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THE DOWNFALL OF HELEL, THE SON OF DAWN ASPECTS OF ROYAL IDEOLOGY IN ISA 14:12–13

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1. *Introduction: Isa 14:12-13, the fall of Satan and the fall of the angels*

Isa 14:12–13 carries a special importance for understanding the multi-form tradition of the “fall of angels”. The Vulgate translates the Hebrew *Helel* as *Lucifer* who in Roman mythology is the son of *Aurora*.¹ In the *Life of Adam and Eve* 15 the fall of *Helel* is interpreted as the fall of Satan and his angels (cp. similarly 2 *En* 29:4–5).² According to this tradition Satan belonged primordially to the first light creatures of God and was cast down from heaven because of his arrogant pride. This account became more widespread in Christian theology thanks to Origen, who related Isa 14:12–13 to the Jesus logion of Lk 10:18 by interpreting *Helel* as *Satan*.³ The fall of the king of Tyre (Ezek 28:11–19) was interpreted in the same way in patristic literature.⁴ Furthermore, some passages in the New Testament (2 Pet 2:4; Jude 6; Rev 9:1; 12:9) and in the pseudepigrapha concerned with the notion of the fall of angels (cp. 1 *En* 68:4; 86) inspired the identification of *Lucifer* with *Satan* even further. As a result, since the Middle Ages *Lucifer* has become a common name for the devil.⁵

2. *Isa 14:12–13—an ancient Helel-myth?*

However, the figure of *Helel* in Isa 14:12 has nothing to do with *Satan*. Many scholars are agreed that the author of this song about

¹ This corresponds to the Greek mythology where *Eos*, the goddess of dawn, gives birth to the morning star Phosphorus; see Hesiod, *Theog.* 986f.

² See Chr. Böttrich, *Das slavische Henochbuch* [JSHRZ V/7] (Gütersloh, 1996) 910f.

³ See Origen, *De Princ.* 1,5,5 and 4,3,9; *ibid.*, *De Mart.* 18; Origen was possibly influenced by *VitAd* 15 or 2 *En* 29:4ff. Cf. also Eusebius, *Dem. Evang.* 4,9,4. For further instances of this notion in patristic literature, see E. Turdeanu, *Apocryphes Slaves et Roumains de l'Ancient Testament* [SVTP 5] (Leiden, 1981) 45–46.

⁴ Cf. Tertullian, *Adv. Marc.* 2,10,2f.; Origen, *De Princ.* 1,5,4 *passim*.

⁵ On *Lucifer*, see K. L. Schmidt, “*Lucifer als gefallene Engelmacht*”, *ThZ* 7 (1951) 161–179.

the downfall of the king of Babylon draws upon an old myth that narrated the presumptuous rise and downfall of a certain *Helel*. Despite such a widely held view, there remains considerable difference of opinion concerning the contents and origin of such a myth. Most scholars still find the closest parallel to Isa 14:12–15 in an episode of the Ugaritic Baal-Cycle (KTU 1.6 I 53–65) which describes the unsuccessful attempt of Athtar to take the vacant throne of Baal on the summit of Zaphon. However, Spronk has pointed out that “there also remains a striking difference between Athtar, who is promoted by Athirat but subsequently acknowledges his own inferiority, and *hyll bn-šhr*, who is the example of unfounded pride which has had a fall.”⁶ In addition, the voluntary (!) descent of Athtar from the throne of Baal is not actually described as a downfall:

Athtar the Strong descends,
Descends from the throne of the Mightiest Baal,
And rules over all the great earth.⁷

The text thus describes how Athtar becomes “king of the world”. This is in no way the result of humiliation or punishment, as is the case in Isa 14. Quite the contrary: “There is no warrant for seeing the present episode as itself a deposition myth . . ., even though it is thematically linked to such passages as Isa. 14:9–15, Ezek. 28:2–10.12–19, which develop the deposition theme.”⁸ Furthermore, one is missing in KTU 1.6 I 53–65 the important astral implications of Isa 14:12f. (v.12: *Helel* = “shining one”; “son of dawn”; v.13: “stars of El”; ascent to heaven and downfall from heaven)⁹ and the relation to the theme “death and netherworld”. Thus, the Ugaritic Athtar-text hardly offers an appropriate parallel to Isa 14:12f. There are

⁶ K. Spronk, “Down with Hêlêl! The Assumed Mythological Background of Isa. 14:12”, in M. Dietrich and I. Kottsieper (eds.), “*Und Mose schrieb dieses Lied auf*”. *Studien zum Alten Testament und zum Alten Orient*, FS O. Loretz [AOAT, 250] (Münster, 1998) 717–726, here p. 719.

⁷ KTU 1.6 I 63–65, quoted from M. S. Smith and S.B. Parker (eds.), *Ugaritic Narrative Poetry* [Writings from the Ancient World 9] (Atlanta, 1997) 154.

⁸ N. Wyatt, *Religious Texts from Ugarit. The Words of Ilmilku and his Colleagues* [The Biblical Seminar 53] (Sheffield, 1998) 132f., n. 75.

⁹ “The ancient Arabic deity Athar is indeed connected with the morning star, but for the Ugaritic deity of the same name this is less certain.” K. Spronk, *Beatific Afterlife in Ancient Israel and the Ancient Near East* [AOAT 219] (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1986) 221; see also J. Henninger, “Zum Problem der Venusgottheit bei den Semiten,” *Anthropos* 71 (1976) 129–168, who notices that the astral character of Athar is not attested in Ugaritic myths (p. 141); Henninger also rejects Grelot’s reconstructed identification of *Helel*, son of Dawn in Isa 14:12ff. with the Ugaritic god Athar (p. 142).

some other proposals which refer Isa 14:12f. to Mesopotamian, Greek (Phaethon) and Arabic myths and notions, but none of them is really convincing.¹⁰ This has led Wildberger to reconstruct a hypothetical *Helel*-myth which could have had the following content:

Helel, Schachars Sohn, war ein gewaltiger Recke, der sich im Übermüte vermaß, es Eljon gleichzutun. Er wollte auf Wolkenhöhen zum Himmel hinauf, höher als alle Gottessterne, auf den Versammlungsberg im äußersten Norden, um dort zu thronen als König des Alls. Aber das Ende des frevelhaften Griffes nach den Sternen war der Sturz in die Scheol. Wir werden ergänzen können: es kam zum Kampf; entgegengetreten ist ihm doch wohl derjenige, dessen Macht und Majestät er anzutasten sich vermaß, El Eljon.¹¹

However, Wildberger concedes that we have no real proof for the existence of this myth—whether in Canaanite religion or in the more remote religious context of Israel's religion. Thus proposals for myths sufficiently plausible to have served as background to Isa 14:14f. are ultimately and inevitably dependant on hypothetical reconstructions.¹²

3. *Isa 14:12ff. and the Royal Ideologies of Canaan, Egypt and Babylonia*

Following K. Spronk, I want to offer here an alternative interpretation of Isa 14:12ff., that is, one which does not separate these verses from their immediate literary context. The thesis is: Isa 14:12ff. does not reflect any myth about a deity named *Helel* son of *Shahar*, but rather it alludes by way of criticism to the royal notion of the postmortal apotheosis of the king. It is of crucial importance for our interpretation that the context of 14:12ff. narrates the postmortal fate of the barbarous and wicked king of Babylon, his shameful down-

¹⁰ See the discussion of the relevant literature in O. Loretz, "Der kanaanäisch-biblische Mythos vom Sturz des Šaḥar-Sohnes Hêlêl (Jes 14,12–15)," *UF* 8 (1976) 133–136; Spronk, *Beatific Afterlife*, 213–227, here 221ff.; Spronk, "Down with Hêlêl!," 717ff.; W. G. E. Watson, "Helel," *DDD*, 746–750; H. Wildberger, *Jesaja 13–27* (BK, X; Neukirchen-Vluyn, ²1989) 551f.

¹¹ Wildberger, *Jesaja*, 550.

¹² For example, Wildberger, *Jesaja*, 552, considers the thesis that *Helel* could be an epithet of Athtar, because Phaethon, the son of Eos, is the epithet for ἑωσφόρος, the morning star. But Wildberger also discusses the problems of this thesis and comes to the conclusion: "Was die ug. Texte über 'Attar zu berichten wissen . . ., läßt sich (gegen McKay) mit dem Phaethonmythos nicht zur Deckung bringen." See also Spronk, *Beatific Afterlife*, 221f.

fall to and entry into the netherworld (Sheol—14:9ff.; 14:14) where he meets the spirits of the dead kings (*Rephaim*).

The cult of the dead kings was of great importance for religion and society in the ancient world, above all in Egypt and Syria. Spronk's summary is *a propos* in this respect: "As is now acknowledged by many scholars, the way the word *rp'ym* is used here seems to be inspired by the ancient Canaanite conception of royal ancestors having become powerful spirits of dead, called *rp'ym* in Ugaritic texts. The emphasis on their weakness (vs.10), sharply contrasting the belief in their supernatural power, fits in well with the mocking of the king who thought he would reach heaven, but fell down into the netherworld. The use of this term and in this connection points to a mingling of mythology and royal ideology. It seems likely that the phrase *hyll bn-šhr* also has its place within this framework."¹³ In other words, the entry of the king into the netherworld is decisive for understanding Isa 14:12ff.

