From Biblical Semantics to Theology: Divine and Human כעס and קנאה*

Ariel Seri-Levi
Ben-Gurion University of the Negev; serilevi@bgu.ac.il

■ Abstract

Scholarship assumes no significant differences among various "terms for anger" in the Hebrew Bible, but it does assume an essential difference between human and divine anger. This article challenges these preconceptions by presenting a novel semantic analysis of כעס, considered a "term for anger." It shows that in Classical Biblical Hebrew, כעס does not denote anger but rather sorrow or insult associated with קנאה, "jealousy." This analysis leads to a new, deeper, and more precise understanding of the phrase "to cause כעס to Y<small>HWH</small>" and of its meaning in biblical literature and theology in general and in Deuteronomistic writings in particular.

■ Keywords

biblical semantics, emotions, biblical theology, anger, jealousy, Deuteronomistic writings, כעס, קנא

■ Introduction

Considered a central phenomenon in the Hebrew Bible, "divine anger" has been the subject of numerous studies. Most of these assume that Biblical Hebrew offers a range of expressions that denote the concept of anger, including קצף, אף, חרה, and

others. Indeed, considerable scholarship has been devoted to trying to classify these terms,[1] but the basic lexical assumption—that these are basically synonymous expressions for anger—has not been challenged.[2] Even the literature that offers some insights into nuances differentiating the "terms for anger" tends to treat them essentially as synonyms, regarding any differences identified among them as inconsequential in the interpretive and conceptual analysis of anger.[3]

While virtually overlooking any meaningful distinction between these various Hebrew words and idioms, many studies either presuppose or seek to prove another distinction, one between human and divine anger, in terms of meaning, terminology, phenomenology, and even justification.[4] Both the unwillingness to differentiate between the "terms for anger," on the one hand, and the strong differentiation between "human anger" and "divine anger," on the other, do not emerge from readings of the biblical texts. Rather, they stem from scholarly preconceptions about anger and the divine which impede our ability to properly analyze the phenomenon of divine anger.

This article demonstrates that semantic analysis, based on philological, linguistic considerations such as morphology and syntax—rather than theological considerations such as the perfection or righteousness of the deity—reveals that biblical authors clearly distinguished between different phenomena by using very specific words and idioms to describe crises in human-divine relations in various contexts. Moreover, they did so by intentionally using terms from human relationships, assuming that the two realms are analogous.

I will focus on the root כעס, which is the common and conventional way of denoting "anger" in modern Hebrew as it probably already was in Mishnaic Hebrew, and perhaps even in Late Biblical Hebrew, and which is therefore usually considered to have had the same meaning in Classical Biblical Hebrew as well.[5] The widespread

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[1] See, for example, J. Bergman and E. Johnson, "אנף‎," *TDOT* 1:348–60; Meyer I. Gruber, *Aspects of Nonverbal Communication in the Ancient Near East* (2 vols.; Rome: Biblical Institute, 1980) 2:448–553; Paul A. Kruger, "A Cognitive Interpretation of the Emotion of Anger in the Hebrew Bible," *JNSL* 26 (2000) 181–93; Ellen van Wolde, "Sentiments as Culturally Constructed Emotions: Anger and Love in the Hebrew Bible," *BibInt* 16 (2008) 5–17.

[2] See, for example, the unequivocal statement of Bruce Edward Baloian, *Anger in the Old Testament* (New York: Lang, 1992) 5: "[T]he use of a particular word, although conveying special nuance, is not found to enunciate a special theological meaning."

[3] E.g., Matthew Richard Schlimm, *From Fratricide to Forgiveness: The Language and Ethics of Anger in Genesis* (Siphrut 7; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2011) 65–88, 193–201; Deena Grant, *Divine Anger in the Hebrew Bible* (CBQMS 52; Washington, DC: The Catholic Biblical Association of America, 2014) 21–39.

[4] Schlimm, for example, limits his study on anger in Genesis to human anger, not only because Genesis, in his opinion, does not deal with divine anger, but because of "a fundamental distinction between divine and human anger" (*From Fratricide,* 13). On attributing distinct meanings to one verb when it is used in divine or human contexts, see below.

[5] See Avi Hurvitz, *A Linguistic Study of the Relationship between the Priestly Source and the Book of Ezekiel: A New Approach to an Old Problem* (Paris: Gabalda, 1982) 115–16. Hurvitz noted that, in Tannaitic midrash, the Sages use the verb כעס‎ *qal* to paraphrase a verse in which the verb

appearance of כעס in Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic redaction of the Former Prophets and Jeremiah (henceforth: Dtr) has led scholars to point out the centrality of "divine anger" in these writings. While distinguishing it from human כעס, they have assumed there is no difference between (divine) כעס and other so-called terms for anger, thereby overlooking its semantic, literary, and theological meaning.

The novel semantic analysis of כעס presented herein leads to three main conclusions. Firstly, in Classical Biblical Hebrew, neither divine nor human כעס denotes anger.[6] Rather, the term is lexically proximate to sorrow, vexation, or insult. Secondly, in view of the close semantic congruence between כעס and קנא, כעס expresses a particular kind of offense specifically associated with jealousy rather than a general, undifferentiated offense. While both claims are not totally unprecedented in research, neither has been comprehensively developed to date. This task leads to the third contribution the present article seeks to make—namely, a new, deeper, and more precise understanding of divine כעס in the biblical literature and theology. More than any other term, כעס depicts the insult and jealousy Yʜᴡʜ feels when Israel engages in idolatry. This is the background of the central place the term holds in the Deuteronomistic literature, which broadens its scope from the worship of foreign deities to worshipping Yʜᴡʜ with graven images or on high places.

◼ Does כעס Mean "Anger"?

Scholars, commentators, and translators regularly include כעס among the terms that express the notion of anger while acknowledging that the meaning of "anger" is not always congruent with it. This has led to inconsistency in defining the word. In *HALOT*, for example, the noun כעס is defined as either "vexation" or "grief" when its references pertain to people but only as "vexation" when the reference is to the deity. In almost all occurrences of the verb כעס *hiphil*, however—where the object is the deity—it is interpreted in *HALOT* as "to offend, to provoke to anger,"

קצף *qal* (usually translated "be angry") appears. This phenomenon, he claims, was already manifest in the book of Ezekiel, in which כעס is preferred over קצף, the latter being the common term in the priestly literature. For Hurvitz, this demonstrates the later provenance of this book of prophecy compared to the Pentateuchal stratum. Regardless of the debate over Ezekiel and the priestly literature, however, Hurvitz's specific argument is hard to accept, given that קצף occurs many times in Ezekiel, whereas כעס is well documented in ancient biblical texts. It is possible that the phenomenon that Hurvitz identifies in rabbinic literature can be found in some texts in Late Biblical Hebrew. Nonetheless, even if this is the case, a synchronic semantic analysis is needed to clarify the differences in meaning between כעס and קצף and other "terms for anger" within Classical Biblical Hebrew.

