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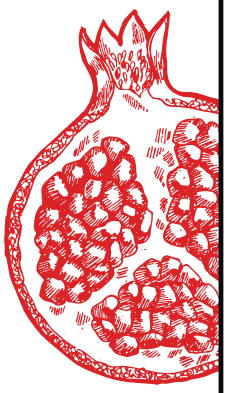

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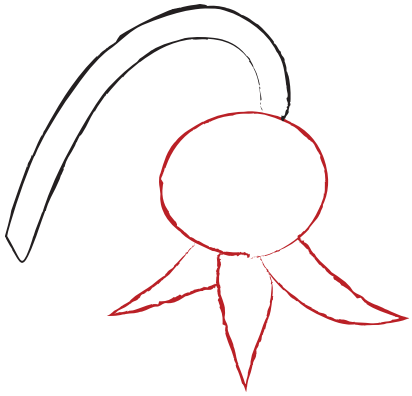

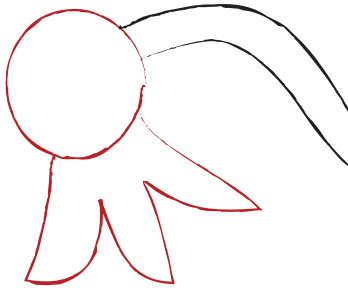

Inaugural Issue: Conceptualizing the Divine in the Levant and Mesopotamia

EBERHARD KARLS UNIVERSITÄT TÜBINGEN
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THE DAY STORM IN MESOPOTAMIAN LITERATURE: A BACKGROUND TO THE BIBLICAL DAY OF YAHWEH?

Sebastian Fink and Mark S. Smith

Source: *Advances in Ancient, Biblical, and Near Eastern Research* 1, no. 1 (Spring, 2021): 29–63

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Keywords: Day-storm, day of Yahweh, Mesopotamian Lamentations, Sumerian literature, Akkadian literature, divine agency, divine wrath

Abstract

This article explores the conception of divine (decision) days, especially the "day-storm" in second- and first-millennium Sumerian and Akkadian literature and finally compares it to the "the day of Yahweh" in the Hebrew Bible.

Der hier vorliegende Artikel untersucht das Konzept eines göttlichen (Entscheidungs-)Tages, speziell des „Sturm-Tages", in der sumerischen und akkadischen Literatur des ersten und zweiten Jahrtausends und vergleicht dieses mit dem „Tag Jahwehs" im Alten Testament.

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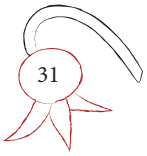
THE DAY STORM IN MESOPOTAMIAN LITERATURE: A BACKGROUND TO THE BIBLICAL DAY OF YAHWEH?*



Sebastian Fink and Mark S. Smith

As Mischa Meier has recently argued in an article on the problem of time (Meier 2015) in European historiography, that historiographers tend to "compress" time in critical situations and attribute the decisive actions to a single point in time – a decision day, so to speak. The historical events that finally lead to a decision are concentrated on that very day. That day is the heyday of a crisis, and – as in the medical use of this word – it decides between life and death. The basic concept is well known from military history, and it even was described as an essential component of "the western way of war" (Hanson 1989), namely the idea of one decisive battle that ends a war, issuing in a clear result as to the victor and the vanquished and thereby re-establishing order.

* We wish to thank our hosts Izaak de Hulster and Martti Nissinen for their invitation to Helsinki and to the other members of the symposium for their responses. We additionally thank Daniel E. Fleming and Mahri Leonard-Fleckman for their feedback

This article explores two usages of the technique of temporal compression. More specifically, we compare the "day-storm" (or "storm-day") in ancient Mesopotamian literature from the early second and first millennia with "the day of Yahweh" in the Hebrew Bible. This essay consists of five parts: (1) an examination of the "day-storm" in traditional Sumerian lament literature; (2) Sumero-Akkadian examples of "the day-storm" within the same genre dating to the first millennium; (3) Akkadian "day-storm" in the first millennium; (4) divine wrath and the causes of destruction in these Mesopotamian texts; and (5) possibly relevant cases of "the day of Yahweh" in the Hebrew Bible. The Mesopotamian materials are offered to broaden the perspective on the biblical "day of Yahweh," long a topic of scholarly discussion.[1] The approach taken in this study hardly resolves the many questions concerning the "day of Yahweh" or even the directions potentially worth pursuing with respect to this phenomenon. Instead, the central goal of this study is to suggest the broad base of potential comparative evidence.

I. Sumerian Lament Literature

The first clear Mesopotamian instances of temporal compression of historical events to a single day is found in year names of the Ur III dynasty, where it is said that the king achieved great deeds in a single day (Fink 2016, 116). However, this article will not concentrate on royal inscriptions where this concept is found from time to time, especially in connection with great battles, because in the royal inscriptions the concept is used as a quite simple motif without further elaboration, for example: "the king defeated x enemies in a single day." We focus instead on lamentation literature, which stresses the non-heroic aspects

[1] For example, Mowinckel 1958; von Rad 1959; and Weiss 1966, all discussed below. For more recent work, see Beck 2005; Schwesig 2006; Oswald 2009; Norin 2009; and Fleming 2010. Note also the two dissertations: Leung 1997, and LaRocca-Pitts 2000.

of war and develops the idea of a decision-day in detail.[2] While royal inscriptions highlight the heroic deeds of the king, lamentation literature depicts events from a considerably different viewpoint. It takes the perspective of the suffering, vanquished population. At the same time, the fact that someone remains to lament demonstrates that the destruction was not a final, complete one; the survivors expressed the hope for a better future in their laments. While the city was destroyed by human enemies based on the actions of hundreds or even thousands of people, this destruction is attributed to and conceptualized as a single entity, which is described, if we follow Nili Samet's translation, as "a storm-day" (see below).

In the following discussion, we offer an overview of relevant Sumerian and Akkadian texts. This material is closely connected, as Sumerian lamentations were written in post-Sumerian times. It is usually taken for granted that the use of Sumerian was restricted to a school and temple environment after the fall of Ur III, in a linguistic landscape dominated by Akkadian. Scribes composed Sumerian as well as Akkadian literary texts,[3] and for some reason Sumerian (or to be more correct Emesal [see below], the only literary variant of Sumerian) was seen as the most appropriate language for lamentations until the end of the cuneiform record. The city laments, all composed in the first half of the second millennium BC, are usually thought to have been performed during a festival celebrating the restoration of a city.

The Lament over Sumer and Ur, commonly regarded as the oldest city lament, introduces the motif of the "storm-day." Nili Samet suggested this translation of the Sumerian word "u_4/ud," which actually means both, "storm" and "day." She convincingly argues that "the 'day' on which Ur's fate changed and the 'storm' that destroyed it are mythologically identical."[4] Obviously, the scribes were aware that these were

[2] George 2013 distinguishes between heroic and non-heroic descriptions of war in Mesopotamian literature.

[3] So, e.g., the famous Ipiq-Aja, who is known as the scribe of tablets containing the Akkadian Atram-hasīs as well as the Sumerian Destruction of Ur. See Löhnert 2011.

