

The Imagery of Clothing, Covering, and Overpowering

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The imagery of “cover, envelop, clothe” in the special sense of “overpower, overwhelm” is well attested in Sumerian and Akkadian literature and has echoes in biblical Hebrew, Syriac, Arabic, and Talmudic Aramaic. An examination of the relevant passages in Sumerian and Akkadian will illumine the later usages through reference to the historical antecedents of the imagery. I will also deal with the syntactic changes that occurred in certain parallel images in biblical Hebrew when the original image was no longer recognized. I offer this study in grateful memory of our respected teacher whose deep erudition and enthusiasm for comparative philological study enriched all of his students. May his memory ever be for a blessing.

The image of “covering like a cloak” in the sense of “overwhelm” occurs often in Sumerian and Akkadian literature, one instance being the Sumerian *Eridu Lament*, e.g., ʾu₄ te.eš.dug₄¹. [ga túg.gin₇ ba.e.dul gada.gin₇ ba.e.búr], “the roaring storm covered it like a cloak, spread over it like a sheet.”¹ The king is compared to such a storm; e.g., ur.[sag] tum₆.ul₁? gim kur.ra dul.la/ur.sag ní.[te.bi ul].ù.gim gur.ra: qarrādu ša [p]uluḫtašu kīma alē māti katm[at], “hero, who overwhelms the enemy land like a storm from the south: hero, whose fearsomeness covers the land like an alu-demon.”² Another example is: a.lá.ḫul.gal.e.túg.gin_x mu.un.dul.la: alû lemnu ša kīma šubāti ikattamu, “the evil alû-ghost who envelopes [his victim] like a garment.”³

Further instances of Akkadian *katāmu*, “cover,” equated with Sumerian *dul*, with the additional sense of “overpower, overwhelm,” are u_x.lu lú.[an].dul: alû ša amēla ikattam, “the alû-demon which overwhelms a man,”⁴ lú.u_x(GIŠGAL).lu pap.ḫal.la túg.gin_x ba.an.dul: amēla muttallika kīma šubāti iktatam, “he [the asakku-demon] enveloped the miserable man like a garment,”⁵ níg.me.gar.ra túg.gin_x ba.an.dul: qūlu kūru kīma šubāti iktumšu, “dumbness and dozing have covered him like a garment,”⁶ katimšuma tēšû, “confusion overwhelmed him,”⁷ akû bēl emūqi ikattam, “the weak

1 M. W. Green, “The Eridu Lament,” *JCS* 30 (1978), 132–33, line 5.

2 W. H. Ph. Römer, *Sumerische “Königshymnen” der Isin-Zeit* (Leiden, 1965), 100; cf. *ibid.*, 91, line 6, for the same image.

3 *CT* 16, 1:30f.; *CAD* A/1, 376a.

4 *CT* 17, 33:1; *CAD* A/1, 375b.

5 *CT* 17, 6, iii, 31f.

6 *Šurpu* V–VI, 16; cf. M. Held, “A Faithful Lover in an Old Babylonian Dialogue,” *JCS* 15 (1961), 16–17.

7 *Afo* 19, 51:83; *CAD* K, 300b.

man overwhelms the strong one,"⁸ *liktumkunuši šiptu ezzītu rabītu*¹⁰ *ša* ^d*Ea mašmaši*, "may the fierce adjuration of the incantation priest, Ea, overwhelm you,"⁹ *murūš kišpi ruḫi rusi iktumu[ni]*, "the illness of magic, spell and incantation has overwhelmed me."¹⁰

In this connection we may cite the well-known boasts of the Assyrian kings, that their awesome radiance covered/overwhelmed (*saḫāpu*, *katāmu*) their enemies, causing their flight or madness. A few instances will suffice; e.g., *puluḫti melammēja iktumšunuti ina qirib mātišunu imqussunu ḥattu*, "my awesome radiance overwhelmed them, terror falling upon them in the midst of their land,"¹¹ *pulḫi melammē bēlūtija iṣḫupūšu*, "the awesome radiance of my lordship overwhelmed him,"¹² *namrīri* ^d*Aššur u* ^d*Ištar iṣḫupūšuma illika mahḫutas melammē šarrūtija iktumūšuma ša uza'inūinni ilāni*¹³ *šūt šamē eršiti*, "The radiance of the gods Assur and Istar overwhelmed him, and he went crazy; the refulgence of my kingship, with which the gods of heaven and earth adorned me, overpowered him."¹³ The images of being overwhelmed both by fear of battle and by the alu-demon are combined in a simile in the following passage: *ḥurbašu tāḫāzija kīma lē* (sandhi for *kīma alē*) *zumuršun iṣḫup*, "the fear of my battle overwhelmed their bodies like an [a]lu-demon."¹⁴

