince of Persia. If this is the case, then Daniel's three week experience should be viewed as a consequence of delay. His own struggle, perhaps without knowing the heavenly scene, suggests this: 'I, Daniel, mourned for three weeks. I ate no choice food; no meat or wine touched my lips; and I used no lotions at all until the three weeks were over' (10:2-3). Although the exact point of Michael's appearance is not clear. the impression is that Michael overcomes the resistance of the Persian prince and releases God's messenger from detention. Whether Daniel's continuing prayer plays a role in God's deployment of Michael cannot be concluded, although the ancient Near East is full of rituals and incantations to influence heavenly conflicts.

Satan

The earlier Yahweh religion constructs a theology that he is the only true God. In this absolute monotheism, he is responsible for everything that exists, and this includes evil. However, in the later period, Yahweh is promoted to be exclusively good. This requires the origin of evil to be sought elsewhere, and this is where the figure of Satan appears as God's antagonist.[31]

There are three passages with references to !j'Þf': 14 times in the prologue of Job, three occurrences in Zechariah, and once in the Clronicler's account of David's census. Except for the Clronicler's use, all the occurrences are with the definite article. It is also observed that all the occurrences are from late periods, that is, from the post-exilic era.

Job's Prologue (1:6-11; 2:1-7)

As the word appears with the definite article, it thus is taken as a common noun, not a proper noun, as Satan. As used for human (e.g. 1

Ringgren, *Israelite Religion,* p. 313.

King 5:18) and superhuman figures, it is an 'adversary' or 'accuser', assumed to indicate the function of a spirit in God's court.[32] In the prologue of Job, the accuser stands with the 'sons of God' before the Lord. However, the sequence of the sons of God followed by the appearance of the accuser leaves unanswered the question of whether the accuser is a regular member of the council or an unexpected visitor.[33] The language does not necessarily present the accuser as evil in nature. If 1 Kings 22 can be used as a guide in a heavenly court scene, various spirits are assembled around God 'probably thought of as his own particular duties'.[34] His accusation of Job also comes only at the urging of God. Nonetheless, he accuses Job without evidence, leading to a 'possible conflict between the domains of heaven and earth' which is 'typical of biblical legends'.[35] Job 1:12 makes it clear that he can bring harshness and misfortune only by God's permission and to the extent set by God.

Now the agents of evil that bring disaster to Job's children and his possessions are both human and natural, and supernatural forces. The accuser can cause the Sebeans (1:15) and the Chaldeans (1:17) to attack Job's children and servants, and raid his livestock. He also brings the 'fire of God' (1:16) from the sky as well as a mighty wind (1:19) and causes physical disease (2:7). As a supernatural being and part of God's heavenly council, he is believed to have natural and supernatural forces at his disposal to harm humans. However, it is also noted that not every evil is caused by him: the verbal assault from Job's wife and the long and painful accusatory confrontations of the three friends are not attributed to the instigation of the accuser.

His role is twofold. One is bringing charges before the Lord against an individual, thus, provoking God's permission for an action against the individual; and, he not only accuses Job but also incites (or 'seduces') God to act against Job (2:3). The same verb is used to describe Jezebel's instigation upon Ahab to act out evil (1 King 21:25). The other is executing the permitted evil against the individual, and the adversary has human, natural and supernatural elements at his disposal.

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[32] H. H. Rowley, *Job,* New Century Bible (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1978), p. 31.

[33] Norman C. Habel, The *Book of Job: A Commentary,* Old Testament Library (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1985), p. 89.

[34] Rowley, *Job,* p. 30.

[35] Habel, The *Book of Job,* **p.** *27.*

It is also noted that his role is found only in the beginning and the rest is left to its own (human) course, with little evidence of supernatural intervention until the thick curtain is raised and God shows his face to Job and the three friends.

Nowhere is it found for Job to take any action to counter the evil. Job consistently maintains a long-standing faith that both good and evil come from God. His only 'exocistic' action is to have a firm faith in God, his sovereignty, his justice to vindicate the righteous at the end, and that God's deep mystery is hidden to humans. In fact, in the dramatic conclusion of the drama, the adversary is nowhere to be found. Job's vindication is not against the accuser but in God's faith in Job's righteousness. This passage maintains a mid-way between the absolute belief that everything, including evil, comes from the Lord and the absolute dualism which is found in extra-biblical writings and the New Testament. It also continues the familiar heavenly council scene as the backdrop for this revelation.

David's Census (1 Chro 21:1)

This is the Chronicler's version of David's fateful national census. This is the only incident that the noun !j'Þf' appears without the definition article, thus being a proper noun. It may be argued that by the time the Chronicles were completed, Satan as the chief adversary of God had been established. Nonetheless, a comparison between this and the older pre-exilic records yields a useful insight. This pair provides a rare window into the developmental process of the concept of Satan and the motivation behind it.

