

# Silence, Sound, and the Phenomenology of Mourning in Biblical Israel

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As a scholar for whom words are all important, Yochanan Muffs has surely experienced the insouciance of the philologist. In addition to seeking out new evidence that might extend the range of possible meanings, the philologist must also generate new associations. Thus it is that after completing a commentary on the book of Leviticus, I was able to learn more about certain words than I had known previously. In tribute to Yochanan Muffs, a master of Semitic semantics, I would like to share an illustrative example of review and reconsideration, taken from the text of Leviticus.

## I. Wayyiddōm ʾAhārōn (Lev. 10:3b)

The accepted interpretation of Lev. 10:3b is that Aaron remained silent, or was stunned, upon learning of the sudden death of his two sons, Nadab and Abihu. Thus, Onkelos renders wayyiddōm ʾAhārōn as *ûšēteq ʾAhārōn*, "and Aaron remained silent," and the Septuagint has *kai katenukhthē Aarōn*, "and Aaron was stunned; kept silent."<sup>1</sup> Whereas the rendering of the Septuagint suggests a shocked response, one we might associate with extreme depression, the rendering of Onkelos allows us to see a stoic attitude, a courageous acceptance of the divine decree.

The Masoretic pointing, wayyiddōm, predicates a geminate root, *d-m-m* (cf. wayyissōb, "he turned," from *s-b-b*). The verbal root *d-m-m*, "to be still" (here to be classified as *d-m-m* I for reference), is morphologically indicated in Biblical Hebrew, so that initially, there is no problem in reading Lev. 10:3b in the accepted way.

Both the comparative and the inner-biblical evidence to be adduced presently will, however, suggest an alternative rendering: "—and Aaron *mourned*." This rendering identifies in Lev. 10:3b a homonymous Hebrew root, here to be classified as *d-m-m* II, "to moan, mourn." Understood in this way, Lev. 10:3b means that Aaron reacted in the customary manner; he moaned or wailed and was about to initiate formal mourning and lamentation for his two lost sons.

Once this line of interpretation is considered, the commentator will read the remainder of Leviticus 10 differently. Immediately after the bodies of the two dead sons of Aaron had been taken outside the encampment for burial (vv. 4–5), Moses issued instructions to Aaron and his two remaining sons not to engage in

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1. See Liddell-Scott, *Greek Lexicon* 903 s.v. *kata-nuktikos*, passive: *kata-nugēsomai*.

formal mourning, by bearing their heads and rending their garments, lest they meet death and arouse God's wrath against the Israelite community. Rather, the entire house of Israel was to act in their stead, and mourn (the verb *b-k-y*, "to weep") the untimely death of the two priests (vv. 6–7). Mourning, even over a son or brother, would have defiled Aaron and his two remaining priestly sons at a time when their purification was just taking hold. Read in this way, Leviticus 10 actually achieves a higher degree of symmetry.

## II. Biblical Hebrew *d-m-m* II, "to mourn, moan"

The late Mitchell Dahood revived an earlier suggestion that several biblical passages would be better understood as expressing *d-m-m* II, "to mourn, moan," rather than *d-m-m* I, "to be still." Earlier, Friedrich Delitzsch and Paul Haupt had noted the cognate Akkadian verb, *damāmu*, "to mourn, moan," and, after the Ugaritic evidence became known, C. H. Gordon and J. Blau, together with Dahood, pointed out a Ugaritic verb, *d-m-m*, clearly cognate with Akkadian *damāmu* and used in parallelism with *b-k-y*, "to weep."<sup>2</sup> As will be shown here, the recent Ebla discoveries have yielded further cognates of proposed Hebrew *d-m-m* II.

The association of *wayyiddôm* in Lev. 10:3b with proposed *d-m-m* II, "to mourn," has not been adequately discussed in modern scholarship. In his recent commentary on Amos, S. M. Paul lists, in his notes to Amos 5:13, a number of biblical verses attesting the proposed *d-m-m* II, including Lev. 10:3, but he offers no comment on this reference.<sup>3</sup> Haupt had also referred in his study to Lev. 10:3b, but he suggested vocalizing consonantal *wydm* as *wayyādûm*, from the root *d-w-m*. He took the statement to mean: "Aaron was stunned, petrified." Hebrew *d-w-m*, "to stay, be silent," and its suggested Arabic cognate *d-w-m*, "to endure, continue; to be still, await," have been discussed in the literature.<sup>4</sup> It was Haupt's view that in Biblical Hebrew the geminate root *d-m-m* never means "to be silent" and that this meaning is always conveyed in Hebrew by forms of the middle-weak root *d-w-m*. Hebrew *d-m-m*, according to Haupt, means only what Akkadian and Ugaritic *d-m-m* do, namely, to "moan, mutter." In effect, Haupt concluded that in the case under discussion two lexemes, with their respective sets of meanings, were morphologically differentiated in Biblical Hebrew.

2. See M. Dahood, "Textual Problems in Isaiah," *CBQ* 22 (1960) 400–9; cf. F. Delitzsch, *Prolegomena eines neuen hebräisch-aramäischen Wörterbuchs zum Alten Testament* (Leipzig, 1886), 64, n. 2; P. Haupt, "Some Assyrian Etymologies," *AJSL* 26 (1909), 1–26; J. Blau, "Über Homonyme und Angeblich Homonyme Wurzeln," *VT* 6 (1956), 242–48, at 243; C. H. Gordon, *UT*, 385, Glossary, no. 674.

3. S. M. Paul, *Amos*, Hermeneia (Memphis, 1991), 175–76 with n. 169, to Amos 5:13.

4. See A. Guillaume, *Hebrew and Arabic Lexicography* (Leiden, 1965), 8 with nn. 21–22, s.v. *d-w-m* and *d-m-m*, summarizes the question. The association of Hebrew *d-w-m* with Arabic *d-w-m* is not without problems. The connotation "still" in Arabic develops from the notion of remaining in place, lasting, enduring, not from that of ceasing to move, being frozen in place, or the like. To attempt to restrict the cognate connotations of Arabic *d-w-m* to a single one of the three Hebrew realizations—*d-m-m*, *d-w-m*, or *d-m-y*, respectively—is misleading. The Arabic root *d-w-m* can shed light on all three realizations in Hebrew, in varying contexts. And yet, one suspects that some contamination may have occurred in Arabic so that more than one lexeme is represented by Arabic *d-w-m*.