[4] Samet 2014, 20. See also 87–88.

different words, maybe even with different etymologies and different pronunciation[5] – but the temptation to identify them in this context and play with the ambiguity of the sign UD seemingly was too high. Being able to use the inherent possibilities of script to create different levels of meaning was proof of the highest mastery of scribal education.[6] As this ambiguity is not reproducible with a single English word, the best rendering for the ambiguous passages is surely Samet's "storm-day" in order to let the modern reader know that the ancient readers had both options. It is hard to assess if the identification was also an ontological one for the ancient scribes of the text. However, it is quite a universal belief that things that are connected in language and – as Marc van de Mieroop (2017) has convincingly argued for the case of Mesopotamia – also in script, are also connected in reality.[7] From this background, Samet's identification of the concept of the destructive storm and the fate-changing day makes even more sense. The initiated scribes, who know how to read, can clearly understand that these two entities are only readings of one sign or two sides of the same coin as we moderns might say.

In the lament for Sumer and Ur, the storm-day is called forth by the most powerful gods: An, Enlil, Enki and Ninḫursag (or Ninmaḫ). One god alone does not make the decision regarding the destruction of the land. It is rather a matter for the divine assembly, and this assembly made the decision to "change its [Sumer's] preordained plans."[8] The gods decide that the land has to be destroyed and this time the plan cannot be changed (lines 56–57). Enlil calls down a wild tribe, the Gutium, from their mountains, yet the text attributes the destruction to the storm-day. After a passage describing the destruction in several places of Sumer, two lines equate the storm with Enlil's word:

163.) u_4.ba inim u_4.dam al.du_7.du_7 $ša_3$.bi a.ba.a. mu.un.zu
164.) inim ^{d}en.lil_2.la_2 zid.da.aš gel.le.eĝ$_3$ gab_2.bu zu.zu.de_3

[5] This is suggested by Parpola 2016, see entries 2636 (u_4) and 2662 (ud, ug_4, u_4).
[6] See Maul 1997 and 2003; Vanstiphout 2004; Frahm 2011.
[7] See Bronkhorst 2001 for a comparative analysis of this belief.
[8] The text in line 27 reads: ĝiš.ḫur.bi kur_2.ru.de_3. Transliteration and translation from ETCSL (2.2.3).

> On that day the word (of Enlil) was an attacking storm. Who could fathom it?
> The word of Enlil was destruction to the right, … to the left. (ETCSL 2.2.3)

These lines suggest that the word of Enlil and the storm are identical or at least very closely related in this context. Here the description of the storm-day applies to the divine word, which plays a major role in the conceptualization of divine power in the lamentations.

In the Ur Lament, the destruction is caused by Enlil calling forth (gu_3 $-de_2$, LU 173) the "storm-day."[9] This personified storm acts as Enlil's tool:

196.) kalam.e saĝ eĝar du_3 i_3.ak.e UR.bi i_3.gu_7.e
197.) u_4 gig er_2.re nam nu.tar.re $uĝ_3$.e še am_3.$ša_4$
198.) u_4 šu ur_3.ur_3.re kalam i_3.ur_4.ur_4.re
199.) u_4 a.ma.ru.gin_7 uru_2 i_3.gul.gul.e
200.) u_4 kalam til.til.e uru_2.a me bi_2.ib_2.ĝar
201.) u_4 ni_3 u_2.gu de_2.de_2 ḫul.ĝal$_2$.e ba.e.DU
202.) u_4 izi.gin_7 bar_7.a $uĝ_3$.e su bi_2.ib_2.ĝar$_2$
203.) u_4 ḫul.gig du_{11}.ga ^{d}en.lil$_2$.la_2 u_4.kalam.ta be_4.be_4
204.) uri_2^{ki}.ma tug_2.gin_7 ba.e.dul gada.gin_7 ba.e.bur_2

> In the land, it (= the storm) *dashes heads against the walls*, consuming indiscriminately.
> The bitter storm by tears cannot be influenced – the people moan.
> The sweeping storm makes the land quake,
> The land-annihilating storm silenced the city.
> The all-exterminating storm came wickedly toward it.
> The storm, blazing like fire, ripped the flesh of the people.
> The storm ordered by Enlil in hate, the storm gnawing away the land
> Covered Ur like a garment, was spread over it like a linen cloth.
> (Samet 2014, 64–65)

The extant parts of the Uruk lament do not contain long references to the word or the storm as an agent of destruction. The agent of the destruction is described as a monster called forth by Enlil (see

[9] ^{d}en.lil$_2$.le u_4.de_3 gu_3 ba.an.de_2 $uĝ_3$.e še am_3.$ša_4$ "Enlil called the 'storm-day' – the people moan." Samet 2014, 62–63.

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Cavigneaux 2013). The Nippur lament contains a rather long passage that elaborates on the good day set up by Enlil, but does not elaborate on the storm-day or the force of the divine word.

It seems that the Eridu lament began with a description of the mighty word of Enlil but the extant lines add little new to the picture, except for one line. It elaborates on the topic of the inhuman nature of the storm, which fulfills its destructive mission without any hesitation once it is set in motion:

> I 20.) u_4 sig_5 ḫul nu.ĝal$_2$.la sa_6.ga nu.zu ḫul nu.zu.e
>
> A storm, which possesses neither kindness nor malice, does not distinguish between good and evil. (Green 1978, 132–33)

Summarizing the evidence from the city laments, we can say that the storm-day is an agent of destruction and it is equated with the divine word.

At the same time, this is only one side of the "day" in the lamentations. While the storm-day occurs as an expression of divine wrath, there is also evidence for the "good day" as an expression of the restoration of divine favor. On the other hand, the opening of the Curse of Agade describes a prospering city, before divine favor is withdrawn and Agade is destroyed.[10] The descriptions of good days were used as a literary device in order to sharpen the contrast to what will happen later, or to what has happened before. This feature will be important for the discussion of the biblical material below, as it might serve to explain why different, even contradictory, interpretations are given concerning the "Day of Yahweh." The best example for the good day (u_4 zi – we could translate more literally the "righteous day" and connect it to renewed divine judgement) comes from the Nippur Lament:

> 247. i_3.ne.eš$_3$ a_2. še$_3$ ^{d}en.lil$_2$.le u_4 zi kalam.ma bi_2.in.gub.ba.am$_3$
> 248. u_4 nibru^{ki} gu_2 an.še$_3$ zi.zi i_3.ne.eš$_3$ im.mi.in.dug$_4$.ga
> 249. u_4 zi e_2.kur.ra sag mu_2.mu$_2$ e.ne im.mi.in.tuk.a
> 250. u_4 ki.ur$_3$.ra dalla maḫ e_3.a e.ne im.mi.in.zi.ga

[10] For an edition, see Cooper 1983.