In addition, we know from both from Egypt and Ugarit the notion that the deceased kings ascend to the stars of heaven into the divine world of immortality. This aspect of royal ideology opens up a new understanding of the following elements in Isa 14:12ff:

3.1 *Helel (the Shining One)*

Wildberger had already considered the possibility that *Helel* is not the name of a god but rather an epithet of a deity: "Es liegt zunächst zweifellos nahe, die Bezeichnung mit der auch im Hebr. bekannten Wurzel *hll* zusammenzubringen (. . .) Das mit ihm zusammengehörende *ellu* bzw. *ellitu* ist im Akk. Epitheton von Astralgottheiten (so Grelot, *VT* 6, 303). Das heißt, daß auch *hyll* nicht eigentlich Name, sondern Epitheton einer Gottheit ist."¹⁴ Spronk takes up Wildberger's epithet-thesis: ". . . the idea of a god named *Hêlêl* should be abandoned. *hyll* is no more than an epithet, which can be compared to the use of Akkadian *ellu/elletu*, which can refer to, among other things, shining purity, to light, and also to gods, kings, and priests."¹⁵ According to Spronk, *hyll bn-šhr* "denotes the king's arrogant idea of being able to take the highest place in heaven, as if he

¹³ Spronk, "Down with Hêlêl!", 721.

¹⁴ Wildberger, *Jesaja*, 551.

¹⁵ Spronk, "Down with Hêlêl!", 725.

were the sun.”¹⁶ Spronk plausibly interprets Isa 14 within the wider context of Isa 13 and finds a close relationship between Isa 14:12f. and Isa 13:10f. (darkening of the stars, sun und moon). He observes that the poet in 14:12 used a noun related to the verb *hll* which otherwise only occurs in 13:10 and in Job 29:3 and 31:26 (connection with the sun) with the meaning “to give light”. In his opinion *bn-šhr* is a poetic description of *hšmš bš’tw*, “the sun in its rising” in 13:10b. Spronk sees the best parallel to Isa 14:12–15 in the Ugaritic text KTU 1.15 V:16–20 where king Keret’s death is described as “joining El” and “reaching the sun-set”. In another passage of the Keret legend, the children of Keret bewail the king because of his imminent death (KTU 1.16 I:1–23). “Within the context of mourning, reminiscent of Isa. 14, Keret is called ‘son of El.’ It is suggested that as a god he could not die.”¹⁷ Thus, Spronk interprets Isa 14:12f. against the background of this kind of Canaanite royal ideology, suggesting the king’s divine status and his close relation to El after his death. The mention of El, of Zaphon as the mountain of the divine assembly,¹⁸ and the allusion to the *rp’um* as powerful spirits of the royal dead ancestors in Isa 14 all support Spronk’s thesis of a possible Canaanite background.

In principle I agree with Spronk but would like to suggest some slight modifications to his theory. Above all the solar identification of *Helel* appears to me to be open to question. Although we do often find the title “sun” for the king in the ancient Near East,¹⁹ this is mostly related to the *living* king, whereas Spronk seems to have in mind the *postmortal* existence of the king, who is “joining El”. The Ugaritic phrase “reaching the sun-set” means that after his death

¹⁶ Spronk, “Down with Hêlêl!”, 724f.

¹⁷ Spronk, “Down with Hêlêl!”, 726.

¹⁸ Concerning the central cosmic significance of the *Zaphon* as “Weltachse”, “Fundament für den Thron des Allerhöchsten” and as place for the assembly of gods in Isa 14:13ff., see K. Koch, “Ḥazzi—Šafôn—Kasion,” in B. Janowski, K. Koch, and G. Wilhelm (eds.), *Religionsgeschichtliche Beziehungen zwischen Kleinasien, Nordsyrien und dem Alten Testament* [OBO, 129] (Freiburg, Switzerland-Göttingen, 1993) 180ff.

¹⁹ Spronk points to a number of letters where the Hittite king is consistently called “the sun” (cf. KTU 2.16:6–10), just as Akk. *šamšu* can be used as an epithet of rulers; see also the Amarna-letters, where the pharaoh is often called “sun”, for example: “My lord is the Sun in the sky, and like the coming forth of the Sun in the sky (your) servants await the coming forth of the words from the mouth of their lord.” (EA 195 16ff.) Quoted from W. L. Moran, *The Amarna Letters* (Baltimore-London, 1992) 273.

King Keret is supposed to go to the setting sun which descends into the netherworld in the west. Spronk himself pointed out that this notion is in line with the hymn to the sungoddess in KTU 1.6 VI:45ff. in which she is called a ruler of the dead kings and heroes (*rp'um*).²⁰ The hymn, however, distinguishes the dead king and the sun! We find the next parallel for this notion in the Egyptian royal concept of beatific afterlife: the deceased king is said to join Re, the sun-god, when he goes through the netherworld by night and when he rises for crossing the sky by day. In the Egyptian concept the deceased king is often identified or associated with a star—in the old Pyramid texts with the circumpolar-stars (“Imperishable Stars”) and later with the stars of the constellation Orion who represents Osiris, the ruler of the netherworld, in the night-sky (see below). Interestingly enough, we also have some clues for a stellar postmortal existence of the dead Canaanite kings and heroes (cp. KTU 1.19 IV:23–25; 1.43:2–3).²¹ Thus, it seems more likely that *Helel* in Isa 14:12f. denotes the postmortal *stellar* existence of the king. This stellar interpretation is supported by the context of 14:12: *Helel* will ascend to the heaven “above the stars of El” (14:13). Furthermore, the subject of the verb *hll* in Isa 13:10 are the “stars and *their Orion-stars* (?)” (*ksylyhm*). Therefore it is more plausible to assume that *Helel* is an epithet for the deceased king ascending to the immortal stars. A further designation points in this direction.

3.2 “Son of dawn” (*bn-šḥr*)

The difficult text of Ps 110:3 seems to refer to the king being born “from the womb of dawn” (*mrḥm mšḥr*), that is, the king belongs to the heavenly sphere²² and is of divine origin (cp. Ps 2:7; 45:7; 89:27f.; Isa 9:5). In Egypt the king was regarded *inter alia* as “son of Re” who ascends after his death to the sun and to the immortal stars.²³ In light of the designation “son of dawn” it is of particular importance that the deceased Egyptian king is designated as “Morning

²⁰ Spronk, *Beatific Afterlife*, 154.

²¹ For this, see Spronk, *Beatific Afterlife*, 160; Dietrich and Loretz (eds.), *TUAT* 3. 1302.

²² See in this sense H.-J. Kraus, *Psalmen II* [BK XV/2] (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1972) 759.

²³ For this, see R. O. Faulkner, “The King and the Star-Religion in the Pyramid Texts,” *JNES* 25 (1966) 153–161.

star” or is associated with this special star. This occurs, for example, in the Pyramid texts: “You ascend to the sky as a star, as the Morning Star.” (PT § 1366)²⁴ The astral rebirth of the king was in astronomical terms regarded as the heliacal rising of the royal star, that is, when it made its first appearance in the horizon following a period of invisibility.²⁵ In Egypt the heliacal rising of the stars (decans),²⁶ which is their reappearance from the netherworld (*Duat*), is also expressed through the “birth” metaphor,²⁷ whereas the akro-nychal setting, which is the entry into the netherworld, is described as a “dying” of the stars! For Sirius-Sothis (*Sopdet*)—the brightest star which was of special importance in Egypt,—astronomical texts give a 70 day-period of invisibility after which the star rises heliacally in the East.²⁸ This invisible interval is also given for the other 35 decans²⁹ which pass through the dark netherworld, the realm of the dead. This staying of the decan-stars in the netherworld was interpreted as a cleaning or regeneration process.³⁰ The duration of 70 days cor-

²⁴ Quoted from Faulkner, “The King and the Star-Religion”, 159; for the king as morning star, see also Spronk, *Beatific Afterlife*, 88f.; R. Bauval and A. Gilbert, *Das Geheimnis des Orion* (München-Leipzig, 1994) 115ff.; G. Hart, *A Dictionary of Egyptian Gods and Goddesses* (London-New York, 1999) 209.

²⁵ For this, see B.L. van der Waerden, *Erwachende Wissenschaft, Bd. 2: Die Anfänge der Astronomie* [Wissenschaft und Kultur 23] (Basel-Boston-Stuttgart, 1980) 3. 10ff.

²⁶ Concerning Sirius and the notion of decans, see for example E. G. Richards, *Mapping Time. The Calendar and its History* (Oxford, 1998) 46: “At one time, Sirius (or Sopdet as the Egyptians called this star) was observed to rise just before dawn; this was its heliacal rising. As the days went by it would be found higher and higher in the sky at dawn until, in time, it had set in the West before sunrise. It then remained invisible for 70 days till once more it made its heliacal rising, a year after the cycle began. Meanwhile other stars (or groups of stars) were seen to rise just before dawn. The Egyptians noted the 36 stars that rose just before dawn on the first day of each of the decades; these came to be called decans. We have not been able to determine which stars the decans were, except for Sirius and Orion, but it is likely that they lay in a band near to the ecliptic.”

