

The regular meaning of the word קצף in the Hebrew Bible is "wrath, anger."¹ From the Middle Ages² until the present day,³ scholars have been divided on the meaning of קצף in Hosea 10:7: נדמה שומרון מלכה כקצף על פני מים "Samaria and its king shall perish⁴ like קצף on the surface of the water." The two renderings of קצף in this verse which have found the greatest number of adherents have been

¹ קצף occurs more than 25 times and always means "wrath, anger" in all passages other than Hos. 10:7. It serves as a synonym to חמה in Deut. 29:27; Isa. 34:2; Jer. 21:5; 32:37; Ps. 38:2, and as a synonym to יא in Deut. 29:27; Jer. 21:5; 32:39.

² Rashi understood קצף as "foam," Ibn Ezra took it as "splinter of wood," and Kimchi sided with the latter interpretation but cited the former as another possibility. Those who understood קצף as "splinter of wood" cited Joel 1:7 as supporting their interpretation.

³ BDB, p. 893; Koehler-Baumgartner, Lexicon, p. 848; and W. H. Harper, Amos and Hosea, ICC (London, 1905), p. 347, all translate "splinter of wood" or the like. A. Ehrlich, Miqra Ki-Pheshuto (Rep: N.Y., 1969), vol. 3, p. 382 (Hebrew); S. Mandelkern, Veteris Testamenti Concordantiae (Rep: Jerusalem, 1965), p. 1037b (Hebrew); and A. S. Yehuda, JQR 13 (1903), p. 706, all render "foam."

⁴ נדמה is a third person masculine perfect niphal of דמה "to annihilate"; cf. Isa. 15:1; Hos. 10:15 and Zeph. 1:11. That this is the only sense permitted here is shown by the parallelism in verses seven and eight (i.e., // נשמדו). The waw is supplied by BH³ and may or may not be required. An alternative explanation would be to put the etnachta under the word, but this division seems a bit unnatural.

"foam" and "splinter or chip of wood."⁵ It is the aim of this paper to demonstrate that the former is the only acceptable rendering.⁶ We will accomplish this task in two ways: (A) by showing that the semantic range of words for "anger, wrath" in Semitic languages may also include "foam"; (B) by utilizing Moshe Held's observation that the imagery of someone or something perishing like foam (disappears) on water, occurs in an Akkadian text which dates from approximately the ninth century B.C.E.⁷

(A) It is a major contention of this paper that the semantic range of words in Semitic languages meaning "anger, wrath" may also include the meaning "foam." The evidence will be presented below and will deal with words in three different Semitic languages: חמה in Hebrew, imtu in Akkadian, and the root רחח in Aramaic.

The substantive חמה occurs in the Hebrew Bible more than one hundred times, and is a regular word for "wrath, anger." The most common synonyms of חמה are אף⁸ and קצף,⁹ a fact confirmed by their interchangeability in two otherwise identical verses: יהוה אל באפך/בקצפך חוכיחני ואל בחמתך תיסרני (Psalms 6:2 & 38:2) "O Lord, Do not rebuke me in your wrath nor admonish me in your anger." However, aside from this regular meaning of "wrath, anger," חמה also denotes "poison, venom" in no less than four cases where it is unrelated to the meaning "anger, wrath." עם חמת זחלי עפר... (Deut. 32:24)¹⁰ "... with the venom of

⁵ See notes two and three above. The ancient versions in translating our verse also render either "foam" or "splinter or chip of wood." The LXX and Theodotian both translate phruganon "splinter of wood," while Targum Johnathan renders רוחחא. Aquila, the Vulgate and Symmachus translate קצף as "foam."

⁶ Note the respective arguments of A. S. Yehuda, loc. cit., and Koehler-Baumgartner, loc. cit. The former claims that the text calls for something directly related to the water of the sea. As far as he is concerned, "foam" fits the context quite admirably. However, how can the Hebrew word mean "foam"? To this he replies that the Arabic root qasafa means "to break, shatter or smash," and "foam" is simply the result of the breaking of the waves of the sea! The latter, on the other hand, maintains that קצף denotes a "bough snapped off," and offers none other than the same Arabic root as his evidence.

⁷ Oral communication.

