

Witchcraft in the Old Testament

By G. R. DRIVER

DR. GUILLAUME, following Professor Mowinkel, has recently examined¹ a number of passages in the Old Testament in which he suspects traces of magical practices, incidentally throwing light on several obscure Hebrew words and phrases which have hitherto defied interpretation, or rather satisfactory interpretation.

Although, however, some of his suggestions seem eminently convincing, it is difficult to accept his explanation of the mysterious הַוָּה (hawwāh) or הוֹוָה (hōwāh) which occurs in eighteen passages of the Hebrew Bible.

Dr. Guillaume, starting from the prophet's

לֹא תִדְעֵי שַׁחֲרָה	וּבֹא עֲלֶיךָ רָעָה
לֹא תוּכְלֵי כַפְרָה	וּתְפַל עֲלֶיךָ הַוָּה

(Is., xlvi, 11), argues that, because the "evil" in *a* is described as something that "thou knowest not how to charm away", the parallel הוֹוָה in *b* is "an evil of magical origin"—*quod non sequitur*. If anything in this verse were an evil of magical origin, it would be the "evil" in *a* which could not be charmed away; the verb which refers to הוֹוָה is כַּפַּר, which has no magical associations. Unfortunately, too, for the theory underlying this attempted explanation, it is extremely doubtful if שַׁחֲרָה has any magical connotation.²

Dr. Guillaume then observes that this הַוָּה or הוֹוָה in eight out of the remaining seventeen passages in which it occurs is "connected with the organs of speech or with a verb that denotes utterance"; but this statement is hardly exact. The word is indeed so connected in three passages (Mic., vii, 3; Ps., xxxviii, 13; Prov., xvii, 4); in one this result can be obtained by emendation (Ps., xci, 3); in two it is connected by parallelism with לְשׁוֹן "tongue" (Ps., lii, 4; Jb., vi, 30), and in another with פֶּה "mouth", while

¹ In *JRAS.*, 1942, 111-131.

² See p. 8, n. 1. The root denoting witchcraft is *šhr*, which seems originally to have referred to magic circles (see Höfner and Rhodokanakis in *WZKM.*, 43, 216-17); the Acc. *šāhiru* and Hebr. שַׁחֲרָה "magician" (Ewald; see Driver in *JTS.*, 36, 400-1), the Hebr. שַׁחֲרָר "was bewitched" (see Thomas in *JTS.*, 40, 390-1), and the Arab. سِحْرٌ "sorcery" (see Meissner, *Kg.AG.*, § 8b for *š* = *h*) prove this. May also the Targ.-Aram. קַחֲרָר (e.g. Qoh., ix, 14) be added to these words?

actually related to קריב “inward part(s)” (Ps., v, 10), to which in another it is again related though with no reference to any organ of speech (Ps., lv, 12).

However this may be, Dr. Guillaume proceeds to the next stage in his argument, to the effect that the Acc. *awātu* or *amātu* “word”, which is commonly applied in magical texts to the sorcerer’s “evil word(s) of power”, is philologically identical with the Hebr. חַוְוָה (*hawwāh*) or חוּוָה (*hōwāh*), and that “thus Accadian points to the meaning ‘word of power’ or ‘binding curse’ which fits all the senses of the word in Hebrew, though in some cases it has become weakened”.

The philological basis of this argument is doubly unsound, on the score both of form and of meaning.

First, in regard to form. Dr. Guillaume rightly says that the Acc. *aw/mātu* is equated by Bezold¹ with the Hebr. חַוְוָה (*hiwwāh*) = Syr. חַוְוָה (*hawwā*) “informed”, while Muss-Arnolt² postulates a \sqrt{mh} with reference to Halévy’s suggestion that its root is identical with the \sqrt{wmy} supposed to underlie the Syr. حَمِي (*îmî*) “swore”; of this the Acc. *awū* or *amū* “to speak, swear”, whence *māmūtu* “oath” is derived, is probably the source. Operating with trebly weak roots is very risky work, and not the least so in the Accadian language which unfortunately has confused several guttural and weak letters; and Dr. Guillaume apparently feels this as he does not make perfectly clear which of these identifications he prefers. If he accepts חַוְוָה (*hiwwāh*), the equation of ח (h) with ח (h) is open to objection; if he accepts חַמִּי (*yîmî*), the equation of ח (h) with a hypothetical *w* or *y* is equally difficult.³ Apart from these points, an argument resting on alternative premises cannot be sound.