²⁷ For this, see R. A. Parker and O. Neugebauer, *Egyptian Astronomical Texts, I. The Early Decans* (London, 1960) 41.

²⁸ *Ibidem*.

²⁹ Cp. R. A. Wells, “Astronomy in Egypt,” in Chr. Walker (ed.), *Astronomy before the Telescope* (London, 1996) 28–41, here p. 38; H. O. Lange and O. Neugebauer, *Papyrus Carlsberg No. 1* (Copenhagen, 1940) 48.52.

³⁰ For example, in the so-called Papyrus Carlsberg I, we read: “It stops in the House of Geb 7 decades (of days). It looses away the impurities in the 7 decades—that is to say, after the 70 days. It is said: It is [in] the Embalming-House that [it] is left for 70 days until . . .”; quoted from Parker and Neugebauer, *Egyptian Astronomical Texts I*, 73; cp. also Lange and Neugebauer, *Papyrus Carlsberg No. 1*, 48, L. V, 37f. The Papyrus Carlsberg I is an astronomical commentary from the Roman period (2nd century C.E.) on the “Book of Nut” from the time of the New Kingdom: “Im Neuen Reich ist dieses Buch nur im Kenotaph Sethos‘ I. in Abydos und im Grabe

responds to the time of mummification of deceased persons. In other words, death and rebirth of men were seen in analogy to the annual cycle of the stars!³¹ The sky-goddess Nut, who daily swallows the sun, the moon and stars in the West to give birth to them in the East again,³² was also a very important funerary deity from the time of the Pyramid Texts onwards. “In the Pyramid Texts the goddess is said to enfold the king in her ‘soul’ or to uncover her arms for the monarch. These are euphemisms for the pharaoh being placed in his coffin and buried. Death as termination of life is denied and the king is with Nut living in the sky . . . Royal stone sarcophagi sometimes show Nut carved in high relief with stars, in whose numbers is the soul of the king, at her head. This notion extends to the courtiers, as we can see from the image of Nut decorating the interior of mummy-cases symbolising the deceased protected by and linked with the sky-goddess.”³³

The close connection between stars and the souls of the dead in the Egyptian religion goes back to the old star-religion in the Pyramid texts in which we meet the notion that the deceased king ascends to the stars. The Egyptian term for “starry sky” means “a thousand

Ramses' IV. bezeugt, wobei die letztere Version verkürzt ist; beide Male steht das Buch an der Decke der Sargkammer. Aus römischer Zeit (Mitte des 2. Jahrh. n. Chr.) stammt ein demotisch geschriebener Kommentar dazu (Pap. Carlsberg I und Ia). Dazwischen bietet nur das Grab der Mutirdis (Theben 410) aus der 26. Dynastie (um 630/620 v.Chr.) eine unvollständige Fassung, die sich offenbar an Ramses IV. orientiert . . . Der Papyrus Carlsberg gibt die originalen Texte (eine Abbildung fehlt oder ging am Anfang verloren) hieratisch wieder; sie werden ins demotische übersetzt und ebenso demotisch kommentiert.”; so E. Hornung, *Altägyptische Jenseitsbücher* (Darmstadt, 1997) 90; cp. the Introduction in Lange and Neugebauer, *Papyrus Carlsberg No. 1*, 7ff.

³¹ See in this sense, Lange and Neugebauer, *Papyrus Carlsberg No. 1*, op. cit., 52.54; the analogy between stars and human beings concerning the death is explicitly stated: “The burials take place like (those of) men—that is to say, they are the likeness of the burial-days which are for men today—that is to say, the 70 days which they pass in the Embalming-House before the utterance of words by them . . . Its duration in the Duat indeed takes place. It is taking place of its duration in the Duat—that is to say, every one of the stars—that is to say, 70 days.” So Papyrus Carlsberg I, VI, 38f., quoted from Parker and Neugebauer, *Egyptian Astronomical Texts I*, 78.

³² See Hart, *Dictionary*, 145f.: “A detailed representation can be found on the ceiling of the sarcophagus chamber of Ramesses VI (Dynasty XX). Nut is painted twice on a colossal scale, depicting the day and the night sky. The sun god sails in his barge along the elongated body of Nut until evening, when the disk of the sun approaches the mouth of the sky-goddess to be swallowed. The sun travels with the stars through the hours of night safely inside the goddess's body.”

³³ Hart, *Dictionary*, 146.

are her soul(s)”, that is, the souls of the sky-goddess Nut.³⁴ According to R. O. Faulkner, this implies “that the stars are the souls of the dead, at this date presumably only the royal dead.”³⁵ Above all, the constellation Orion (*Sah*—the stellar representation of Osiris, the king of the netherworld)³⁶ played a significant role in relation to the post-mortual life of the king in the Pyramid texts: “May you ascend to the sky, may the sky give birth to you like Orion.” (§2216; see also §2172)³⁷ With respect to the royal designation “son of dawn” in Isa 14:12 another Pyramid text is a very instructive:

O king, the sky conceives you with Orion, the dawn-light bears you with Orion. He who lives, lives by the command of the gods, and you live. You will regularly ascend with Orion from the eastern region of the sky, you will regularly descend with Orion from the western region of the sky. (from §§ 819–822)³⁸

The astral rebirth of the deceased king at dawn as the brilliant morning star (heliacal rising) is in my opinion best suited for “illuminating” the meaning of the epithet “*Helel*, son of dawn”, because the dawn-light *bears* the king with Orion, so that he can be regarded as a “son of dawn”.

According to G. Hart, the constellation Orion has close affinities with Osiris and the king in ancient Egypt: “Orion is imagined as being swallowed at dawn by the Underworld but having the power to emerge again into the sky. In the Afterlife the king reaches the firmament as Orion who bestows in him the authority of a ‘great

³⁴ See H. Altenmüller, “Himmelsgöttin,” in Wolfgang Helck und Eberhard Otto (eds.), *Lexikon der Ägyptologie* (Wiesbaden, 1972–1992) 4. 1212; cp. also the description of the rising stars in Papyrus Carlsberg I (Book of Nut) VI,43: “*The souls go forth and they travel in the sky at night. The rising of the stars.*”; quoted from Parker and Neugebauer, *Egyptian Astronomical Texts*.

³⁵ I.e. at the time of the Pyramid texts; Faulkner, *The King and the Star-Religion*, 160.

³⁶ J. A. R. Legon, “The Orion Correlation and Air-Shaft Theories,” *Discussions in Egyptology* 33 (1995) 45–56, argues, that the Egyptian term *S3h* (= Toe-star) does not designate the whole constellation, but only a single star, namely Rigel—one of the brightest stars in the night sky—(cp. R. Hannig, *Großes Handwörterbuch Ägyptisch-Deutsch. Die Sprache der Pharaonen (2800–950 v. Chr.)* [Mainz, 1995] 661), which marks one of the two “feet” of the anthropomorphic figure of Orion. In his opinion, only Rigel embodied the spirit of Osiris, because the ancient Egyptians believed that only one star could represent the *Ba*, the individual soul of the deceased person. In the same way Isis (sister of Osiris) is only represented in the star Sirius too. Isis-*Sopdet* and Osiris-*Sah* are the most important stars in the Egyptian astral mythology.

³⁷ Quoted from Faulkner, *The King and the Star-Religion*, 158.

³⁸ *Ibidem*.

force' . . . In the New Kingdom funerary texts Orion reaches his land by rowing towards the stars, an image which is depicted on the ceilings of some tombs and temples (e.g. Esna) by a god in the pharaonic White Crown standing on a papyriform boat sailing across the sky."³⁹ The equation of Osiris with the deceased king was a constant element in the Egyptian royal ideology, while the living king is equated with his son Horus.⁴⁰ Orion-Osiris and Sirius-Isis are also the central constellations on the ceiling of the tomb of Senmut from the reign of Hatshepsut (15th century B.C.E.) and on other tomb-ceilings. This corresponds to an inscription on the sarcophagus of king Merenptah (end of the 13th century B.C.E.) in which the sky-goddess, as Orion and Sothis (Sirius), promises rebirth to the deceased king. For example:

Ich sage dir, ich sage dir,
 ich bin Neith, die Deine Majestät liebt!
 Ich lasse dich umlaufen an der Spitze des Himmels
 in deiner schönen Erscheinungsform als Orion.
 Ich gebe Sothis zum Schutz hinter dich.⁴¹

How can it be explained, however, that this very ancient Egyptian notion of royal-astral immortality (as Orion-Osiris) appears in an Old Testament text from the middle of the first millennium B.C.E. (if the here proposed explanation of Isa 14:12 is correct)? The key for a possible answer to this question could be the fact that there was a *democratization* of the old idea of astral immortality which was originally a privilege of the royal dead.⁴² During the period of the Middle Kingdom and afterwards, the royal privilege came to non-royal persons, so that Osiris became central to the general belief in immortality.⁴³ Concerning this J. Assmann writes:

³⁹ Hart, "Orion," in *Dictionary*, 151.