Throughout the present discussion, it should be borne in mind that movement is a function of sound, that what is silent is still, and that what moves produces sound. It is our view that stillness and silence, on the one hand, and moaning and similar sounds, on the other, are indeed distinguished from each other in Biblical Hebrew, but on a different basis. We will review here a series of Hebrew forms meaning "to be still, immobile, silent" and morphologically derived from a geminate root, *d-m-m*, based on their Masoretic vocalization. To deny these forms to *d-m-m* I one would have to revocalize all of these on the model of the middle-weak root *d-w-m*, assuming this to be possible, thereby reading *d-m-m* I out of existence entirely. One doubts that such a process would yield credible results. The reality of *d-m-m* I in Biblical Hebrew should be acknowledged.

We prefer to classify the evidence as follows. On the one hand is *d-m-m* II, cognate with Eblaic, Akkadian, and Ugaritic lexemes, and bearing the primary sense of mourning and the emission of sounds associated with mourning. On the other hand are three morphological realizations of a lexeme which connotes stillness and immobility as well as silence: (a) a homonymous geminate form, to be registered as *d-m-m* I; (b) a middle-weak form *d-w-m*; and (c) a third-weak form, homonymous with *d-m-y* I, "to be equal, similar," but to be registered as *d-m-y* II. The meanings attendant upon these three realizations seem to be semantically compatible.

For his part, Blau likewise postulated three realizations of an originally distinct lexeme connoting shock, stillness, and silence. Furthermore, he acknowledged an originally homonymous geminate form, with cognates in Akkadian and Ugaritic, that connoted moaning and mourning. But Blau concluded that *d-m-m* I and *d-m-m* II no longer functioned as genuine, distinguishable homonyms in Biblical Hebrew. These are his words:

Eine klare scheidung zwischen diesen beiden Wurzeln durchzufuhren ist dagegen unmöglich, denn die Bedeutungen "schweigen > (vor schmerz) erstarren" und "wehklagen" beruhen sich und wurden naturgemäss kontaminiert.

As a consequence of the assumed compatibility of the two sets of connotations we are to conclude, according to Blau, that original homonyms, whose existence is indicated by Akkadian and Ugaritic, eventually blended or interpenetrated so that in Biblical Hebrew they were no longer distinguishable in their usage.

Although the process of "contamination" that Blau describes is well attested in its own right, we must dispute his judgment on the matter of semantic fields. Anticipating the results of our detailed review of both the comparative and the biblical evidence, it is clear that the notion of "mourning, moaning" is differentiated in biblical usage from "stillness, silence, cessation" and that it operates in different contexts.

Whereas the two sets of meanings are hardly compatible with each other, it is admittedly difficult in certain instances to determine which lexeme is being expressed by a given form in Biblical Hebrew. This is so, however, not because the two sets of meanings are compatible and have become indistinguishable in their usage but because they are realized in forms which are, in the Masoretic vocalization, usually homophonous as well as homographic. We must also remain sensitive

to plays on words, to the phenomenon of *double entendre*. It is quite possible that in certain instances, biblical writers intended that the reader associate both sets of meanings homophonously in a given verse. Nevertheless, the biblical writers undoubtedly knew the difference between what we are here calling *d-m-m* I and what we are calling *d-m-m* II, and it is their meaning, after all, that we wish to decode.<sup>5</sup>

Dahood pointed to several likely attestations of *d-m-m* II in Biblical Hebrew that will be taken up here; but, as mentioned, he never applied his insight to Lev. 10:3b. As will be shown, some of Dahood's suggested attestations of Hebrew *d-m-m* II stand up under scrutiny, whereas others will be questioned. In a similar way, we shall suggest additional biblical attestations of *d-m-m* II.

### III. Comparative Indications

It would be well to begin by surveying the comparative evidence bearing on cognates of proposed *d-m-m* II in Biblical Hebrew. Akkadian *damāmu*, "to mourn," and nominal *dimmatu*, "moaning" (and similar nominal forms such as *dimmu* and *dummu*, *damāmu* and *dumāmu*), attest clear connotations in context. In the lexical series as in literary sources verbal *da-ma-mu* is synonymous with *ba-ku-u*, "to weep," and we read of humans and animals, as well as objects such as swamp reeds emitting sounds akin to moaning. Especially interesting is the use of this verb with respect to the cooing of doves, as we shall observe further on, in the analysis of Hebrew diction. The occurrence of Š-stem *šudmumu*, "to order another to mourn," in Akkadian, in parallelism with *šubkū*, "to cause to weep," also serves to reinforce the sense conveyed by the Akkadian verb. Thus we read in the seventh part of the Gilgamesh epic:

[ušabk]ak-ka niši ša Uruk; ú-šad-ma-ma-ak-ka [šamḥāti]

He will order the people of Uruk to perform the mourning (ritual) for you, and the courtisans to mourn for you.<sup>6</sup>

Recently, evidence from Eblaic texts has added to our knowledge of the cognate semitic root which would be expressed by Biblical Hebrew *d-m-m* II. I have referred elsewhere to Eblaic texts, originally edited by G. Pettinato, wherein ideographic *si-dū* is a term meaning "lament." In a bilingual lexicon, also edited by Pettinato, ideographic *si-dū* is rendered by the Eblaic noun *t/di-mu-mu*, "lament."<sup>7</sup>

To be more specific, royal records from the reign of Ibbi-Zikir, the last king of Ebla in the early period, list various sacrifices to be offered during the month of

5. The recovery of lost forms that had been masked by Masoretic vocalizations was discussed incisively by H. L. Ginsberg, "Behind the Masoretic Text," *Tarbiz* 5 (1933-34), 208-23; *Tarbiz* 6 (1934-35), 543 [in Hebrew].

6. See Thompson, *Gilgamesh*, VII, iii:45, and CAD D, 60-61, s.v. *damāmu*; and 143, s.v. *dimmatu*.

7. G. Pettinato, *Culto ufficiale ad Ebla durante il regno di Ibbi-Šipīš* (Rome, 1979), 47, text 1, rev. ii:24-iii:12; 84, text 3, rev. xii:21-26. Further: G. Pettinato, *Testi lessicali bilingui della Biblioteca L.2769* (Naples, 1982), 320, entry no. 1116. Also see B. A. Levine, "The Impure Dead and the Cult of the Dead: Polarization and Opposition in Israelite Religion," *Bitzaron*, Jubilee Issue (1990-91), 80-89 [in Hebrew].

the Ishtar festival by the king of Ebla and his family and court. Among these are: SI-DÜ.SI-DÜ EN.EN, "the laments for the kings." These rituals were apparently part of the royal cult of dead kings at Ebla.

An actual derivative of *d-m-m*, "to mourn, lament" (possibly realized as *d-m-y*) occurs in a collection of administrative texts from Ebla, recently re-edited by A. Archi. There we read of a deposit of textiles designated: *in da-ma-ti* K1-SUR, "for the lament of the catacomb."<sup>8</sup> The Eblaic lexicon thus yields two cognate terms meaning "lament," *ti/di-mu-mu* and *da-ma-tu*, thereby indicating a provenience for this lexeme in the West Semitic languages prior to the Old Babylonian period in which Akkadian *damāmu* is first attested.

