



AN EGYPTIAN LOANWORD IN THE BOOK OF ISAIAH AND THE DEIR 'ALLA INSCRIPTION: HEB. *nšr*, ARAM. *nqr*, AND EG. *ntr* AS “[DIVINIZED] CORPSE”*

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The term נצר in Isa 14:19 has generated numerous and diverse explanations, without any one winning much enthusiasm. In light of the growing awareness of Egyptian influence on the Levant during the eighth and seventh centuries,¹ and on the book of Isaiah in particular,² this article argues that term is best explained as a loanword³ from the common Egyptian noun *ntr*. *Ntr* is generally translated “god,” but is commonly used of the divinized dead and their physical remains. It originally came into Hebrew as a noun referring to the putatively divinized corpse of a dead king, which is closely related to the Egyptian usage. Furthermore, this etymology suggests new solutions to two other instances of the same Hebrew root later in the book of Isaiah (49:6 and 65:4), and to the long-debated term *nqr* in Deir ‘Alla II.5, 12, 14. The article concludes by showing that there is sufficient warrant from the historical philological data to warrant the slightly uncommon phonological correspondence of Egyptian *ntr* with Hebrew *nšr* and Aramaic *nqr*.

Isa 14:19 reads, as a whole:

ואתה השלכת מקברך כנצר נתעב לבוש הרגים מטעני חרב יורדי אל-אבני-בור כפגר מובס

Apart from one phrase, most of the verse is clear enough in its description of the degradation of a Mesopotamian king after his death: “But you are cast out from your grave, like נצר נתעב, clothed with the murdered, those pierced with the sword, those who go down to the stones of the pit, like a trampled corpse.”

The variety of translations for נצר נתעב reflects the variety of theories about it:

- The most linguistically plausible theory propounded thus far relates נצר to the word for “shoot, branch,” which is used elsewhere in Isaiah (11:1; 60:21). This is adopted by the Vulgate (*stirps inutilis*), NJB: “loathsome branch,” NASV, and NIV (“rejected branch”). But נצר in this sense usually means “heir, son,” not a natural term for a seasoned ruler who had already

terrorized the earth (Isa 14:16-17). This is also the etymology that André Caquot and André Lemaire suggested for נקר in the Deir ‘Alla text.

- Baruch Levine suggested that the forms from נצר Isa 14:19 and 49:6, and נקר in Deir ‘Alla, should be connected to postbiblical נצל, “flesh from a corpse which has become detached,” based on a rare r / l confusion,⁴ and this proposal seems to lie behind recent translations such as NRSV and NJPS (both: “loathsome carrion”), if these are not simply translating from context.⁵ But that theory was deemed highly unlikely by Jo Ann Hackett and is not adopted here.⁶ She calls the connection to נצל “linguistically shaky,” though she acknowledges that the context of Isa 14:19 seems to require a word with a similar meaning.
- Wildberger suggested reading נַשֵּׁר (“vulture”) in Isa 14:19 rather than the MT’s נַצֵּר, on the theory that the latter was a scribal emendation to connect the poem to Nebuchadnezzar.⁷ The vulture is an unclean bird and is associated with the dead throughout the ancient Near East,⁸ but this emendation does not create a convincing image (“you are cast out ... like a vulture”?) and can only be considered speculative.
- Finally, the RSV (“a loathed untimely birth”) seems to have followed the suggestion to read נפל, “miscarriage.” Not only would this require a textual error that would be hard to explain, it would not create a very coherent image with the rest of the poem.

Finding none of these solutions appealing, I propose that נַצֵּר is a loanword from the Egyptian noun *ntr*, and refers to the dead person or corpse. Happily, this is in line with the reading of the Old Greek (ὡς νεκρὸς ἐβδελυγμένος, “like an abhorrent corpse”). This could be taken as a mere translation from context, or it could reflect an accurate understand of the underlying Hebrew term, which has not to this point been adequately explained.

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EGYPTIAN *ntr*: “GOD” AND “(DIVINIZED) ROYAL CORPSE”

In Egyptian, *ntr* most basically means “god,” but as Hans Goedicke has noted, “*Ntr*, singular and plural, is well attested as designation of the deceased.”⁹ Among other things, a *ntr* is simply “one of those who inhabit the afterlife.”¹⁰ Indeed, descriptions of the dead, particularly dead rulers, as gods are well-attested throughout Egyptian history:

The expression *h'm ntr* [“to appear as a god”] is attested in the funerary literature of the New Kingdom where it refers to the establishing of the deceased as ritually equipped dead. In this respect it appears to be a continuation of an older concept found in Pyr. 465 b, where *h'm ntr* is used in reference to the establishing of the deceased as ritually buried dead.¹¹