⁴⁰ J. G. Griffiths, "Osiris," *Lexikon der Ägyptologie*, 4. 627.

⁴¹ Quoted from J. Assmann, *Tod und Jenseits im Alten Ägypten* (München, 2001) 225.

⁴² E. Hornung, *Das Totenbuch der Ägypter* (Zurich-München, 1979) 21, points to an important change in the notion of an astral beatific afterlife beginning with the Middle Kingdom, a change which is paralleled by democratization: "Gegenüber den himmlischen Regionen der 'unvergänglichen' Zirkumpolarsterne, welche den Jenseitsglauben der Pyramidenzeit und dann der Pyramidentexte des späten Alten Reiches bestimmt hatten, werden nun die Tiefen der Unterwelt, in welche die Gestirne hinabsteigen, zum wichtigsten maßgebenden Jenseitsort." Above all the decan-stars (esp. Sirius and Orion), which pass through the netherworld regenerating there, assume central importance in the hope for immortality.

⁴³ *Ibidem*, 627.

Der König ist als Gottessohn unsterblich, er fliegt nach dem Tode zum Himmel auf, wie es die *Pyramidentexte* in den verschiedensten Formen ausmalen, während die Menschen ‘sich verbergen’, nämlich in ihren Gräbern (Pyr. 459a). Mit der Demotisierung der königlichen Totenreligion nach dem Untergang des Alten Reiches tritt nun auch die Konzeption der Unsterblichkeit in den Horizont des allgemeinen Totenglaubens. Weiterhin aber gilt, daß der Mensch nicht als Mensch, sondern nur als König oder Gott unsterblich werden kann. Er muß also mit dem Tode zu einem Gott werden. Genau das ist die Verheißung der Osiris-Religion, die sich mit dem Untergang des Alten Reiches ausbreitet. Osiris ist der Gott, der gestorben ist und als gestorbener Gott lebt.⁴⁴

In the “Book of the Dead” from the time of the New Kingdom the deceased persons are mostly called “Osiris NN”. This postmortal identification with Osiris has also an astral aspect: The stellar representation of Osiris is the constellation Orion, as above shown.⁴⁵ So we find in the “Book of the Dead” the following spell:

Ich bin Osiris, der Älteste der Körperschaft, der Älteste der Götter . . . Ich bin Orion, der dieses (Var.: sein Land) betreten hat, der flackert gegenüber den leuchtenden Sternen des Himmels am Leib seiner Mutter NUT. Sie hat mich nach ihrem Wunsch empfangen, sie hat mich nach ihrer Herzensregung geboren.⁴⁶

The notion of astral immortality (as Osiris-Orion) is also attested in funerary texts from the Ptolemaic period and even later!⁴⁷ Thus, in

⁴⁴ J. Assmann, *Ma'at—Gerechtigkeit und Unsterblichkeit im Alten Ägypten* (München, 21995) 118.

⁴⁵ See for example H. Loprieno-Behlmer, “Orion,” in *Lexikon der Ägypter*, 4. 609f.; Hart, “Orion,” in *Dictionary*, 150f.; an epithet of Osiris is: “He who dwells in Orion with a season in the sky and a season on earth.” Hart, “Osiris,” in *Dictionary*, 153, explains: “This formula connects Osiris with an important constellation of stars and signifies an astral element in him which contrasts with the predominant chthonic aspect. The imagery is probably attracted from one of the manifestations of the king in the Afterlife where he becomes a Star-god.” In late texts Orion is designated as “soul of Osiris”; so Loprieno-Behlmer, “Orion,” 610.

⁴⁶ Quoted from Hornung, *Totenbuch*, 146.

⁴⁷ For example, in an inscription of a tomb stele of Weresch and Bastet (ca. 200–150 B.C.E.), the deceased Weresch is called “Osiris”, to whom is attributed the wish that he may ascend with Re-Harachte to the sky “that he may for ever become a companion to the stars of heaven.”; see *TUAT*, 2. 539. Here we have a combination of the solar and stellar notion of immortality. See also the following text from an embalming ritual (pBoulaq 3) which is paleographically dated in the middle of the 1st century C.E.: “Erstrahle am Himmel als einziger Stern, denn du bist (ja) der Orion am Leibe der Nut . . . Du wirst an dem Ort aufgehen, an dem . . ., und es wird dir in der Duat gesagt werden: ‘Du bist ein Gott unter den Verklärten, Du bist die Gestalt des Osiris.’”; quoted from *TUAT*, 2. 427.

Egyptian religion there seems to have been an unbroken continuum with respect to the idea of astral immortality. Since the equation of the dead persons with Osiris was such a central element of the Egyptian belief in beatific afterlife, it would not be misleading to assume that this kind of belief in immortality influenced also the royal Canaanite ideas of afterlife during the period of Egyptian hegemony over Syria-Palestine during the second half of the second millennium.⁴⁸ As mentioned above, we have some clear indications that the Ugaritic royal ideology adopted *mutatis mutandis* the Egypt notion of astral immortality (cp. KTU 1.19 IV:23–25; 1.43:2–3).⁴⁹ Moreover, a Phoenician funerary text (KAI 277) may be understood in the same way.⁵⁰

On the other hand, among the Ugaritic sources the notion is attested that the deceased kings (*rpum*) belong to the entourage of the sun goddess *Shapshu* (KTU 1.6 VI 45ff.—text see below). As is generally known the sun-god is also of central importance for the Egyptian hope of eternal beatific afterlife.⁵¹ “The end-concern of all Egyptian thanatology was to enable the deceased to participate in the daily resurrection of the sun god or . . . to join the equally immortal stars.”⁵² A combination of solar and stellar ideas of postmortal life is already found in the Pyramid texts.⁵³ The king becomes a star in the entourage of Re, who travels across the celestial ocean with the “Imperishable Ones”.⁵⁴ In the course of time the solar and the stellar Osirian concept of afterlife and immortality were associated with one another.⁵⁵ This combined solar-stellar concept of the king’s

⁴⁸ For the Egyptian predominance over Syria-Palestine in this period, see for example M. Görg, *Die Beziehungen zwischen dem alten Israel und Ägypten: Von den Anfängen bis zum Exil* (Darmstadt, 1994) 23–71.

⁴⁹ For this, see Spronk, *Beatific Afterlife*, 160; Dietrich and Loretz, *TUAT*, 3. 1302.

⁵⁰ See G. N. Knoppers, “‘The God in his Temple’: The Phoenician Text from Pyrgi as a Funerary Inscription,” *JNES* 51 (1992) 108ff.

⁵¹ See Hornung, *Totenbuch*, 33: “Ihre Barke, in die der Tote einsteigt, trägt ihn aus der Unterwelt wieder hervor und mit ihm das ganze Heer der Millionen seligen Toten, die als ‘Vorgänger’ des Verstorbenen . . . das große Schiff füllen.”

⁵² J. Davies, *Death, Burial and Rebirth in the Religions of Antiquity* (London-New York, 1999) 32.

⁵³ The astronomical background of this combination is the important astronomical insight of the Egyptians that “appearance and disappearance of sun and stars are related phenomena, here expressed by their common wanderings through the Duat.”; so Parker and Neugebauer, *Egyptian Astronomical Texts I*, 41.

⁵⁴ Faulkner, *The King and the Star-Religion*, 154; 161; Hart, *Dictionary*, 209; Spronk, *Beatific Afterlife*, 88f.

⁵⁵ This synthesis between the chthonic god Osiris and the solar deity Re made it possible to formulate the hope for immortality and beatific afterlife by saying: “I

afterlife seems also to have left its traces in the Canaanite royal ideology. Israel, however, was the heir of Canaanite culture and religion; therefore, it is quite possible that solar-stellar concepts of the king's postmortal ascent to heaven were known in Israel. Indeed, we have clear evidence for Egyptian solar influence on the Israelite royal ideology and the royal concept of God.⁵⁶ According to Keel and Uehlinger, YHWH was regarded as sun god or "solarer El" in Judah during the Iron Age II B.⁵⁷ It is plausible to assume that YHWH as a deity with solar characteristics took over the competence and solar functions as they had been related to both the netherworld and life after death.⁵⁸

Thus, we have good reasons to assume that Egyptian notions of the postmortal life were familiar in Israel.⁵⁹ This background offers a good possibility for understanding the ascent of *Helel*, the "son of dawn", to heaven above the stars of El in Isa 14:13: The king, as a "son of god" (cp. KTU 1.16 I:10; 2Sam 7:14; Ps 2:7; 45:7; 89:27ff.; 110:3; Isa 9:5),⁶⁰ was believed to descend to the netherworld with

am Osiris and reversed I am the *Ba* of Re, when he enters *him*."; quoted from Spronk, *Beatific Afterlife*, 89. Concerning the fusion of Osiris and Re, see also Hart, *Dictionary*, 158; 181; J. G. Griffiths, "Osiris," *LexAq* 4. 628f.