We agree with Dahood, who finds *d-m-m* II in the Ugaritic Keret epic, where *d-m-m*, "to mourn," parallels *b-k-y*, "to weep":

|                               |                                                       |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>bn.al tbkn.</i>            | Son, weep not,                                        |
| <i>al / tdm. ly.</i>          | Lament not for me;                                    |
| <i>al tkl. bn / qr. ʿnk.</i>  | Exhaust not, son, the well of your eye,               |
| <i>mḥ. rišk / udmʿt.</i>      | The marrow of your head with tears.                   |
| <i>ṣḥ. aḥtk / ṭmmṭ.</i>       | Speak to your sister, Thitmanat,                      |
| <i>bt. ḥmḥh / dnn.</i>        | A young woman whose <i>passion</i> is strong;         |
| <i>tbkn. wtdm. ly</i>         | Let her weep and lament for me.                       |
| [ḡzr]. <i>al. trgm. laḥtk</i> | Hero, truly speak to your sister,                     |
| [t]tr[gm] l[h. t]dm           | Speak to her and let her lament.                      |
| <i>aḥtk / ydʿt krḥmt</i>      | Your sister—I know she is compassionate. <sup>9</sup> |

Not only does parallelism reinforce the conclusion that here we have *d-m-m* II and not *d-w-m*, but poetic context considerably clarifies Ugaritic usage of the verb *d-m-m*, for we read, in words reminiscent of biblical verse, of eye-wells gone dry from excessive weeping.<sup>10</sup>

What has not been given adequate notice is the fact that in the same Keret epic, the root *d-w-m* occurs twice and means "to stay put, tarry." In the theophany, El instructed Keret at one point:

|                         |                                              |
|-------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| <i>dm ym wṭn</i>        | Tarry a day and a second;                    |
| <i>ṭlt rbʿ ym</i>       | A third, a fourth day;                       |
| <i>ḥ(?)mš ṭdt ym</i>    | A fifth, a sixth day.                        |
| <i>ḥzk al tsʿl qṛth</i> | Thine arrows shoot not into the city,        |
| <i>abn ydk mšdpt</i>    | (Nor)thy hand-stones <i>flung headlong</i> . |

We have presented the translation by H. L. Ginsberg, which is preferable to Gibson's rendering: "Stay quiet a day and a second."<sup>11</sup> Here we have the singular,

8. A. Archi, *Archivi reali di Ebla, Testi I, Testi amministrativi: Assegni di Tessuti* (Archivio L.2769) (Rome, 1985), 126, text 13, rev. iv:5-7. The same document had been edited earlier by G. Pettinato, *Testi Amministrativi della Biblioteca L.2769* (Naples, 1980), 60, text 7, rev. iii:15-iv:7, and see comments, 68.

9. J. C. L. Gibson, *Canaanite Myths and Legends* (Edinburgh, 1977), 95, no. 16:25-33. Gibson's translation has been adapted.

10. See Jer. 8:23; Lam. 1:16; 3:47-48, 51.

11. Text and translation in Gibson, *CML*, 85, no. 14, iii:114-18. Preferred translation by H. L. Ginsberg in *ANET*, 144, ll. 116-18.

masculine imperative of *d-w-m*, "to remain in place, stay," expressing the very connotation that characterizes the Arabic cognate, *d-w-m*. That the morphological root is, indeed, *d-w-m*, emerges from the second occurrence, in the chronicle of Keret's expedition:

*d[m] ym wtn*

He tarr[ied] a day and a second.<sup>12</sup>

Notwithstanding the need to restore *mem*, it is virtually certain that here we have the 3rd masculine perfect form of *d-w-m* since in the Keret epic the fulfillment of what has been predicted carefully follows the predictive formulation. What we learn from Ugaritic usage is, therefore, that the notion of immobility is clearly differentiated from that of moaning and mourning and is expressed by a separate word.

The common denominator unifying all of the cognate evidence relevant to *d-m-m* II is a complex of sounds associated with mourning and death and, by extension, of sounds akin to moaning, like the cooing of doves and sounds emitted by certain other animals, as well as by the rustling of reeds.

#### IV. Biblical Attestations of Hebrew *d-m-m* II

Now that comparative evidence has been reviewed, it would be well to establish the occurrence of *d-m-m* II in Biblical Hebrew, independent of its proposed attestation in Lev. 10:3b. The first passage to be examined is Isa. 23:1-2:

*maššāʾ Šôr hêlîlû ʾoniyyôt Taršîš  
kî šuddad mibbayit  
mibbôʾ mēʾereš Kittîm niglâh lâmô  
dōmmû yôšēbê ʾî  
sôher Šidôn  
ʿôbēr yâm miPāk*

The vision of Tyre:

*Howl*, you ships of Tarshish!

For havoc has been wrought, not a house is left;

As they came from the land of Kittim,

This was revealed to them.

"*Moan*, you coastal dwellers,

You traders of Sidon,

Once thronged by seafarers."

The above translation, taken from NJPS, highlights the parallelism of *hêlîlû*, "Howl" (or "wail"), and *dōmmû*, "Moan." The meaning "be still, silent" is possible, of course, since the B colon does not always reiterate the sense of the A colon in poetic parallelism. And yet, there is something irresistible about the striking parallelism that is produced by proposed *d-m-m* II in this verse, which was central to Dahood's analysis, and was first so understood by Delitzsch.

12. See Gibson, *CML*, 88, no. 14, v:218.

A second attestation of *d-m-m* II is probably to be found in Lam. 2:10:

*yēšēbū lāʾāreš yiddēmū*  
*ziqnē bat-Šiyyôn*

They sit on the ground; they *mourn*,  
The elders of Daughter-Zion;  
They have placed dirt over their head,  
Wrapping themselves in sackcloth.  
The young women of Jerusalem  
Have lowered their head to the ground.

The context is demonstrably one of formal mourning. As noted by Dahood, it was customary in ancient Israel as at Ugarit to mourn sitting on the ground.<sup>13</sup>

One could argue, however, that in the doublet, *yēšēb bādād wēyiddōm* (Lam. 3:28), the form *yiddōm* clearly derives from *d-m-m* I, "to be still, silent," as we emphasize further on (in section IV). As D. Marcus has observed, this is one of the many non-recurring doublets in Lamentations, and one might have expected *yiddēmū* in our verse to share this meaning.<sup>14</sup>

Each occurrence must be judged independently nevertheless. In Lam. 3:28, adverbial *bādād* alters the situation and suggests the stillness of solitude. What is more, the single sufferer is not mourning, as are the gathered elders of Lam. 2:10. These differences suggest that the link between doublets is, perhaps, not as hard and fast as some suppose.