To be clear, it not just that the deceased was viewed as having become a god in some spiritual sense; the physical remains were actually referred to as *ntr*. This can be seen in a Dynasty 21 text about the reburial of the mummy of king Amenhotep I, which reads, “The First Prophet of Amon-Re, King of the Gods, Masaharta, son of king Pinedjem, issued a dispatch to renew the burial of this god (*ntr*) by the treasure scribe and temple scribe Penamon...”¹²

The use of a single term for both a supernatural being and a dead body may seem odd, but it was normal in ancient Egypt, as well as elsewhere in the ancient Near East.¹³ After noting that “The Egyptians often called kings and dead persons gods (*ntrw*) in express terms,” Herman te Velde adds that “the meaning of the Egyptian word we are accustomed to render as ‘god’ (*ntr*) includes god revealed in symbols, but also extends to the symbols that reveal the god.”¹⁴ Certainly those symbols included the physical remains of the king, which are precisely what is in view in the Isaiah passage. A Roman Period lexical papyrus makes the connection to the corpse quite explicit, defining *ntr* as “that which is buried.”¹⁵

נצר AS “(DIVINIZED) ROYAL CORPSE” IN ISAIAH 14:19

In the context of Isaiah 14, the play on a word for a divinized royal corpse is quite natural. The prophet has just described the tyrant as one who says:

I will ascend to heaven;
I will raise my throne above the stars of God;
I will sit on the mount of assembly on the heights of Zaphon;
I will ascend to the tops of the clouds,
I will make myself like the Most High.” (Isa 14:13-14)

The taunt-song thus plays on both the positive and negative aspects of *ntr/nšr* to subvert the monarch’s hope for a divinized

afterlife, just as it does numerous other aspects of afterlife expectation, such as those for mourning and burial.

The presence of the modifying word נהעב in the text favors the interpretation of נצר as “divinized royal corpse.” The root תעב, related to the much more common noun תועבה, “abomination,” has a very strong negative meaning. It is reserved for some of the sternest warnings in biblical law. A term such as “miscarried fetus” or “flesh from a corpse” would not really need to be described as “abhorrent,” because they would have been viewed that way inherently. By contrast, a term such as *ntr*, which normally carries a strong positive connotation, requires an equally strong negative modifier to bring it in line with the mocking tone of taunt-song: “Oh yes, you’ve become a ‘god’ ... an abominated/rejected god.”

Von Rad suggested that the Niphal of תעב meant “to treat as ritually unclean,”¹⁶ and although תעב and תועבה are not used specifically of dead bodies,¹⁷ it is of course the case that dead bodies were ritually unclean (Lev 11:31-32; 21:1, etc.). Thus the use of תעב is all the more understandable: a corpse could indeed be called “a ritually impure ‘god’.”

There are certain objections that could be raised against this theory. The first is that it makes no sense for Isaiah to use an Egyptian loanword in speaking of a Mesopotamian ruler. But in the linguistic crossroads at which Isaiah lived, it does not seem to have been much more odd for him to hybridize cultural references than it is for us today. A very similar example is 19:3, where it is widely accepted that an Akkadian loanword is used in a text about the *Egyptians*: “The spirit of the Egyptians within them will be emptied out, and I will confound their plans; they will consult the idols and the spirits of the dead (אטים=Akk. *ešimmu*) and the ghosts and the familiar spirits.”¹⁸

Second, one might object that a wordplay requiring awareness of an Egyptian word is so esoteric as to strain credulity. Then again, *ntr* is an exceedingly common Egyptian noun, and perhaps one of the ones that a Judean prophet and court would be most likely to know.¹⁹ Furthermore, one can cite multiple other instances of bilingual wordplays in Isaiah (e.g. 10:8; 28:15, 18) and elsewhere in the Bible.²⁰ One need not even assume that the biblical author’s (or prophet’s) audience would have understood the reference, although I think many would have. As Morrow rightly warns about a different passage:

In the pre-exilic period, [proto-biblical literature] was the province of a small, educated elite. Only a rather select group would have appreciated the bilingual pun ... But the insertion of such abstruse knowledge is hardly exceptional in ancient Near Eastern scribal practice. There are many examples in Mesopotamian literature of obscure references that would only make sense to the especially learned.²¹

It is particularly unsurprising to find esoteric wordplay in Isaiah; he is notorious for it.²² Not only is he never portrayed as speaking to the masses, if anything he is portrayed as a difficult and mysterious figure who is hard to understand (Isa 6:9).