⁵⁶ See e.g. the iconographic evidence in O. Keel and Chr. Uehlinger, *Göttinnen, Götter, Gottessymbole. Neue Erkenntnisse zur Religionsgeschichte Kanaans und Israels aufgrund bislang unerschlossener ikonographischer Quellen* [QD 134] (Freiburg-Basel-Wien, 1992) 199–321; and O. Keel and Chr. Uehlinger, "JHWH und die Sonnengottheit von Jerusalem," in W. Dietrich and M. A. Klopfenstein (eds.), *Ein Gott allein?* (Freiburg, Switzerland, 1994) 269–306.

⁵⁷ Keel and Uehlinger, *Göttinnen*, 316f.; 320.

⁵⁸ Chr. Uehlinger, "Gab es eine joschijanische Kultreform? Plädoyer für ein begründetes Minimum," in W. Groß (ed.), *Jeremia und die "deuteronomistische Bewegung"* [BBB 98] (Weinheim, 1995) 57–85. Uehlinger discusses the solar implications of the inscriptions on the Ketef Hinnom silver amulets which were discovered in a tomb: "Wenn hier Erlösung durch Jahwe mit der Vorstellung verbunden wird, daß Jahwe Licht zurückbringe, dann erinnert das an die gemeinorientalische, am besten aus Ägypten bekannte Vorstellung vom Sonnengott, der in der Nacht durch die Unterwelt fährt und am Morgen tatsächlich 'Licht zurückbringt'." This plausible solar interpretation is a modification of his former astral explanation in Keel and Uehlinger, *Göttinnen*, 421.

⁵⁹ Concerning the mummification of Jacob and Joseph in Gen 50:2f., 26, see below.

⁶⁰ Keel and Uehlinger, "JHWH und die Sonnengottheit," 293f.; see Isa 14:12 and the Israelite royal ideology against this solar background: "Der Sonnengott ist es, der dem König die Verwaltung von Recht und Gerechtigkeit anvertraut, wie z.B. Ps 72,1–2 das schildern. Wenn der König als Gottes Sohn gilt (vgl. Ps 2), so eben in erster Linie als Sohn des Sonnengottes (vgl. den *hyll bn šhr* in Jes 14,12). Als solcher herrscht er 'vom Meer zu Meer' (Ps 72,8), und deshalb soll sein Name 'vor der Sonne' gedeihen (*lpyy šms* Ps 72,17)."

the sun in the west (cp. KTU 1.15 V:16–20) and to rise heliacally as a bright morning star after a certain time span, ascending from the netherworld to the “stars of El”.⁶¹ There he has eternal life in the heavenly host of the supreme God.

3.3 The “stars of El” and the hubris of the king

According to Job 38:7 the “morning stars” (*kwkby bqr*) belong to the divine council of God. This notion could have its origin in the above sketched Egyptian concept of postmortal royal existence according to which the deceased king ascends as morning star or with the morning star to heaven.⁶² In Job 38:7 the *kwkby bqr* are also called “sons of God” who represent the heavenly council of the Most High (cp. Deut 32:8 LXX; Ps 29:1; 82; 89:7). This corresponds to the Ugaritic notion of the “assembly of the sons of El” (*pḥr bn ilm*) which is also designated as “assembly of the stars” (*pḥr kkbm*—KTU 1.10 I 3f.)⁶³—just as in Mesopotamia where the term *puḥrum* is the *terminus technicus* for the pantheon (*puḥur ilāni*—cp. *Enuma eliš* II 125ff.), the divine members of which have astral images and astral positions assigned to them by Marduk, the king of gods (cp. *Enuma eliš* V 1f.).⁶⁴

⁶¹ Spronk, *Beatific Afterlife*, 225, assumes in my opinion rightly that “the ‘stars of El’ (v.13) probably denote the deified dead who according to Canaanite belief were regularly freed from the netherworld (cf. KTU 1.19:IV.22–25 and 1.43:1–14).” Cp. also the Balaam-oracle in Num 24:17, where the future Davidic King is seen as a star, rising out of Jacob. The star-metaphor probably has its origin in the Egyptian and Canaanite royal association of kings and stars. The earthly birth of the king is paralleled to its heavenly rebirth as star when he ascends to the eternal world of gods. Cp. also W. Wifall, “The Status of ‘Man’ as Resurrection,” *ZAW* 90 (1978) 382–394, here 384ff., who argues in similar way that the designation of the king as ‘star’ goes back to the royal ancestral cult of the deceased kings and heroes: It “describes the close relation between the dead and living leaders in the ancient Near East” (p. 385). The blessed dead heroes and kings represent the heavenly host or stars (whose worship is later prohibited by the Deuteronomists, cp. Deut 17:3; 2Ki 23:5; Jer 8:2) who help their living successors during times of war from their heavenly courses (Judges 5:20). In the Canaanite religion “El and the other leading gods of the Canaanite pantheon are described as commanding both messengers to speed their royal dispatches between heaven and earth and host of warrior stars or *repaʾim* to partake in cosmic or synergistic warfare with and against their counterparts here on earth.” For the notion of the warrior stars and the “host of heaven”, see also the detailed discussion in M. Albani, *Der eine Gott und die himmlischen Heerscharen. Zur Begründung des Monotheismus bei Deuterocesaja im Horizont der Astralisierung des Gottesverständnisses im Alten Orient* [ABG 1] (Leipzig, 2000) 186–230.

⁶² For this, see Albani, *Der eine Gott*, 147f.

⁶³ *Ibidem*, 143ff.; cp. also the following Pyramid text: “make your seat in heaven, among the stars of heaven . . .”, quoted from Spronk, *Beatific Afterlife*, 88.

⁶⁴ Though in Mesopotamia the notion of an astral divinization of the kings is

Now, the *hubris* of the Babylonian king in Isa 14:12ff. should not be recognised merely because he is thought to ascend to the heavenly realm of the gods to which he belongs as “son of god” according to the royal ideology. Rather, the text takes a critical posture against the king who, not content with the usual place *among* the “stars of El”, wanted to have equality with the Most High (14:14): “I will be like the Most High.” Since the Babylonian tyrant took the highest position of power in the world during his life, he also wants to occupy the most central heavenly position after his death. This is *hubris* which has to be punished by the Most High. Thus the tyranny of the Babylonian king during his life on earth (cf. Isa 14:6.12.16f.20f.) corresponds to his greed for power after his death in the heavenly realm. Therefore, he is to lose his privilege of beatific afterlife in the heavenly world. The king, who once had a legal (post-mortal) place among the gods,⁶⁵ is now fallen from heaven.⁶⁶ He is condemned to go down into the netherworld like all mortals (14:15)—without the chance of ascending again from there to the heaven with the sun and stars (Orion). However, his new situation is even worse: Unlike the other kings of the nations, “who lie in glory, every one in his own house” (14:18), the Babylonian tyrant is cast out of his grave “like an abominable branch . . . like a carcass trodden under feet” (14:19). In view of the eminent importance of the royal cult of the dead in Egypt, Syria and Mesopotamia including an honourable burial, this would have been considered a very harsh punishment for the tyrant, who strove for eternal life (cp. the Gilgamesh Epic) and everlasting power. Both his postmortal existence and his memory are in this way totally extinguished (cp. Isa 14:20).

3.4 *Further biblical and extrabiblical references to the royal notions in Isa 14:12ff.*

In the lamentation over the pharaoh (Ezek 32), the slain Egyptian king is also cast forth onto the open field where he becomes feed

not attested, Isa 14:12f. projects Canaanite and Egyptian royal notions onto the Babylonian king; see below.

⁶⁵ In KTU 1.113 the names of the deceased kings are preceded by the determinative *il*; see G. Del Olmo Lete, *Canaanite Religion according to the Liturgical Texts of Ugarit* (Bethesda, 1999) 177ff.

⁶⁶ See in this sense B. Lang, “Der vergöttlichte König im polytheistischen Israel,” in D. Zeller (ed.), *Menschwerdung Gottes—Vergöttlichung des Menschen* [NTOA 7] (Freiburg, Switzerland-Göttingen, 1988) 56.

for the wild beasts (32:4). Interestingly enough the final, postmortal extinguishing of the pharaoh can be observed in the sky: YHWH darkens the stars, sun and moon, which are of crucial importance for attaining immortality in Egypt and Canaan. As shown above, in Egypt the 70-day-process of mummification corresponds to the 70-day-invisibility of the decans (Sirius, Orion, etc.) after which the stars and the souls of the dead rise heliacally in the east. The darkening of the stars and the casting out of the king's corpse means that the pharaoh is excluded from a beatific afterlife for ever! Against this background we can also understand the above mentioned darkening of the stars and "their Orion-stars" in Isa 13:10f. According to Spronk, this is the next parallel to Isa 14:12f. The verb *hll* denotes here the "shining" of the stars (see above). YHWH's judgment against the "iniquity of the wicked", "the pride of the arrogant" and the "insolence of the tyrants" (13:11) is portrayed as the darkening of the astral powers, especially of Orion (Osiris) who according to Egyptian royal ideology leads the souls of the deceased kings to the heaven of astral immortality. The puzzling plural *kslylyhm* in 13:10 is easily explained against this background.⁶⁷ In later times the Egyptians used the plural *S3hw* for all the stars of the constellation Orion, whereas the word *S3h* originally denoted only one star in this constellation (Rigel) which embodied the spirit of Osiris.⁶⁸

The notion of a close relationship between kings and stars is also attested in the apocalypse of Isaiah (Isa 24–27). There the astral host of the heavens appears as the counterpart to the kings of the earth (Isa 24:21). They are the enemies of YHWH who "will be gathered together like prisoners in a pit; they will be shut up in a prison, and after many days they will be punished" (Isa 24:22, cp. 1En 18:14; 90:21ff.). Here we have a very similar motif to Isa 14:12ff.!