Furthermore, if we were to translate: "Silent sit on the ground / The elders of Fair/Zion" (thus NJPS), we would be implying that it was customary to mourn in silence. Does this correlate with what is known about the phenomenology of mourning in ancient Israel? Was it, in fact, customary to maintain silence while sitting on the ground, garbed in sackcloth or with garments rent, with dirt or ashes on one's head? Or, is that very depiction largely the result of taking the verbal root *d-m-m* to connote stillness and silence in passages related to mourning?

Some have pointed to the dire circumstances depicted in Job 2:11–13, part of the prologue, as suggesting that silence was a customary aspect of mourning in biblical times. There we are told that Job's companions arrived to comfort him after hearing of his misfortunes, including the awful news that Job's children had died in a storm. Verse 13 reads: "They sat with him on the ground for seven days and seven nights, and no one would speak a word to him, for they perceived how great the pain had become."

It should be noted, however, that when the companions first arrived and saw that Job's visage had altered beyond recognition, they did what mourners usually did—they wept aloud, rent their garments, and tossed dirt upward so that it fell on their heads (Job 2:12). They subsequently refrained from addressing Job only as a

13. See Jon. 3:6; and in the Ugaritic Baal cycle, see Gibson, *CML*, 73, no. 5, vi:11–13ff. There we read that Latipan descended from his throne and sat on the ground when mourning over Baal, who had died.

14. D. Marcus, "Non-Recurring Couplets in Lamentations," *HAR* 10 (1986), 177–95, esp. 179, 188.

reaction to his state of shock. No one questions the reality of shock as part of the mourning experience. This does not imply, however, that maintaining silence was a formal aspect of mourning, either by the bereaved or on the part of their comforters, which is the claim being challenged in the present discussion.

If we were to exclude all forms of the verbal root *d-m-m* I, of *d-m-y* II, "to come to an end," and of *d-w-m*, "to be still, silent; to await," from consideration, we would find little further indication that silence was actually a customary feature of mourning in biblical Israel. We would find wailing, bitter weeping, sighing, sobbing, and moaning—outcries of woe and grief, and liturgical words of lamentation. It is difficult to isolate each of these emotions in the biblical texts because such reactions are, by their very nature, complex and are reported and described in different ways.

If a mourner remained silent, it was most likely out of gloomy depression, often expressed by Hebrew *qôdēr* and related forms,<sup>15</sup> or because one was stunned by shock, a state sometimes conveyed by Hebrew *šômēm* (Lam. 1:13, 16; 3:11). It was not because it was customary to stifle one's cries, or because Israelites were expected to accept death stoically. As a rule we should not, therefore, assume that forms which predicate a geminate root *d-m-m* necessarily characterize the phenomenology of mourning as one of shock or silence. It is this thinking, of course, that led in the first place to the interpretation of *wayyiddôm ʾAhārôn* in Lev. 10:3b as: "Aaron kept silent; was stunned."

Once we free ourselves of the notion of stillness, we are led to consider other probable attestations of *d-m-m* II in biblical Hebrew, where we previously assumed derivation from *d-m-m* I—or from *d-m-y* or *d-w-m* for that matter.

One such verse that possibly attests *d-m-m* II is Amos 5:13:

*lākēn hammaškîl bāʿēt hahtʾ yiddôm kî ʿēt rāʾāh hîʾ*

Therefore, the prudent person at such a time *mourns*,  
for it is [decidedly] a time of disaster.

The usual rendering "keeps silent" does not jibe with the prophet's call to his people, expressed in the oracle of Amos 5:4–15 as a whole. Amos urges Israel to seek the LORD sincerely, by acts of righteousness and equity, not through their usual sacrifices at sites such as Bethel, Gilgal, and Beer-sheba, shrines about to be destroyed. The operative term of reference in this passage is the verb *dāraš* (vv. 4, 5, 6, 14), whose nuances are suggestively evoked by the prophet. The people are urged to "seek" good, not evil (v. 14), as well as to "seek" the LORD. In such contexts, the verb *dāraš* often refers to oracular inquiry, or to similar acts intended to receive divine guidance.<sup>16</sup> This is suggested by the exhortation of the prophet that the people are to cease "seeking" at the improper, condemned cult sites. So, it is far from obvious that the prudent should be silent in the face of impending disaster. Knowing the truth about the consequences of the evil they observe all around

15. Cf. Isa. 50:3; Jer. 8:21; Mal. 3:14; Ps. 35:14; 38:7; 42:10; 43:2; Job 5:11; 30:28.

16. Cf. Gen. 25:22; Exod. 18:15; Deut. 18:11; Isa. 19:3; Jer. 8:2; Ezek. 20:1.

them, the prudent grieve, rather than enjoy their current prosperity in complacency (Amos 6:1).<sup>17</sup>

It is true, of course, that one experiencing the full impact of death and disaster might be shocked into silence. *In extremis*, one would be cautioned to hold his tongue and refrain from pronouncing God's name (Amos 6:10), probably out of a fearfulness best explained as demonic. After all, the calamity was brought about by God. One could, therefore, detect in Amos 5:13 a resonance of the same anxiety, so that we find the prudent person holding one's tongue when disaster is imminent so as not to invite further misfortune. From Amos 8:3 we learn that both reactions—wailing and shock—may be present in the same situation, although they are described in different language:

And the singing women of the palace shall howl (*wēhēlilā*) on that day—declares my LORD,  
God:  
So many corpses  
Left lying everywhere!  
Hush!

A balanced view would give preference to immediate context, and interpret Amos 5:13 to mean that the prudent grieve over social ills and gross injustice, knowing these will hasten ultimate disaster. There would be no virtue to their silence in such circumstances, nor were they already in reactive shock.

Common to all of the above passages is the context of mourning or disaster. But, as we have seen, the sense of *d-m-m* II as "moaning," a sense which originates in the context of mourning, also describes sounds akin to moaning in other contexts. This fact allows us to consider Ps. 4:5, whose context may not be entirely devoid of grieving after all:

*rigzû wē'al tehēṭā'û*  
*imrû bilbabbem 'al miškabkem*  
*wēdōmmû, Selah.*

So, tremble and sin no more;  
ponder it on your bed, and *sigh*, Selah.

This is the translation of NJPS, where it is noted that an alternative rendering is "be still." The reference to a bed is resumed in v. 9, at the conclusion of this Psalm, in which the worshiper had been entreating God to hear his prayer:

Safe and sound I lie down and sleep,  
for You alone, O LORD, keep me secure.