⁸ For אף // חמה see Gen. 27:44-45; Deut. 29:22, 27; Isa. 63:3,6; Jer. 21:5; Ezek. 7:8; 13:13; Ps. 37:8; 90:7.

⁹ For קצף // חמה, see note one.

¹⁰ זחלי עפר is no different from נחש, as can be seen from the parallel expression in Micah 7:17 ... ילחכו עפר כנחש כזחלי ארץ

snakes"; חמה תנינים יינם וראש פתנים אכזר (Deut. 32:33) "the venom of serpents is their wine, and the poison of vipers..."; חמה כמו נחש (Psalm 58:5) "their poison is like the venom of a snake"; חמה עכשו¹¹ כמו נחש (Psalm 140:4) "their fangs are as sharp as those of a serpent, with snake venom under their lips."

One should not conclude from the usage in these occurrences, however, that there is a חמה I "wrath, anger," and a חמה II "poison, venom." In many cases חמה is employed specifically to evoke a double-entendre based on its two-fold meaning: namely that God's wrath is itself poison to all those who suffer its consequences. For example, note אשר שתיה מיר יהוה או כוס חמתו או קבעת¹³ כוס התועלה שתיה מציה (Isa. 51:17) "the one who has been forced to drink the cup of God's poison/wrath, who has drunk the beaker of poison," קח את כוס היין החמה הזוא מירי והשקיתה אותו או כל הגוים (Jer. 25:15) "Take this cup of wrathful/poisonous wine from me and give it to the nations to drink." See also Isa. 51:22, Job 6:4¹⁴ and *ibid.* 21:20.¹⁵

Furthermore, note the many occurrences of the idiom "pouring out of God's wrath/poison" לשפוך חמה יהוה¹⁶ and the idiom מלאים חמה יהוה¹⁷ "full of God's poison/wrath."

In Akkadian, the etymological equivalent of חמה is imtu,¹⁸ which usually denotes poisonous foam produced from the mouths of angry gods, humans and animals.¹⁹

¹¹ לשון // שפה occurs in the Hebrew Bible and in Ugaritic literature. For references, see M. Held, *Leshonenu* 18 (1953), p. 155, n. 85.

¹² The translation of עכשו as snake is based on parallelism only. The etymology of this word is entirely unknown.

¹³ קבעת // כוס occurs in the Hebrew Bible and in Ugaritic literature. For references and bibliography, see M. Held, *JBL* 84 (1965), p. 281, n. 61.

¹⁴ Cf. N. H. Tur-Sinai, *The Book of Job*, (Jerusalem, 1967), pp. 115-117.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 329.

¹⁶ E.g., Isa. 42:25; Jer. 10:25; Ezek. 7:8; 14:19; 20:34; 30:15; Ps. 79:6.

¹⁷ Isa. 51:20; Jer. 6:11.

¹⁸ That the chet of Hebrew חמה is a h and not a h is proven now by recently published snake-charm texts from Ugarit in which the word hmt "poison, venom" occurs; see Michael C. Astour, *JNES* 27 (1968), p. 13ff.

¹⁹ *CAD* I/J, p. 139ff.

This is proven by the equation imtum = martum²⁰ (Malku VIII: 124) and by such texts quoted in the CAD I/J, pp. 139-140, as: azzūzâ izarri imta ana sursurru izarri imta imat širi imassu imat zugaqipi imassu (LKU 33:21ff.) "She (Lamaštu) spits venom now and then; she spits venom suddenly; her venom is snake venom; her venom is scorpion venom."

However, by a simple logical extension of the semantic range of imtu, we find that it can also mean any kind of foamy substance (e.g., spittle): imat balātu kummu (IV R 29 No. 1, 37f.) "Yours is the spittle of life," or imas[su elleta] ana imtiya iškun (CT 16 2:76f.) "He (Ea) made his pure spittle mine (the exorcist's)."

Likewise, it has come to mean foamy substances of the body in a medical sense. For example, in a list of diseases, we read: a.gal.la.ti.la. = ra-ah imti (CT 19 p. 3 II:4) "dropsy = the pouring out of foam." In another text listing plant names and uses, we find: u IGI.LIM = u ša-mu imti (Uruanna II, 391) "drug against foaming: imhur limu plant."