The verbs *katāmu* and *saḫāpu* are also used in a different context, that of the radiance or power of a god or a king covering the heavens and earth; e.g., *puluḫti melammī* (ME.LÁM) *šarrūtija pāt šamē u eršetim lū iktum*, "the awe of the radiance of my kingship has covered the limits of heaven and earth,"¹⁵ *nam.maḫ.zu kur.kur.ra du.la me.lám.zu an.kù.ga šú.a: . . . šamē ellūtim saḫpū*, "your greatness covers all foreign lands, your radiant glow covers the pure heavens . . . (Akkadian:) covers the pure heavens,"¹⁶ . . . *kīma imbari [ka]tmāta [rap]šu andullaka saḫip mātāti*, ". . . you (Šamaš) cover like a fog, your far-extending shade covers the lands,"¹⁷ and *[n]amur-ratka ezzīti mātum saḫpat*, "your fierce glare covers the land."¹⁸ The Hebrew equivalent to these words is *ksh*, "cover," as in Hab. 3:3.

With respect to negative qualities covering a person, *ksh* is used of shuddering (*pallāšūt*; Ezek. 7:18) and shame (Ps. 44:16). The latter passage speaks of the shame of the face covering the entire body, that is, overwhelming it. A parallel is the image of being garbed in shame, involving the verb *lbš*, e.g., *yilbēšū ḥōšēl* (Ps. 35:26, Job 8:22; cf. Ps. 132:18).

8 Erra IV:11.

9 Meier, *Maqlū*, 19, II:156.

10 Ebeling, *Handerhebung*, p. 16; l. 20.

11 TCL 3, line 69 (Sargon).

12 OIP 2, 29, ii:38–39 (Sennacherib).

13 Streck, *Assurbanipal*, 2, 8:84–86. The action of a trap (*ḥuḫāru*) is described with both the verbs *saḫāpu* and *katāmu*; e.g., *kīma šuškali asaḫḫ[ap] kīma ḥuḫāri akattam*, "I clamp down like a *šuškallu*-net, I cover like a *ḥuḫāru*-trap," KAH 2, 84:21; CAD H, 224b–25b. The same imagery is used of the overpowering of hostile magicians; e.g., *kīma ḥuḫāri iṣḫupu eḫlu kīma šēti ukattimu qarrādu . . . kīma gišparri iktumu danna*, "as the trap clamps down on a man, as the snare covers the hero . . . as the net covers the strong one"; *Maqlū*, 27, III:161–64.

14 OIP 2, 47, vi:26–27; CAD A/1, 376, 377.

15 King, *Letters and Inscriptions of Hammurabi*, #97:79–82.

16 Å. W. Sjöberg, *Der Mondgott Nana-Suen in der sumerischen Überlieferung* (Stockholm, 1960), text 11:10–11.

17 BWL, 128–29:39–40.

18 Ibid., line 48.

Other Akkadian verbs are also used in this imagery of “cover, overpower,” such as *edēqu*, “wrap,” and *labāšu* “wear”; e.g., *muṣṣu . . . libbušāku kīma*¹ [*šubāti*], “I am covered with . . . disease as with a garment,”¹⁹ and *labšāku nāku ḥalpāk guru*[š], “I am clothed with copulation, I am enveloped with intercourse.”²⁰ In his discussion of this last passage, Biggs compares the image with *ru²amam labšat*, “she is clothed with loveliness.”²¹ These passages are part of a large repertoire of passages that speak of gods, temples, and kings as clothed with power, awe, and radiance; and of goddesses clothed with sexual charm (see *CAD* s.v. *ḥalāpu*, *labāšu*).²² These qualities, worn by the bearers, add something to their basic natures. They are more than they might have been and are enhanced because of the wrapping of extra power.²³ I would like to suggest that the passage in ŠĀ.ZI.GA is also to be connected with the imagery of “being clothed/overpowered” which we are discussing. We shall see later that Talmudic Aramaic *lbš* is used to describe being overwhelmed by the sexual urge and unable to control it.²⁴ I do not deny, however, that the images of wearing enhancing qualities and of being overwhelmed by powers that clothe and cover one are related.²⁵ In both cases, an additional force is added to the wearer. The difference, of course, is that the wearer of positive enhancing qualities is free to act in a more effective manner in his best interests, while the one who is clothed by a negative, overpowering force has lost his freedom. Both the demonic and the enhancing are combined in the following bilingual citation: *zi dÁ.nu.kuš.ù muš(for mûš).me.lám.ḥuš ul.ba.sù.sù: nīš dMIN ša zīm melammē ezzu alā ulluḥū*, “[be conjured] by the life of DN whose looks are fierce with awe-inspiring radiance, equipped with [the powers] of the *alū*-ghost.”²⁶

Another passage, where the verbs *edēqu* and *katāmu* occur together, can be cited; e.g., *alū zumrī tēdiq šubāti kīma šuškali ukatimanni šittu*, “the *alū*-demon has clothed himself in my body as with a garment; sleep covers me like a net.”²⁷ The above is Lambert’s translation; the *CAD* renders “has put on my body as if it were a garment.”²⁸