The worshiper can sleep peacefully at night in the knowledge that God protects him, whereas his antagonists will experience anxiety on their beds, in fear of God's punishment. What recommends "sighing" rather than "silence" is the observable association of trembling (the verb *r-g-z*) with moaning or the emission other

17. Cf. Paul, *Amos* (see n. 3 above).

sounds brought about by fear or pain. As has been shown, the notion of silence attendant upon *d-m-m* I derives from the primary sense of "stillness, immobility" so that one would hardly tremble and be still simultaneously.

And yet, the rendering "be silent" might make sense if the man suffering mockery at the hands of others is, in this verse, adjuring his tormentors to be silent, to cease maligning him, in his confidence that God will ultimately vindicate him.

On balance, the former interpretation is preferable, however, since the one afflicted complains not of forensic abuse, in particular, but of suffering fraud and shame. There is no specific emphasis on the speech of the worshiper's enemies, which would counterbalance a call for their silence. Rather, the devotee calls upon his tormentors to cease their offenses against him, and, in effect, to repent.

We may, therefore, have a further attestation of *d-m-m* II in biblical Hebrew. This is also the view of Dahood, who notes that the Ugaritic Keret epic affords a description of weeping on one's bed, as does Psalm 6, which projects the same anxiety over one's enemies.

Dahood suggested that in Isa. 38:10 Hebrew *bidmî yāmây* expresses *d-m-m* II, "to mourn, moan." This suggestion is, in our opinion, off the mark and must be rejected. Nevertheless, a discussion of it will enlighten us in other respects.

Since Dahood cites the RSV translation of Isa. 38:10, we will do the same:

*ʾānî ʾāmartî—bidmî yāmây ʾēlēkā;  
bēšaʿārē šēʾōl pūqqadī, yeter šēnôtāy*

I said in the noontide of my days I must depart,  
I am consigned to Sheol for the rest of my years.

The implication of the RSV is that *dēmî* means "half," hence: "midday." For his part, Dahood questions whether nominal *dēmî* can mean "half," but in fact, there is a semantic bridge between the concept of "half" and that of "equal, like," the sense of *d-m-y* I, "to be similar, like, equal." One "half" is equal to the other. As noted in KB 217, s.v. *dēmî*, Hebrew *dēmî* is to be compared with Akkadian *mišlu* (from the verb *mašālu*), which means "half, midpoint, midday, midyear." One notes, as well, nominal *mašlu* in the idioms *ūm mašil*, "midday," and *mūšu māsil*, "midnight."<sup>18</sup> The cognate Hebrew root *m-š-l* is surely relevant to our discussion. Cf. Isa. 46:5:

*lēmî tēdamṣēyūnî wētašwū; wētamšilūnî wēnidmeh*

To whom can you compare Me  
Or declare Me similar?  
To whom can you liken Me,  
So that we seem comparable? (NJPS)

That *d-m-y*, *m-š-l*, and *š-w-y* are synonyms also emerges from Isa. 40:25:

*wēʾel mî tēdamṣēyūnî wēʾešweh yōʾmar qādōš*

To whom, then, can you liken Me,  
To whom can I be compared—says the Holy One. (NJPS)

18. See Gibson, *CML*, 83, no. 14, i:26–30.

The root *š-w-y* has the specific connotation “be of equal value” in Prov. 3:15 and 8:11, in variations of the same dictum:

She (wisdom) is more precious than rubies,  
All of your goods cannot equal her (*lôʔ yišwû bāh*). (Prov. 3:15; NJPS)

Quite clearly, unique *dēmî* in Isa. 38:10 derives from *d-m-y* I, “to be similar, equal.” But Dahood also questions the phrasing, a point which I fail to understand. As formatted above, the Hebrew verse may be analyzed as 2+3/3+2, which is a common pattern. In any event, Dahood’s suggested rephrasing, which would yield the pattern 3+2/3+2, runs into difficulty:

|                                |                            |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------|
| <i>ʔanî ʔāmartî bēdōmmî</i>    | <i>yāmāy ʔēlēkāh</i>       |
| <i>bēšaʿārēi šēʔōl pūqqadî</i> | <i>yeter šēnōtāy</i>       |
| I said in my sorrow:           | I have marched my days.    |
| I have been consigned to Sheol | for the rest of my years.” |

The problem is that the postulated idiom *hālak yāmîm* would mean “to march for X number of days,” with *yāmāy* used adverbially. This is the sense in the Ugaritic idiom cited by Dahood: *ylk ym wtn*, “He marched for a day and a second.”<sup>19</sup> To regard *yāmāy* as an accusative of duration would, in any event, yield the sense: “I have marched, walked during my days,” telling us what the person in question had done during one’s lifetime. It would not mean what Dahood proposes—“I have marched my days”—which is to say, “I have reached the end of my days; I have traversed the duration of my life.” In fact, the verb *hālak* itself, in certain contexts, may mean “to depart” from the land of the living, from life.” This is most clearly expressed in Qoh. 1:4: *dôr hōlēk wēdôr bāʔ*, “One generation departs and the next arrives.”<sup>20</sup> Most revealing, perhaps, are Job 10:20–21 and 16:22:

My days are few, so desist!  
Leave me alone, let me be diverted awhile;  
Before I depart—never to return (*bēterem ʔēlēk wēlōʔ ʔāšûb*)—  
For the land of deepest gloom.

For a few more years will come [to pass] (*yeʔētāyû*)  
And I shall go (*ʔehlēk*) the path of no return.

In conclusion, Dahood’s suggestion that nominal *dēmî* in Isa. 38:10 derives from *d-m-m* II, “to mourn,” must be rejected, and his corollary rephrasing is unnecessary and, in any event, reflects an incorrect understanding of the connotation of *hālak*, “to go,” in this verse.

An additional passage is attractive to the philologist for what it may tell us about usage of *d-m-m* II in biblical Hebrew, even though it presents complex semantic problems. Reference is to Ezek. 24:16–17, where a possible attestation of *d-m-m* II occurs. We first present the rendering of NJPS:

19. See CAD M 2, 126–29, s.v. *mišlu*; and CAD M 1, 379, s.v. *mašlu*.

20. See Gibson, CML, 88, no. 14, iv:207.

O mortal, I am about to take away the delight of your eyes [the prophet's wife] through pestilence; but you shall not lament or weep or let your tears flow. Moan softly; observe no mourning for the dead [*hē'ānēq dōm; mē'tīm 'ēbel lō' ta'āšeh*]. Put on your turban and put your sandals on your feet; do not cover your upper lip, and do not eat the bread of comforters.