[6] While a comprehensive analysis of all the Hebrew "terms for anger" lies beyond the scope of this article, one of the reasons scholars maintain that כעס signifies anger is its congruence with other such terms. I shall thus discuss this argument in detail in order to clarify the unique signification it bears without rigorously or precisely defining the meaning of the other terms. For an analysis of the word חרה, considered the most common "term for anger," see my article "'My Wrath Will Burn:' The Terminology of Biblical Emotions," *HeBAI* 13 (2024) 254–80.

and only where the object of the verb is human is it construed as "to grieve."[7] However, this interpretation is ambiguous, both in terms of matching between the causative verb and its outcome and in terms of making semantic distinctions within the same morphemes on the basis of theological rather than linguistic assumptions.

Scholars have attempted to solve the problem of what seems like the semantic duality of כעס in a number of ways. Samantha Joo, who devoted a detailed study to the usage of כעס in Dtr, added another distinction—internal/external—to the human/divine distinction in *HALOT*: "כעס can indicate both internal irritation (usually with humans as subject) and external/active anger (usually with God as subject). The word in of itself does not differentiate between human or divine use; rather the context determines which meaning is more relevant."[8]

To these three distinctions—irritation (or vexation, grief, etc.)/anger, human/ divine, internal/external—Matthew Schlimm added another, hierarchical, distinction. According to Schlimm, the primary meaning of כעס is "being 'troubled,'" and the exact meaning depends on the hierarchical status of the subject: "It conveys anger when someone in a hierarchical position is described with this word, but interestingly it refers to anguish or sadness when describing a subordinate."[9]

Finally, focusing on divine anger, Deena Grant reestablished the theological distinction between human כעס that means "grief" and divine כעס that means "anger" because the latter often appears next to other words that are considered "terms for anger."[10]

What are the reasons for this equivocality? Is there a real ambiguity or duality in the semantics of כעס? I will suggest that there is no need for such complicated distinctions and that the meaning of כעס is quite consistent in most occurrences in Classical Biblical Hebrew. To confirm this, however, we must base the semantic inquiry on morphologic, syntactic, and contextual considerations rather than on theological ones. Only in the next stage shall we apply the results to understanding the theology of כעס.

Let us first consider various occurrences of כעס in human contexts only and then turn the discussion to divine כעס. The root כעס appears several times in the story of Hannah (1 Sam 1:6–18):[11]

> Moreover, her rival used to provoke her severely to כעס, to irritate her, be-
> cause YHWH had closed her womb. So it went on year by year; as often as she
> went up to the house of YHWH, she used to provoke her to כעס. Therefore

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[7] See Ludwig Koehler, Walter Baumgartner, and Johann J. Stamm, "כעס," *HALOT* 2:491.

[8] Samantha Joo, *Provocation and Punishment: The Anger of God in the Book of Jeremiah and Deuteronomistic Theology* (BZAW 361; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2006) 21 n. 10.

[9] Schlimm, *From Fratricide,* 86. This distinction cannot explain, for example, the meaning of כעס in a non-hierarchical situation like Ps 6:7 (Heb 6:8).

[10] Grant, *Divine Anger,* 31–32.

[11] Translations are taken from NRSV with some changes and without the translation of כעס (which is inconsistent in this translation, as well as in NJPS and others).

> Hannah wept and would not eat. . . . She was deeply distressed and prayed to
> Yнwн, and wept bitterly. . . . But Hannah answered, "No, my lord, I am a
> woman deeply troubled; I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but I
> have been pouring out my soul before Yнwн. Do not regard your servant as
> a worthless woman, for I have been speaking out of my great anxiety and כעס
> all this time." . . . So the woman left, and she ate, and was no longer down-
> cast.

Evidently, כעס in the account of Hannah is not an expression of anger but of distress
manifested in weeping, refusing to eat, and being "a woman deeply troubled."[12]
Anger must have an object or an addressee; it is always directed at someone.[13]
Hannah, however, does not express כעס at Peninnah or anyone else. Neither is she
angry with Yнwн; instead, she is pouring out her soul before him, as she made
clear to Eli. Rather, the כעס she experiences is her emotional response to others'
actions and is not levelled at anyone. In fact, כעס usually appears in *hiphil* or *piel*
verbs.[14] This reflects the passive character of כעס in Classical Biblical Hebrew,
which is not consistent with the meaning of anger. One can cause כעס to another;
one cannot feel כעס or act in כעס toward another.

The phrase שיחי וכעסי, "my great anxiety and כעס" (1 Sam 1:16), also expresses
the association of כעס with distress, which is one of the contexts in which שיח occurs,
as attested by other texts: "I pour out my complaint [שיחי] before him; I tell my
trouble before him" (Ps 142:2 [Heb. 3]); "I loathe my life; I will give free utterance
to my complaint [שיחי]; I will speak in the bitterness of my soul" (Job 10:1).[15]
Hannah's כעס is accompanied by weeping and tears, as is also found elsewhere:

> I am weary with my moaning; every night I flood my bed with tears; I drench
> my couch with my weeping. My eyes waste away because of כעס; they grow
> weak because of all my foes. Depart from me, all you workers of evil, for
> Yнwн has heard the sound of my weeping. (Ps 6:6–8 [Heb 7–9])

> Be gracious to me, Yнwн, for I am in distress; my eye wastes away from כעס,
> my soul and body also. For my life is spent with sorrow, and my years with
> sighing; my strength fails because of my misery, and my bones waste away.
> (Ps 31:9–10 [Heb 10–11])

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[12] The fact that both NRSV and NJPS do not use words from the semantic field of anger in this
chapter leads to an intuitive conclusion that anger is not in any way the subject of the narrative. I
will now try to confirm that there is a concrete basis for this conclusion and that this passage is not
a unique but rather a representative case.

[13] See Robert C. Solomon, *True to Our Feelings: What Our Emotions Are Really Telling Us*
(Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007) 19.

[14] The root כעס appears in the Hebrew Bible mainly in transitive verbs, i.e., the subject of the
sentence inflicts כעס on another; there are forty-six instances in *hiphil* and two in *piel*. Only in six
places, all in the late texts, does the root כעס occur in *qal,* i.e., where the subject itself exhibits כעס.
In addition, the nominative כעס (or כעש) occurs twenty-five times in passages from various periods.

[15] See Koehler, Baumgartner, and Stamm, "שיח," *HALOT* 3:1321.

In both passages, the eyes are wasted by כעס,[16] which clearly belongs to the semantic field of tears, weeping, sorrow, and groaning. The nexus of כעס and sorrow recurs also in the following: "כעס is better than laughter, for by sadness of countenance the heart is made glad. The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning; but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth" (Eccl 7:3–4). Here, כעס is contrasted with "laughter" and resembles "sadness of countenance" (רע פנים, literally "badness of face"). This also explains the statement about Hannah after being blessed by Eli: ופניה לא היו לה עוד, literally, "she did not have her face any more" (1 Sam 1:18), i.e., her face was no longer sad.[17] The proximity of the contrast of כעס/laughter to the contrast of mourning/mirth reinforces the possibility that כעס is associated with sorrow and not with what we call anger. In certain instances, כעס parallels מכאוב "pain" (Eccl 1:18; 2:23) and once it appears next to the verb חרה with the preposition ל, which also verges on sadness (Neh 4:1 [Heb 3:33]).[18]

Thus, כעס is associated with sorrow, insult, or vexation inflicted by one person on another. While scholars and translators have remarked on this meaning, they still see it as a secondary meaning, the primary one for them—perhaps the only one in relation to Yʜᴡʜ's כעס—being "anger." Before addressing divine כעס and its relationship to the "terms for anger," let us point out a particular kind of sorrow that arises in certain situations with respect to both divine and human כעס. To substantiate this, we need to demonstrate how כעס relates to קנאה ("jealousy").