Second, in regard to meaning. It is true that the Acc. *aw/mātu* is used of the “evil word of power” in magical texts, but it is

¹ In *Bab.-Ass. Glossar*, 2-3.

² In *CDAL.*, 52-3.

³ There seem to be no instances of initial ח being interchanged with *w* or *y* except in the hypothetical \sqrt{yfk} (whence חָלַק = חָלַק “he went” and in a small number of onomatopoeic roots (e.g. Hebr. יַבֵּב = Arab. هَبَب, Hebr. הִילֵל = הִילֵל = and Arab. وسوس = هَسَس), which have no bearing on the present problem.

also the ordinary term for “word” or “speech”. Consequently, when it denotes this magician’s “word”, the context must make the sense abundantly clear; and, in part, it is so employed without qualification, so far as I know, only in specifically magical texts. Dr. Guillaume, however, proposes to assign this magical sense everywhere to the Hebr. הַנְּיָה or הַנְּיָה, whether the passage in which it occurs is otherwise of magical import or not; but the root certainly cannot bear this strain.

Dr. Guillaume’s thesis, then, that הַנְּיָה or הַנְּיָה denotes “word” with the connotation of an “evil word of power” as uttered by sorcerers and witches is, at any rate in my opinion, unacceptable, and I am driven to re-examine the origin and usage of these terms in order to see whether a satisfactory explanation of them is attainable.

In this connection attention has often been drawn to the Arab.

هَوَاةٌ (*hawā*) “blew”, from whose root both the Arab. هَوَاةٌ (*hawāʿun*) “wind, air, atmosphere” and the Syr. ܗܘܘܐ (*harwe*) “wind” are derived. These words are evidently cognate with the Hebr. הַנְּיָה (*hōwāh*), הַנְּיָה (*hawwāh*), and הַנְּיָה (*hawwōt*), and it may be suggested that, following them, these too mean “wind, winds”, or the like, though in fact always used of an ill wind, whether in the sense of misfortune or of slander. Will this meaning suit any or all of the passages in which one or other of these words occur?

First, I will take those passages in which there is no mention of the organs of speech and in which the usage may not be so far from the primitive sense of the root, translating them as I go:—

לֹא תִדְעִי שְׂחָרָה	וּבֹא עֲלֶיךָ רֵעָה
לֹא תִוְכַלִּי כִפְרָה	וּתִפֹּל עֲלֶיךָ הַנְּיָה

“and there shall come upon thee an evil
that thou knowest not how to overcome,¹
and there shall fall on thee an ill wind
that thou shalt be unable to propitiate” (Is., xlvii, 11);

¹ So explained after the Syr. ܗܘܘܐ Pa. *domuit, coegit* (cf. Aram. שְׂחָרָה, Pa. “impressed for service”), Arab. سَحَرَ “constrained”, and سَجَرَ (1) “scuffed”, (2) “abashed”, with which the Acc. *šahrartu* “oppression” is probably connected; cf. Is., viii, 20, where שְׂחָרָה may mean “compulsion, power to compel” (Driver in *JTS.*, 36, 400–1; 41, 162).

הָיָה עַל־הַדָּהָה תְבוּאָה וְשִׁמְעָה עַל־שִׁמְעָה תִדְוֶה

“ ill wind upon ill wind shall come
and rumour shall be added to rumour ”

(Ezek., vii, 26), where “ ill wind ” and “ rumour ” are nearly as nicely balanced as “ evil ” and “ ill wind ” ;

לֹא שָׁקוֹל יִשְׁקָל כַּעֲשֵׂי וְהִנָּתִי בְּמֵאזְנִים יִשְׂאוֹ יַחַד

“ would that my vexation were surely weighed
and my ill wind laid in the balance together ”

(Jb., vi, 2), where “ ill wind ” connotes “ ill luck ” and is thus properly parallel with כַּעֲשֵׂי “ vexation ” ;

נָתְסוּ נִתְיַבְתִּי לְדִהְתִּי יַעֲלוּ לֹא עוֹזֵר לָמוֹ

“ they tear down my path, they make gain of my ill wind,
with none to hinder ³ them ”

(Jb., xxx, 13), where again “ ill wind ” connotes “ ill luck ” ;

וּבִצֵּל כַּנְּפֵךְ אַחֶסֶה עַד יַעֲבֵר הַיּוֹת

“ and in the shadow of Thy wings will I take refuge
till ill winds be passed ”

(Ps., lvii, 2), where the verb is one commonly applied to the breath, to winds and storms ⁴ ;

הָיָה לְאָבִיו בֶּן כְּסִיל וְדִלְף טָרַד מְדִינֵי אִשָּׁה

“ an ill wind to his father is a foolish son,
and the contentions of a wife are driving drops (of rain) ”

(Prov., xix, 13), where “ ill wind ” (unlike magic words) is perfectly parallel to “ driving drop(s of rain) ”.