⁶⁷ A different astronomical solution for the riddle of the plural *kslylyhm* in Isa 13:10 is proposed by J. Koch, "Der Finsternisbericht Jesaja 13,10," *UF* 25 (1993) 201–217; his very interesting, but highly nuanced and sophisticated explanation is based on Babylonian astronomy, translating *kslylyhm* "sein Orion-Doppelgestirn". He identifies the "Orion-Doppelgestirn" with the Babylonian constellation ^{mul}gag-si-sá, which consists of the stars Sirius and Beteigeuze (cp. p. 20). I doubt, however, that the author of Isa 13 had such a professional insight and interest in Babylonian astronomy so that he encoded astronomical information on ^{mul}gag-si-sá in the plural of *ksyl* (and on two eclipses in February 561 B.C.E.). A much simpler and more obvious explanation is the here suggested relation to the Egyptian plural *S3hw*, which denotes the stars of the constellation Orion.

⁶⁸ For this, see in detail Legon, "The Orion Correlation," 45–56.

In another place of the Isaiah apocalypse the Canaanite royal idea of “resurrection” is explicitly rejected: “The dead (*mtym*) do not live and the shades of the dead kings (*rp’yym*) do not rise”! (Isa 26:14). The *Rephaim* (*rp’yym*)—mentioned also in Isa 14:9—appear in KTU 1.6 VI 45ff. in the entourage of the sun deity who travels through the netherworld, as noted above:

O Šapšu, may you judge/preside over the ‘heroes,’ (*špš rpim thtk*)
 O Šapšu, may you judge/preside over the divinities, (*špš thtk ilnym*)
 The divine ones constitute your regular company, (*dk ilm*)
 Behold, the dead constitute your regular company. (*hn mtm ‘dk*)⁶⁹

Thus, the deified dead kings and heroes, similar to their Egyptian royal “colleagues”, belong to the “host of the sun” (KTU 1.15 V 18ff.).⁷⁰ According to the so-called “Rephaim texts” (KTU 1.20–22) the *rpum* appear as a host with horses and chariots (cp. 2Kings 6:17) at night—probably on the occasion of the New Year festival.⁷¹ Interestingly enough, for their journey between the realms of the dead and the living, they require a timespan of three days. “This period of three days occurs within the same framework of the hope for revivification in Hos 6:2.”⁷² It is probable that the cults of the dead, especially of the royal deceased, played a more important role in the monarchic period of Israel than the biblical texts reveal (cp. for example Ezek 43:7ff.).⁷³ It is against this background that we are to understand the strong rejection of royal “resurrection” in Isa 26:14. The veneration of the deified royal dead as heavenly host of (warrior) stars⁷⁴—being apparently a common element of royal ideology in Syria-Canaan, Israel and Egypt—was seen as a contradiction to YHWH’s exclusive rule as monotheistic god in the postexilic period, an idea clearly articulated in the context (26:13f.). Therefore YHWH

⁶⁹ The transcription and translation are from Th. J. Lewis, *Cults of the Dead in Ancient Israel and Ugarit* [HSM 39] (Atlanta, 1989) 36.

⁷⁰ See in this sense Lewis, *Cults of the Dead*, 37; for the Ugaritic “host of the sun” (*sbu špš*), see the detailed discussion in Albani, *Der eine Gott*, 195–211.

⁷¹ For this, see for example Spronk, *Beatific Afterlife*, 163–177; J. Tropper, *Nekromantie. Totenbefragung im Alten Orient und im Alten Testament* [AOAT 223] (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1989) 134–141.

⁷² Spronk, *Beatific Afterlife*, 170; for Hos 6:1–3, see *ibidem*, 293ff., 314f.

⁷³ See Lewis, *Cults of the Dead*, 139–142; Spronk, *Beatific Afterlife*, 150; Albani, *Der eine Gott*, 171f.

⁷⁴ For this, see Wifall, “The Status of ‘Man’ as Resurrection,” 385; on the Deuteronomistic polemics against the “host of heaven” and cults of the dead, see Albani, *Der eine Gott*, 211–230.

himself “wiped out all memory of them” (26:14), that is, of the deified royal dead, who were regarded as heavenly host to which the “son of dawn” wanted to ascend in Isa 14:12f.

A very close relationship to Isa 14 exists in the proclamation of doom and lamentation over the king of Tyre (Ezek 28:1–10; 11–19). The king, who walked once on the holy mountain of God among the stones of fire as an anointed cherub (Ezek 28:14; cp. V. 16),⁷⁵ was cast to the ground by God, suffering the fate of mortality because of his *hubris* (28:2.9f.17). Here we meet explicitly the idea that the king was regarded as a divine being: “I am a god” (28:2.9). The “stones of fire” on the holy mountain possibly refer to the heavenly beings who were imagined as stars (cp. Isa 14:13).⁷⁶ The king as “son of god” (cp. Ps 2:7; 45:7; 89:27ff.; 110:3)⁷⁷ has already in his earthly life gained access to the divine realm (temple > mountain of god)⁷⁸ to which, according to royal ideology, he ascends after his

⁷⁵ According to O. Keel, *Die Welt der altorientalischen Bildsymbolik und das Alte Testament—Am Beispiel der Psalmen* (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1984) 23, the “Weltenberg ist der Ort des Lebens. Auf seiner Spitze erhebt sich der Lebensbaum.” Cp. fig. 23; the “holy mountain” (Ezek 28:14) and the “mount of assembly” (Isa 14:13) seem to be this “Weltenberg”, because Ezek 28,13 says that the king of Tyre was in “Eden”, the garden of God. In the midst of Eden is located the tree of life (Gen 2:9), whose fruits bring eternal life (Gen 3:22).

⁷⁶ See in this sense W. Zimmerli, *Ezechiel* [BK XIII/1] (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1969) 685f.

⁷⁷ For the discussion concerning the “sacral kingship” in Israel, see for example R. Albertz, *Religionsgeschichte Israels* (Göttingen, 1992) 176; he sees strong Egyptian influence on the royal “son of god”—notion and interprets it in analogy of Egyptian ideas as “göttliche Wiedergeburt des Königs bei seiner Inthronisation”; see recently also A. Moenikes, “Psalm 2,7b and die Göttlichkeit des israelitischen Königs,” *ZAW* 111 (1999) 619–621.

⁷⁸ Thus Lang, “Der vergöttlichte König,” 54; according to a mythical conception of the world, the temple as “interface” between the divine and human world is located on the mountain of god, the place of the divine assembly (cp. Zaphon as mountain of god in Isa 14:13). In Ps 48:3 the Zion is identified or associated with the mountain of the divine assembly in the North, the Zaphon. Zimmerli, *Ezechiel*, 685, assumes, that the holy mountain in Ezek 28:14 has also to be identified with the cosmic mountain in the North, the place of the assembly of the “stars of El” (Isa 14:13). That would mean that the king has access to the divine realm via the temple. Cp. Keel, *Welt der altorientalischen Bildsymbolik*, 104. The cherub belongs to the mythical conception of the Jerusalem temple too; cp. e.g. Ezek 10:2 (Zimmerli, *Ezechiel*, 684). The Jerusalem conception of the temple was probably very similar to that of Phoenicians, esp. that of Tyre; cp. the account on the cooperation between Solomon and Hiram of Tyrus concerning the building of the temple (1 Kgs 5:32). It is generally assumed that Solomon’s temple was designed by Phoenician craftsmen in accord with Syro-Palestinian models, presumably adapted to fit the Israelite milieu. For the sacral functions of the Phoenician kings, see M. Hutter in P. W.

death. According to Ezekiel, however, the arrogant king of Tyre is an outcast from the mountain of God and descends to the pit, the realm of the dead—like the king of Babylon in Isa 14!