■ כעס and קנא

Biblical Hebrew does not distinguish between envy and jealousy; both fall within the semantic field of קנא, although "jealousy" seems to be more common, especially in contexts relating to the deity.[19] For this discussion, קנאה can be defined as reaction by an individual—human or divine—to a situation in which something that this individual desires is in someone else's possession: economic success, family fertility, or, as is sometimes the case, loyalty.

Absolute and exclusive loyalty can be neither multiplied nor divided; for this reason, any threat to such loyalty triggers קנאה in the party demanding it. This kind of קנאה is typical of a husband who suspects his wife of betraying him, as we find in the law of the suspected adulteress (Num 5:11–31) and, similarly, in Yʜᴡʜ's

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[16] See Gruber, *Aspects,* 1:386–400, on עשש and עתק in the sense of drying of the eyes.

[17] "Bad face" may signify sadness also in Neh 2:2–3.

[18] As Gruber has shown, חרה ל—in contrast to חרה אף—does not mean "anger" but rather sorrow or distress. See Gruber, *Aspects,* 1:370–79; and Seri-Levi, "My Wrath Will Burn."

[19] A full discussion of קנא is beyond the scope of the current article, and I hope to elaborate on it elsewhere. For now, see John H. Eliot, "God—Zealous or Jealous but Never Envious: The Theological Consequences of Linguistic and Social Distinctions," *The Social Sciences and Biblical Translations* (ed. Dietmar Neufeld; SBLSS 41; Leiden: Brill, 2008) 79–96. For a philosophical analysis, see Martha C. Nussbaum, *Anger and Forgiveness: Resentment, Generosity, Justice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016) 51–52; Solomon, *True to Our Feelings,* 102–9.

insistence that Israel worship him exclusively, for which he is repeatedly called אל קנא, "a jealous god" (e.g., Exod 20:5; 34:14; Deut 4:24; 5:9; 6:15).[20]

Many biblical passages relating to interpersonal and human-divine interaction indicate a special relationship between the roots כעס and קנא.[21] The most significant examples are found in the Song of Moses. Four times in this poem—or three, according to MT[22]—a verb from the root קנא appears in parallel to a verb or a noun from the root כעס, probably signaling a semantic proximity between them: "They made him jealous [יקנאהו] with strange gods, with abhorrent things they provoked him to כעס [יכעיסהו]. They sacrificed to demons, no-gods, to deities they had never known, to new ones recently arrived, whom your ancestors had not feared" (Deut 32:16–17). The Israelites make Yhwh jealous of another deity—one who, in some sense, is unworthy of the appellation "god"—by worshipping this no-god instead of Yhwh. Therefore, Yhwh promises to exact vengeance, measure for measure, by making them jealous of another nation, one which, in some sense, is unworthy of the appellation "people":

> He said: I will hide my face from them, I will see what their end will be; for they are a perverse generation, children in whom there is no faithfulness. They made me jealous [קנאוני] with what is no god, caused me כעס [כעסוני] with their idols—so I will make them jealous [אקניאם] with what is no people, cause them כעס [אכעיסם] with a foolish nation. (Deut 32:20–21)

Yhwh's jealousy is aroused when faced with other gods; the Israelites' preference for powerless gods as objects of worship intensifies Yhwh's displeasure with their treachery toward him,[23] and causing him this displeasure is signified by the verb כעס in the *hiphil* or *piel*. This explicit parallelism between divine and human כעס forces us to interpret them in the same way. Hence, כעס is a special kind of sorrow or insult, resembling קנאה, "jealousy," in the sense that it surfaces in situations

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[20] See the discussion of Moshe Halbertal and Avishai Margalit, *Idolatry* (trans. Naomi Goldblum; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992) 9–36.

[21] Certainly, the connection between כעס and קנא has been observed by scholars, e.g., N. Lohfink, "כעס kāʿas; כעס kaʿas," *TDOT* 7:284–85. However, no one has developed the connection in a way that would lead to the broad conclusions reached in this article.

[22] MT, as well as the Samarian Pentateuch, do not have קנא in Deut 32:19: וירא יהוה וינאץ מכעס בניו ובנתיו. However, 4Qphyl[n] has ויקנא instead of וינאץ, and a verb from the root קנא is probably reflected in LXX. Since 4Qphyl[n] lacks the second half of the verse, and LXX is quite confusing and seems to reflect both וינאץ and ויקנא, there is ambivalence in reconstructing the original verse. See the text in Roland de Vaux and Józef T. Milik, *Qumrân grotte 4.II* (DJD VI; Oxford: Clarendon, 1977) 73; and the discussions in Paul Sanders, *The Provenance of Deuteronomy 32* (*OtSt* 37; Leiden: Brill, 1996) 186–87; Petra Schmidtkunz, *Das Moselied des Deuteronomiums: Untersuchungen zu Text und Theologie von Dtn 32,1–43* (FAT 2; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2020) 23 n. 23. In any event, the noun כעס in the construct state "the כעס of his sons and daughters" means that they are those who caused the כעס. Cf. כעס אויב "the כעס (caused) by the enemy" in v. 27 and n. 40 below.

[23] Cf. Jer 2:11: "Has any nation changed its gods even though they are no-gods? But my people has exchanged its glory for what can do no good." See also Halbertal and Margalit, *Idolatry,* 25–30.

when another person possesses or threatens to steal something that the subject believes or desires to be his or hers.

The unique nexus between the terms כעס and קנא is found in other biblical texts:

> They provoked him to כעס [ויכעיסוהו] with their high places; they moved him to jealousy [יקניאוהו] with their idols. (Ps 78:58)

> There is the heaviness of stone, the burden of sand, but a fool's כעס outweighs them both. There is the cruelty of חמה, the overflowing of אף, but who can withstand jealousy [קנאה]? (Prov 27:3–4)[24]

> Surely כעש kills the fool, and jealousy [קנאה] slays the simple. (Job 5:2)

While drawing attention to the close links between כעס and קנא, we cannot ignore the numerous passages in which other "terms for anger" appear either in proximity to קנא or in contexts related to jealousy.[25] However, each is much more commonly employed in passages that neither include קנא nor relate to jealousy.[26] In contrast, כעס most frequently appears either in contiguity with קנא or in situations clearly, implicitly, or highly possibly related to jealousy. This suggests that even if the nexus between anger and jealousy is a significant biblical phenomenon expressed via various Hebrew terms, including those of "anger,"[27] only in כעס does the aspect of jealousy appear to form part of the semantic range of the word itself.[28]

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[24] Hurowitz sees these two verses as a unity since they are connected by כעס in v. 3 and חמה and אף in v. 4, assuming that they are all "terms for anger." See Victor Avigdor Hurowitz, *Proverbs: Introduction and Commentary* (ed. Shmuel Ahituv; 2 vols.; Mikra LeYisra'el; Am Oved: Tel Aviv, 2012) 2:521 (Hebrew). However, it emerges that the parallel of כעס is not חמה and אף but rather קנאה, thereby strengthening the unity because both כעס and קנאה appear in the second unit of the parallelism and are presented as "heavier" than the mention in the first one.