Thus, the etymological equivalents חמה / imtu share the meanings "venom, poison," while taken individually, they include the meanings "wrath" and "foam." Given the established link between imtu and חמה, it would not be unreasonable to conclude that there exists a semantic link between "wrath" and "foam" as well.

In the Aramaic root רחח, we have a clear example of a Semitic root denoting both "to be angry" and "to foam." Forms of the verb רחח are used in the Aramaic Targumim to translate Deut. 19:6, Ps. 39:4 and Eccles. 7:9 containing the Hebrew expressions יחס לבנו, יחס לבני, and לכעוס respectively. The hiphil of the same verb in the Babylonian Talmud denotes "to cause foaming," e.g., ובמסורה שלא ירהח (B. Metz. 61b, B. Bat. 89b) "and in liquid measure (Lev. 19: 35) one is warned that one must not make the liquid foam."²¹ So too, the Aramaic substantive רחחא "effervescence, scum, foam" is attested alongside Aramaic רחחא, denoting "anger." The latter is employed by the Targumim to render חמה in Pss. 19:7; 37:8; 78:38.

The semantic link between "wrath" and "foam" suggested by the correspondence of חמה / imtu, and confirmed by the root רחח is of key importance to our understanding of קצף in Hosea 10:7. There קצף is actually

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ M. Jastrow, A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud... (New York, 1950), II, pp. 1502-03.

rendered in the Targum by גוֹחַחַא .²²

(B) In Hosea 10:7, the simile "like foam on the surface of the water" expresses the notion of swift annihilation. That such a simile is apt and proper in this context may be seen from its employment in a passage in the Akkadian Era Epic which is "a theological myth describing the divine machinery behind the Sutilian invasions in Babylonia from the eleventh through ninth centuries."²³ The text reads nišīša kī qanī tuhtaššaš²⁴ kī ḥubuš²⁵ pān mē ḥuburšina tubtalli (Era IV: 67-68) "You do break its population like a reed; you brought their din to an end like foam on the surface of the water."

The idiom kī ḥubuš pān mē is identical to גוֹחַחַא ; and thus we may translate our text "Samaritae & its king shall perish like foam on the surface of the water."

²² Tur-Sinai, Peshuto shel Miqra (Jerusalem, 1967), Vol. 32, p. 428 (Hebrew), states that those versions which translated spuma or גוֹחַחַא , did so only under the influence of the idea that one who is very mad will "boil" and his anger will rise (in temperature) like boiling water which consists of bubbles and therefore "foam." This imagery of a king likened to bubbles of boiling water on the surface of the water, in Tur-Sinai's opinion, is very odd. Therefore, he emends the text. Apparently, he did not realize that imtu / imtu which goes through the same semantic development is devoid of the technical meaning "boiling water." Thus, the semantic development of the meaning "foam" for words also meaning "wrath, anger" is, in the case of imtu -- the poisonous foam formed on the mouth of an angry person (or god) developing into "any foamy substance," and, in the case of imtu -- the boiling of the blood of one who is angry developing into "any effervescent substance." As will be demonstrated in part B of this paper, the imagery of a person being annihilated like foam (neither poisonous or boiling), has an exact parallel in an Akkadian text, so that Tur-Sinai's objection that the imagery is strange can no longer stand.

²³ J. A. Brinkman, A Political History of Post-Kassite Babylonia (Rome, 1968), p. 362. According to Tablet IV:6-35, "Babylon became the scene of civil war: the peaceful citizens rose in arms, and the king sent in his army against them with orders to plunder the city." There was also "destruction in Dur-kurigalzu, Sippar, and Der, and male and female Sutilians howling in the city of Uruk" (Tablet IV:50). It is against this background that lines 67-68 are to be understood.

²⁴ The II/2 form of ḥašāšum should be added to CAD H, under ḥašāšum, as should this passage. The metaphor of people being annihilated like the swift breaking of a reed (qanā ḥašāšum) was very common, cf. CAD H, under ḥašāšum and the passages listed there.

²⁵ The word ḥubuš is listed in AHW, p. 351, and is translated "schaum" (foam). For some unknown reason, this word is not listed as an entry in the H volume of the CAD, even though the passage is quoted in that same volume under ḥuburu (p. 221).