There is further evidence in the OT that the idea of divine status of the king and of his postmortal deification was familiar in Israel,⁷⁹ although the real significance of such royal ideological elements for Israelite kingship is itself much debated in research.⁸⁰ In any case, the Bible itself attests the acquaintance of the Israelites with Egyptian rites for deceased persons; this notably occurs in the Joseph Narrative (Gen 37–50). There, the contact between Egypt and Israel is described in a strikingly positive way. The figure of Joseph functions a type of the wise and just ruler in the horizon of Egyptian kingship, almost exerting royal power himself (Gen 41:44; 42:6). Perhaps he was considered a model of the just and wise king for the Northern Israelite kingdom—like Solomon for the Southern

Haider, M. Hutter, and S. Kreuzer (eds.), *Religionsgeschichte Syriens* (Stuttgart-Berlin-Köln, 1996) 135; H. Niehr, *Religionen in Israels Umwelt. Einführung in die nordwest-orientalischen Religionen Syrien-Palästinas* (Würzburg, 1998) 126ff.; concerning the Phoenician royal cult of the dead, see further in Niehr, *ibidem*, 140ff. and Spronk, *Beatific Afterlife*, 208ff.

⁷⁹ For this, see Albani, *Der eine Gott*, 143–152 and 202–230. A reflection of royal ideology is probably the strange narrative on the sexual intercourse between the sons of god and the daughters of men (Gen 6:1–4), which probably has its background in the royal myth of the “sacred marriage”; for this, see lately M. and R. Zimmermann, “‘Heilige Hochzeit’ der Göttersöhne und Menschentöchter? Spuren des Mythos in Gen 6,1–4,” *ZAW* 111 (1999) 327–352; among others, the myth had a political legitimizing dimension that is parodied and contrasted by Gen 6:1–4: “Statt einer Legitimation des Königs durch die ‘Heilige Hochzeit’ kann man im Jhwh-Spruch (V.3) inhaltlich wie auch durch seine syntaktische Stellung einen deutlichen Grenzverweis erkennen” (*ibidem*, 348). In my opinion the limitation of the human lifespan to 120 years in Gen 6:3 should be interpreted as a polemic against the royal claim for eternal life and rule (cp. Ps 21:5; 72:5) which was based on the notion that the king is a “son of god” (Ps 2:7); see similarly Spronk, *Beatific Afterlife*, 279f. M. and R. Zimmermann formulate the point well: “Die explizite Nennung der Göttersöhne und die Kritik ihres Machtanspruches könnte in Gen 6,1–4 auf pragmatischer Sprachebene eine Kritik des königlichen Machtmißbrauches bzw. politischer Herrschaftsansprüche überhaupt intendieren. Die spezifische Rezeption der ‘Heiligen Hochzeit’ verkehrt hier demnach die eigentliche Intention des Mythos in ihr Gegenteil: Statt Machterweis erfolgt in Gen 6,3 ein Grenzverweis!” (*ibidem*, 349) This intention is basically the same as that in Isa 14!

⁸⁰ See J. F. Healey, “The Immortality of the King: Ugarit and the Psalms,” *Orientalia* 53 (1984) 245–254; against Healey, see J. Day, “The Canaanite Inheritance of the Israelite Monarchy,” in J. Day (ed.), *King and Messiah in Israel and the Ancient Near East. Proceedings of the Oxford Old Testament Seminar* [JSOT.S 270] (Sheffield, 1998) 72–90, here 85f.

kingdom. Görg and others assume that the Joseph Narrative reflects the fate of Jereboam I (926–907 B.C.E.), but the question of the historical background of the Narrative is controversial (era of Israelite tribal league; monarchic period?).⁸¹

However, we do find in Gen 50:2f. some information about Jacob's death which is pertinent to the issue being addressed here. Joseph commands his physicians to embalm⁸² his deceased father according to the Egyptian procedures: "They spent forty days in doing this, for that is the time required for embalming. And the Egyptians wept for him seventy days" (50:3). This reflects the above mentioned Egyptian rites of embalming (see section 3.2) which lasted 70 days⁸³ corresponding to the astral timespan of 70 days,—the period of invisibility of Osiris-Orion, Isis-Sirius and the other decanal stars in the netherworld after which that stars rise heliacally in the dawn (rebirth). "The ceremonial and religious aspects of embalming were extremely important to the Egyptians, being the key to the continuance of life in the hereafter."⁸⁴ An Egyptian text (pBoulaq 3) that describes the embalming procedure illustrates the purpose and the final result of embalming:

Erstrahle am Himmel als einziger Stern, denn du bist (ja) der Orion am Leibe der Nut. Mögen deine Strahlen auf diese Erde fallen, so wie der Mond, der angefüllt ist. Isis wird bei dir am Himmel sein als Sothis und sich ewiglich nicht von dir entfernen . . . Du wirst an dem Ort aufgehen, an dem . . ., und es wird dir in der Duat gesagt werden: 'Du bist ein Gott unter den Verklärten, Du bist die Gestalt des Osiris.' . . . dein Ba wird im Himmel, dein Leichnam in der Duat und deine Statuen in den Tempeln sehend sein, denn du lebst sicher bis in alle Ewigkeit und verjüngst dich gewiß bis in alle Ewigkeit.⁸⁵

The mummification of Jacob and Joseph and the mention of the 70 day mourning time in Gen 50 indicate an acquaintance of the Israelites with the Egyptian hope for astral rebirth. According to M. Görg, the Joseph Narrative reflects "mehr oder weniger deutlich

⁸¹ See Görg, *Beziehung zwischen dem alten Israel und Ägypten*, 119ff., esp. p. 123; and the discussion in R. Lux, *Josef* (Leipzig, 2001) 226ff.

⁸² See R. N. Jones, "Embalming," in D. N. Freedman, *Anchor Bible Dictionary* (Garden City, 1992) 2. 490ff.

⁸³ Cp. for example *ibidem*, 493ff.

⁸⁴ *Ibidem*, 493; see also Spronk, *Beatific Afterlife*, 90.

⁸⁵ Quoted from *TUAT* 2. 427, 430f.

das Wissen einer Zeit um Ägypten, die von einem lebhaften Kulturaustausch geprägt ist.”⁸⁶ In view of the prevailing tendency in the OT to show hostility towards Egypt (cp. Ex 1ff.), it is fairly astonishing that the corpse of the ancestor of the Israelites is treated in an Egyptian way that is essentially bound up with the hope of astral rebirth. This also applies to Joseph (Gen 50:26) who, according to Gen 41:45, was married to the daughter of the priest of Heliopolis (*On*), the cultic centre of the Egyptian sun-god Re! It thus seems that the Egyptian belief in a beatific afterlife and its astral aspects played some role in monarchic Israel—whatever form in which this occurred. The rising star from Jacob as metaphor for the coming Israelite king in the Balaam oracle (Num 24:17) comes from the same world of royal ideas (see above).

Thus, in Isa 14 the Babylonian king is being viewed from the perspective of Israelite royal ideology which had incorporated Canaanite and Egyptian notions. The ascent of the tyrant to heaven and his subsequent downfall to the netherworld are mainly described by drawing on elements that reflect the influence of Canaanite and Egyptian royal ideology and mythology.⁸⁷ As far as we know, the Babylonians did not have the concept of a postmortal deification of the kings as stars. Since the stars, however, also played an eminent role in Mesopotamian kingship as powers of fate (astral divination),⁸⁸ the projection of astral Canaanite and Egyptian notions to the Babylonians appears plausible from an Israelite point of view. The affinity of kings and stars is well attested in Mesopotamian iconography. On stone stelae one can often see the king and astral gods

⁸⁶ Görg, *Beziehung zwischen dem alten Israel und Ägypten*, 122.

⁸⁷ Thus also Lang, “Der vergöttlichte König,” 56; only the notion that the Most High is enthroned above the stars of El could be of Babylonian origin: according to the cosmological text KAR 307 (VAT 8917) the throne of Bel (Marduk) is located in the middle heavens above the lower heavens of the stars (lines 30–33); for this text, see the detailed discussion in W. Horowitz, *Mesopotamian Cosmic Geography* [Mesopotamian Civilizations 8] (Winona Lake, 1998) 3–19.

⁸⁸ According to D. Pingree, *From Astral Omens to Astrology* (Rome, 1997) 18, the importance of astral omens in Mesopotamian royal courts from the last few centuries of the 2nd millennium B.C.E until the Achaemenid period “depended on their being regarded as the principle means for the gods to signal their intentions to the king. Therefore, throughout this long period the kings . . . employed numerous observers to watch the heavens for the divine messages.” For the interconnection of royal rule and astral divination in Mesopotamia, see also Albani, *Der eine Gott*, 41–46; and concerning Mesopotamian astral divination in general, see also e.g. U. Koch-Westenholz, *Mesopotamian Astrology. An Introduction to Babylonian and Assyrian Celestial Divination* [CNI Publications 19] (Viborg, 1995).

above or beside the head of the ruler.⁸⁹ This iconographical motif of royal rule was widespread. Therefore the *hubris* of the Babylonian kingship conveyed a particularly “astral face” for Israelite prophetic thinking. In the Ancient Near East the sun, the moon and the stars were regarded as the visible appearance of divine power and eternity in which the kings wanted to participate (cp. Ps 72:5.17; 89:37f.). The “oracle concerning Babylon” (Isa 13:1–14:23) rejects the claim of the Babylonian kingship for universal power because the Babylonian oppressor is the very embodiment of the *hubris* of kingship. Although the most plausible historical background of these prophetic texts in their present shape is the time of exile (i.e. between the time of Nebuchadnezzar’s death in 562 B.C.E.? and the final phase of the Neo-Babylonian rule around 538 B.C.E.?) or the early postexilic period, there are good reasons to assume that the taunt song against the tyrant was originally related to a Neo-Assyrian oppressor, most probably Sargon II.⁹⁰ During the time of the exile at the very latest, the notion of royal rule was fundamentally brought into discredit in Israel. The Babylonian tyrant and the king of Tyre embody quasi *pars pro toto* the arrogant claim of the kings to divine status which also obviously ended up playing a considerable role in Israelite royal ideology.