NOUNS FROM נצַר IN ISA 65:4 AND 49:6

One should ask, in light of the recognition of נצַר as “royal corpse” in 14:19, whether the similar terms נצַר/נצור that appear in Isa 49:6 and 65:4 are also related to Egyptian *ntr*. In both cases, the context is amenable to a word for a corpse that was perceived by some as divinized. With this understanding, Isa 65:4 condemns “those who sit in graves and spent the night among corpses” (הַיֹּשְׁבִים בְּקַבְרִים וּבְנִצְרוֹת יָלִינוּ). It is indeed preferable to avoid the *lectio facillior* emendation וּבֵין צֻרִים יָלִינוּ (“and between the rocks they spend the night”), which is not supported by any Hebrew manuscript—even though that was also the best that LXX translator could do with the rare word (ἐν τοῖς σπηλαίοις, “in caves”).²³ Better to preserve the parallelism (graves/corpses) without emending the text at all.²⁴

If it is correct to preserve the MT and understand נצורִים as “corpses,” then the word has perhaps lost its royal associations in this late period. That would be unsurprising from an Egyptological perspective, since the “democratization of death”—the process in which aspirations of a divinized afterlife spread from kings to a wider populace—was nearly complete by the middle of the first millennium.²⁵ It is true that Francesca Stavrakopoulou has perceived in 65:3-5 a scene from a mortuary garden dedicated to “the veneration of possibly royal dead ancestors.”²⁶ That would strengthen the present argument, since the corpses mentioned in v. 4 would be royal, and thus even more plausibly viewed as divinized. However, it seems very uncertain whether a royal mortuary cult would have flourished in the postexilic period without a monarchy to support it. Although hopes survived in preexilic Judah for the restoration of an indigenous monarchy, and although the maintenance of a royal ancestor cult might have supported those hopes, the Mesopotamian practice of desecrating the remains of enemies’ dead kings gives one pause about whether the (preexilic) royal tombs and mortuary garden would have been left intact.²⁷ Indeed, Baruch 2:24-25 reports that the royal remains did not survive the fall of the city.²⁸ In sum, the royal mortuary cult could have been carried on in a limping fashion in Judah, but one does better to assume that the term here lacks the royal context that made it so appropriate in 14:19.

Isaiah 49:6 may also contain a reference to corpses using the root נצַר, though it is the most uncertain of the possible instances. (Levine has already suggested connecting these two instances of the root נצַר.)²⁹ The verse is usually understood to proclaim that the servant will “raise up the tribes of Jacob and bring back the survivors (K: נְצִירֵי/Q: נְצֹרֵי) of Israel.” However, the passage could also be interpreted to say that the Servant was to “raise up

the tribes of Jacob and restore the *corpses* of Israel”—the Hiphil of שׁוּב can express physical renewal (2 Sam 8:3; Dan 9:25; Ps 80:4, 8, 20) that would work well with the preceding use of קוּם, with its echoes of revivification (Amos 5:2; Hos 6:2). The author’s postponement of the verb לְהַשִּׁיב until the end of the phrase (לְהַקִּים אֶת־שְׁבִטֵי יַעֲקֹב וְנִצְוֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל) does nothing to discourage the hearer from hearing, “raise up the tribes of Jacob and the corpses of Israel.” (This is of course a normal, chiasmic word order in poetry; I mean to describe only a possible effect in the ear of the hearer.)

Imagery of raising the dead was fairly widely used to portray the restoration of the people—not only in famous passages such as Ezek 37, Isa 26:19, and Hos 6:2,³⁰ but also in this same section of Isaiah—cf. Isa 41:13b-14 (“Do not fear; I will help you. Do not fear, worm of Jacob, dead³¹ of Israel! I will help you,’ says the Lord”) and Isa 52:2 (“Shake yourself from the dust, rise up [קַמְּ], O captive Jerusalem!”).³² Given how common wordplay is in Isaiah, it is not a great stretch to imagine that 49:6 could have been another play on the same motif.

The *kethib* נצִירֵי in 49:6 seems at first to complicate the assumption that one is dealing with the same word in 49:6 as in 65:4—נצִירֵי could be understood as an Aramaizing passive participle (“protected ones”). However, the Masoretes corrected it to נצוּרֵי, and so it seems that interpreters already connected these texts in an early period. Interestingly, 1QIsa^a reads נצִירֵים *both* here and in 65:4, which affirms the intertextual connection while complicating the interpretation. (Not surprisingly, the more conservative 1QIsa^b scroll matches the MT at 49:6; it is not preserved for 65:4.) In both 49:6 and 65:4, the forms from נצַר can be read as “corpses,” but “protected ones” does not work in both places—it makes little sense in 65:4—so the decision to level the spelling of the two occurrences seems to reflect a scribal preference to read both as referring to the dead.

nqr IN DEIR ‘ALLA II.5, 12, 14

The Deir ‘Alla plaster inscription has proved an extremely difficult text to interpret, largely because of its broken condition. This is especially true of Combination II, where the term *nqr* appears. Suffice it to note here that there appear to be references to “crossing over to the House of Eternity, the house from which the traveler does not rise” (II.6-7) to “a worm from a tomb” (II.8) to graves (II.8), to an “eternal bed” where someone perishes (II.11), and to death itself (II.13).³³ In short, however one reconstructs the narrative and purpose of Combination II, there could scarcely be a context more amenable to a term referring to the divinized dead. Of course, Levine has already translated and explained the text on the basis of the idea that *nqr* means “corpse,” and I will not attempt to improve on his interpretation of the narrative.³⁴ I have only suggested a different *derivation* of *nqr*, a derivation that does a better job of explaining why the

corpse should be capable of action such a “sighing in its heart” (II.13)—because it is divinized, rather than simply being “flesh from a corpse which has become detached” (נצר, see above)!