[25] See Schlimm, *From Fratricide*, 65–67. These are all the passages in which I have found "terms for anger" (as defined by Grant, *Divine Anger*, 21–39) appearing close to קנא: חמה (14x)—Num 25:11; Isa 59:17–18; Ezek 5:13; 16:38, 42; 23:25; 36:6; 38:18–19; Nah 1:2; Zech 8:2; Ps 79:5–6; Prov 6:34; 27:4; חרה אף (2x)—Deut 6:15; Zeph 3:8 (cf. תתחר/תקנא in Ps 37:1; Prov 24:19); אף (7x)—Deut 29:20 (Heb 19); 32:21–22; Ezek 5:13; 23:25; 35:11; 38:18–19; Prov 27:4; זעם (Zeph 3:8); עברה or עבר *hitpael* (3x)—Ezek 38:19; Zeph 1:18; Ps 78:58–59 (but see below); קצף (1x?)—Zech 1:14–15 (though the two terms do not relate to the same object); נטר (Nah 1:2). זעף is never attested with קנא. On Prov 27:3, see above. For the distinction between אף and חרה אף, see Gruber, *Aspects*, 2:486–90, 510–53.

[26] For cases clearly unassociated with jealousy, see the following examples: חמה—Lev 26:28; 2 Sam 11:20; 2 Kgs 5:12; Isa 27:4; 34:2; 51:17; חרה אף—Gen 44:18; Exod 4:14; 22:24 (Heb 23); 32:19; Num 11:1, 10, 33; 22:22, 27; אף—Isa 9:12, 17, 21 (Heb 11, 16, 20); 30:30; 63:3, 6; Jer 10:24; 23:20; זעם—Num 23:7, 8; Isa 10:5; 30:27; Jer 10:10; עברה/התעבר—Isa 9:19 (Heb 18); 10:6; 13:9; Jer 7:29; 48:30; Ezek 22:21; קצף—Gen 40:2; 41:10; Exod 16:20; Lev 10:6, 16; Num 1:53; 16:22; 17:11; 18:5; 31:14; נטר—Lev 19:18; Ps 103:9.

[27] Other terms also appear in closely proximity to קנא: נקם—(Isa 59:17; Nah 1:2; Prov 6:34), and שנא (Exod 20:5 = Deut 5:9; Ezek 35:11; Eccl 9:6).

[28] James Barr cautions scholars against engaging in "illegitimate totality transfer," i.e., seeking for everything said about a certain term throughout the entire corpus and then reading this integrated, generalized "meaning" into every single occurrence of the term: James Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1961) 218–19. I am not making this argument regarding כעס here, however. On the contrary, in the next section I postulate, for example,

Thus, for example, Rachel's prolonged infertility, in stark contrast to the fertility of Jacob's second wife, prompts her to קנא (Gen 30:1), and the same condition stirs Hannah's כעס, as we have seen (1 Sam 1:6, 7, 16). This is also evident in the passage discussed above: "My eyes waste away because of כעס; they grow weak because of all my foes. Depart from me, all you workers of evil, for Yнwн has heard the sound of my weeping" (Ps 6:7–8 [Heb 8–9]). The evildoers' success evokes the narrator's כעס, which he manifests in weeping and in wishing his enemies to be "disappointed and struck with terror" (Ps. 6:10 [Heb 11]).[29] In another psalm, it is stated that the evildoer will experience כעס when he observes the success of the righteous: "The wicked man shall see it and he shall כעס; he shall gnash his teeth; his courage will fail" (Ps 112:10, NJPS). And Nehemiah describes Sanballat's כעס in view of the Jews' construction of the wall (Neh 4:1 [Heb 3:33]).

The connection between כעס and jealousy is reflected in most of its occurrences in the Hebrew Bible, including virtually all occurrences in the Pentateuch and the Prophets,[30] most occurrences in the Psalms,[31] and some occurrences—although not all of them—in Job,[32] Proverbs,[33] Ezra-Nehemiah,[34] and Chronicles.[35] Only in Qoheleth does כעס seem to have no connection with jealousy.[36]

In Classical Biblical Hebrew, then, a special relationship can be found between כעס and קנא "jealous." This conclusion is consistent with the observation that כעס is often associated with sorrow or insult and not with anger. It is on the basis of

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that various biblical authors disagree about the precise cultic wrongdoing that induces Yнwн to כעס—in other words, the "meaning" of כעס. Rather than reconstructing the meaning—or better, denotation—of כעס by combining the information extrapolated from all the occurrences and then attributing it to each incidence, I seek out the lowest common denominator. In cases where information still needs to be "imported" due to limited data, I seek to demonstrate that this creates a good, even better, interpretation of the ambiguous occurrences. From another point of view, a relatively consistent denotation of כעס in Classical Biblical Hebrew and through most of biblical literature is a more parsimonious hypothesis than arbitrarily dividing the term into two separated senses as so commonly done in contemporary studies (see the section "Does כעס Mean 'Anger'"? above). The fact that in some cases כעס is very clearly and explicitly connected to sadness, insult, and jealousy thus makes similar exegesis of the less clear cases preferable—unless, of course, good reason exists to favor an alternative interpretation.

[29] See Yael Avrahami, "בוש in the Psalms—Shame or Disappointment?," *JSOT* 34 (2010) 295–313.

[30] Most of them refer to the כעס of Yнwн, which I discuss in the next section.

[31] Including Pss 6:7 (Heb 8); 31:9 (Heb 10); 78:58; 106:29; 112:10. In Ps 10:14; 85:4 (Heb 5), the context does not indicate jealousy.

[32] Job 5:2 explicitly parallels כעש and קנא. Job 17:7, much like Ps 6:7–8, discussed above, can plausibly be interpreted in the context of jealousy. Job 6:2 and 10:17 are not necessarily connected to jealousy.

[33] See the discussion of Prov 27:3–4 above. In contrast, see 12:16; 17:25; 21:19.

[34] Neh 4:1 (Heb 3:33) but not 4:5 (Heb 3:37).

[35] 2 Chr 28:25; 33:6; 34:25. Very exceptional is 2 Chr 16:10, which has כעס *qal* with the preposition אל "toward."

[36] See Eccl 1:18; 2:23; 5:16; 7:3, 9; 11:10.

these findings that we now reexamine the meaning of הכעיס את יהוה—to provoke YHWH to כעס.[37]

■ Causing כעס to YHWH—Making Him Jealous

The verb כעס *hiphil* with YHWH as the direct object is characteristic of Deuteronomy and Dtr.[38] Apart from the Song of Moses, discussed above,[39] it appears three times in Deuteronomy, eighteen times in the Former Prophets, nearly all of them in the Deuteronomistic redaction, eleven times in Jeremiah—mainly in the prose sermons—and ten times in the rest of the Hebrew Bible.