We must discuss this passage in connection with Judg. 6:34, *wērûah YHWH lāḥēšāh eḏ Gidʿôn*. The various translations reflect the confusion surrounding the verse’s proper syntactic analysis. Does the spirit of God clothe (cover) Gideon or does it wear him (Gideon being the covering of the spirit of God)? Normally, of course, *lbš* in the *Qal* has as its direct object the garment. The wearer of the garment is the subject of the sentence; see, e.g., Lev. 6:3, 16:4; Ps. 93:1. If the normal, expected syntax of *lbš* is being strictly followed in this verse, then the spirit of God, the subject of the

19 King, *Babylonian Magic and Sorcery*, #12:52–53.

20 R. D. Biggs, *ŠĀ.ZI.GA, TCS* (Locust Valley, N.Y., 1960), p. 40:10.

21 *RA* 22, 172:5 (Old Babylonian hymn to Ištar).

22 Cf. *ḥalip šalummāti ša libbušu namrīri*, “[Nergal] is covered with luminosity, [he is the one who] is clothed in brilliance”; King, *Babylonian Magic and Sorcery*, #46:15; *ša tuqunia ḥalpat lābišat ḥurbaša*, “(Gušea) who is draped in battle (array), clothed in fearsomeness”; King, *Seven Tablets of Creation*, vol. 2, pl. 76:12.

23 Compare Isa. 51:9, 59:17, 61:10; Ps. 93:1, 104:1; Job 40:10.

24 *TB Kiddushin* 81b; *Ketubot* 51b.

25 Greek *enduein*, “put on, wear,” can denote the wearing of either positive or negative qualities; G. Kittel, ed., *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum alten Testament* (Stuttgart, 1935), 2:319–21.

26 *LKA* 77, v:47–49; *CAD* A/1, 376a, lexical.

27 *BWL*, 42–43:71–72.

28 *CAD*, A/1, 376a.

sentence, is wearing Gideon. It is on the inside, and Gideon, the direct object, is the garment on the outside, clothing the spirit. The LXX renders: *kai pneuma Kuriou eneduse ton Gedeon*, "and the spirit of the Lord put on Gideon," the Greek verb *eneduse* meaning "wear, put on." Similarly, the Vulgate translates: *spiritus autem Domini induit Gedeon*, that is, "put on Gideon." Luther renders: *zog der Geist des Herrn Gideon an*. These translations are literal, respecting the normal syntax of *lbš*. The uses of *lbš* in the Bible are consistent, meaning "to wear, be garbed, clothed," whether literally or figuratively; e.g., *lāḥšû kārîm haššō'n wa'āmāqîm ya'aṭēpû-ḥār*, "the meadows are clothed with flocks, the valleys are mantled with grain" (Ps. 65:14).

There are, however, deviations from the strict syntactic understanding. The Targum to Judges, concerned with the dignity of God, paraphrases "a spirit of bravery from before the Lord put on Gideon"; it is followed by Rashi and Levi ben Gershom. The latter, however, also suggests that the passage means that the holy spirit rested upon Gideon (*šārēlāh 'ālāw*). This latter interpretation moves away from the strict syntactical analysis of *lbš* in the *Qal*, where the spirit of God is on the inside.

The various versions have also moved away from the strict syntactical analysis; e.g., "and the spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon" (*AV*), "but the spirit of the Lord took possession of Gideon" (*RSV*), "the spirit of the Lord enveloped Gideon" (*NEB*, *NAB*, *NJPS*) and "Yahweh's spirit clothed Gideon."²⁹ These translations, in departing from the strict analysis of *lbš* as "wear" and understanding it as "cover, envelop," are influenced by other biblical passages in which the *rûaḥ* of the Lord, not in the sense of "life force" but as an external prophetic or charismatic enhancement, is on the outside; e.g., 1 Sam. 19:20, 23; Isa. 11:2.

One might argue that the original intent of the image in Judg. 6:34 is indeed that the spirit of God was on the inside and cite as support the Akkadian passage from *Lūdlul*, cited above, viz., *alû zumrî itediq šubāti*, "the *alû*-demon has clothed himself in my body as with a garment."³⁰ This interpretation of the passage is based on the understanding of *itediq* as a Gt, having a reflexive sense.³¹ This, however, is not the only way to interpret the form. The G form with infixed-*t* can also have the sense of doing something habitually, permanently or thoroughly.³² It is also possible to analyze the infixed-*t* form as a perfect, which cannot always be distinguished from the Gt preterite, and which in Old Babylonian expressed a past action just completed (*consecutio temporum*). In later periods it is no longer functioned that way. From Middle Babylonian on, the perfect became the narrative form of the past tense.³³ *Lūdlul* has other instances of verbs with an infixed-*t* that appear not to have any reflexive meaning; e.g., *ēteme*, "I have become," I:79; *itamgur*, "were pleasing," II:33; *ītaḥaz*, "has seized," II:75; *imtaqu*, "has fallen," II:78. In addition, *edēqu* in the G form can mean "to wrap," taking two direct objects, the person or body and the garment; e.g., *bašāmu šubāt bēl arnī ēdiqa zumuršu*, "he wrapped his body in sackcloth befitting a penitent sinner."³⁴

29 Robert G. Boling, *Judges*, AB 6A (Garden City, N.Y., 1975), 138.

30 *BWL*, 41-42:71.