A revival of the originally royal privilege of an astral “beatific afterlife” is found in the apocalyptic literature *mutatis mutandis* in Dan 12:3 and 1 Enoch 104:2.⁹¹ In the Israelite religion of this later period, the just wise men are made to occupy the place of the kings, who had the divine task to implement God’s righteousness on earth according to the royal ideal (cp. 2Sam 23:3f.; Ps 72:1ff.)⁹² but had failed

⁸⁹ For example, cp. the Nabonid-Stela which shows the king with the “astral trias”; on this see Albani, *Der eine Gott*, 155 (fig. 7); cp. also fig. 6, *ibidem*, 153, which shows the head of the king Asarhaddon with the “astral trias” and Pleiades (Asarhaddon-stela from Zincirli).

⁹⁰ For this, see the discussion in Wildberger, *Jesaja*, 543f.; Spronk, *Beatific Afterlife*, 220, and Chr. Uehlinger, *Weltreich und ‘eine Rede’. Eine neue Deutung der sogenannten Turmbauerzählung (Gen 11,1–9)* [OBO 101] (Freiburg, Switzerland-Göttingen, 1990) 542f., plausibly assume that the concrete individual description of the arrogant king’s death in 14:18–20a also has a concrete historical background, namely in the death of Sargon II, because he was actually killed in battle and had not been buried “in his house” (cp. SAA III 77); according to Spronk and Uehlinger, the taunt song was later reinterpreted with regard to the Neo-Babylonian rule (“king of Babylon”, 14,4, cp. 14.22f.); Spronk, *Beatific Afterlife*; Uehlinger, *Weltreich*, 537.546.

⁹¹ For Dan 12:1–3, see the discussion in Spronk, *Beatific Afterlife*, 338–343.

⁹² For the royal ideology in Ps 72 (the ideal king as protector of justice and righteousness) and its Egyptian and Mesopotamian background, see B. Janowski, *Stellvertretung*.

in fulfilling of their royal duty (cp. Ps 82:2–5). Thus not the kings will be resurrected, but those “who lead many to righteousness shall shine like the stars forever and ever” (Dan 12:3).

4. *Summary and New Testament perspectives*

The downfall of *Helel* from heaven to the netherworld symbolizes not only the judgement of God over the barbarous Babylonian tyrant, but is also fundamentally concerned with the traditional royal claim to divine status, which reached its zenith in the concept of a post-mortual astral deification of the king among the “stars of El”. Within the framework of the rising Israelite monotheism during the Babylonian exile, the polytheistic notion of other gods and divine beings alongside YHWH was radically called into question (see Second Isaiah). This revolutionary religious breakthrough was likewise and inevitably concerned with royal ideology. The sole, incomparable god “brings princes to naught, and makes the rulers of the earth as nothing” (Isa 40:23). In comparison with the true eternal god it became obvious that the rulers of the earth are not divine immortal beings but transient mortals like plants which “the whirlwind carries off like stubble” (Isa 40:24). Analogous to the earthly rulers the stars of the host of heaven prove only to be creatures that obey the command of the creator (Isa 40:26).⁹³ Thus one consequence of exilic monotheism is that the polytheistic idea of royalty’s divine status—once also accepted in monarchic Israel—is now unmasked as *hubris*.⁹⁴ Both the Neo-Assyrian and the Neo-Babylonian imperial rule, which were experienced by Israelites as barbarous tyranny (Isa 14:6.16f.), had also exposed the idea of sacral kingship and divine sonship of the king as *hubris*. The exilic situation was the proper occasion to proclaiming a monotheistic death sentence over any royal claim for divinity (cp. Ezek 28; 31:18).⁹⁵

Alttestamentliche Studien zu einem theologischen Grundbegriff [SBS 165] (Stuttgart, 1997) 41–66.

⁹³ For the parallelism between the earthly rulers and the heavenly host in Second Isaiah’s disputation speech 40:18–26, see Albani, *Der eine Gott*, 153ff.

⁹⁴ This is the tenor of the essay by Lang, “Der vergöttlichte König”.

⁹⁵ According to Spronk, *Beatific Afterlife*, 226, Ps 82 is to be interpreted in this sense. He assumes that “gods” and “sons of Elyon” in 82:1.6 designate the kings of the people, so that “Ps 82 offers a beautiful parallel to Isa 14: these leaders may think to have reached the state of gods . . . , nevertheless they shall die like all mor-

The *hubris* of human beings who aspire to invading the divine sphere is a central biblical theme that touches on all periods of the biblical tradition.⁹⁶ The New Testament antithesis to the tyrannical Babylonian king, who attempts to ascend to the throne of the Most High on the mountain of god, is exemplified in Matt 4:8: Jesus resists the temptation to worship the Satan on “a very high mountain” and rejects this as a way of attaining rule over the entire world. Jesus thus proves himself to be the true “son of God” (Matt 4:3.6.11)—much in contrast to the kings who in their unmitigated pride and ambition attempt to attain divine sonship, universal rule and immortality. In the Christ hymn of Phil 2:6–11 we also find a christological motif which contrasts sharply from the royal notion of the king’s divinity and postmortal ascent:

⁶Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: ⁷But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: ⁸And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. ⁹Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: ¹⁰That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of *things* in heaven, and *things* in earth, and *things* under the earth; ¹¹And *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (KJV)

The Babylonian king wants to escape the fate of mortality by ascending to the divine realm, whereas Christ descends voluntarily from the heavens down to human existence and, finally, to the realm of the dead. He “thought it not robbery to be equal with God”, whereas the tyrant ascends to heaven in order to become equal with the Most high (Isa 14:14). The “christology of descent” therefore implies a rejection in principle of the traditional royal notion of postmortal ascent to heaven.

On the other hand, Christ is the true “son of God” (Mark 9:7 par.) who has defeated death by his resurrection for ever (1Cor 15:25f.).⁹⁷ Thus in the New Testament the very ancient royal hope

tals (v.7; cf. Isa 14:10).” For further arguments in favour of Spronk’s interpretation of Ps 82, see Albani, *Der eine Gott*, 226f.

⁹⁶ Cp. e.g. Gen 3; 11,1–9; Job 20:6f.; Prov 16:18; 28:23; Isa 2:9–17; 9:7–9; 10:5–15 passim; Ezek 28; 31; 32; Dan 4:17ff.; 27ff.; 8:10ff.

⁹⁷ Paul quotes here the royal psalm 110:1 “For he must reign *until he has put all*

for beatific afterlife is regarded as fulfilled in the Christ event. The “postmortal” Christ is taken up to heaven *by God* (Mark 16:19; Luke 24,51; Acts 1:9ff.)—in contrast to the Babylonian king who says in his heart: “*I will ascend into heaven.*” The resurrection of Christ brings about a kind of democratization of the royal privilege of a beatific afterlife as believers follow and participate in Christ’s way of salvation.⁹⁸ 2Pet 1:16–21 alludes to the transfiguration of Christ on a high mountain (Mark 9 par.) where the voice of God declares him as “my son, the beloved”. It cannot be by chance that Christ, the beloved son of God, is designated in 2Pet 1:19 as a “morning star” who rises in the hearts of the believers “until the day dawns”.⁹⁹

The Vulgate translates the relevant passage: “. . . donec dies inlucescat et *lucifer* oriatur in cordibus vestris.” According to this Latin translation Christ is the true morning star or *Lucifer* (= bringer of light), not Satan! Thus, our interpretation has come full-circle. It could be of interest, against the ancient royal ideologies sketched above, to reconsider the New Testament passages that speak of Christ as the morning star (2Pet 1:19; Rev 2:28; 22:16).

his enemies under his feet”! Christ is the true royal “son of God”, born from the “womb of dawn” (110:3), who is able to destroy the last enemy, the death.

⁹⁸ The idea of participation in the salvation way of Christ resembles the Egyptian Osirian concept of beatific afterlife; see above the quotation from Assmann, *Ma’at*, 118, on the “Demotisierung der königlichen Totenreligion nach dem Untergang des Alten Reiches”. Assmann emphasizes “daß der Mensch nicht als Mensch, sondern nur als König oder Gott unsterblich werden kann. Er muß also mit dem Tode zu einem Gott werden. Genau das ist die Verheißung der Osiris-Religion, die sich mit dem Untergang des Alten Reiches ausbreitet. Osiris ist der Gott, der gestorben ist und als gestorbener Gott lebt.”

⁹⁹ Cp. Rev 22:16, where Jesus says: “I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star.” The designation of Jesus Christ as “morning star” is seen here in the context of the Israelite royal theology!