The connection between כעס and קנא "jealousy" explains why YHWH's כעס is virtually always in reaction to idol worship.[40] Deuteronomy 4:23–25, for example,

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[37] The proximity of כעס and קנא in Deut 32 has been recently discussed by Schmidtkunz, *Das Moselied des Deuteronomiums*, 171–87. Dating the poem to the Persian period, Schmidtkunz argues that its author used כעס in a novel way, creating a new understanding of the sin of idolatry. According to Schmidtkunz, the Deuteronomists used the verb כעס *hiphil*, in the context of worshiping other gods, mainly in the meaning of breaking a religious prohibition, while the Wisdom literature uses כעס not in the verbal but in the noun form to refer to a foolish, unfaithful, disappointing behavior which, for example, causes grief to the fool's father (Prov 17:25). By combining the verb and the noun in a few instances (1 Kgs 15:30; 21:22; 2 Kgs 23:26), Schmidtkunz argues, Dtr implicitly integrates these two meanings, thus strengthening the insulting character of idolatry. It is the author of Deut 32 who made it explicit by using the verb and the noun not only as a verb and its internal object but also in separate verses, in addition to his explicit and elaborated presentation of the Israelites as unfaithful "sons," disappointing and insulting their father (Deut 32:5–6, 19–20) as in the Wisdom literature. Finally, Schmidtkunz goes on to explain that by paralleling כעס and קנא and attributing them to both YHWH and Israel, Deut 32 merges two formerly distinct themes: Israel's insulting YHWH by their unfaithfulness, on the one hand, and the "zeal" of YHWH and his depiction as jealous God, manifested as devouring fire, on the other hand.

My analysis differs fundamentally, regardless of dating questions. First, I do not see any essential difference between the verb כעס *hiphil* and the noun כעס, which appears in some passages in Dtr as nothing more than an internal object and is not stronger than the verb when it appears alone. However, there is no need to use the noun to express the meaning of "sorrow, grief, insult," since this is the very semantic value of the verb כעס *hiphil* in Classical Biblical Hebrew. Thus, the moral, emotional, interpersonal meaning of כעס is not implicit but totally explicit, not only in Deut 32 but also in Dtr, which probably intentionally used כעס in the context of idolatry for this purpose (this is not to deny the specific literary and theological uniqueness of the depiction of idolatry and YHWH's reaction in Deut 32). As for the parallelism of כעס and קנא, I see it as evidence—accumulated with the other evidence I have just presented—for the semantic proximity of these words rather than a novel theological concept in Deut 32.

[38] As noted, for example, by Moshe Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomic School* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1972) 155.

[39] As Baruch Schwartz has demonstrated, the Song of Moses does not form part of the Deuteronomic literature. See Baruch J. Schwartz, "The Song and the Torah in Deuteronomy 31 and the Four Accounts of the Last Days of Moses," *Beit Miqra* 67 (2022) 130–71 (Hebrew).

[40] The three exceptions do not contravene the principle. Ps 85:5 (Heb 6) and Job 10:17 do not specify the sin that causes YHWH's כעס, although at least in the case of Job it is clearly not idolatry. They do deviate from the common Classical Biblical Hebrew usage of כעס (כעס *hiphil* + YHWH as direct object or noun כעס without suffix pronoun in reference to human deeds that prompt YHWH to כעס). Here, the noun כעס carries a pronominal suffix (כעסך "your כעס") and the preposition עמי/עמנו "with me/us." This reflects Transitional or Late Biblical Hebrew, in which כעס gradually shifts from

links Y<small>HWH</small>'s being a "jealous god" to the injunction against constructing an idol, which may provoke his כעס (v. 25). In light of the affinity between the terms, it becomes clear that the verb להכעיסו does not mean "to cause him anger" but instead to cause Y<small>HWH</small> a form of sorrow or insult that verges on what we would call jealousy. For this reason, unlike other so-called terms for anger, כעס is usually triggered by actions of the people of Israel and almost never by those of other peoples.[41]

This distinction is important due to the prominence of כעס in the Dtr, which has led scholars to conclusions such as: "In Deuteronomy and in the Historical Books, Israel's past is interpreted through the lens of divine anger."[42] This conclusion is problematic because it defines the subject of "divine anger" too broadly, missing the unique meaning of כעס and therefore failing to recognize the specific theological concern of these authors and the way they perceived the divine persona.

Indeed, a study of the occurrences of כעס in Deuteronomy and Dtr reveals a rigorous and systematic distinction between כעס and other expressions that are considered by most scholars to be terms for anger. Deuteronomy 9:1–10:11, for example, sets forth the sins of Israel in the desert and emphasizes Y<small>HWH</small>'s displeasure with their actions.[43] Before listing their many sins in detail, Moses describes Israel's conduct in the desert in a general way by means of two verbs of which the Israelites are the subject and Y<small>HWH</small> is the object, קצף *hiphil* and מרה *hiphil*: "Remember and do not forget how you provoked Y<small>HWH</small> your god to wrath [הקצפת] in the wilderness; you have been rebellious [ממרים] against Y<small>HWH</small> from the day you came out of the land of Egypt until you came to this place" (Deut 9:7). The text goes on to supply the specifics of their actions, followed by an account of the sin of the golden calf (vv. 8–21), the misdeeds at Taberah, Massah, and Kibroth-hattaavah (v. 22) and the sin of the spies (vv. 23, 25–29). In relating the latter, a general statement is

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the passive to the active. Losing its unique semantic value among the "terms for anger," it eventually becomes the principal term for anger in Rabbinic through to Modern Hebrew (see n. 5 above). Focusing on Classical Biblical Hebrew, in which the common form is *hiphil* "to provoke Y<small>HWH</small> to כעס," reveals that almost without exception it occurs in the context of idolatry.

The final abnormality, which does belong to Classical Biblical Hebrew, is Deut 32:27, wherein Y<small>HWH</small> is afraid of כעס אויב—i.e., the כעס to which the enemy would provoke Y<small>HWH</small> by attributing his acts of punishment to his own military power. Although this usage is unique in contextual terms, it is perfectly consistent with its standard semantic value—i.e., sorrow and jealousy. The sense of "anger" is so inappropriate herein that various scholars suggest that it is a scribal error and propose emendations; see Jeffrey H. Tigay, *Deuteronomy* (JPS Torah Commentary; Philadelphia: JPS, 1996) 310. On the semantic reading of כעס presented above, this passage poses no problems.

[41] The only exception is Deut 32:27 (see the previous note). For other "terms for anger" referring to other nations, see *inter alia* Jer 49:37 (חרה אף); Zech 1:15 (קצף); Isa 34:2 (חמה).

[42] Grant, *Divine Anger,* 152. Joo, *Provocation and Punishment,* focuses on כעס in Dtr but also sees it primarily as signifying "anger," as reflected in her book's subtitle (*The Anger of God in the Book of Jeremiah and Deuteronomistic Theology*).