31 W. von Soden, *GAG* §92c.

32 Loc. cit.

33 L. Lipin, *The Akkadian Language* (Moscow, 1973), 117-19.

34 Borger, *Asarhaddon*, 102, II, i, 3; cf. *CAD B*, 137.

The verse in *Lūdlul*, then, can also be rendered: "the alu-demon has wrapped my body as with a garment."³⁵ This understanding of the passage in *Lūdlul* brings it in line with the numerous other passages (see above) in which demons or afflictions cover the person and removes it from being a supportive parallel for the idea of God wearing Gideon in Judg. 6:34.

However, after eliminating the passage from *Lūdlul* from the discussion, Judg. 6:34 still remains a problem. We can respect the traditional syntax of *lbš* or emphasize the relationship of the image to parallel images in Mesopotamian literature, where the demon or illness covers the person. If we consider the tradition of this imagery to be primary, we are forced, as the different Bible translations are, to disregard the syntax and to claim that in a minority of cases, here and in Job 29:14, *lbš* changes its meaning and means "cover." We shall see that rabbinic Hebrew recognizes this alternate understanding of *lbš*. Moreover, the prevailing Mesopotamian imagery has the action of the demon on the outside. There are some passages where the *asakku*-demon settles inside a person's body; e.g., *asakku* (var. *-ka*) *maṣa ina zumrišu iškunū*, "they put the evil *asakku*-demon in his body,"³⁶ *asakku maṣu ina zumur amēli itabši*, "the dangerous *asakku*-demon has settled in the body of the man."³⁷ The same demon, however, can also overwhelm from the outside; e.g., *asakku kīma mīli nāru iṣḥup*, "the *asakku*-demon overwhelmed [him] like the flood of a river."³⁸ The prevalent imagery, apart from these instances and in consideration that the unique passage from *Lūdlul* can be challenged, indicates that the demon is on the outside and the human is enveloped. Moreover, the *asakku*-passages we have cited do not use the "wearing" imagery and are not comparable with the use of *lbš* in Judg. 6:34.

In general, the action of the prophetic spirit is also from the outside (resting upon, rushing upon; see below). One possible exception might be cited, 2 Sam 23:2, *rūaḥ YHWH dibbēr-bî*. This might be translated "the spirit of the Lord has spoken in me," although "by me" (*AV*) and "through me" (*NJPS*) are also possible. Moreover, the construction *dibbēr b-* is used specifically of the prophetic communication, e.g., Num. 12:6, 8. Thus, there is no certain parallel to the interpretation that the spirit of God acts or speaks from within an individual.

What we seek to demonstrate here is that the biblical usage reflects the ancient image of being covered/overwhelmed, and the traditional syntax of *lbš* in the *Qal* is being ignored and is being understood as "cover" rather than "put on, wear." For whatever it is worth, we can cite a rare instance of the G-form of *labāšu* in Nuzi being used in the sense of a D; e.g., *ṣubāta ilabassu*, "he shall clothe him in a garment."³⁹ Whether this usage influenced a rare use of Hebrew *lbš* in the *Qal* to have a sense "clothe, cover" we cannot say with any certainty.⁴⁰

35 Von Soden, *AHw.*, 186b.

36 *CT* 16, 2, 41; *CAD* A/2, 325b, lexical.

37 *CT* 17, 6, iii, 29f.; *CAD* A/2, 326a, lexical.

38 5 R 50, ii, 27f.; *CAD* A/2, 325b, lexical.

39 *HSS* V, 60, 18; von Soden, *AHw.*, 523b.

40 The verb *ṭh*, "wrap, wear," parallels *lbš*, having the meaning "wear"; e.g., *ṭeh mē'il*, "he is wrapped in a robe" (1 Sam. 28:14) and *ṭeh ʾor kaššalmāh*, "wrapped in light as in a robe" (Ps. 104:2; cf. also Isa. 59:17; Ps. 109:19, 29). However, Isa. 61:10, *mē'il šēdāqāh yē'ānī*, "for he has clothed me with a garment of triumph," is problematic. If the verb is in the *Qal* stem, its root must be *ṣ'ṭ*, a by-form of *ṭh*. It has,