In none of these passages does the context or the parallelism of thought suggest or support anything in the nature of a “ magical word of power ” ; in all of them something like the ill wind which brings ill luck, misfortune, or disaster, offers a highly suitable sense.

Second, I take those passages in which הָיָה or הַיּוֹת appears in connection with speech, proposing as a meaning something of the same sort, namely words “ like a strong wind ”,⁵ wild, windy or

¹ For אֵל (Hermann, following several ancient versions).

² So Q.

³ So Ehrlich, *Psalmen*, 312.

⁴ Gen., viii, 1 ; Ps., ciii, 16 ; Jb., xxxvii, 21 (רִיחַ) ; Prov., x, 25 (סוּפָה).

⁵ Jb., viii, 2.

blustering words spoken by way of slander or threat. These passages are the following :—

והגדול דבר הַנֶּפֶשׁ נִפְשׁוֹ

“ and the great man speaketh the windy word(s) of his soul ”
(Mic., vii, 3) ;

וּדְרָשִׁי רַעְתִּי דִּבְרוּ הַוּוֹת וּמִרְמוֹת כָּל־דִּיּוּם יִדְגּוּ

“ and they that seek thy hurt speak windy words
and meditate slanders ¹ all the day ”

(Ps., xxxviii, 13), where once again רַעְתִּי and הַוּוֹת are parallels ;

מִרַע מִקְשִׁיב עַל־שִׁפְת־אָוֶן שֶׁקֶר ² מִזִּין עַל־לִשׁוֹן הַוּוֹת

“ an evil-doer payeth heed to wicked lips ³
and a liar giveth ear to a tongue uttering windy words ”

(Prov., xvii, 4).

If then this rendering of הַנֶּפֶשׁ or הַוּוֹת is accepted, it is easy to explain these “ windy words ” (Jonson) as something like the *rumorum et contionum ventos* of which Cicero speaks, the blustering and ill-founded charges of the speaker’s enemies.

There may now be added to these passages three in which הַנֶּפֶשׁ is not directly related to the organs of speech as such ⁴ but appears in a parallel clause, and four others which contain no reference to speech but in which the sense just proposed suits the context. The former passages are the following :—

אִין בְּפִימוֹ ⁵ נְכוֹנָה קִרְבָּם הַוּוֹת

“ there is nothing sure ⁶ in their mouths ;
their inward part(s) are (full of) windy words ”

(Ps., v, 10) ;

כָּל־דִּיּוּם הַוּוֹת תַּחֲשֵׁב

לְשׁוֹנְךָ כִּתְעַר מִלִּפְטֵשׁ עֲשֵׂה רַמְיָה

¹ So Dr. Guillaume (see p. 12, n. 3).

² Driver in *ZAtW.*, 52, 144.

³ Literally “ a lip of naughtiness ”, in which Professor Mowinkel (*Klagespsalmen*, 181) sees witchcraft—surely a clear proof that the parallel הַוּוֹת too means “ spells ” !

⁴ I put here the passage in which הַוּוֹת is related to הַחֵךְ “ palate ”, since that is there mentioned as an organ of taste or perception rather than of speech (Davidson, *Job*, 50).

⁵ So Lagarde with several ancient versions.

⁶ That is, their charges are unsubstantiated (see p. 12).