[43] This passage has been thoroughly studied, mainly in terms of its composition and relationship with other Pentateuchal material (which is not at the core of the current study). For a recent review and discussion, see Robert A. DiVito, "The Calf Episodes in Exodus and Deuteronomy: A Study in Inner-Biblical Interpretation," *Golden Calf Traditions in Early Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (ed. Eric F. Mason and Edmondo F. Lupieri; TBN 23; Leiden: Brill, 2019) 1–25, esp. 6–9.

again made: "You have been rebellious [ממרים] against YHWH as long as I have known you" (v. 24).

Many "terms for anger" appear in this passage: קצף (vv. 7, 8, 19, 22), אף/התאנף (vv. 8, 19, 20), and חמה (v. 19). However, among all the misdeeds listed in the passage—the spies, Taberah, Massah, and Kibroth-hattaavah—only about the calf is it said that Israel caused כעס to YHWH (v. 18).[44] The reason for this can now be clearly understood. The sin of the calf transcended mere disobedience or disbelief; it involved constructing an idol—an act that is considered doing what is evil in the sight of YHWH and causing him כעס (Deut 4:25). Consequently, it appears adjacent to the description of YHWH as a "jealous god" [אל קנא] (Deut 4:24).[45] Thus, it appears that the expression "to cause YHWH כעס" is not a general category that signifies inciting divine displeasure by any means. Rather, it has a specific meaning of provoking YHWH's sorrow and jealousy by means of idol worship in the two senses of this term found in Deuteronomy and Dtr: worship of other gods or worship of YHWH in an illegitimate way.

This distinction can be illustrated with some examples from Dtr. Nathan's reproachful sermon to David (2 Sam 12:7–12) strongly resembles Abijah's reprimand of Jeroboam (1 Kgs 14:7–11) in structure and style.[46] In both passages, the prophet describes YHWH's selecting the king and assisting him against his enemies (2 Sam 12:7–8; 1 Kgs 14:7–8) and contrasts this with the ingratitude of the king, who did "evil" (2 Sam 12:9; 1 Kgs 14:9), warning of the "evil" that YHWH will bring upon him in retribution (2 Sam 12:11; 1 Kgs 14:10). Given this similarity, it is significant that the verb כעס *hiphil* appears only in the sermon to Jeroboam (1 Kgs 14:9). This is not because Jeroboam's actions are worse than those of David, who "despised" (בזה *qal*) the word of YHWH and even YHWH himself (2 Sam 12:9, 10), but because David is not accused of idol worship, which is the only behavior that evokes כעס in YHWH.

The next example of the semantic singularity of כעס relative to the other so-called terms for anger also involves two similar Deuteronomistic passages, however from a different perspective: here, the phrase "made YHWH jealous (קנא *piel*)" serves as a clear equivalent to the widely used expression "caused YHWH כעס":[47]

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[44] Both the immediate narrative context (cf. Exod 32:9–14) and the singular form חטאתכם "your sin" (cf. Exod 32:30–31; Deut 9:21) suggest that Deut 9:18 refers to the sin of the calf rather than to the other transgressions described later in this chapter.

[45] The fact that Moses is concerned by the "אף and the חמה that YHWH had קצף upon you" (Deut 9:19) closely associates the כעס in v. 18 with various "terms for anger." It also evinces their disparity, however, with כעס relating to YHWH's emotions in the fact of idolatry and the other terms to his potentially dangerous reaction. On this, see the next section.

[46] At least part of 2 Sam 12:7–12 is Deuteronomistic; see Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy,* 130 n. 4. 1 Kings 14:7–11 seems entirely Deuteronomistic; see Mordechai Cogan, *1 Kings* (AB 10; New York: Doubleday, 2001) 382–83.

[47] Cf. Cogan, *1 Kings*, 386, who notices this equivalence and concludes the opposite—that קנא *piel* implies "anger."

> Judah did what was evil in the sight of Yʜᴡʜ; they provoked him to jealousy [ויקנאו אתו] with their sins that they committed, more than all that their ances-tors had done. For they also built for themselves high places, pillars, and sacred poles on every high hill and under every green tree. (1 Kgs 14:22–23)

> They set up for themselves pillars and sacred poles on every high hill and under every green tree; there they made offerings on all the high places, as the nations did whom Yʜᴡʜ carried away before them. They did wicked things, causing כעס to Yʜᴡʜ [להכעיס את יהוה]. (2 Kgs 17:10–11)

We have seen that, in the Song of Moses, the verb קנא *piel* may express the meaning of the same root in *hiphil:* "They made me jealous [קנא *piel*] with what is no god. . . . So I will make them jealous [קנא *hiphil*] with what is no people" (Deut 32:21).[48] Similarly, in 1 Kgs 14:22–23 above, the verb קנא *piel* means to make Yʜᴡʜ jealous. The statement "Judah did what was evil [הרע] in the sight of Yʜᴡʜ; they provoked him to jealousy [קנא *piel*]" resembles in wording and content the passage from 2 Kings 17: "They did wicked things [דברים רעים], causing כעס to Yʜᴡʜ." Given their semantic proximity, the Deuteronomistic writer of 1 Kgs 14:22–23 was free to use a verb from the root קנא instead of the common phrase הכעיס את יהוה.

■ כעס and the "Terms for Anger"

Having established the meaning of כעס and its resemblance to קנא, we can now discuss the relationship between כעס and other so-called terms for anger, such as אף חרה and חמה, which scholars usually, albeit unjustifiably, consider nearly identical to כעס. As we have seen, most "terms for anger" attributed to Yʜᴡʜ, such as חרה אף, may occur in diverse contexts, while divine כעס belongs mainly—and in Dtr, exclusively—to the context of idol worship. However, it is specifically when כעס and other terms appear in close proximity that the syntactic and semantic distinction between them becomes conspicuous. It is important to differentiate between the expressions because, as outlined above, the occasional appearance of כעס in proximity to other "terms for anger" has led scholars to the unwarranted conclusion that כעס is one of these terms.

The כעס of Yʜᴡʜ is not a different emotion than the כעס of Hannah (1 Sam 1:6–16) or the כעס the Israelites would feel in the Song of Moses (Deut 23:21b). However, their reactions to כעס may be different since people can react in various ways to being insulted by or jealous of another person. Yʜᴡʜ often responds to כעס in a powerful, even violent way, with reactions that are often depicted with words like חרה אף or חמה, which are considered "terms for anger." It does not mean that כעס is anger, only that a possible reaction to it is a powerful act, signified in words that scholars call "terms for anger."

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[48] Elsewhere, קנא *piel* also can mean "be jealous of or for," depending on the context and the preposition.

Consider, for example, a passage describing the cyclical nature of the era of the Judges:

> Then the Israelites did what was evil in the sight of Yʜᴡʜ and worshiped the Baals; and they abandoned Yʜᴡʜ [. . .] they followed other gods . . . and bowed down to them; they caused כעס to Yʜᴡʜ. They abandoned Yʜᴡʜ, and worshiped Baal and the Astartes. Then חרה אף Yʜᴡʜ against Israel: He gave them over to plunderers who plundered them . . . so that they could no longer withstand their enemies. (Judg 2:11–14)

Abandoning Yʜᴡʜ and worshipping Baal and the Astartes (vv. 11, 13) is tantamount to doing what is evil in the sight of Yʜᴡʜ (v. 11) and causing him כעס (v. 12). As a result of these deeds, Yʜᴡʜ is חרה אף against the Israelites. This is either expressed by means of or leads to delivering them over to their enemies, against whom they cannot defend themselves (v. 14).