Although the syntax of *mē'tīm 'ēbel lō' ta'āšeh* remains awkward, it is acceptable.<sup>21</sup> In effect, the rendering of these words by NJPS requires us to understand the Hebrew in the following way: "As for the dead—mourning do not perform." Or, the sequence of the wording may be a case of *hysteron proteron*, the reversal of usual syntactic order, and should be understood as *'ēbel mē'tīm*, "mourning over the dead."

More important is the question of whether "softly" is what Hebrew *dōm* means, or whether *d-m-m* I connotes complete stillness and silence. This question will occupy us considerably as the present discussion unfolds, and it will be argued that the connotations attendant upon *d-m-m* I are uncompromising.

An alternative rendering would derive *dōm* from *d-m-m* II, "to moan." Such a derivation could express itself in two ways:

a. One could analyze *dōm* as a substantive, yielding the composite term *dōm mē'tīm*, "the lament over the dead." If one allows for haplography, it is even possible to reconstruct the consonantal text as: *dm[m] mtym* (= *dēmām mē'tīm*), "the lament over the dead," thereby producing a geminate form similar to Eblaic *dimūmu*, "lament." On this basis, we would translate verse 17a as follows:

*hē'ānēq! dōm/dēmām mē'tīm, 'ēbel lō' ta'āšeh*

Groan! But the lament over the dead, [and] mourning do not perform, etc.

This rendering would at once remove the awkwardness of the Masoretic syntax and resolve, as well, the apparent contradiction between moaning and silence.

b. *hē'ānēq! dōm! 'ēbel mē'tīm lō' ta'āšeh*

Groan! Moan! But do not perform mourning over the dead.

Taken either way, v. 17a would parallel v. 23b, thereby forming an *inclusio*, as the prophet repeats God's instructions, now applying them to the people collective: "You shall be heartsick because of your iniquities and shall moan (*ānēhamtem*) to one another."

The depictions of verses 17a and 23b, however we interpret *dōm* in v. 17a, mean that only primal feelings are to be expressed: the irrepressible groaning and moaning over the dead. Formal mourning is eschewed because the envisioned disaster represents deserved punishment for iniquity. One should not mourn over God's punishment, which is just, nor would it do any good. Here, a more subtle distinction is suggested between sounds like groans and moaning, which are virtually involuntary, and the more formal and intentional acts that comprised mourning in ancient Israel, such as words of eulogy and those traditional formulas uttered while weeping (Jer. 22:18; 34:5), prescribed radical changes in attire, and the donning of a mask to cover the lower part of one's face.

21. Cf. Qoh. 3:20; 6:6; 12:5; and also Josh. 23:14 = 1 Kgs. 2:2; 1 Chr. 17:11.

Whereas the dynamics of the prophet's statement in Ezek. 24:16–23 are understandable, the particulars of the phenomenology hinge on the precise semantic ranges of *d-m-m* I and proposed *d-m-m* II, respectively. Does the semantic range of *d-m-m* I extend in biblical Hebrew to such connotations as “speaking softly, murmuring,” and the like, as J. Blau maintained, or is it less flexible, always connoting utter stillness? If the semantic range of *d-m-m* I is taken to be flexible, then *hēʾānēq dōm*, “Moan softly,” is acceptable. If, however, *d-m-m* I contrasts with any audible sound, just as it does with any perceptible motion, then to render *hēʾānēq dōm*, a unique biblical locution, as “Moan softly,” produces an oxymoron. One would have to translate: “Moan in silence.”

The same issue informs our determinations regarding the nominal form *dēmāmāh*, which surely reflects a geminate root. In fact, it is only by means of an analysis of the semantic range of the form *dēmāmāh* that we can hope to demonstrate that *d-m-m* I and *d-m-m* II are genuinely distinguishable homonyms in biblical Hebrew. One suspects that the oft-suggested rendering of *d-m-m* I as “speak softly” derives from an imprecise understanding of the nominal form *dēmāmāh*, which occurs three times in the Hebrew Bible (1 Kgs. 19:12; Ps. 107:29; Job 4:16).

It would be best to begin with Job 4:16, more precisely with Job 4:12–16, so as to comprehend the context:

A spoken message came to me in stealth,  
Terror gripped me when I heard it.  
In thought-filled visions of the night,  
When deep sleep falls on men,  
Fear and trembling came upon me,  
Causing all my bones to quake with fright.  
A wind passed by me,  
Making the hair of my flesh bristle.

*wayyaʿāmōd wēlōʾ ʾakkīr marʾēhā*  
*tēmūnāh lēneged ʾēnāy*

Something stood up, whose appearance I did not recognize;  
A form [loomed] before my eyes;  
I heard a *droning voice* (*dēmāmāh wāqōl*).

Our translation is based on NJPS, but with significant changes, some of which were suggested by H. L. Ginsberg's insightful reading of this passage.<sup>22</sup> The semantics are, indeed, subtle. Does Hebrew *rūaḥ* mean “wind,” which a comparison with the scene described in 1 Kgs. 19:12, the Elijah episode, would suggest? Or, does *rūaḥ* refer to the “spirit,” the apparition beheld, as Ginsberg understood it? Does *dēmāmāh* express the oft-experienced stillness after the storm, in which case a derivation from *d-m-m* I would be acceptable? Or is *dēmāmāh* produced by the voice of the apparition, or by the wind, so that *dēmāmāh* refers to sound and movement—which is also Ginsberg's view? Even if the Septuagint's reading is upheld, so that *dēmāmāh* is a sound made by the wind, albeit greatly reduced, we are

22. See A. B. Ehrlich, *Mikrā ki-Pheschutō* (Ktav reprint: New York, 1969), 3:336.

still dealing with sound, not absolute stillness. In these events, a derivation from *d-m-m* II might be more accurate. After all, Akkadian *damāmu* is used to describe sounds in nature, like the rustling of reeds when the wind blows.

Reference to Ps. 107:29–30 further focuses the question. NJPS translates as follows:

He reduced the storm to a whisper (*yāqēm šē'ārāh lidmāmāh*),  
the waves were stilled (*wayyehēšū gallêhem*).  
They rejoiced when all was quiet (*kī yištôqū*),  
and He brought them to the port they desired.

It would seem that NJPS took *dēmāmāh* to represent what we are calling *d-m-m* II. All motion did not stop at once; there was a breeze that was audible, after which the waves fell silent. Such an interpretation, actually adopted in the Septuagint, would help to clarify the sense of 1 Kgs. 19:12. There we read that Elijah first heard a tumultuous, crashing wind, then an earthquake, then a fire raging. God was not discernible in these intensely audible phenomena, however. Then came *qôl dēmāmāh daqqāh*, which, as v. 13 informs us, was likewise audible to Elijah. NJPS translates: "And after the fire—a soft murmuring sound." It would seem that here, too, the NJPS translation derives *dēmāmāh* from *d-m-m* II, "to moan, sigh, mourn," and we, too, opt for this derivation. If this choice is correct, there would be no clear evidence in biblical Hebrew of the connotation "speak softly, murmur" for *d-m-m* I.