> Again the anger of the LORD burned against Israel, and he incited David against them, saying, 'Go and take a census of Israel and Judah' (2 Sam 24:1, NIV).

> Satan rose up against Israel and incited David to take a census of Israel (1 Chro 21:1, NIV).

The earlier text identifies God himself as being responsible for David's decision for a census. In fact, it was God's anger that led him to provoke (the same verb as used in Job and Jezebel, see above) David to carry out this disastrous plan. As seen in the 'evil spirit' and the 'lying spirit' above, pre-exilic minds are willing to live with this dilemma in order to project Yahweh as the supreme deity. However, in the post-exilic era, having affirmed the supremacy of Yahweh over the

nations, the figure of God's adversary emerges. Ringgren and others strongly argue that the Persian influence encourages the increasing dualistic trend in the Jewish mind. However, he rules out that the Persian thought is responsible for the concept of Satan, but the common human inquiry on the origin of evil.[36]

In this extremely scanty evidence, the provocative role of Satan is in line with our observation above. The presence or absence of the definite article hardly makes any difference; but to be compared is the naturalistic view of Satan's operation here. Unlike in Job, there is no supernatural element introduced in the passage, although his instigation itself is consistently naturalistic.

Now for the discussion of exorcism, the passage does not give any clue to ways to counter the act of Satan. The only evidence is an equally naturalistic common-sense objection of Joab, which is quickly overruled by the king (21:4):

> But Joab replied, 'May the LORD multiply his troops a hundred times over. My lord the king, are they not all my lord's subjects? Why does my lord want to do this? Why should he bring guilt on Israel?' (21:3).

Night Vision of Zechariah (3:1-5)

The vision of Zechariah presents another heavenly council scene where Joshua the high priest stands before the angel of the Lord, while the adversary (with the definite article, thus, not a proper noun), standing on God's right, brings his charge against Joshua. The filthy clothes of the high priest indicate his unworthiness in the presence of God's angel, and the adversary accuses him of this filthiness. However, it becomes quickly evident that the high priest represents the nation of Israel. The Lord's reaction is rather surprising, if we consider the two passages we studied above. In spite of clear evidence, the accuser is rebuked by the Lord himself. Nonetheless, he is a member of Yahweh's heavenly council.

As in Job, God is the advocate of his servants. In this passage, God's advocacy comes in spite of the high priest's sinfulness. In God's sight, his filthiness is compared to destruction by fire. It is God's act of salvation and restoration that causes him to snatch Joshua (or Israel) from complete annihilation.

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[36] Ringgren, *Israelite Religion*, **p.** *315*

In this heavenly council vision, the prophet interrupts the council proceedings by joining the conversation. This prophetic interruption is not uncommon (e.g., Isa 6). Although this intervention is not against the accusation, thus, the accuser, the prophetic voice becomes part of Joshua's restoration. There is no evidence of human measure to counter the accuser's activity. After all, he is part of God's heavenly council.

Summary: Human Response to Evil

The preceding discussion makes it quite clear that 'exorcism' is not a relevant term for the Old Testament, if it is defined as 'the practice of expelling evil spirits from persons or places by means of incantations and the performance of certain occult acts'.[37] A clear dualism in the balance of universal power only has a trace of its development in the Old Testament. The sudden surge of references to exorcism after the biblical period is a stark contrast. For example, Qumran documents attest to a significant development during the inter-testamental period. Therefore, it is more appropriate for the Old Testament to speak about the problem of evil and human response to it.

The root of evil, including fear of surroundings and suffering, is found in various places. Ancient Israelites were aware of the presence of adverse forces in operation, and they are often supernatural in nature. Terms are not clearly defined and clarified at all, and some of them are 'demon', 'spirit', 'prince' and 'Satan'. Often 'foreign' ideas have become part of Israelite psyche as seen in the idea of some demonic elements and Balaam's (planned) curse.

What is consistently clear is the absolute supremacy of Yahweh, leaving little room for them to function as decent deity; they often succumbed to the heavenly council of Yahweh. They become evil only as they assume an evil assignment (as in Saul's case). In the religious world where God's theodicy is firmly upheld, this is a handy way to explain the presence of evil without hurting God's sovereignty and mpremacy.

Although any proactive or even preemptive measure to counter the presence of evil is less likely, there is evidence that God's people are not just passive spectators of what is taking place in the divine world as discussed above in the case of Saul, as well as Daniel. And, although Jacob's wrestling with the unidentified figure may suggest human measure, it may also be treated as part of an unswerving commitment

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[37] I. Mendelsohn, 'Exorcism', *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (New York: Abingdon, 1962), vol. 2, pp. 199-200.

and piety. It is ultimately the all loving and all powerful God who holds the key to all the problems of evil, and the Old Testament is consistent in establishing this truth.