The distinction between כעס and חרה אף in this passage reflects more than stylistic diversity. The two terms are not interchangeable. Giving the Israelites into their enemies' hands embodies Yʜᴡʜ's חרה אף at Israel. This constitutes his response to the people's idol worship, the conduct that provokes him to כעס. Whether we accept the prevalent understanding of חרה אף as denoting anger or read it as referring to an action, the two terms clearly play separate syntactical and functional roles. Rather than being synonymous with כעס, חרה אף results from it.

The term כעס thus denotes a sense of sorrow, being insulted, and jealousy specifically and almost exclusively associated with Israelite idolatry. In response to this emotion, Yʜᴡʜ reacts in חרה אף—i.e. with an aggressive response that he also exhibits, under different circumstances, in various other situations: deeds performed by the Israelites, other nations, and individuals.

This relationship between כעס and חרה אף is also clearly evident in another Deuteronomistic passage:

> Still Yʜᴡʜ did not turn away from his awesome חרון אף that he had חרה אף against Judah *because* of all the כעס deeds by which Manasseh caused him כעס, and Yʜᴡʜ had said,[49] "I will remove Judah also out of my sight, as I have removed Israel; and I will reject this city that I have chosen, Jerusalem, and the house of which I said, 'My name shall be there.'" (2 Kgs 23:26–27)

This historical-theological comment before the end of the account of Josiah—either original or redactional—means that, despite Josiah's good deeds (2 Kgs 23:25), Yʜᴡʜ did not relent from his intent to destroy Judah because of Manasseh's profound idolatry. As in the foregoing quotation (Judg 2:11–14), here, חרה אף

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[49] The action described in this statement did not happen at this point in the narrative, before Josiah's death, but rather in the days of Manasseh, as related in 2 Kgs 21:10–15. Then, in Manasseh's days, Yʜᴡʜ חרה אף toward Judah, deciding to destroy them as he had done to Israel; and he never revoked this intention—neither in Josiah's days nor at any other time—because of the כעס that Manasseh caused to him.

represents Yʜᴡʜ's response to feeling כעס, with the two terms separated by the preposition על, "for" or "because of."

Here, too, the statement that Yʜᴡʜ חרה אף at Judah is clearly distinguished from כעס and presented as its consequence rather than simply being a repetition of the same statement in different words. It also serves as the reason why Yʜᴡʜ may turn away (שוב) from his intention or the emotion of חרה אף—as he does in so many other instances.[50] If this were not the case, this passage would have no need to emphasize and explain why he refused to do so on this specific occasion. Only the actual, harmful results of the כעס can be annulled, however, not the כעס itself.[51]

While כעס is not interchangeable with other "terms for anger," the other terms are more labile. כעס may thus be juxtaposed with another so-called term for anger— חמה (literally "poison" or "venom," usually translated "wrath").[52] Here, חמה functions similarly to חרה אף, leaving כעס unparalleled:

> Thus says Yʜᴡʜ, I will indeed bring disaster on this place and on its inhabitants . . . Because they have abandoned me and have made offerings to other gods, so that they have provoked me to כעס with all the work of their hands, therefore my חמה will be kindled against this place, and it will not be quenched. (2 Kgs 22:16–17)

These words of the prophetess Hulda establish a clear causal relationship between provoking Yʜᴡʜ to כעס and his response, which here, is the kindling of חמה. Because of the people committing idolatry and thus causing כעס to Yʜᴡʜ, his חמה will be kindled to the point of unquenchability. Here, חמה functions similarly to חרה אף in 2 Kgs 23:26–27, and the phrase "My חמה will be kindled against this place" refers to the divine reaction, just as the phrase "I will indeed bring disaster on this place" does. כעס, in contrast, characterizes the Israelites' deeds—insulting Yʜᴡʜ and provoking him to jealousy through idolatry, which may elicit a harsh reaction from Yʜᴡʜ—but it does not refer directly to the divine reaction that results from these deeds, as חרה אף and חמה do. While the above comparison of 1 Kgs 14:22–23 with 2 Kgs 17:10–11 demonstrates that—at least in certain contexts—כעס is interchangeable with קנא, "jealousy," due to the semantic affinity between the two terms, it turns out that כעס is not interchangeable with so-called terms for anger, as it does not relate to anger in any sense.

Even when condemning the same person in the same speech for diverse misdemeanors, Dtr strikingly only employs כעס with respect to idolatry:

> Moreover the word of Yʜᴡʜ came by the prophet Jehu son of Hanani against Baasha and his house, both because of all the evil that he did in the sight of Yʜᴡʜ, causing him כעס with the work of his hands, in being like the house of Jeroboam, *and also* because he destroyed it. (1 Kgs 16:7)

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[50] Cf. Exod 32:9–14; Num 25:4, 11; Deut 13:17 (Heb 18).

[51] The exceptions to the rule are, again, Late Biblical Hebrew: see especially Ps 85:4 (Heb 5) but cf. also Job 10:17; Ezek 16:42; Eccl 7:9; 11:10.

[52] For the meaning of חמה, see Gruber, *Aspects*, 2:53–315.

> Ahab said to Elijah, "Have you found me, O my enemy?" He answered, "I have found you. Because you have sold yourself to do what is evil in the sight of YHWH, I will bring disaster on you; I will consume you, and will cut off from Ahab every male, bond or free, in Israel; *and* I will make your house like the house of Jeroboam son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha son of Ahijah, because you caused me כעס, moving Israel to sin. (1 Kgs 21:20–22)

> ". . . because they have done what is evil in my sight and have caused me כעס, since the day their ancestors came out of Egypt, even to this day." *Moreover*, Manasseh shed very much innocent blood, until he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another, besides the sin that he caused Judah to sin so that they did what was evil in the sight YHWH. (2 Kgs 21:15–16)

While a character is judged for his deeds—both moral and idolatrous—herein, all three passages use כעס exclusively in the specific phrase dealing with idolatry. Although the latter is not necessarily the most severe transgression they commit or the one that makes YHWH most angry, it is the only one that provokes in him the sorrow and jealousy signified in Classical Biblical Hebrew by כעס.

The extensive usage of כעס in depicting YHWH's emotional reaction to idol worship is thus neither a stylistic Deuteronomistic choice nor due to the special Deuteronomistic concern with idolatry. It is rather a function of the semantics of כעס, which differ from that of the other "terms for anger" in Classical Biblical Hebrew. Dtr and other CBH texts thus adduce divine כעס in the context of jealousy, specifically idolatry, with other terms being applicable to idolatry and other sins.[53] As we have seen, this semantic aspect of כעס is also widely attested in inter-personal situations.

This conclusion regarding the unique semantic value כעס bears carries far-reaching implications for understanding the Deuteronomistic theology. The conventional statement in scholarship, that in the Deuteronomistic history the destruction of Israel and Judah was caused by divine anger, is inaccurate. The main precipitant of that event was causing YHWH כעס, i.e., worshipping other gods, which evokes in YHWH a sense of affront or outrage involving jealousy. Following this כעס comes YHWH's aggressive and destructive acts—often signified by so-called terms for anger, such as חרה אף and חמה—the worst among which was destroying Judah and the Temple in Jerusalem.