PHONOLOGY

As reflected by the earlier studies treating Heb. נצר and Aram. נקר together, the equivalence of Heb. צ and Aram. ק—both deriving from Proto-Semitic **d* (sometimes written as **d* or **ṣ*)—is well established (e.g., Heb. *ṣ* / Old Aramaic *ṣ* / Arabic *ṣ*, all meaning “land, earth”).³⁵ It remains to be argued that the Egyptian letter *ḏ* had a similar phonetic value to PS **d*. It may be objected that the equivalence of Eg. *ḏ* with Heb. *ṣ* is not the norm, but the correspondence usually thought to be normal (Eg. *ḏ* :: Heb. *t*) turns out to be based on slim data. Since the correspondence Eg. *ḏ* :: Semitic *ṣ* is normal in Phoenician during the same period, and since both were voiceless affricates of similar articulation, it is quite possible in Hebrew as well.

In earlier periods, Eg. *ḏ* had a complex reception in Semitic languages.³⁶ It is sometimes stated that Eg. *ḏ* was equated with *s* (i.e., *samekh*). However, in the Old Kingdom, it seems to have been equated with Semitic *t*, *t*, and *d*, and in the New Kingdom it was equated with Semitic *t* as well as *s* and *ṣ*.³⁷ Correspondences between Eg. *ḏ* and Semitic *ṣ* during the New Kingdom include the loanword *ḏi2-du-’u2* (“game, venison”) in a Dynasty 19 papyrus, from the same Semitic base as Heb. *ṣayid*;³⁸ and the more common Eg. *kṭn* (“charioteer”), comparable with Heb. *qāṣṣîn* (e.g., Josh 10:24; Jdg 11:6).³⁹

In any case, the earlier (and better attested) correspondences of Eg. *ḏ* in the OK and NK do not bear directly on the later reception of Egyptian words by the first-millennium Hebrew prophets. Around the middle of the first millennium, *samekh* itself changed in pronunciation, becoming a sibilant. Eg. *ḏ* is not a sibilant, and so in the first-millennium NW Semitic languages, it was re-interpreted in various ways: for example, it turns into *ṣ* in Phoenician, but into *ṣ* in Aramaic. The harder one looks at the data, the less absolute these equivalences appear. For example, Eg. *ḏ* may also correspond also to Phoenician *ṣ*.⁴⁰ And the Aramaic situation is particularly diverse: in the fifth century, Eg. *ḏ* could correspond to *ṣ*, *t* and *t*, and even *ṣ* has been proposed!⁴¹ Thus, when it is reported that Eg. *ḏ* became *t* in Hebrew, as it usually is, one has cause for suspicion. Indeed, the support usually offered for this is the Eg. *nṭr* > Heb. *neter*, “natron,”⁴² which probably came into Semitic stock around 1200 BCE, centuries before the Isaiah and Deir ‘Alla texts.⁴³ Therefore it does not elucidate how Eg. *ḏ* would have been adopted by Semitic scribes near the middle of the first millennium. At another time, Eg. *ḏkw* was adopted in Hebrew as סכות (Succoth; cf. Exod 12:37, Num 33:5-6).⁴⁴ Given that the data reveals a wide variety in the adoption of Eg. *ḏ* in Iron Age West Semitic languages, and given that the epigraphic data

for the late eighth century is particularly sparse, it is quite plausible that in Isaiah’s time Eg. *ḏ* could correspond to Heb. *ṣ*, just as in Phoenician. Since Egyptian culture frequently made its way to Israel and Judah via the Phoenician coastal cities, it is even possible that the word came first into Phoenician and only later into Hebrew, where its spelling was maintained.

The already understandable equation Eg. *ḏ* > Heb. *ṣ* is lent further plausibility if one returns to what is basically known about the phonetic actualization of Eg. *ḏ* and Heb. *ṣ*. Antonio Loprieno says that it a voiceless palatal affricate,⁴⁵ and it is now widely accepted that Semitic *ṣ* was an affricate as well⁴⁶—probably an alveolar, a close relative to a palatal.