In view of all these considerations, we cannot prove conclusively that the divine action is from the outside in Judg. 6:34, but I am suggesting that it is the continuing influence of the traditional imagery that is dominant, even if the use of *lbš* in the *Qal* in this verse reflects a departure from its customary meaning and syntax. A further suggestion is that the *Qal* form in this passage resulted from the absence of one of the direct objects in the historic image. We may reconstruct two theoretical possibilities: (1) The Spirit of God (subject) + covered (verb) + Gideon (object), parallel to the structure of many of the *katāmu/sahāpu* passages cited above, and (2) the same structure + a quality (object), that quality possibly being *ʿôz* or *gēbūrāh*, "might" and the verb being *hilbīšāh*. A similar structure is exhibited by Isa. 61:10, "for he has garbed me (*hilbīšanni*) in garments of victory." In our verse, however, the second object, indicating what quality the spirit of the Lord bestowed upon Gideon, is missing, either because (1) it was never part of the original idiom or (2) it was but was omitted. Thus, *hilbīš*, which takes a second object, the enhancing quality, is not used, and *lbš* takes its place.

It is important to note that in all of the Sumerian and Akkadian material we have cited as evidence for the image of "covering, overwhelming" we have demons, illness, fear, etc., as the subjects, but there is no mention of a god covering a person in a prophetic or ecstatic situation.⁴¹ Moreover, the verb *lbš*, describing Gideon's prophetic or charismatic experience, is unique in the books of Judges, Samuel, and Kings. In other cases, the spirit comes upon (*watēhī* . . . *ʿal*) one (Judg. 3:10; 11:29; 1 Sam. 10:6, 10; 11:6, 13; 16:13), rests upon (*nāhāh*) one (2 Kgs. 2:15). If, indeed, the imagery used with regard to Gideon is uniquely derived from demonic possession and being overwhelmed by negative forces, we must ask whether it has a special significance, distinguishing Gideon's experience from that of others. It may be intended to be pejorative (Gideon displays much doubt, asking for miracles) or to diminish the degree of human participation as against divine compulsion. The verb *lbš* is used of prophetic experience in 1 Chr. 12:19 and 2 Chr. 24:20, but this use must be seen as a later adaptation of an early, rare biblical word and must be interpreted in the unique theological context of the book of Chronicles.⁴²

Job 29:14, *šedeq lābaštī wayilbāšēnī kimēʿīl wēšānīp mišpāṭī* must also be discussed in this context. Understanding the second verb in the strict sense, Pope observes: "Just as Job was, as it were, clothed with righteousness, it was clothed with him."⁴³ Again, this strict interpretation is not followed by the various versions and commentators; Pope, Cahana, and Gesenius-Buhl seek to correct what they consider a loose and careless translation. However, considerations of context and other biblical passages have influenced the versions here as well as in Judg. 6:34. The LXX has: *Dikaïosunēn de endedukein ēmphiasamēn de krima isa diploidī*, "I put on righteous-

however, been proposed that *yēʿāṭānī* should be read as **yaʿāṭēnī*, a *Hifʿil* form (*BDB*, 742); cf. Ps. 84:7 and 89:46. It is therefore not certain at all that *ʿīh* can be a parallel to a use of *lbš* in the *Qal* with a sense of "clothe."

41 On prophecy in Mari, see H. B. Huffmon, "Prophecy in the Mari Letters," *BA* 31 (1968), 101-24; cf. also R. R. Wilson, *Prophecy and Society in Ancient Israel* (Philadelphia, 1980), 89-134.

42 Sarah Jafeth, *Beliefs and Opinions in the Books of Chronicles* (Jerusalem, 1977), 154-66 [Hebrew].

43 M. H. Pope, *AB* 15 (Garden City, N.Y., 1965), 188; A. Cahana, *The Book of Job* (Tel Aviv, 1938), 156 [Hebrew]; Gesenius-Buhl, *Hebräisches und aramäisches Handwörterbuch über das alte Testament*, 17th ed. (Leipzig, 1921), 378b, suggests: *Gerechtigkeit zog mich an*.

ness, and clothed myself with judgment like a mantle,” and the Vulgate renders: *iustitia indutus sum et vestivit me sicut vestimento et diademate iudicio meo*. Other renderings are: “I put on righteousness and it clothed me” (*AV, RSV*); *Gerechtikeit war mein Kleid, das ich anzog wie einen Rock* (Luther); “I wore my honesty like a garment; justice was my robe and my turban” (*NAB*); “I put on righteousness as a garment and it clothed me: (*NEB*) and “I clothed myself in righteousness and it robed me” (*NJPS*).

The relationship of the two forms of the same verb in the sentence is one of action initiated (*lāḥašī*) and action completed through the subject being acted upon from the outside (*wayyilbāšēnī*). The related phenomenon of the factitive-passive sequence of identical verbs was studied in depth by Professor Held.⁴⁴ While the second verb in our passage is not passive, our verse should be seen in the light of Held’s research.