“ all the day thou devisest windy words,
 (with) thy tongue as a sharpened razor working slander ” ¹
 (Ps., lii, 4) ;

היש-בלשוני עולה אם חפני לא-יבין היות

“ is there injustice on my tongue,
 cannot my palate discern windy words ? ”

(Jb., vi, 30), or, in other words, “ do I say aught that is unjust ?
 Have I not the taste to discern and avoid speeches that are as
 wind ? ” ²

The latter passages are the following :—

ויבטח ברב עשרו יעז בְּהוֹתוֹ

“ and he relieth on the abundance of his wealth
 and is strong in his windy word(s) ”

(Ps., lii, 9) ;

ואוֹךְ³ ועמל בקרבה⁴ היות בקרבה⁴

ולא ימיש מרחבה תך ומרמה

“ and naughtiness and mischief are in her midst,
 (and) windy words are in her midst,
 and there shall not depart from her broad places
 oppression and slander ” ¹

(Ps., lv, 11-12) ;

לא-ירעיב יהוה נפש צדיק וְהוֹת רשעים יהרף

“ Yahweh will not make the soul of the righteous to tremble, ⁵
 but he will repel the windy words of the wicked ”

(Prov., x, 3), so that they will do no harm to the righteous at whom
 they are aimed ;

צדקת ישרים תצילם וּבְהוֹת⁶ בנדרים ילכדו

“ the righteousness of the upright shall deliver him,
 while the treacherous shall be caught in (their own) windy words ”

¹ So Dr. Guillaume (see p. 12, n. 3).

² Jb., vi, 26 (רוח אמרי נואש) *si vera lectio*.

³ Here again אוֹךְ (see p. 10, n. 3) !

⁴ One קרב must have displaced a word of similar form and meaning.

⁵ So Dr. Guillaume, aptly comparing the Arab. رَعَبَ “ trembled ; composed rhymes, made spells ” ; he, of course, *ex hypothesi* is bound to prefer the second sense.

⁶ Or וּבְהוֹתָם (Toy with several ancient Versions) ; but is the pronominal suffix necessary ? The Versions may merely be filling in the sense from the context.

(Prov., xi, 6), which means that the insults and slanders with which the treacherous bluster against the upright will recoil on to their own heads.

Three points may be made in connection with these passages. First, in Ps., v, 10, the next line, in which it is said that "their throat is an open sepulchre" recalls a passage in a Babylonian tablet¹ concerning evil spirits, which says that "the evil blasts of wind have come forth from the grave" (*zaqīqū limnūti istu qabrim ittašūni*); here then it is not impossible that the Psalmist may be suggesting that blustering words are stored in and are poured forth from his enemies' bellies as evil spirits come forth from the grave in the guise of gusts of wind. That, however, is the most that can be said, and it is no form of sorcery or witchcraft; this is not the belief that evil spirits can emerge from the grave but the calling of them up from it as at Endor. Second, in the same place the use of נבוך "sure" is suggestive, as it is elsewhere used of certain or substantiated charges,² and the antithesis raises the suspicion that הויות are false charges; and Ps., lv, 11-12, supports this view, if מרמה does in fact mean "slander".³ Third, if הויה is thus translated, the text in Ps., lii, 9, is correct, so that יעז בהויה may be left as it stands.

This discussion leaves only two passages in which הויה or הויה occurs unexamined.

One is a very familiar line, namely

יִצִּילְךָ מִפֶּחַ יְקוּשׁ מִדְּבַר הַוֵּיֹת

(Ps., xci, 3), which is translated in the R.V.

"He shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler
(and) from the noisome pestilence".

It has, however, long been recognized that the mention of pestilence is here premature; it makes its first and quite apposite appearance in v. 6, which speaks of "the pestilence that walketh in darkness" and "the destruction that wasteth at noon-day", where the parallelism is as good as it is bad in v. 3. Dr. Guillaume therefore agrees with most modern scholars in altering מִדְּבַר הַוֵּיֹת

¹ Thompson, *Devils and Evil Spirits*, ii, 130-1 Y 5-6.

² Deut., xiii, 15; xvii, 4.

³ So Dr. Guillaume, who aptly compares the Syr. **ܩܠܠ ܗܘܐ** or **ܕܘܡܘܢ ܗܘܐ** and **ܕܘܡܘܢܐ ܐܘܨܘܘܒܐ** *accusavit, calumniatus est*, to which the Arab. **رُمِيَ** "charged (a person) with (a thing)" may be added.