The complexity and variety of the correspondences of Eg. *ḏ* with Semitic graphemes reflects two things: 1) that Eg. *ḏ* probably never had a settled cognate in Semitic during the Iron Age; and 2) that changes took place in the phonology of *ḏ* within Egyptian, which still frustrate attempts at satisfactory systematization.⁴⁷ Indeed, the native phonology of Eg. *ḏ* is sufficiently uncertain that James Hoch used *ḏ* as his *example* of a sign for which the exact phonetic value is unclear.⁴⁸

At all events, given the combination of uncertainty, diachronic change, and clear variety in the phonological data,⁴⁹ one must heed Hoch’s advice that “the context must be given primary consideration” when identifying loanwords,⁵⁰ and Lipiński’s caution that the rules “cannot be applied mechanically.”⁵¹ Languages’ actual behavior in history is less than completely orderly; this is especially true of Semitic languages of the Iron Age, given their fragmentary and partial remains. Certain phonemes were received in different ways even within Iron Age Semitic dialects, and the possibility of graphic variants only adds to the uncertainty.⁵² The phonological argument is thus significant but not determinative.

CONCLUSION

In sum, one has in Eg. *nṭr* a plausible explanation for נצר in Isa 14:19 and נצוריים in 65:4, both of which have thus far defied positive explanation. In Isa 14 it is perfectly suited to mock the king’s divine aspirations; it commonly refers to the deceased king and to the mummified corpse in Egyptian; it requires a strong negative modifier such as נתעב; and it is no great stretch to think that Isaiah knew such common Egyptian vocabulary. In Isa 65:4 it avoids an emendation and reveals a far better parallelism (graves/corpses) than other proposed solutions. Isaiah 49:6 has long been understood to employ the same word as 65:4, and it may well reflect an intentional wordplay on the meanings “returning the survivors” and “restoring the corpses.” Finally, a reference to a divinized dead person in Deir ‘Alla II.5, 12, 14 makes better sense in the context than a word related to “detached flesh.” From a broader perspective, the field of biblical studies is still only beginning to grasp the impact that Egyptian

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culture had on the Bible, particularly in the second quarter of first millennium BCE; it is not surprising to find another Egyptian loanword in Isaiah.