The lexica and commentaries, dealing with Judg. 6:34 and Job 29:14, have called attention to the parallel imagery of *lbš* in Syriac and Arabic, with the sense of “be possessed.”⁴⁵ Arabic *libās* has the sense of the “utmost degree,” as in *libas aljuwaʿ waʿalḥawf*, “(so God made her taste) the utmost degree of hunger and of fear.”⁴⁶

That the verb *lbš* clearly has the sense of “be overwhelmed” can be seen from its use in the Talmud. A woman who is raped, protesting at the outset but ceasing to protest in the course of events, even to the extent that she later says she would be willing to hire the rapist for further sexual activity, is permitted to remain with her husband. Her “enjoyment” of the rape does not mean she acquiesced in it, because her passion has overcome her (*yēšer ʿalbēšāh*).⁴⁷ The use of the *Afʿel*, corresponding to Hebrew *Hifʿil*, is significant in the light of the Akkadian passages we have cited. The word for “overcome, overwhelm” means literally “to clothe someone.” The same expression is used of a young girl who has reached the age when she is ashamed to stand naked before her father. At that point, her sexual awareness has overcome her (*yēšer ʿalbēšāh*).⁴⁸ From other passages it is evident that *lbš*, even in the *Qal*, means “to clothe another”; e.g., Est. 5:1, *wattilbaš ʿEstēr malkūt*, is interpreted in the Talmud as *lēḥāšattāh rūaḥ haqōdeš*, “the holy spirit clothed her.” I do not see any reason to render that the holy spirit “put her on” since the biblical text that is being interpreted depicts Esther as being garbed in something (*malkūt*). The point of the midrash is that *malkūt* means not merely royal garments but prophecy, which rests upon a person.⁴⁹ Another midrashic passage is: *lāḥēšāh nēqāmāh lammelek wehālak ūpādāh ʿel bēnō*, “vengeance clothed the king and he went and redeemed his son.”⁵⁰

44 M. Held, “The Action-Result (Factitive-Passive) Sequence of Identical Verbs in Biblical Hebrew and Ugaritic,” *JBL* 84 (1965), 272–82.

45 *BDB*, 528b; Maan Z. Madina, *Arabic-English Dictionary* (New York, 1973), 591. Cahana, in his commentary on Job 29:14 (p. 156), cites Ephraem the Syrian, ʿʾdʾ *lbšk*, “a demon has possessed you,” but translates, incorrectly, as I have tried to argue, “the demon has put you on,” that is, “has entered into you”; cf. Gesenius-Buhl (n. 43), 378b.

46 E. W. Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, 2648b; *Quran*, XVI:113. Another translation is “so Allah made it taste hunger and fear which clothed it like a garment”; *The Holy Qurʾān*, trans. M. Sher Ali (first published: Holland, 1955), 261–62. Yet another translation is “Allah enveloped it in hunger and fear”; *The Koran*, trans. M. Zafrulla Khan (London, 1970), 261.

47 TB *Ketubot* 51b.

48 TB *Kiddushin* 81b.

49 TB *Megillah* 14b; Targum on Est. 5:1. For the connection between *malkūt* *sāmāyīm*, “kingship of God,” and Divine revelation, see Max Kadushin, *Worship and Ethics* (Evanston, 1964), 169–70.

50 M. Friedmann ed., *Pesikta Rabbati* (Wien, 1880), 76b, ch. 15.

We have noted that Syriac is rich in examples of the use of *lbš* in the sense of "be overwhelmed, overcome," by disease, laughter, fear, and by the holy spirit.⁵¹ As pointed out by Gesenius-Buhl,⁵² the Syriac version of Luke 24:49 exemplifies the extended imagery of *lbš*, where a positive, enhancing quality is worn, e.g., *dm² dīlbšwn hyl² mn rwmh*. This usage is paralleled in the Greek version's use of *enduein*; e.g., *ēōs ou endusēsthe ex hupsous dunamin*, "until you are clothed with power from on high." But this is not all; compare Romans 13:12, *endusōmetha de ta hopla tou phōtos*, Syriac *wnlbš zynh dnwhr²*, "let us put on the armor of light"; 1 Cor. 15:53, *dei gar to phtharton touto endusassthai aphtharsian*, Syriac *tyd hw gyr hn² dmthbl dnlbš l² mthblnwt²*, "for this corruptible must put on incorruption"; Gal. 3:27, *hosoi gar eis Xriston ebaptisthēte Xriston enedusasthe*, Syriac *lyln gyr dbmšyh² mdtwn lmsyh² lbštwn*, "for as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ"; Eph. 4:24, *kai endusassthai ton kainon anthrōpon*, Syriac *wtlbšwn lbrnš² hdt²*, "and that ye put on the new man"; Col. 3:12, *endusasthe . . . splagchna oiktirmou xrēstotēta tapeinophrosunēn prautēta makrothumian . . .*, Syriac, *lbšw . . . rhm² wrwhp² wbsymwt² wmkykut r²yn² wnyhwt² wngyrwt rwh²*, "put on . . . bowels of compassion [Syriac: mercy and compassion], kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering. . . ."⁵³