“from the pestilence of destruction(s)” to מְדַבֵּר הַהוּת “from the word of destruction(s)”,¹ which he naturally interprets as the magician’s “evil word of power”, although the Psalm contains no other allusion to charms and spells. All the other ills in this Psalm are concrete. Can then דַּבְרָה be right, if הַהוּת means “(ill) winds”, here used in the literal and concrete sense of destructive winds which are so destructive to those who dwell in tents? ² If so, may it not have the same sense as the Acc. *dabru* “violent” or the like, which often occurs in such a combination, here particularly instructive, as *umē dabrūti* “driving, violent” or “destructive storm-winds”³; the Acc. *dibiru* “ill-luck” and perhaps also “pestilence”⁴ comes from the same root. The verse may then be translated

“He shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler
(and) from the driving violence of the winds”,

that is from falling into the trap set by an enemy, as a beast falls into the hunter’s snare, and from the dangers of nature, the tempest which may steal a man away in the night and the storm which may hurl him out of his place.⁵

Dr. Guillaume then sets about the solution of the last difficult passage in which הַהוּת occurs, namely

וַיַּחְבֹּד כִּסֵּא הַהוּת יֵצֵר עִמָּל עַל־יַחַח

(Ps., xciv, 20), which the R.V. renders

“shall the throne of wickedness have fellowship with thee,
which frameth mischief by statute?”

This rendering, he rightly observes, is impossible.

¹ So Graetz with several ancient Versions.

² Cf. Jb., i, 19, where it is said that “there came a great wind from the wilderness and smote the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young men and they are dead”.

³ Langdon, *Creation*, i, 142; ii, 29; iii, 33, 91. The fundamental sense of the \sqrt{dbr} is that of “back”, whence it is used of driving as done from behind and of that which lies in wait for a man behind his back, such as “plague” (Hebr. דַּבְרָה) and “death” (Arab. دَبْرٌ), whence it comes to be applied to anything that is destructive or unlucky, such as “ruin” (Arab. دَبَارٌ) and “defeat” or “adversity” (Arab. دَبْرَةٌ) and any “violent deed” (Acc. *dabratu*); cf. Syr. כַּחַח כַּחַח “drove with violence, oppressed” and כַּחַח “agitation”.

⁴ Meissner, *Beiträge zum assyrischen Wörterbuch*, i, 34.

⁵ Jb., xxvii, 20-1.

Dr. Guillaume then draws attention to the fact that the Acc. *ubburu* "to bewitch" and the Hebr. **חבר** "tied a magic knot"¹ offer a plausible meaning also for **יחברך** here; and, relying on his explanation of **הַיָּהוּה** as an "evil word of power", he proposes to read **כָּסָא** "binding" for **כָּסָא** "throne". He is thus able to translate this verse

"can he that bindeth spells charm thee,
he that deviseth mischief against the statute?"

which *ex hypothesi* is the law against sorcerers and witches.² In support of **כָּסָא הוּוּת** "he that bindeth spells" he cites the Bab. *ša māmūt ukaszušu* "whom a curse has bound",³ having failed to observe that the Acc. *kasū* "to bind" is always and only used of binding (the limbs of) the victim by the sorcerer or (the limbs of) the sorcerer by the exorcist, never of the weaving of spells or the binding of magic knots.⁴ So, too, the Hebr. **כְּסָתוֹת** "bands" from the same root refers to the concrete bands sewn upon the wrists of the sorcerers, perhaps to symbolize the binding power of their words; it does not mean magic bonds or spells.⁵ Further, it may be doubted whether any Hebrew Psalmist would dare to think or speak of trying to coerce God by magic charms into becoming a partner in wrong-doing. These objections seem to make the proposed interpretation of this passage very precarious.

Can sense, however, be made of the verse? I suggest reading

וַיַּחְבֵּר כָּסָא הוּוּת יצר עמל עלייך

and translating this text—

"will he that dissembleth windy words⁷ take thee into partnership,
(and) he that doeth mischief unlawfully?"⁸;

¹ Deut., xviii, 11; Ps., lviii, 6.

² Exod., xxii, 17 (18); Deut., xviii, 10–11.

³ Rawlinson, *CIAA*, v [not "tablet iv"], 50 (= Fossey, *Magie*, 434–5), 66.

⁴ This is *riksī rakāsu* (Meier, *Maqlā*, iv, 108).

⁵ Ezek., xiii, 18–20 (see Cooke, *Ezekiel*, 145–6).

⁶ An Aramaizing spelling of **כָּסָא**; cf. **נִשְׂאָ** (1 Sam., xxii, 2; Is., xxiv, 2) for **נִשְׂאָ** (Exod., xxii, 24).