….
261. u_4 nig_2.si.sa_2 kalam.ma ga_2.ga_2 a_2.taḫ.a mi.ni.in.ku_4.ra

Now, see! Enlil hast set up a good day in the land!
The day for Nippur to raise (its) neck to heaven he has even now ordered!
He, a good day to shine in the Ekur, he has provided!
He, the day for the Ki'ur's magnificent manifestations, he has raised up!
…
The day for establishing justice in the land, he brought in (Išme-Dagan) in (its) aid! (Tinney 1996, 116–17)

The lines omitted above all describe how fertility and power are restored to the land. Lines 284–95 describe the ritually pure day, in which all members of society peacefully co-exist and which finally removes the "darkness" from the land.[11]

II. Sumero-Akkadian Evidence of the First Millennium

The Mesopotamian tradition of lamentation is well attested into the first millennium.[12] The city laments of earlier tradition were replaced by the so-called canonical lamentations. Canonical Sumerian lamentations were an important part of the state cult, and their role is well documented for the Neo-Assyrian period. The evidence for this period shows that they were performed on a fixed schedule, several times a week, if not every day, and that even the Neo-Assyrian king had to perform Emesal lamentations.[13] The latest dateable copies of canonical lamentations come from the first century BC.[14] Scribal families that kept this tradition alive until the very end of cuneiform writing copied

[11] Tinney 1996, 120–21. Several parallels to this "harmony" passage were collected by Steve Tinney in his commentary to the text. See Tinney 1996, 177–81. The most prominent one is Gudea Cylinder A xii 21–xiii 15.
[12] For a recent overview on Emesal prayers in the first millennium, see Gabbay 2014.
[13] See the cultic calendars published in SAA 20 and Maul 2000.
[14] These texts were published by Reisner already in 1896.

these texts and passed their knowledge of Sumerian from father to son.[15] These texts also influenced prayers in Akkadian language; some Akkadian prayers or hymns might be adapted translations of Sumerian texts (Wassermann and Gabbay 2005). Besides direct translations, the Sumerian tradition also influenced the language and motifs of Akkadian prayers, based on the fact that scribal education always was bilingual. At the same time, Sumerian remained the most appropriate language for lamenting until the very end of cuneiform culture and perhaps impeded the development of an Akkadian genre of lamentations. When it came to lamentation, Sumerian, or more exactly Emesal,[16] the only known variant of Sumerian, was regarded as the fitting language.

The canonical lamentations, especially the balaĝs, include several attestations of the "storm-day," usually described in long litanies. In the balaĝs, the "storm-day" is often equated with the divine word. A discussion of every reference to the destructive storm in the balaĝs does not seem fruitful, but the following selection indicates how the "storm-day" was conceptualized. We present the evidence in four groups: (1) equations of the storm with the word of the gods and the flood; (2) the destructive character of the storm; (3) the motif of the storm without mercy; and (4) cases representing temporal compression.

II.1 Equations

The balaĝ u_4.dam ki am_2.us_2 "It touches the earth like a storm" elaborates on the destructive qualities of the divine word and compares it to a storm.[17] The storm and the word alternate as agents of destruction.

[15] As far as we can see, there are no references to female scribes in the colophons of the canonical lamentations from the first millennium.

[16] On Emesal, see Schretter 1990 and Schretter 2018 with references to earlier literature. Most Emesal variants of the Sumerian main dialect can be explained by straightforward sound changes (Schretter 1990, 31–70). However our correct understanding of the nature of Emesal (dialect, sociolect, etc.) is hampered by the fact that all the clear evidence for Emesal comes from a time where Sumerian (and therefore also Emesal) was no longer an everyday language.

[17] For an edition and translation, see Cohen 1988, 120–51.

As stated above, they are identified with each other, as shown in the following line:

47.) e.ne.eĝ$_3$.ĝa$_2$.ni u$_4$.de$_3$ e$_2$.5.ta 5.am$_3$ ba.ra.ab.e$_3$

His word is a storm which chases (all) five out from a household of five (Cohen 1988, 125/137).

The following text likewise offers an equation of the two destructive entities storm and word, this time specified as the word of the sky god An:

151.) u$_4$.de$_3$ e.ne.eĝ$_3$ an.na e.ne.eĝ$_3$ ^{d}mu.ul.lil$_2$.la$_2$.re
152.) u$_4$.de$_3$ ša$_3$ ib$_2$.ba an gu.la.re
153.) u$_4$.de$_3$ ša$_3$.ab ḫul.ma.al.la ^{d}mu.ul.lil$_2$.la$_2$.ke$_4$
154.) aĝ$_2$ e$_2$.zi.ĝu$_{10}$ ba.ab.gul.la.re
155.) aĝ$_2$ uru$_2$.zi. ĝu$_{10}$ ba.ab.ḫul.la.re

The storm, the word of An, the word of Enlil,
The storm, the angry heart of great An!
The storm, the vicious heart of Enlil!
That which has destroyed my faithful house!
That which has destroyed my faithful city![18]

The text first elaborates on the storm-day, equating it first with the word of An and Enlil and then with their angry hearts. In the last two lines, the text refrains from naming the destructive entity and simply calls it aĝ$_2$ "thing," thereby referring to all these aspects.

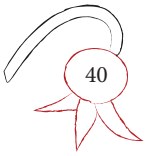
The following passage apparently elaborates on the second part of Enlil's name – lil$_2$ – that can be understood as "wind," "breeze." It equates the god himself with the storm and once more the text plays with the homophony of "day" and "storm" (b+92.):

[18] Cohen 1988, 147, 149–50. We thank the anonymous reviewer for the hint to line 9' of BRM 4,6 which is an Akkadian translation of lines 151–52, see Linssen 2004, 306.

b+92.) u_4.ri u_4.ri.gin_7 te.ga.ba zal
b+93.) gi_6.ri gi_6.ri.gin_7 te.ga.bi zal
b+94.) u_4 e.lum.e mu.un.zal.a.re
b+95.) u_4 ^{d}mu.ul.lil_2.le mu.un.zal.a.re

As in every day of yore, it continues unabated when approaching.
As in every night of yore, it continues unabated when approaching.
The storm, the important one, continues unabated.
The storm, Enlil, continues unabated.[19]

In sum, the texts discussed above equate the storm-day with the divine word, with the god's angry heart, and with the god Enlil himself. In one instance, the storm is even called the "messenger of the honored one" (Cohen 1988, 625, line a+22), which shows the storm-day as a divine tool and as a personification of the destruction.



II.2 The destructive character of the storm-day

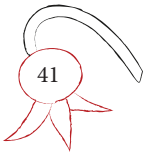
The destructive capacities of the storm precisely described in litanies appear with slight variations. These offer very similar descriptions for the divine word and the storm, which comes as no surprise since they were considered to be identical or at least different aspects of one entity.[20] The following text focuses on the results of the storm's activities:

b+109.) u_4 mu til.e u_4 gi til.e
b+110.) u_4 tur_3 gul.e u_4 amaš bu.re
b+111.) tuk.ku_3.de u_4 $ša_3$.ba nu.pa_3.de_2.da.ra
b+112.) tur_3 al.gul.gul.e amaš bu.bu.re
b+113.) am_2.tur_3 am_2.maḫ.ba mu.da.ab.gi.gi
b+114.) [mu].an.na.me.gub mu.bi še am_3.$ša_4$
b+115.) [gi].an.na.me.gub gi.bi še am_3.$ša_4$
b+116.) [^{giš}]mes.gal.gal.la gu_2.re a[m_3.me]
b+117.) [u_4].de_3 du_6.du_6.dam šu.$še_3$ a[l.ma.ma]
b+118.) [e].ne.eĝ$_3$ ^{d}mu.ul.lil_2.la bu_5.bu_5.am_3 i[bi_2 nu.bar.bar.re]

[19] Cohen 1988, 258/263. This is the more complete Old Babylonian version of the text, however a rather broken first-millennium text also exists.
[20] It is quite typical for the genre that such litanies appear in expanded and abridged versions.