The wearing of enhancing qualities is also attested in Mandaic liturgies, e.g., *zyw² lbšwn wnhwr² k²sywn*, "they clothe me with radiance and cover me with light,"⁵⁴ *wnylb²s štly² dzyw²*, "and we shall wear robes of light,"⁵⁵ *lbšyh zyw² dnpyš*, "he clothes him in the radiance of fullness."⁵⁶

Similar imagery of the wearing of enhancing qualities is found in the Aramaic incantation bowls; e.g., *wlbyšn² lbwš² d²rms²*, "I am clothed with the garment of Hermes,"⁵⁷ and *mylbwšhwn ylbšwnh wmykswthwn [yk]swnh my²yl hysd² d²lh²*, "they will clothe her with their clothing, [they will c]over her with their garments, the robe of the kindness of God."⁵⁸

Let us return to the idea suggested above, that the historic image was syntactically restructured in transmission. The basic syntax of the image of being covered, both in the positive and negative senses, can be theoretically reconstructed thus: (subject) the quality {positive or negative} + (active verb) covers + (direct object) the person being covered. A transformation to a passive structure would retain the same elements in a different mutual relationship: (subject) person being covered + (passive verb) is covered by + (agent) quality (positive or negative). Thus, . . . *ōlālayik hā²ātūpīm bēra²āb*, "... your infants, who faint (lit.: are wrapped) for (lit.: as a result of) hunger . . ." (Lam. 2:19) represents a passive structure. If, however, the element indicating the covering quality is dropped, whether as subject in an active structure or as agent in a passive structure, the syntax and the verbal stem will change. It is true

51 C. Brockelmann, *Lexicon Syriacum*, 2nd ed. (Göttingen, 1928), 357–58.

52 *Hebräisches und aramäisches Handwörterbuch über das alte Testament*, 378.

53 *The New Covenant, Peshitta Aramaic Text With a Hebrew Translation* (Jerusalem, 1986).

54 M. Lidzbarski, *Mandäische Liturgien* (Berlin, 1920; reprint: Berlin and Hildesheim, 1962), 29:7.

55 *Ibid.*, 57:1.

56 *Ibid.*, 85:5–6.

57 C. D. Isbell, *Corpus of the Aramaic Incantation Bowls*, SBLD 17 (Missoula, Montana, 1975), #2:2, 6:4–5, 7:3.

58 *Ibid.*, #25:6.

that the passive participle, the *qatul*-form, can be retained when there is no agent, as in Gen. 30:42, *hā'ātūpīm*, "the weak animals" (lit.: the ones covered),⁵⁹ but we also find forms like the *Qal*, e.g., *tēpillāh lē'ānī ki-ya'āṭōp*, "a prayer of the lowly man when he is faint" (lit.: when he puts on; Ps. 102:1); the *Nif'al*, e.g., *bē'āṭēp 'ōlēl wēyōnēq*, "as babes and sucklings languish (lit.: are wrapped)" (Lam. 2:11); the *Hitpa'el*, e.g., *bēhiṭ'atēp 'ālay napšī*, "when my life was ebbing away (lit.: when my soul wraps itself upon me)" (Jon. 2:8; cf. Ps. 77:4, 142:4, 143:4, Lam. 2:12 [*bēhiṭ'at-pām*], Ps. 107:5 [*napšām bāhem tiṭ'atāp*]) and the *Hif'il*, *bēha'āṭīp haṣṣō'n*, "but with the feeble animals (lit.: when the animals cover)"⁶⁰ (Gen. 30:42).

The fact that alternative verbal stems of *ʿlp* are used indicates that an ambiguous situation results when the syntax of the original image is altered by the elimination of the subject of the act of "covering." Different solutions of the syntactic problem are possible. Operative also is analogy with other verbs in the same semantic range and, possibly, popular etymology. For example, *Qal ʿsb* can mean "to make one sad, to vex" (1 Kgs. 1:6). The passive participle *ʿāṣūḥ* occurs in Isa. 54:6 (*ʿāṣūḥaṭ rūaḥ*) and is frequent in post-biblical Hebrew. The reflexive *Nif'al* (*ne'ēṣaḥ*; 1 Sam 20:34) and *Hitpa'el* (*wayiṭ'aṣṣēḥ 'el libbō*; Gen. 6:6) can be compared with and may be the model for *Nif'al* *bē'āṭēp* (from **ne'ēṭāp*) and *Hitpa'el* *hiṭ'atēp*.