NOTES

- * I would like to thank Kathlyn M. Cooney, Jeremy M. Hutton, W. Randall Garr, Joel M. LeMon, and the anonymous JAEI reviewers for reading and commenting on drafts of this article.
- ¹ Donald B. Redford has written that it is “between 725 and 525 B.C.” that one might best look for Egyptian influence on Judah. See *Egypt, Canaan and Israel in Ancient Times* (Princeton: Princeton University, 1992), 365. Iconographic studies indicate that Judahite crafts during the Iron IIB era (ca. 925–725) give “evidence of an intense fascination with Egyptian power symbols”—Othmar Keel and Christoph Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses and Images of God in Ancient Israel* (trans. Thomas H. Trapp; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998), 266.
- ² Thomas Lambdin proposed a number of examples from Isaiah in “Egyptian Loanwords in the Old Testament,” *JAOS* 73 (1953): 145–55. In general, however, the idea of Egyptian influence on Isaiah (particularly on the prophecies of Isaiah of Jerusalem) was received with some skepticism. More recently, however, the question has been re-opened. See J. J. M. Roberts, “Yahweh’s Foundation in Zion (Isa 28:16),” *JBL* 106 (1987): 27–45; Alviero Niccacci, “Isaiah XVIII–XX from an Egyptological Perspective,” *VT* 48 (1998): 214–38; Hilary Marlow, “The Lament Over the River Nile—Isaiah XIX 5–10 in its Wider Context,” *VT* 57 (2007): 229–242; Christopher B. Hays, “Damming Egypt/Damning Egypt: The Paronomasia of *skr* and the Unity of Isa 19:1–15,” *ZAW* 120 (2008): 612–16; *idem*, “The Covenant with Mut: A New Interpretation of Isaiah 28:1–22,” *VT* 60 (2010): 212–40; *idem*, “The Egyptian Goddess Mut in Iron-Age Palestine: Further Data From Amulets and Onomastics,” *JNES*, forthcoming. For a more thorough assessment of Egyptian influence on Judah in Isaiah’s time, see Christopher B. Hays, *Death in the Iron Age II and in First Isaiah* (FAT 79; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 60–66.
- ³ “Loanword” is used as a generic term here. One may wish to distinguish between *Lehnwörter*, *Fremdwörter*, and *Kulturwörter*, distinctions that Paul V. Mankowski helpfully discusses in *Akkadian Loanwords in Biblical Hebrew* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2000), 7–8. *Ntr* clearly has Egyptian origins and thus cannot be understood as a *Kulturwort*. And Mankowski himself notes that when one has only a small number of occurrences it is difficult to distinguish between loanwords (which are almost totally assimilated into the target language) and words that remain subjectively foreign. That caveat certainly applies to *nšr*.
- ⁴ See “The Plaster Texts from Deir ‘Alla,” in *The Balaam Text from Deir ‘Alla Re-Evaluated: Proceedings of the International Symposium Held at Leiden, 21–24 August 1989* (ed. J. Hoftijzer and G. van der Kooij; Leiden: Brill, 1991), 68–70.
- ⁵ See also Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* AB 19; New York: Doubleday, 2000), 284–85. Blenkinsopp adopts the same translation as the NRSV but then also notes the LXX’s νεκρός and the idea of emending to נפל—a non-resolution characteristic of work on the word.
- ⁶ Hackett, *The Balaam Text from Deir ‘Alla Re-Evaluated*, 78.
- ⁷ Wildberger, *Isaiah 13–27*, 46.
- ⁸ The unburied or unhappy dead were thought to haunt the living in the form of birds. See Christopher B. Hays, “Chirps from the Dust: The Affliction of Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 4:30 in Its Ancient Near Eastern Context,” *JBL* 126 (2007): 303–23.
- ⁹ Hans Goedicke, “The Beginning of the Instruction of King Amenemhet,” *JARCE* 7 (1968): 20.
- ¹⁰ Kasia Szpakowska, “Demons in Ancient Egypt,” *Religion Compass* 3 (2009): 802.
- ¹¹ Goedicke, “The Beginning of the Instruction of King Amenemhet,” 20.
- ¹² Robert K. Ritner, *The Libyan Anarchy* (SBLWAW 21; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009), 116. The “renewal” (*wḥm*) of royal burials entailed the re-wrapping of mummies and their placement in a different “cache.” While this was presented as a pious act of “re-Osirification,” it appears that it was motivated also by a desire to get access to the riches of the tombs.
- ¹³ The best-known example among scholars of Semitic religions is *nbs/npš*, which came to mean both “soul” and “monument.” I have also argued that Heb. *wb/’bwt* and Eg. *zbtw* are further examples of the same thing. See Christopher B. Hays and Joel M. LeMon, “The Dead and Their Images: An Egyptian Etymology for Hebrew *’ob*,” *JAEI* 1 (2009): 1–4.
- ¹⁴ Herman te Velde, “Commemoration in Ancient Egypt,” in H. G. Kippenberg, L. P. van den Bosch et al., *Visible Religion: Annual For Religious Iconography, 1982, Volume I - Commemorative Figures: Papers Presented To Dr. Th. P. Van Baaren On The Occasion Of His Seventieth Birthday, May 13, 1982* (E. J. Brill: Leiden, 1982), 136.
- ¹⁵ Françoise Dunand and Christiane Zivie-Coche, *Gods and Men in Egypt: 3000 BCE to 395 CE* (Translated by David Lorton; Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2004), 8.
- ¹⁶ Gerhard von Rad, *Das fünfte Buch Mose: Deuteronomium* (ATD 8; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1964), 104.
- ¹⁷ The instances of the verb תעב in Job 19:19 and 30:10 occur in close proximity to language of suffering and death, but these are not legal or cultic passages.