> The storm brings to an end (the life of) the young man; it brings to an end (the life of) the young girl.
> The storm destroying the cattle pen, the storm uprooting the sheepfold,
> …the midst of the storm cannot be seen.
> It destroys the cattle pen; it uproots the sheepfold.
> It kills both small and great.
> When it encounters a young man, that young man moans.
> When it encounters a young woman, that young woman moans.
> It fells the great *mes*-trees.
> The storm turns all into ruin mounds.
> The word of Enlil rushes about (so quickly), it cannot be seen.[21]

The storm brings the life of young man and young woman to an end (b+109); it destroys the cattle pen and uproots the sheepfold (b+110, b+112); it kills small and great (b+113); it fells huge trees (b+116); and it turns everything into ruins (b+117).[22] Towards the end of the preserved text we find several lines pleading the gods to "turn back the storm" and thereby end the destruction.[23]



In the balaĝ am.e bara$_2$ an.na.ra the storm is equated with the word of An and several lines elaborate on the destructive character of this word, angry heart, storm or flood that "causes the heavens to rumble above [and] the earth to shake below."[24]

II.3 The storm has no mercy

The texts describe the storm as an entity without any social relations and the inability to feel mercy for its victims. As seen above, it kills young man and woman alike. In im.ma.al gu$_3$.de$_2$.de$_2$ it is said that the storm has no regard for mother and father, for spouse and child, for sister and brother or for friend and companion.[25] The storm does not even spare persons who deserve special protection according to all human standards, such as young girls without brothers or children

[21] Cohen 1988, 259–60/263, lines b+109–b+118.
[22] Cohen 1988, 263, lines b+109–118.
[23] Cohen 1988, 438, lines f+109–f+115.
[24] Cohen 1988, 332, lines a+29–a+45.
[25] Cohen 1988, 625, lines a+14–a+19.

without father.[26] However, in e_2 tur_3.gin_7 niĝin.na.am_3 it is said that the word, which is equated with the storm in line c+88, is just to those who are just and unjust to those who are unjust:

> c+97.) i_3.ge.en i_3.ge.en nu.ge.en nu.ge.en
> *ana ki-i-nu ki-na-ku ana la ki-i-nu ul ki-na-ku:*
> *ana sar-ra sar-ra-KI:*
> *ana ki-i-nu ki-na-at ana sar-ra sar-ra-at*
>
> (To him who) is just, it is just. (To him who) is unjust, it is unjust. (Cohen 1988, 79/86)

The fact that the line has three variant Akkadian translations gives evidence of the theological implications this line might have had for its readers, as it contradicts the usual idea of the merciless storm that kills indiscriminately.

II.4 Temporal compression

Temporal compression is clearly represented in the following lines from B25 (u_4.dam gu_3 de_2.de_2.aš):

> a+9.) na.aĝ$_2$.bi.še_3 an ba.dub_2 ki ba.sig_3
> a+10.) an ba.dub_2.dub_2 ki ba.sig_3.sig_3
> a+11.) ^{d}utu an.ur_2.ra ba.da.nu_2
> a+12.) ^{d}nanna an.pa.$še_3$ $muš_2$ ba.an.da.ni.ib_2.ga
> a+13.) u_4.gal an.ta $u.gu_3$ ba.an.de_2.e
> a+14.) u_4.ḫul.ma.al.la.e ka.naĝ.ĝa_2 su ba.ab.da[r$^{?}$]
>
> On account of this [the word of the angry gods] the heavens trembled, the earth shook.
> The heavens continually rumbled, the earth continually shook.
> The sun lay at the horizon.
> The moon stopped still in the midst of the sky.
> In the sky the great lights disappeared.
> An evil storm (has split$^{?}$)[27] the nations.

[26] Cohen 1988, 625, lines a+49–a+50.

[27] Cohen 1988, 439 tentatively suggests this translation.

Here the word is identical with the storm as demonstrated in the last line, examples could be multiplied.[28] It causes time to stand still, as all the indicators for the passing of time – the sun, the moon and the stars in the sky – either stand still or even disappear. The destruction thus takes place in this timeless world (Cohen 1988, 436, lines a+14–a+26).

III. The Storm-day in Akkadian

The Akkadian word *ūmu* has the same ambiguity as Sumerian u_4: it designates the day as a unit of time, as well as the storm as a mythical being or demon (*CAD U/W* 138, s.v. ūmu). When *ūmu* cannot be translated as day, *CAD* uses "weather-beast," even in cases where "storm" would be more fitting. The use of this word for storm/weather beast might be due to the Sumerian influence. This intimate relation of the sign UD with destructive forces is also demonstrated by the Sumerian Ug-demons, which were written ^{d}UD.PRIRIG or ^{d}UD.UG in oldest times, and which are equated with *ūmu* in Ḫḫ. XIV 121 (MSL 8/2; see Krebernik 2014). It was suggested by J. J. M. Roberts (1972, 55) that the god *ūmu* "was nothing than the deified day." Frans Wiggermann (1992, 171) added: "and its nature [is] the manifestation of divine will." He also notes, as perhaps expected, that these beings are "associated with Iškur/Adad, the storm god" (Wiggermann 1992, 171). In the god lists this demon or god – it is hard to draw a clear line between these categories – is closely related to storm and war (Krebernik 2014, 279).

In any case, the literature in both Sumerian and Akkadian shares the idea of the destructive storm-day, which is somewhat more personalized in Akkadian literature. However, as outlined above, the genre of lamentation was intimately connected with the Sumerian language. The

[28] Ana Elume, lines 10–17 (Cohen 1988, 209 and 216); the parallelism of "storm" and "word of Enlil" in Uruhulake of Gula, lines 117–18 (Cohen 1998, 260 and 263); the opening of Elum Gusun, lines 1–13, which begins with "your name is against the lands," then identifies the addressee as Enlil and then ends with its effects, "heaven itself rumbles, the very earth shakes" (Cohen 1998, 274–75 and 291), and later in the same, in line 94, "The word of the lord is indeed a flood" (Cohen 1998, 277 and 293).

lamentations that were used on many occasions throughout the second and first millennium were written in Sumerian and therefore not many Akkadian lamentations were composed. The idea of the destructive "storm-day" was reflected in the ongoing practice of Sumerian texts accompanied by their Akkadian translations.[29]

Despite the virtual lack of Akkadian city lamentations, which are – as a matter of genre – closely connected to destruction, instances of these *ūmu*-demons/beasts are attested in other Akkadian genres. In *Enūma Eliš* they appear in a list of eleven monsters:

I 141 *uš-zi-iz ba-aš-mu muš-ḫuš u* ^{d}*la-ḫa-mu*
I 142 u_4*-gal-la ur-idimin-me ù gír-tab-lú-*u_{18}*-lu*
I 143 u_4*-me da-ab-ru-te* ku_6*-lú-*u_{18}*-lu ù ku-sa-rik-ku*
I 144 *na-ši kak-ku la pa-du-ú la a-di-ru ta-ḫ*[*a-z*]i

She created the Hydra, the Dragon, the Hairy Hero,
The Great Demon, the Savage Dog, and the Scorpion-man,
Fierce demons, the Fish-man, and the Mighty Bull,
Carriers of merciless weapons, fearless in the face of battle.
(Lambert 2013, 58–59)

This line refers to the army created by Tiamat, or more exactly it is a listing of the eleven dangerous monsters and is repeated in II 29, III 33 and 91. We know that they are eleven because it is explicitly stated in I 146. However, if we count the creatures, there are only have eight of them.