The fact that Akkadian *damāmu*, which we take as a cognate of Hebrew *d-m-m* II, is used to describe the cooing of doves (Akkadian *summātu*) suggests a comparison of the semantic range of Hebrew *d-m-m* II with the semantic ranges of the verbs *h-g-y* and *h-m-y*, which both describe the sounds emitted by doves, among other things.

The Hebrew verb *h-g-y* describes the cooing of doves (Isa. 38:14; 59:11), and in Isa. 16:7 refers to mourning, together with *hêlîl*, "to howl":

*lākēn yēyêlîl Mō'āb; kūllôh yēyêlîl;  
la'āšîšē Qîr-Ḥarāšet tehgû nēkā'im*

Ah, let Moab howl;  
Let all in Moab howl!  
For the men of Kir-haresheth  
You shall moan most pitifully.

But, Hebrew *h-g-y* can also describe the sound made by a lion (Isa. 31:4), just as Akkadian *damāmu* is said of the sounds emitted by donkeys, and other animals.

Turning to Hebrew *h-m-y*, we note its use to describe the cooing of doves (Ezek. 7:16) and also with respect to sounds emitted by other animals like bears (Isa. 59:11) and dogs (Ps. 59:7, 15). Further subtlety emerges from the usage of *h-m-y* to describe the shrill sound emitted by a recorder (*hâlîl*) (Jer. 48:36) and the sound of a lyre (Isa. 16:11). As regards context, we note that *h-m-y* also describes mournful moaning, at least by implication (Ps. 42:6, 12; 43:5). Most telling perhaps is the decibel range of Hebrew *h-m-y*; it may refer to the roaring of

the waves and the tumult of a crowd, very loud sounds expressed by the form *hāmôn*, for example.<sup>23</sup>

The foregoing discussion argues for taking the nominal form *dēmāmāh* from *d-m-m* II, "to moan, mourn," and for restricting derivation form *d-m-m* I, "to be still, silent," to usages and meanings that contrast with motion and sound altogether.

To test this hypothesis, it is necessary to examine all clear biblical attestations of *d-m-m* I, "to be still, silent," and its derivatives. In this way, it should be possible to differentiate more precisely between the two homographic vocables and the forms related to each. We must also take up the matter of the roots usually listed as *d-m-y*, "to be still, come to an end, cease to be," and as *d-w-m*, "to be silent, to await." We know that biblical Hebrew morphology is sufficiently fluid to allow for three realizations of the same lexeme when expressed by weak verbs: (a) a middle weak form, in our case *d-w-m*, (b) a 3rd weak form, in our case *d-m-y*, and (c) a geminate form, in our case *d-m-m*. It is our contention that all three of these realizations are distinguishable from proposed *d-m-m* II.

#### V. Biblical Hebrew *d-m-m* I, and Its Alternative Realizations, *d-m-y* and *d-w-m*

There can be little question that in Josh. 10:12–13 the sun and moon were ordered to stop in their paths, and that there imperative *dōm* means "stand still," as is confirmed by the parallel word, *āmad*, "halted." The same is true of 1 Sam. 14:9, where the response to imperative *dōmmû*, "stay put," is *wēāmadnû tahtēnû*, "We will stand in place." The precise sense of *d-m-m* I is further clarified by Jer. 47:6:

O sword of the LORD,  
When will you will be quiet (*lōʔ tišqōʔi*) at last?  
Withdraw into your sheath,  
Rest and be still (*hērāgēʔi wādōmmi*)!

In all of the above, the primary concept underlying the usage of *d-m-m* I is immobility, or inertness, in contexts that describe motion or refer to it.

In Lam. 3:28 *yiddōm* describes how one remains solitary and immobile because one is somehow compelled to do so. That *yiddōm* in this verse means "to stay put," and not primarily "to be silent," is indicated by what precedes, in v. 26: "It is best that he await without stirring (*wēdûmām*) / For rescue by the LORD." The same can be said of usage of *d-m-m* I in Job. 31:34, where one is said to remain indoors, and stay put. The notion of patient, immobile waiting or expectation is also conveyed by forms of *d-m-m* I in Ps. 37:7; 62:6; 131:2–3; and Job. 29:21.

Seldom do we find that *d-m-m* I connotes specifically silence in contrast to sound. One could interpret Ps. 30:13 precisely in this way:

*lēmaʿan yēzammerkā kābōd wēlōʔ yiddōm*  
*YHWH ʔēlōhāy lēʿōlām ʔōdēkkā*

23. See H. L. Ginsberg, "Job the Patient and Job the Impatient," *VTS* 17 (1969), 88–111, esp. 105–6.

That [my] whole being may sing hymns to You and not be silent;  
O LORD, my God, I will praise you forever.

But one could just as easily translate *wēlō<sup>3</sup> yiddōm* “without end, endlessly” (thus NJPS). The sense of silence is clearly present, however, in Ps. 31:18–19:

O LORD, let me not be disappointed when I call You;  
Let the wicked be disappointed;  
Let them be silenced (read: *yiddammū*) in Sheol;  
Let lying lips be stilled (*lē<sup>3</sup>ālamnāh*),  
That speak haughtily against the righteous,  
With arrogance and contempt.

Having referred above to the occurrence of the form *dûmām*, “in an inert state,” in Lam. 3:26, it is now time to consider a suggestive occurrence of the same form in Hab. 2:19:

*Hôy ʔômēr lā<sup>c</sup>ēš hāqîṣāh; ʔrî lē<sup>3</sup>eben dûmām*

Ah, you who say, “Wake up” to wood,  
“Awaken” to inert stone (NJPS).

The form *dûmām* appears to derive from *d-w-m*, with the affix *-ām* having adverbial force: *dûm* + *ām* = *dûmām*, “in an inert state, silently” (cf. *yômām*, “by day”). For the postulated form *dûm*, “silence,” compare *hûg* “ellipse, circle” (Isa. 40:22; Job 26:10, 14; Prov. 8:27). Of course, *d-w-m* is simply an alternative realization of *d-m-m*, and the identification of the root as alternatively middle-weak or geminate is often merely a function of the phonetic determinations made by the Masoretes. In any event, the imagery of petrification is also expressed in Exod. 15:16:

*bigdōl zērô<sup>c</sup>akā yiddēmū kâ<sup>3</sup>āben . . .*

When Your arm was extended,  
They became inert as stone,  
Until Your people would pass through, LORD,  
Until the people would pass through—  
Whom you brought into being.