- ¹⁸ For discussion and literature, see Theodore J. Lewis, *Cults of the Dead in Ancient Israel and Ugarit* (HSM 39; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989), 133–34.
- ¹⁹ In a general sense, the level of intercultural religious awareness in the ancient Near East is demonstrated by the recent study of Mark S. Smith: *God in Translation: Deities in Cross-Cultural Discourse in the Biblical World* (FAT 57; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008). Itamar Singer has written that during the Hittite Empire, a “basic knowledge of foreign pantheons was not just an intellectual asset of Hittite theologians, but rather an essential requirement for the Hittite ‘Foreign Office.’” Itamar Singer, “‘The Thousand Gods of Hatti’: The Limits of an Expanding Pantheon” in *Concepts of the Other in Near Eastern Religions*, eds. I. Alon, I. Gruenwald and I. Singer (IOS 14; Leiden: Brill, 1994), 93. It seems to me that many scribes and religious experts in Iron Age Israel and Judah would have needed a similar level of cross-cultural expertise.
- ²⁰ On Isa 28:15, 18, see Christopher B. Hays, “The Covenant with Mut: A New Interpretation of Isaiah 28:1-22,” *VT* 60 (2010): 212-40. For other examples, see Machinist, “Assyria and Its Image,” 734–5; Gary A. Rendsburg, “Bilingual Wordplay in the Bible,” *VT* 38 (1988): 354–56. Notably, the word נָצַח is used in the sense of “shoot” (figuratively: “scion, heir”) in Isa 11:1. Neither sense appears to have been particularly common, so there may have been a double entendre in 14:19.
- ²¹ William Morrow, “‘To Set the Name’ in the Deuteronomic Centralization Formula: A Case of Cultural Hybridity,” *JSS* 55 (2010): 382.
- ²² See J. J. M. Roberts, “Double Entendre in First Isaiah,” *CBQ* 54 (1992): 39–48; also Immanuel M. Casanowicz, “Paronomasia in the Old Testament,” *JBL* 12 (1893): 105–67, esp. chart p. 167; Edwin M. Good, *Irony in the Old Testament* (2nd ed.; Sheffield: Almond, 1981), 121–25; and note the large number of examples from Isaiah in Stefan Schorch, “Between Science and Magic: The Function and Roots of Paronomasia in the Prophetic Books of the Hebrew Bible,” in *Puns and Pundits: Word Play in the Hebrew Bible and Ancient Near Eastern Literature* (ed. Scott B. Noegel; Bethesda, Md.: CDL, 2000), 205–22.
- ²³ The specific emendation of the MT seems to have been first suggested by Franz Feldmann, *Das Buch Isaias* (2 vols; EHAT 14; Münster: Aschendorff, 1925-26), but is repeated by BHS and HALOT and adopted by Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah* 1–39, 267. The tomb inscription cited by Mitchell J. Dahood (*ḥdr bktf ḥsr*) would have only the word צָר in common with the emended Isa 65:4 and so does not really illuminate it. Cf. “Textual problems in Isaia,” *CBQ* 22 (1960): 408-9.
- ²⁴ Heb. צוֹר appears to have no mortuary associations in the Bible. In cases where rocks are associated with tombs (e.g., Isa 14:19; 2 Sam 18:17), אֶבֶן is used. John Healey has suggested that the נְצוּרִים in Isaiah 65:4 should be explained with reference to a new root נָצַח II, meaning, “to wail, cry, mourn” (J.F. Healey, “Syriac *nšr*, Ugaritic *nšr*, Hebrew *nšr* II, Akkadian *nšr* II”, *VT* 26 [1976]: 433-35.) While this is an intriguing suggestion that could also supply a mortuary parallelism, the new roots he proposed have not been widely accepted, nor adopted into standard lexica such as CAD and HALOT (although the Ugaritic occurrence has been analyzed as he suggested by DULAT, on the strength of its occurrence in parallel with *b-k-y*). In the biblical instances, Healey’s proposal does not convince this reader.
- ²⁵ The democratization of death is summarized in Hays, *Death in the Iron Age II and in First Isaiah*, 74-76.
- ²⁶ Francesca Stavrakopoulou, “Exploring the Garden of Uzza: Death, Burial and Ideologies of Kingship,” *Biblica* 87 (2006): 18.
- ²⁷ E.g., Aššurbanipal’s exposure of the dead Elamite kings (*Annals* 6:70–76). See Maximilian Streck, *Assurbanipal und die letzten Assyrischen Könige bis zum Untergange Ninivehs* (1916; repr., Leipzig: Zentralantiquariat, 1975), 54–57.
- ²⁸ Bar 2:24-25: “[W]e did not obey your voice, to serve the king of Babylon; and you have carried out your threats, which you spoke by your servants the prophets, that the bones of our kings and the bones of our ancestors would be brought out of their resting place; and indeed they have been thrown out to the heat of day and the frost of night. They perished in great misery, by famine and sword and pestilence.”
- ²⁹ Levine, *The Balaam Text from Deir ‘Alla Re-Evaluated*, 70.
- ³⁰ See, recently, Jon D. Levenson, *Resurrection and the Restoration of Israel: The Ultimate Victory of the God of Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 142-65.
- ³¹ Reading מִיָּתִי with 1QIsa^a.
- ³² Hays, *Death in the Iron Age II and in First Isaiah*, 359-60.
- ³³ Major studies and editions of the text include J. Hoftijzer and G. van der Kooij, eds. *Aramaic Texts from Deir ‘Alla* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1976) and Jo Ann Hackett, *The Balaam Text from Deir ‘Allā* (Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1984).
- ³⁴ Baruch A. Levine, “The Deir ‘Alla Plaster Inscriptions,” *JAOS* 101 (1981): 195-205.
- ³⁵ W. Randall Garr, *Dialect Geography of Syria-Palestine 1000-586 B.C.E.* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985; reprinted, Winona Lake, Ind., Eisenbrauns: 2004), 23-24.
- ³⁶ A. F. Rainey, “Toponymic Problems (cont.), Syria, The Brook of Egypt, Shur = The Wall of Egypt, Egyptian *TJ* = Semitic *Samech*,” *Tel Aviv* 9 (1982): 130-36.
- ³⁷ Richard C. Steiner, *Early Northwest Semitic Serpent Spells in the Pyramid Texts* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2011), 59-60.
- ³⁸ James E. Hoch, “Semitic Words in Egyptian Texts of the New Kingdom and Third Intermediate Period” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Toronto, 1991), 454. Note also the proposed phonetic value [ts] for *t* on p. 613. Hoch acknowledges that this is an unusual case, but perhaps it is not as unusual as previously thought. The more usual case is that Heb. *š* was rendered by Eg. *ḏ*.
- ³⁹ W.F. Albright, *The Vocalization of the Egyptian Syllabic Orthography* (New Haven, Conn., American Oriental Society, 1934), 61. Cf. Leonard H. Lesko, *A Dictionary of*

Late Egyptian (Providence, R.I.: B.C. Scribe Publications 2002), 181.