The widespread incantation-series Maqlû (I 117) likewise mentions this demon – once more as a destructive agent that is supposed to kill the evil witch or sorcerer (Abusch 2015, 116/118). While it seems obvious that in these examples the entity described is conceptualized as a kind of demon, the Akkadian evidence of the bilingual texts, most of them being interlinear translations of the lamentations we discussed above, indicates that we cannot always clearly distinguish between the

[29] As a discussion of the instances of *ūmu* in Akkadian translation of Sumerian texts would more or less double the discussion above, we just refer to the bilingual evidence in *CAD U/W* 138, s.v. ūmu.

storm-day and the more clearly defined "weather-beast."[30] However, it is not entirely clear why *CAD* tried to avoid the translation "storm" for *ūmu*, which would fit much better than "weather-beast" in several instances. In some cases, the "weather-beasts" are the draught-animals of divine chariots,[31] for example in *Enūma Eliš* IV 50. There we can find the well-attested motif of the rider of the "storm." Here the storm, also designated by other terms than *ūmu*, is a divine weapon used to punish the god's enemies. W. G. Lambert translates the line the following way:

> IV 50 ^{giš}*narkabat* u_4*-mu la maḫ-ri ga-lit-ta ir-kab*
>
> He rode the fearful chariot of the irresistible storm.
> (Lambert 2013, 89)

Finally, several texts compare or even equate deities with *ūmu*. For example in a Gula Hymn, Lugalbanda is described as "the irresistible storm."[32]

Thus far, we have noted considerable evidence for the concept of a destructive storm or storm-demon in Akkadian literature. However, we did not encounter the intimate relation of the day and the storm or the temporal compression of all kinds of bad experiences to a single day. For these features, we may turn to the concept of a "bad day" and the "good day" in prayers. Akkadian prayers, especially those lamenting the bad fate of the praying person, often conceptualize the prayer as a kind of appeal process, in which their whole case is reopened before the divine jury or the divine judge. On that very "judgment-day," the divine council or a divine judge should end the crisis and re-establish a good fate for the suffering person.[33] The "bad day" in turn is the day when the punishment starts, when a goddess becomes angry. The concept is evident in the following lines from *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi*:

[30] For the evidence, see *CAD U/W* 153–54, s.v. ūmu.
[31] For the evidence, see *CAD U/W* 154 b.
[32] u_4*-mu la ma-ḫi-ri* in Lambert 1967, 126 (line 150).
[33] See Maul 1992 and Steinkeller 2005, where Steinkeller discusses the Mesopotamian idea that judgement is also given during extispicy.

I 41. *iš-tu* u_4*-mi be-lí i-ni-na-an-ni*
I 42. *ù qar-ra-du* ^{d}*marduk* (AMAR.UTU) *is-bu-su itti* (KI)*-ia*
I 43. *id-da-an-ni ilī* (DINGIR-MU) *šá-da-a-šú i-li*
I 44. *ip-par-ku* ^{d}*iš-ta-ri i-bé-eš a-ḫi-tum*

On (lit. from) the day when the lord punished me,
and the hero Marduk became angry with me;
my god rejected me and went up to his mountain (i.e. disappeared)
my goddess deserted (me) and moved away. (Ludlul I)
(Oshima 2014, 80–81)

In line 5 of the first tablet of the composition, even a day of the storm (u_4*-mu me-ḫe-e*) is mentioned, to which we will return below in some detail.[34] In a diĝir.ša$_3$.dib.ba incantation, the bad day is associated with a storm:

96 *a-na* u_4*-mi lem-ni la ta-man-na-an-ni*
97 *a-na* u_4*-mi me-ḫe-e la tu-tar-ra-an-ni*

Do not hand me over to an evil day.
Do not turn me over to a day of storm.[35]

In the same prayer, also the good day is described – this salvation of the individual on a single day stands in stark contrast to the earlier continuous and constant commitment of sins by the praying individual. As in the Sumerian texts discussed above, the good day is the day of renewed divine judgment and the absolution of sins:

7. *a-nu-ú-a ḫi-ṭa-tu-u-a gíl-lat-ú-a* [šá *ki-ma ḫa-mi*] *tab-ku*-ú-ma *eli-ši-na ú-kab-bi-is*
8. *ina* u_4*-mu an-ni-i lu-u paṭ-ra-ni lu-ú pa*-áš*-ra-ni*

[34] See the commentary on this *meḫu*-wind in Oshima 2014, 172–73.
[35] Lambert 1974, 278–79. A parallel is found in another incantation of this type, the text reads: "Do not turn me over to the day of the storm. 25. My god, do not hand me over to an evil night" (291).

> I have trodden on my iniquities, sins and transgressions, [which] were heaped up l[like leaves]:
> On this day let them be released and absolved.
> (Lambert 1974, 284–85)

In *Ludlul* the good day, the day when the punishment ends and the sufferer is restored, is described in great detail on tablets III–V. Unfortunately, we have no mention of a specific day in the text, which is quite broken in the end. Nevertheless, it is clearly indicated that the change happened suddenly: "my illness was suddenly over" (III, 50).[36]

In sum, it is evident that the storm-day as well as the good day are demonstrations of the power of the respective god. The god described in the texts above has the power to destroy and the power to give life. These changes happen suddenly – in a single day.

IV. Divine Wrath and the Causes of Destruction

The main cause for destruction or punishment in the texts discussed above is divine "wrath." The explanation is mainly emotional and conceptualizes the divinity in quite anthropomorphic terms. Only in one text discussed here are the causes for this wrath explained in detail, namely in the *Curse of Agade* where Naram-sin's destruction of Ekur clearly indicates why Enlil is angry and finally decides to destroy Agade. Maybe for that reason the text does not elaborate on Enlil's anger at length, but rather speaks of revenge.[37] However, the god is clearly in a bad mood, as reflected by his situation: he is fasting (line 209) and that the other goods have to cool his angry heart with cold water (line 211).

In one famous instance, divine wrath is explained as a kind of natural law: all empires have to crumble, because no rule is eternal (*Lamentation over the Destruction of Sumer and Ur*, lines 366–69) and

[36] *mur-ṣi ár-ḫi-iš ig-ga-mir* in Oshima 2014, 96–97.
[37] Cooper 1983, 57, line 151: "Enlil, because his beloved Ekur was destroyed, what should he destroy (in revenge) for it?"

each has to fall at some point.[38] The destruction, as well as the reasons for the highest god to allow it, is seen as inexplicable for human beings in many texts. In the following speech to Enlil, even the god Su'en does not understand his father's plans:

> 456. ša$_3$ su$_2$.mu.ug.ga i.zi.gin$_7$ ḫu.luḫ.ḫa.za igi.zi bar.mu.un.ši.ib
> 457. a.a. ^{d}en.lil$_2$ nam mu.e.tar.ra galga ba.ra.an.du$_8$.du$_8$
>
> Look into your darkened heart, terrifying like the waves!
> O father Enlil, the fate that you have decreed cannot be explained!
> (Michalowski 1989, 64–65)

In most texts, however, no reason for the wrath is given at all. The god has become angry and humans can try to calm him down by lamenting and praying to him. Therefore, the "soothing of the heart" (Eršaḫuĝas) has become the name of a whole genre of lamentations.[39] While these Eršaḫuĝas address personal suffering, the balaĝs, often described as public lamentations, are full of descriptions of divine wrath as the cause of the destruction described in these texts. When the heart and the liver of the god are angry, they have to be calmed. In all genres of Emesal-prayers[40] "heart pacification units" can be found. Usually these texts are placed at the end of the composition, as a final appeal to the deity to end his wrath and end the destruction. Often the god is only addressed indirectly, as other gods are used as intercessors (see Gabbay 2014, 33–35). An impressive example for this technique is found in u$_4$.dam ki àm.ús:

> f+225 an.e ki.e de$_3$.ma$_3$.e.huĝ.e
> f+226 an.ki.a.bi.ta de$_3$.ma$_3$.e.huĝ.e
> f+227 ^{d}Uraš ki.še.gu.nu

[38] Michalowski 1989, 58–59. See the commentary in Michalowski 1989, 15 as well as Michalowski 1983. Steinkeller 2003 who provides an edition of an Ur III fragment of the Sumerian King List, still agrees with the idea that the "fatalistic idea of history as a chain of recurring cycles" (285) came into being not earlier than Isin times.