■ What Precisely Provokes YHWH to כעס?

Our realization that divine כעס is associated with jealousy and, accordingly, is mentioned only in contexts of idol worship elicits another question: What, exactly, is it that provokes YHWH's כעס? The threshold for jealousy between spouses, for example, may vary among couples and diverse cultural contexts. In most societies,

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[53] For "terms for anger" attributed to YHWH and appearing in contexts unrelated to idolatry in Joshua–Kings, see Josh 7:1, 26; Judg 6:39; 1 Sam 28:18; 2 Sam 6:7; 24:1 (חרה אף); Josh 9:20; 22:18, 20 (קצף).

sexual relations with another partner would be considered a breach of marital exclusivity. However, it is possible to imagine a different kind of relationship between one of the spouses and another—physical contact, shared leisure activity, or intimate conversation—that would be considered a jealousy-inducing breach of trust in one society or person but something of no consequence in another.

In light of this analogy, we can see how the Deuteronomic/Deuteronomistic writers, by their usage of כעס, broaden the scope of Yʜᴡʜ's jealousy.[54] First, worshipping other gods is undoubtedly the prime trigger of jealousy in Yʜᴡʜ, a jealous god who demands exclusivity in Israel's ritual conduct. Indeed, various biblical writings, including some believed to be of early provenance, relate to worship of other gods as moving Yʜᴡʜ to כעס (Deut 32:15–17; Hos 12:15–13:1).

In the Deuteronomic/Deuteronomistic material, however, the incidence of כעס is expanded beyond outright idol worship. According to Deut 4:23–25, making "an idol in the form of anything that Yʜᴡʜ your God has forbidden you" (v. 23), even one that is meant to represent Yʜᴡʜ, provokes his כעס (v. 25) because he is "a devouring fire, a jealous [קנא] God" (v. 24). As we saw above, the golden calf— probably intended not for worship of another deity but to represent Yʜᴡʜ—is depicted in the Deuteronomic narrative as causing כעס (Deut 9:18). In accordance with this perception, the Deuteronomistic authors use the words of the prophet Abijah to blame Jeroboam: "You have gone and made for yourself other gods, and cast images, causing me כעס" (1 Kgs 14:9; see also 1 Kgs 15:29–30). Worshipping idols and worshipping Yʜᴡʜ by means of "cast images" both lead to כעס.[55] Additionally, the Deuteronomistic writers further expand the limits of כעס even beyond idol worship and worshipping a sculpted image that illegitimately represents Yʜᴡʜ by including worship of Yʜᴡʜ at the במות, "high places," i.e., any cult place other than the chosen place (2 Kgs 23:19). The assertion that even cultic activity in "high places" moves Yʜᴡʜ to כעס recurs in Ezek 20:28[56] and in Ps 78:58.[57]

Thus, we see that the theological circles of כעס and, with them, the acts that may be construed as idol-worship expand steadily. The most obviously and blatantly

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[54] Joo, *Provocation and Punishment,* presents a much more detailed account of the evolution of כעס in Deuteronomistic theology. While she is interested in questions of reward, theodicy, and Yʜᴡʜ's acts in history, my focus is on the ways biblical authors depict Yʜᴡʜ's persona, emotionality, and relationships. The current brief discussion is not meant to exhaust the topic but only to demonstrate the potential of semantic inquiry into the "terms for angers" for understanding theological concepts such as "divine anger."

[55] Other kings are accused of having "walked in all the way of Jeroboam son of Nebat . . . causing כעס to Yʜᴡʜ, the God of Israel, by their idols" (1 Kgs 16:26; see also vv. 2, 7; 21:22; 22:52–53 [Heb 53–54]).

[56] Although struggling for centralization of cult, this prophecy uses priestly rather than Deuteronomistic style. See Moshe Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21–37* (AB 22A; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1997) 385–86.

[57] Dating this psalm is very controversial; see, e.g., Mark Leuchter, "The Reference to Shiloh in Psalm 78," *HUCA* 77 (2006) 1–31. In any event, Ps 78:58 resembles both Dtr in condemning the "high places" and Deut 32 in paralleling כעס *hiphil /* קנא *hiphil.* On the Psalm's relationship with Dtr and the Song of Moses, see the careful conclusions of Jeffery M. Leonard, *Historical Traditions in Psalm 78* (PhD diss., Brandeis University, 2006) 275–321.

illegitimate rite is worship of other gods, which is considered as causing כעס to Yʜᴡʜ already in early writings not influenced by the Deuteronomic material, such as the Song of Moses and Hosea's prophecy. In Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic writings, the circle is expanded: making sculpted images—even for representing Yʜᴡʜ—is also a reason for כעס, and even worship of Yʜᴡʜ that does not necessarily include sculpted images evokes כעס in Yʜᴡʜ if performed outside the central ritual location. According to these theological perceptions, even one who worships Yʜᴡʜ through the medium of a sculpted image, or—in the most extended perception—not at the chosen place, causes כעס to Yʜᴡʜ, just as would one who practices outright idol worship.[58]

■ Conclusion

The Classical Biblical Hebrew common combination of the verb כעס *hiphil* with Yʜᴡʜ as a direct object does not denote any conduct enraging or irritating the deity and is not a general expression of strong negative emotions. It is neither interchangeable nor synonymous with the so-called terms for anger in the Hebrew Bible. Rather, כעס—in both human and divine contexts—has a distinct meaning of causing sorrow or affront involving jealousy and, in the case of Yʜᴡʜ's כעס, sorrow brought on by his fear of losing Israel's exclusive loyalty to him. Indeed, study of the various manifestations of divine כעס shows that virtually all occur in the context of idol worship.

Recognizing the singular semantic force of כעס has far-reaching implications for biblical theological research. It liberates scholarship from the overly broad concept of "divine anger," a theological interpretive category that is often imposed on biblical texts and that integrates a broad range of widely divergent phenomena. Thus liberated, scholarship may begin to map these different phenomena and analyze each on its own merits. It appears that the biblical authors' choice of whether and when to use different "terms for anger" is neither arbitrary nor purely a matter of style but rather intentional and can reflect different theological perceptions.

As this article has shown, the terminology of divine emotions and actions has an internal logic that can be traced both synchronically—distinguishing among different expressions used together—and diachronically, differentiating among ways in which different biblical works use one term or another to describe the divine personality in interaction with human beings. Finally, the correct understanding of divine כעס depends on, and contributes to, a deeper analysis of human experience and interpersonal relationships depicted in the Hebrew Bible.

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[58] Two clarifications are needed here. First, broadening the scope of כעס in some texts in the Hebrew Bible—mostly belonging to a specific tradition or stream—does not mean that any biblical text contemporaneous with those discussed here must share this theological concept. Second, even if one rejects the analysis as a historical reconstruction—for example, because of different dating of the texts—it can still be useful as a phenomenological distinction, showing the theological complexity and richness expressed by כעס, which we can see only if distinguishing it from other "terms for anger."