Whether we take Exod. 15:16 to refer to the Egyptians who plummeted to the bottom of the sea, to the waters which froze up, or to the neighboring peoples who were seized with dread, the imagery of utter stillness is the same.

To summarize: there is no indication of motion or sound in any occurrences of *d-m-m* I, or in those expressions of *d-w-m* that have been surveyed up to this point. Most likely, the forms *dûmāh* (also: *dûmmāh*); *dûmiyyāh* (also: *dûm-miyyāh*), all connoting stillness and silence, also derive from middle-weak *d-w-m*, although derivation from geminate *d-m-m* I or from 3rd-weak *d-m-y* II, “to cease, come to an end,” is not impossible. The same can be said of the form *dōmî* (דֹּמִי) in Isa. 62:6–7; Ps. 83:2, which may be analyzed as a masculine alternative to *dûmiyyāh*.

We proceed, therefore, to consider *d-m-y* II for what it informs us. Surely to be classified under *d-m-y* II is the usage in Jer. 14:17:

Let my eyes run with tears,  
Day and night let them not cease (*wēʾal tidmēnāh*).

The same is true of Lam. 3:49 (cf. 2:18): "My eyes shall flow without cease (*wēlōʾ tidmeh*), / Without respite." Note similar imagery conveyed by a form Masoretically pointed as deriving from *d-m-m* I, in Job 30:27: "My bowels are in turmoil (*rūtēhū*) without respite (*wēlōʾ dammū*)."

It is a Niphal form of *d-m-y* II that is most probably reflected in Isa. 6:5:

Woe is me; I am *undone* (*kī nidmētf*),  
For I am a man of impure lips,  
And I live among a people  
Of impure lips.

The sense is that the prophet feels unable to perform his role by speaking to his people because he has sinned by impious speech. Until he is purified, he cannot continue. One could even translate: "Woe is me, for I am *struck dumb*!"

Whereas Isa. 6:4 occurs in a forensic context, which refers to impure speech, the lexicographer faces a more difficult decision with respect to Hos. 4:5–6:

So you shall stumble by day,  
And by night the prophet shall stumble with you,  
And I will destroy (read: *dimmtf*) your mother.  
My people are destroyed (*nidmū ʿammf*) for lack of knowledge.<sup>24</sup>

At this point the lexicographer is compelled to decide whether we need to posit a form *d-m-y* III or, for that matter, whether we need to posit a form *d-m-m* III, both of which are registered in *KBL*. What we find are biblical passages in which Niphal forms, and others connoting destruction and ruin are vocalized as derivatives of *d-m-y*. Thus, forms like *nidmāh* (from *d-m-y*) are paralleled by *nišmēdū*, "they were in ruin," and *nikrētū*, "they were cut off," or by *šōdēd*, "ravaging," and Pual *šūddād*, "was ravaged," just as in Hos. 4:5–6 there is reference to stumbling (the verb *k-š-l*).<sup>25</sup>

The same is true with respect to forms derived from *d-m-m*. Thus, we read in 1 Sam. 2:9 that the wicked "will perish in darkness" (*baḥḥōsēk yiddammū*), and we find similar forms derivative of proposed *d-m-m* III in Jer. 25:36–37; 48:2, all in the context of destruction. May such contexts and meanings be legitimately subsumed under *d-m-y* II and *d-m-m* I so that the separate entries, *d-m-m* III and *d-m-y* III, may be regarded as superfluous?

Perhaps a comparison of the connotations attested for *d-m-y* II and of *d-m-m* I with the observable semantic range of the Hebrew verb *š-m-m*, "to be desolate, in ruin," will shed some light on the problem. This verb, in various contexts and expressed in its various forms, connotes both (a) the stillness of devastation and

24. For the usage of the verb *h-m-y* to describe the roaring of waves, see Isa. 17:12; 31:35; 51:15; Jer. 5:22; 6:23; 31:35; 50:42; 51:55; Ps. 46:4.

25. The Masoretic pointing, Qal-stem *wēdāmītf*, in Hos. 4:5 yields no acceptable meaning, and it has been suggested that taking this verb as a Piel form would yield the sense of bringing to an end, to ruination, and would lead into v. 6.

ruin and (b) the numbness and dumbness of shock. Common to all of its predications is the concept of stillness. We would, therefore, endorse a semantic range for *d-m-m* I and *d-m-y* II that extends all the way to desolation and ruin, although this extension is far from certain.

## VI. Conclusions

We have found a home in biblical Hebrew for *d-m-m* II, "to mourn, moan," in contexts of mourning and sadness, as well as in describing the sounds of animals and of nature itself—sounds which are reminiscent of mourning.

As we understand Lev. 10:3, it tells us that Aaron began to mourn Nadab and Abihu, and would have continued to do so had he not been instructed to refrain from such activity. Mourning would have rendered him and his remaining sons impure through contact with the dead. They were, instead, to give precedence to their purification as the priests of the Israelite community.

Leviticus 10 may, however, secrete an additional, phenomenological nuance. In our earlier discussion of the depictions of mourning in Ezek. 24:16–23 we found a distinction drawn between the irrepressible moaning and sobbing of be-reavement, which could not be stifled or effectively prohibited, and formal mourning, which could be authoritatively forbidden. The involuntary sounds were there expressed by the verbs *hēʾānēq*, "Groan!" (v. 17), and *ūnēḥamtem*, "You shall moan" (v. 23). If our reading is correct, Ezek. 24:17 also attests a form of *d-m-m* II, either the imperative *dōm*, "Moan!", or a substantive form, *dom* (possibly *dēmām*), "a lament." In either case, the distinction between the irrepressible and the intentional is clearly evident.

Could not the same dynamic inform Leviticus 10? Aaron was not able to repress his emotions, and he moaned (*wayyiddōm*), just as one would have expected him to do. But neither he nor his remaining sons were permitted to initiate formal mourning. In fact, the prohibited forms of mourning stipulated in Lev. 10:6–7 for Aaron and his remaining sons bear the same function as those prohibited in Ezek. 24:16–17, 22–23 with respect to the prophet in his personal grief, and the people of Israel in their collective exile. To dramatize the justice of God's punishment, one ought not perform rituals of mourning for those whose death at God's hand was brought about by their disobedience of His will.<sup>26</sup>

26. See Isa. 15:1; Hos. 4:6; 10:7; Obad. 5; Zeph. 1:11; and cf. Jer. 47:5; Ezek. 32:2; Hos. 10:15.

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