[39] For an edition of these texts, see Maul 1988.

[40] See Gabbay 2014, 5–14 for an overview.

f+228 ^{d}En.ki ^{d}Nin.ki ^{d}En.mul ^{d}Nin.[mul]
…
f+265 [dim$_3$.me.er an.na dim$_3$.me.er ki.a a.ra.zu de$_3$.ra.ab.be$_2$]
f+266 [uru$_2$.zu na.an.šub.be$_2$.en de$_3$.ra.ab.be$_2$ a.ra.zu de$_3$.ra.ab.be$_2$]
(Cohen 1988, 134–35)

May heaven and earth calm you!
May both heaven and earth calm you!
Urash, the place of late barley,
Enki, Ninki, Emul, Nimul
… [long list of names and epithets of gods]
May (these) gods of heaven and (these) gods of earth each utter a prayer to you!
"May you not abandon your city!" may each utter to you! May each utter a prayer to you!
(Cohen 1988, 141–42)

The wrath of the goddess can be conceptualized in the way we have encountered above, namely as the destructive word or storm. Besides this, the inactivity of the deity and its unwillingness to listen to the prayers of the suffering people is also seen as the cause of the destruction, or at least as the reason why the destruction continues, for example in the following passage from am.e amaš.a.na:[41]

25. a.a. ^{d}mu.ul.lil$_2$ mu.lu.u$_6$.di i.bi$_2$.zu en$_3$.še$_3$ nu.kuš$_2$.u$_3$
26. mu.lu sag.zu.a tug$_2$ bi.dul.la e en$_3$.še$_3$
27. gu$_2$.zu ur$_2$.ra ba.e.ni.mar.ra en$_3$.še$_3$
28. ša$_3$.zu ^{gi}pisan.gin$_7$ am$_2$.ma$_3$.ba.šu$_2$.a en$_3$.še$_3$
29. e.lum.e $^{mu.uš.túg}$GEŠTU$_2$.zu ur$_2$.ra mi.ni.ib$_2$.us$_2$.sa en$_3$.še$_3$
(Cohen 1988, 155)

Father Enlil, who gazes about, how long will your eyes not be tired?
How long will you keep your head covered with a cloth?
How long will you keep your neck in (your) lap?
How long will you keep your mind covered like a reed box?
Important one, how long will you lean your ear against (your) lap?
(Cohen 1988, 166)

[41] For other instances of this motif see the index of Cohen 1988, 783 s.v. "úr"

In the balaĝ e.ne.eĝ$_3$.ĝa$_3$.ni i.lu i.lu the intention of the goddess Inanna is standing in front of Enlil's house and she asks the doorkeeper to let her in. Her intention is the following:

b+60. ša$_3$.ga.ni ga.am$_3$.ḫuĝ ba[r.a.ni ga.an.šed$_7$]
b+61. ša$_3$.ge bar.ra.ne$_2$ ga.am$_3$.ma.x.[x]
b+62. ša$_3$.kuš$_2$.u$_3$.a.be$_2$ e.ne.eĝ$_3$ [ga.am$_3$…] ga.na i$_3$.du$_8$ e$_2$ [ĝal$_2$.tag$_4$]
(Cohen 1988, 195)

"May I calm his heart! May I pacify his liver!"
"May I direct words to his heart and liver!"
"May I direct words to that tired heart!"
(Cohen 1988, 199)

The two stock-phrases describing the divine wrath are to cool down the angry heart and to calm the liver of the god. Both are seen as the seat of emotions. The phrases "ša$_3$ -huĝ," calm the heart, and "bar -šed$_7$," pacify the liver, occur frequently in the balaĝs[42] and express the wish that the wrath of the goddess will calm down.

A prime example of the wrath of a god[43] in Akkadian sources can be found in the initial lines of *Ludlul*. There Marduk is characterized as horrible in his wrath, but at the same time kind and compassionate when he calms down:

1. *lud-lul be-lu*$_4$ né-me-*qí ilu* (DINGIR) *muš*-[*ta-lum*]
2. *e-ziz mu*-ši *mu*-˹up˺-pa-šìr *ur-r*[*i*]
5. šá *ki-ma u*$_4$*-mu me-ḫe-e na-mu-ú ug-gat-su*
6. ù *ki-ma ma-nit* še-*re-e-ti za-aq-šú ṭa-a-bi*
7. *uz-zu-uš-šu la ma-ḫar a-bu-bu ru-ʾu-ub*-šu
8. *mu-us-saḫ-ḫir ka-ra-as-su ka-bat-ta*-šú *ta-a-a-rat*

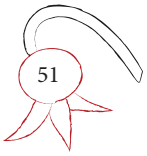
Let me praise the lord of wisdom, the jud[icious] god,
the one who is furious by night (but) lenient by day. (…)
The one whose wrath is like a devastating [day of] *gale*,
but his blowing (wind) is gratifying like a morning breeze.

[42] See Cohen's index s.v. "bar" and "ša$_3$ hun."
[43] This is paralleled by the reoccurring motif of the divinely inspired wrath of the Mesopotamian kings. For examples see *CAD* U/W, 38 s.v. *uggatu* 3'.

> In his anger, he is irresistible, his fury is a deluge,
> (but) his mind is *caring*, his *heart* is lenient.
> (Oshima 2014, 78–79)

This lengthy description of Marduk continues until line 36, and then these statements are further explicated by the personal experience of the author. As already mentioned above, line 5 mentions a day of storm and the term *uggatu* used here either means "anger, wrath" or signifies the "day of wrath," which is the name of the 19th day of the month (see *CAD* U/W, 37, s.v. *uggatu*). In the evidence listed in *CAD* we find a reference to BRM 4 6:9, which mentions the "day of the wrath of High Anu (referring to an eclipse),"[44] and in the Erra epic we find a line that mentions the day of Erra's wrath:

> V 19. *ina ūmi ug-ga-ti-ka ali māḫirka*[45]
>
> V 19. "On the day of your wrath, where is who can withstand you?"
> (Cagni 1977, 58)



To sum up, the wrath of the deity widely served as a reason for destruction and punishment and in some texts it was conceptualized as a "day of wrath" of a certain deity.

V. The Biblical "Day of Yahweh"

The Mesopotamian "day-storm" may be compared with the biblical motif of "the day of Yahweh." Our purpose here is not a detailed analysis, tracing specific motifs associated with "the day of Yahweh" through different texts.[46] Instead, this discussion focuses on some salient, general points about the biblical evidence in relation to the possible, broader Mesopotamian background(s) explored above.

[44] *CAD* U/W, 38, s.v. *uggatu*. The translation of Linssen, who re-edited this text, reminds us of the problems outlined above. He decided to translate "storm is the wrath (in) the heart of great Anu." Linssen 2004, 310.
[45] Text after *CAD* U/W, 38, s.v. *uggatu*.
[46] For a fairly detailed survey, see Weiss 1966.