⁷ Cf. **וּפִי רִשְׁעִים יַכְפֵּה חַמְס** "and the mouth of the wicked concealth violence", i.e. injurious words (Prov., x, 6, 11).

⁸ Cf. Schrader in *Theol. Stud. u. Krit.*, 41, 643, who proposes **וַיַּחְבֵּר כָּסָא הוּוּת יצר עמל** "will he that dissembleth ruin be an associate of him that frameth mischief? i.e. will these two knaves enter into partnership to procure the ruin of the righteous; but the pronominal suffix with the verb is attested by all the ancient versions and is too difficult to be lightly discarded. There is no objection to the Qal of **כָּסָא** in this sense (see Prov., xii, 16, 23).

that is, will this precious pair of knaves, the one secretly preparing the "winds of blame" (Withals) against the righteous and the other seeking to procure his condemnation by unlawful means, try to make God a party to their nefarious schemes?

It may here be added that the Ugar. *hwt* (var. *hwt*, *hmt*) commonly means "word" without any evil connotation in the texts from Râs aš-Šamrah.¹

Finally, I may add that I see no difficulty in another passage which Dr. Guillaume can interpret only on the assumption that it contains an allusion to magical practices, namely,

פִּיךָ שְׁלַחַת בְּרֵעָה וְלִשׁוֹנְךָ תִצְמִיד מֵרַמָּה

"thou settest thy mouth to evil
and thou equippest thy tongue with slander"

(Ps., l, 19), as I translate it; for I suggest that the Hebr. רִצְמִיד, which comes from a root well known though not otherwise found in the causative theme, is used in the same sense, though figuratively, as the Acc. *šamādu* in such phrases as *kakkēšunu šandu* (for *šamdu*) "they were equipped with their weapons"²—both with a second accusative case indicating that with which one is equipped.³ It is thus unnecessary to displace a perfectly good Hebrew word in place of an Arabic one in the interest of a theory.

It is then here suggested that רִיחַ like רִיחַ means both "wind" and "breath" and can be used like it of windy words.⁴ It has, however, always a bad connotation; it is the ill wind that bodes only ruin and destruction, which the Syr. *ḥarūtā* (*ḥarūtā*) *pernicies* from the same root also connotes, and it is the blustering threats of "such as breathe out cruelty"⁵ and the unsubstantiated charges of the false witness "that breatheth out lies".⁶

It is, of course, true that the wind is at times invoked in magic practices and that Thompson⁷ can speak of "tourbillons of wind called *eructationes daemonum*"; indeed, the seventh evil spirit of

¹ Viroleaud *Anat* 31₁₀ 35₁₉ 59₅₁, *Danel* 158₁₁₃ 163₁₄₁₋₂ +.

² Rawlinson, *CIWA.*, v, 35 (= Schrader, *KB.*, III, ii, 122-3), 16.

³ Cf. *אויביו אלביש בשח* (Ps., xxxv, 26; Jb., viii, 22) with *אויביו אלביש בשח* (Ps., cxxxii, 18) for the two accusative cases with the causative theme.

⁴ E.g. Jb., vi, 26; xvi, 3.

⁵ Ps., xxvii, 12 (יפח חמם).

⁶ Prov., vi, 19; xiv, 5 (יפח כזבים).

⁷ In *Semitic Magic*, 59-60.

Babylonian demonology is "the storm-wind, the evil wind".¹ That, however, does not mean that every reference to puffing against an enemy is to be explained by magical practices, any more than it is to be supposed that Cicero referred to such things with his *vento aliquo in optimum quemque excitato*; yet Cicero no less than the Psalmists and other Hebrew writers lived in a world which knew and had recourse on occasion to witchcraft and sorcery. To say this is not to deny the practice of magical arts amongst the ancient Hebrews; that is clearly impossible, since the law would not enjoin the execution of witches if there were none. I think, however, that its prevalence amongst both the Accadians and the Hebrews can be and often is greatly exaggerated. The remarkable thing is the paucity of references to witchcraft in Accadian literature outside the collections of specifically magical texts, which, too, are extraordinarily few in comparison with the vast numbers of tablets now known; and the same thing may be said of the unequivocal allusions to it also in the Old Testament, while the majority of additional passages in which witchcraft is suspected are almost, if not quite, all susceptible of alternative explanations.

¹ Thompson, *Devils and Evil Spirits*, i, 90-1₂₆ (*mešá šáru limnu*); cf. 62-3₆₆.