Similar restructuring is seen in the various forms of *ʿlp*, "cover" (Gen. 38:14; Cant. 5:14). The *Pu'al* and *Hitpa'el* forms used for "cover" are also used for "faint, swoon" (Isa. 51:20; Amos 8:13; Jon. 4:8). The subject doing the covering has been omitted.⁶¹ The midrash, however, offers an example of *ʿlp* in the sense of "overcome" with the cause indicated; e.g., *kaḳ ḥāyēlāh napšām šel miṣrayim šērūrāh bāhem wēlō' mōšī'in wēlō' maḳnīsīn mē'ūlāpīm mērēaḥ hayyām*, "thus were the souls of the Egyptians bound in them, not exhaling and not inhaling, overcome by the smell of the sea."⁶² What is also striking here is the conjunction of the verbs for "tying" (*šrr*) and "being overcome" (*ʿlp*). A comparison with an above-cited passage from the *Šamaš Hymn* is instructive: [*Šamaš*] *kīma qē kasāta kīma imbari* [*kaṭmāta*, "[*Šamaš*], you draw in (or: bind) like the cord [of a net], you shroud (or: overwhelm) like a fog."⁶³ Another passage with the verbs for "tying" and "be overwhelmed" is: *issaḥḥanni šeret*

59 See the writer's "Notes on the Aramaic Lexicon," *JANES* 6 (1974), 131–32.

60 The active form can also denote a passive meaning, thus, "when the animals were covered/overpowered," that is, "weak." Another analysis, common among the medieval Jewish commentators, is that a subject is to be supplied, e.g., *qārā' [haqqōrē']*, "[the one who calls] calls." So, in Gen. 30:42, the elliptical subject would be the quality doing the covering/overwhelming and the sheep would be the direct object, not the subject; cf. E. Kautzsch-A. E. Cowley, *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar* (Oxford, 1910), §144, d, e.

61 Ezek. 31:15, *ʿulpeḥ*, has been emended to **ʿullāpāh* (*BDB*, 763a) or *ʿullāpū* (*BHS*, 953). However, *yīʿalpeḥ*, "faint," occurs in rabbinic Hebrew (TB *Shabb.* 9b; *Niddah* 69b). The idea of covering is indicated by *ksh* at the beginning of the verse. There are multiple associations here, including mourning, where the head is covered (cf. Isa. 29:10), and the closing off of the water supply. However, in my opinion, the idea of being overwhelmed is not absent here.

An interesting use of *ʿlp* for "cover" occurs in the midrashic narration of the song of the cows bringing the ark back to Israel from the land of the Philistines, *hame'ullepēt mibbēn šēnē hakkērūḥīm*, "which is covered between the two cherubim" (*Mid. Gen. Rab.*, 54:4).

62 H. S. Horovitz and I. A. Rabin, eds., *Mechilta D'Rabbi Ismael* (Frankfurt aM, 1931; reprint: Jerusalem, 1960), 138, *Shira*, 6.

63 *BWL*, 128:39.

lā nablati kasanni mūtu, “a punishment from which there is no escape has overcome me; death is binding me.”⁶⁴

We can offer another illustration of the process of syntactic ambiguity and readjustment when an element of a historic image is dropped, although we are not suggesting that the image or the syntax are similar to the one we have been discussing. Gruber has shown convincingly that the expression *kālū ēynay* does not mean “my eyes are worn out” but that it goes back to **kālū (dim^côl) ēynay*, “the (tears) of my eyes are used up.”⁶⁵ Significant parallels are Ugaritic *ʔal tkl bn qr ʕnk*, “do not use up your eye’s water source,”⁶⁶ and Akkadian *nangul libba[šu] ušarripka dimāšu iqtâ*, “he became depressed; he cried out to you; his tears were used up.”⁶⁷

It is easy to see how the misunderstanding of the subject of *kālū*, that is, the belief that it is the eyes and not the tears that are consumed, came about. There are similar formations that no doubt served as analogies, e.g., *kālāh šēʔērī ulēbābî*, “my flesh and my heart fail” (Ps. 73:26), *kālū bēyāgôn hayyay*, “for my life is spent because of grief” (Ps. 31:11), *kālū bēʕāšān yāmay*, “for my days are consumed like smoke” (Ps. 102:4) and *kālū kilyōlay bēhēqî*, “my kidneys pine within me” (Job 19:27).

To summarize: the Sumerian and Akkadian idioms that describe a person as covered/overwhelmed by negative forces, such as demons or illness, are reflected in biblical and rabbinic Hebrew, Aramaic, Syriac, and Arabic. These idioms are also related to the ones that describe the wearing of enhancing qualities. When an element of the original Akkadian idiom is absent, a restructuring of the Hebrew idiom and a change in the verb stems takes place.

64 *Tukulti-Ninurta Epic*, “iv”, 28.

65 M. I. Gruber, *Aspects of Nonverbal Communication in the Ancient Near East*, Studia Pohl 12/1 (Rome, 1980), 1:390–400; Jer. 14:6; Ps. 69:4; 119:82, 123; Lam. 2:11, where “tears” is present.

66 II *Krt* i, 24–28.

67 R. E. Brunnow, “Assyrian Hymns II,” *ZA* 4 (1889), 239:11, 39–41, cited in Gruber, *Aspects*, 370.