Before beginning, we note that we are not positing or presupposing any specific Mesopotamian influence on biblical literature. Instead, in this study the possible relations are viewed in broad comparative terms and not in terms of direct literary or cultural influence ("genetic" relationships).

Like the Mesopotamian "day/storm," "the day of Yahweh" is a day of divine judgment manifest in the form of destruction (Isa 13:6, 9; Ezek 13:5; 48:35; Joel 1:15; 2:1, 11; 3:4; 4:14; Amos 5:18, 20; Obad 15; Zeph 1:7, 14; Mal 3:23). It often involves foreign armies (note *qārôb*, "near," predicated of "the day of Yahweh" in Isa 13:6; Joel 1:15; 4:14; Obad 15; Zeph 1:7, and 14; cf. **bw'*, "is coming," in Isa 13:9; Joel 2:1; 3:4; Mal 3:23). In this respect, "the day of Yahweh" compares with "the day (belonging) to Yahweh" (Isa 2:12; similarly Isa 22:5; 34:8; Jer 46:12; Ps 74:16). Prophetic literature attests to the motif in variants specifying divine anger: "the day of the wrath of Yahweh" (Isa 13:13, see also Zeph 2:14); "the day of wrath" (Zeph 1:15; cf. Prov 11:4); and "the day of my indignation" (Isa 10:5).[47] This form of the day as a time of divine anger made manifest appears also in the city-lament literature of Lamentations: "the day of wrath of Yahweh" in Lam 1:12; "the day of his anger" in 2:1; and "the day of the anger of Yahweh" in 2:22. "The day of Yahweh" may represent an elaboration on divine anger as judgment made manifest for a particular "day." The usages noted thus far show some variety in the relevant expressions. To these we may add the divine judgment cast more generically in terms of "the day" in both the Bible (e.g., "see the day, see, it is coming…," in Ezek 7:10 parallel to "the disaster, see it is coming…," in v. 5), and Mesopotamian texts (e.g., "your day" referring to a day of divine judgment an oracle quoted in the letter of Shamash-nasir to King Zimri-lim of Mari).[48] Thus "the day" does not appear to

[47] Cf. "Yahweh's day of vengeance" in Isa 34:8–17, said to be known in "the book of Yahweh," a possible allusion to the storm of "the day of Yahweh" in Isa 13. See Fitzgerald 2002, 77. For the case in example in Isa 13, see also Grant 2014, 105–106. For the range of phrases, see also Fitzgerald 2002, 199; and further below.

[48] See Bodi 2013, 52. The Akkadian text is ARMT 26, 196, conveniently transliterated and translated in Nissinen 2003, 26–27. The writing of "your day"

be an entirely fixed technical term, but appears in different manners: a variant form ("the day belonging to Yahweh"); elaborated forms (e.g., "the day of wrath of Yahweh"); and perhaps a reduced form ("the day" in reference to Yahweh's judgment of destruction).

Isaiah 13 offers a fairly paradigmatic case of "the day of Yahweh," expressing divine anger marked by disaster and destruction (so Weiss 1966). Verses 4–5 introduce "the day of Yahweh" as a battle of heavenly proportions, before v. 6 explicitly mentions "the day of Yahweh," with its terrible effects described in vv. 7–8. Verse 9 elaborates on the day of Yahweh in these terms:[49]

> "See, the day of Yahweh comes,
> cruel, with wrath and divine anger,
> to make the earth a desolation,
> and to destroy its sinners in it."

The divine anger on this day recalls "the storm ordered by Enlil in hate" in the Ur lament noted above.[50] According to the following v. 10, all light will be suspended, as in B25 (u_4.dam gu_3 de_2.de_2.aš), likewise discussed above. Thus the divine day in biblical literature, as in the Mesopotamian texts noted above, represents a time of divine anger or hate and of the suspension of light.

Unlike the Mesopotamian "day-storm," the biblical "day of Yahweh" is not labeled explicitly as the storm,[51] and unlike Akkadian *ūmu*, Biblical Hebrew *yôm* does not mean "storm." However, a wider perspective on "the day" appears warranted. Indeed, "the day of war" is parallel to "the day of storm" (*sûpâ*) in Amos 1:14 (Fitzgerald 2002, 133–34). Moreover, as Aloysius Fitzgerald rightly noted (Fitzgerald 2002), "the day of Yahweh" texts often use motifs signaling the effects of the

ú-*ut-ka* is exceptional, see the comments in Durand 1988, 423 who tentatively translated "day." See also George 2003, 153, who argues against this translation.

[49] For this passage, see von Rad 1959, 99–100, and Fitzgerald 2002, 44–46.

[50] Cf. "the day of Yahweh" called a "day of wrath" in Zeph 1:14–15.

[51] For the relevant Biblical Hebrew terms for the destructive storm, see Fitzgerald 2002, 133–39. See also "the day of the storm" (*ywm rwḥ*) in Ahiqar, #75, in Lindenberger 1983, 171.

destructive storm marking divine judgment (see Zeph 1:7–13; Mal 2:2–5): destruction and fire, with deleterious results for nature (Joel 1:15–20); darkness and fire (Joel 2:1–3, 10; 3:4, 14–15; Amos 5:20; see also Zeph 2:14–15); and divine armies marshaled (Joel 2:11) or human enemies involved (see Isaiah 13, especially the foes described in vv. 1–5 and 17–18; note also Ezek 13:5; cf. Joel 4:9–14). In most cases, divine judgment appears directed against Israel, but in some instances, "the day of Yahweh" is directed against the nations (e.g., Obad 15). Several of these features have correspondences in Mesopotamian texts about the "day storm" discussed above, which would work well with Fitzgerald's view that "the day of Yahweh" evokes the imagery of the destructive storm to signal the time of divine judgment.

"The day of Yahweh" is limited in its scope in biblical literature. Apart from Lamentations, it is missing from the Writings. It is likewise not at home in the Pentateuch, nor in the Former Prophets. It is absent also from Jeremiah (cf. "the day" in 46:10), as well as the prophetical books of Hosea, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Haggai, and Zechariah. In terms of genre, the prophetic Mesopotamian text describing "the day" noted above aligns with many biblical prophetic texts attesting to "the day of Yahweh," and several of the Mesopotamian texts discussed above belong to city-laments compare with the biblical book of Lamentations with its variations on this day. At the same time, it is notable how many biblical prophetic texts attest to the motif in contrast to the picture in Mesopotamian prophetic literature, while the Mesopotamian city-lament literature is well versed in the motif relative to the single biblical case in the book of Lamentations.

Further perspective may be provided by the similar phrase, "the day (belonging) to Yahweh" (Isa 2:12; 22:5; 34:8; Jer 46:10; Ps 74:16). It, too, involves divine judgment with foreign nations playing their role (e.g., Ezek 30:2–4). Unlike "the day of Yahweh," "the day (belonging) to Yahweh" also enjoys a cultic usage for sacred days (e.g., the Sabbath in Exod 16:25; cf. Exod 32:29; Lev 23:34; Deut 26:23; Ezek 46:13).[52] This approach fits with the cultic theories that have been offered for

[52] For Akkadian cases of "good day" and "bad day," see further *CAD U/W* 148–49, for example, "do not hand me over to an evil day, do not turn me over to a day

the background of "the day of Yahweh." Sigmund Mowinckel (1958) famously proposed the fall New Year festival as the background for "the day of Yahweh." Despite Gerhard von Rad's critique as well as his own proposal (discussed below; von Rad 1959, 107), Mowinckel's view received a sympathetic response in the works of Kevin J. Cathcart (1978) and Aloysius Fitzgerald (2002). The latter based his case on the time of year when the destructive sirocco-storm appears at its strongest, in what he calls "the fall interchange period." A variant on the cultic approach has been suggested by Alexander Heidel, who regarded "the day of Yahweh" in Amos 5:18 and 20 as a "fast-day" to ward off the divine judgment issuing in destruction (Heidel 1929, 356).