- ⁴⁰ For example, Yoshiyuki Muchiki cites as a possibility Ph. שמו < *Eg. *š(y)-(i)m.w*, where Eg. *š* > Ph. *š*. See *Egyptian Proper Names and Loanwords in North-West Semitic* (SBLDS 173; Atlanta, Ga.: Society of Biblical Literature, 1999), 41-42.
- ⁴¹ Muchiki posits Aram. טסחי < Eg. *d(i.t) šī(t)* (“Satis has given,” 88) and Aram. פטנתר < Eg. *p(š)-d(i)-ntr(w)* (“He whom the gods has given,” 118, cf. פטנתי: 117; פקטנתי: 130; פקנתי: 131; פתירתי: 137; פתנק: 138; פנהנתי: 172; תמואנתי: 174), where Eg. *š* > Aram. *t*. For Eg. *š* > Aram. *š*, see the proposal cited but not accepted by Muchiki that Aram. צנצ < Eg. *šn-* (140).
- ⁴² Muchiki, *Egyptian Proper Names and Loanwords in North-West Semitic*, 491.
- ⁴³ T. O. Lambdin argued that Hebrew נטר, “natron,” was adopted from Eg. *ntry/ntry* into Semitic ca. 1200 BCE (it is reflected in later Hebrew texts such as Jer 2:22 and Prov 25:20). See “Egyptian Loanwords in the Old Testament,” *JAOs* 73 (1953): 152-53. Also Paul Kaiberger, “נטר,” *TDOT* 10:122. If indeed *ntry/ntry* (“natron”) came into Semitic languages much earlier than Isaiah’s *nšr* and Deir ‘Alla’s *nqr*, then the latter must be treated as separate processes with distinct phonological behaviors. In any case, there is every reason to think that foreign scribes from different periods would not have naturally connected a word for “god” would with a word for “natron,” and so would have differentiated them orthographically and phonologically. Since the Eg. loanword *ntry*, “natron” came into other languages with simple *t* (such as Akk. *nitiru*, Hitt. *nitri*, and Gk. *nitron*), it might also have come into relatively late Hebrew usage via another language.
- ⁴⁴ Muchiki, *Egyptian Proper Names and Loanwords in North-West Semitic*, 232-33, and see further literature cited in HALOT. It has been argued that Joseph’s Egyptian name

צפנת-פענה (Gen 41:45) reflects Egyptian *df(š,i)-nš(r)-p(š)-nš* (“My provision is god, the living one”), but this is a very contested issue (see Muchiki, 224-26) and should not be used as settled data.

- ⁴⁵ Antonio Loprieno, “Egyptian and Coptic,” in Roger D. Woodard, ed., *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the World’s Ancient Languages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 163. He offers /č^h/ as a vocalization; the reader will recognize that the correspondence to the usual pronunciation of affricated *š* is close (esp. in the phonological environment of the word *nešer*), albeit not exact.
- ⁴⁶ Richard C. Steiner, *Affricated Šade in the Semitic Languages* (New York: American Academy for Jewish Research, 1982).
- ⁴⁷ Carsten Peust, *Egyptian Phonology: An Introduction to the Phonology of a Dead Language* (Monographien zur Ägyptischen Sprache 2; Göttingen: Peust & Gutschmidt Verlag, 1999), 79-84, 123-25. Regarding the change *š* > *t*, Peust writes that even the best of earlier attempts to explain the shift “seems complicated and unnatural and does not make predictions for all environments. However, I cannot make a better proposal.”
- ⁴⁸ Hoch, “Semitic Words in Egyptian Texts,” 19.
- ⁴⁹ We note again the various ways Eg. *š* was received in Semitic languages in various periods in Steiner, *Early Northwest Semitic Serpent Spells*, 59-60; there are also examples of biforms within a single language given in Hoch, “Semitic Words in Egyptian Texts,” 15-16.
- ⁵⁰ Hoch, “Semitic Words in Egyptian Texts,” 14, cf. 503.
- ⁵¹ Edward Lipinski, *Semitic Languages: Outline of a Comparative Grammar*, 2nd ed. (OLA 80; Leuven: Peeters, 2001), 27.
- ⁵² Garr, *Dialect Geography of Syria-Palestine*, esp. 23-30.