More recently, Daniel E. Fleming (2010) has suggested a cultic background for "the day of Yahweh" in Amos 5. As Fleming notes, this case stands outside of the more common repertoire of motifs associated with "the day of Yahweh,"[53] particularly the lack of the language of destruction and the emphasis on light and darkness. Fleming (2010, 24) sees "the day of Yahweh" as "part of a ritual event where the people celebrated the arrival of light after a time of darkness." Accordingly, he proposes a background in a New Moon rite annually celebrated in the fall, with comparison made with the New Moon rites attested at Emar. For Fleming, "the day of Yahweh" would have been a point of reference for Amos 5, the oldest of the uses. This was plausibly a specific moment for creating a new terminology for divinely driven disaster. From this point, the motif could then develop a life of its own; not all the biblical uses had this cultic reference – just this one. While Amos 5 seems to be something of "an outlier" relative to other biblical cases, it is to be noted that its usage seems to fall broadly in line with the concept of "good day" and "bad day," noted above in some of the Mesopotamian examples of "day-storm." Thus, "the day of Yahweh" would be parallel to the Mesopotamian use of the "day" as a moment of divine declaration of intent. Amos 5 is not the only cultic instance. As Heidel (1929, 357)

of storm," in Lambert 1974, 278–79, lines 96–97, and also 290–91, lines 23–24, as 303 for discussion.

[53] See also von Rad 1959, 98, critiquing the idea of taking Amos 5:18 as the *locus classicus* for "the day of Yahweh."

emphasized, the book of Joel also shows the "fast" as the cultic context for "the day of Yahweh." In theory, a number of different cultic contexts could have served as settings for the use of these expressions, with various ones potentially foregrounding certain themes associated with "the day of Yahweh." Given the lack of evidence, it remains unclear whether a cultic origin is indicated; it is difficult to be more precise on this score.

By contrast to cultic settings proposed, von Rad famously suggested that "the day of Yahweh" emerged out of Israel's old Holy War traditions.[54] Ugaritic may offer a comparison in *bym b'l*, "on the day of Baal," but the context is very broken and the text poorly understood.[55] The so-called old poetry attests to divine anger (see Grant 2014, 89–100), but not to "the day of Yahweh." Perhaps the closest analogue in older biblical literature is Josh 10:12–14 (cf. the storm imagery of Ps 29, but without any reference to "the day" or to divine anger).[56] The prose introduction to the poetic piece in these verses understands the day as a special one in terms of the deity listening to a man: "nor was there a day like that day before it and after it, when Yahweh listened to the voice of a man, for Yahweh fought for Israel." This looks like a prose interpretation of the poetic piece in Josh 10:12b–13, perhaps inflected by "the day of Yahweh" as found in prophetic literature and Lamentations. The clause, "the moon stood (still)," in Josh 10:13 enjoys a parallel in the Sumerian lament literature, in B25 (u_4.dam gu_3 de_2.de_2.aš), a+12, as quoted above, "The moon stopped still in the midst of the sky." Thus the imagery of "the day of Yahweh" enjoys antecedents in traditional Israelite literature, as von Rad surmised.

As opposed to its imagery and themes, this day's specific expression as "the day of Yahweh" (with its elaborated forms) appears to represent an eighth-century development, and it is in this context that the expression is to be located. In his response to von Rad, Meir Weiss (1966, 46) understandably thought that Amos coined the expression.

[54] See von Rad 1959, 104–105 and 108. For a detailed critique, see Weiss 1966.

[55] For a possible exception, see *bym b'l* in KTU 1.9, line 15. The end of the line is broken and the syntax is not quite clear. See Pardee 2012, 31–38. Some vocabulary items are possibly indicative of warfare, e.g., *qšt*, "bow," in line 14.

[56] For a recent study of this passage, see Leonard-Fleckman 2017.

However, this explanation would assume that other biblical cases either borrowed the expression from Amos or ultimately go back to Amos; as Weiss himself indicated, this is hardly clear. Rather thinking in terms of a single point or one original context, "the day of Yahweh" seems to emerge in the eighth century as a specification of a more broadly known motif about the day of divine judgment instantiated in a number of contexts, including cultic ones. It is difficult to be more precise, given the lack of more concrete evidence. What is to be stressed about the expression "the day of Yahweh" (as well as its expanded forms) is that they make an important specification: this is specifically Yahweh's day, perhaps in contrast to the day of another deity. In other words, the day evokes not only a day of divine judgment and destruction. The development of this specific expression and its elaborations make a statement specifically about Yahweh in the context of the eighth century and later.

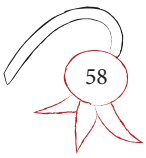
On this point, "the day of Yahweh" contrasts with the divine "day of war" associated with various deities in the eighth century onwards. The latter phrase appears in one plaster inscription from the area of the interior wall of the western entryway of the "Bench-room Complex" at Kuntillet ʿAjrud.[57] In this case, the "day of war" is apparently associated with the gods Baal and El (if these are not titles for Yahweh).[58] The association with Baal would be notable if the Ugaritic case noted above is correct. The expression "the day of war" appears also in Amos 1:14 and Hos 10:14 (note 1 Sam 13:33; Prov 21:31), with similar phrasing in Ezek 13:5. In other words, such a "day of war" may be associated with any number of deities. By contrast, "the day of Yahweh" and its elaborated forms are distinctive relative to other deities with their day of judgment, whether Enlil or other deities in some of the Mesopotamian cases of the "day-storm"; El and Baal "on the day of war" in the Kuntillet ʿAjrud inscription (again assuming these are not titles of Yahweh); and Yahweh "on the day of war" in Amos 1:14 and Hos 10:14. By contrast, "the day of Yahweh" not only marks a time of divine action issuing in

[57] Aḥituv, Eshel, and Meshel 2012, 110. For the location, see Aḥituv, Eshel, and Meshel 2012, 74.

[58] For this view, see Dobbs-Allsopp, Roberts, Seow, and Whitaker 2005, 287–89.

judgment and destruction like "the day of war." "The day of Yahweh" (with its elaborated forms) comes into sharper relief as an expression specifically about Yahweh.

The use of "the day of Yahweh" in times of war became the dominant one, perhaps unsurprising given the engagement of prophetic texts and Lamentations with the empires and armies of Assyria and Babylon. Indeed, the preponderance of biblical cases of "the day of Yahweh" date from the eighth century onwards, a time when Israel encountered Mesopotamian armies. Accordingly, the correspondences between the biblical "day" and the Mesopotamian "day/storm" may make its attestations in the Hebrew Bible all the more poignant. The biblical specification of this day as "the day of Yahweh" arguably represents a claim about Yahweh's judgment and divine control over world events as opposed to other deities'. The expression "the day of Yahweh" first appears in an era when Israel shows an emergent sense of – and responses to – world empires. In this context, "the day of Yahweh" conveys this deity's ultimate control over the world (cf. Isa 10:5) – and perhaps implicitly in this period denies this power to Mesopotamian empire gods.



Abbreviations

ETCSL Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature: http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/

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