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The Helpful God: A Reevaluation of the Etymology and Character of (*ʾēl*) *šadday*

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Abstract

Both the role of the deity (El) Shadday in the religions of ancient Israel and the etymology of the name *šadday* remain poorly understood. In this article, I will propose a new etymology for the name *šadday* and then leverage this etymology into a better understanding of (El) Shadday's character. I argue that *šadday* is a *nomen agentis* from the root *sdy* 'to help' and originated as an epithet of the deity El, which highlighted his benevolent qualities. A comparison of El in the Ugaritic epics and El Shadday in the Priestly Source (P) suggests that El Shadday was thought to help his worshippers by providing them with children. El Shadday thus represents one way in which the deity El survived in the religions of ancient Israel.

Keywords

El Shadday – Israelite Religions – P

Very little is known about the deity (El) Shadday and his role in the religions of ancient Israel. Even the etymology of his name remains opaque, although scholars have proposed at least seven different etymologies for it. In this paper, I will use comparative Semitic linguistics as a window onto the religious world of ancient Israel. I will begin by reviewing the biblical and extra-biblical attestations of Shadday as well as previous etymologies for this name. I will then propose a new etymology for *šadday*[1] and triangulate this etymology with re-

1 A note on nomenclature: in this paper, "Shadday" refers to the deity (or deities) of this name, and *šadday* refers specifically to the Hebrew form of this name as preserved in the Masoretic Text.

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ligious data from the Ugaritic epics and the Priestly Source (P) in order to gain a better understanding of the deity El Shadday. According to my interpretation, *šadday* is a *nomen agentis* from the root *sdy* meaning 'the helper' or 'the helpful'. It originated as an epithet of the deity El and served to highlight his benevolent qualities. In part, it emphasized his power over human fertility and his ability to grant children to his worshippers. El Shadday was thus associated with the daily routines of family life—what today would encompass issues of family planning—and represents one of the ways the deity El survived within the religions of ancient Israel.

I Review of the Evidence

The divine name or title *šadday* appears 48 times in the Hebrew Bible. In seven cases—all of them in P or in priestly texts[2]—it appears in combination with *ʾēl*, which could be either a divine name or an appellative noun. The combined name *ʾēl šadday* thus means either 'El Shadday' or 'the god Shadday'. In another fifteen cases, *šadday* occurs in poetic parallelism with *ʾēl*,[3] which provides additional evidence for the combined divine name *ʾēl šadday*; and in the remaining twenty-six examples, *šadday* appears by itself. *šadday* also occurs in the personal names *ṣûrîšaddāy* 'Shadday is my rock' (Num 1:6; 2:12; 7:36, 41; 10:19), *ʿammîšaddāy* 'Shadday is my kinsman' (Num 1:12; 2:25; 7:66, 71; 10:25), and potentially *šədêʾûr* (Num 1:5; 2:10; 7:30, 35; 10:18), which seems to be a mispointing of either *šaddayʾûr* 'Shadday is light' or *šədîʾûr* 'my protective spirit is light'. The transcription of this personal name as Σεδιουρ in the Septuagint supports the second interpretation.

The name Shadday also appears outside the Hebrew Bible, but the extent of its extra-biblical attestations has been exaggerated. Scholars have claimed to find Shadday in a Thamudic graffito, a Palmyrene dedicatory text, a Semitic personal name in Egyptian transcription, two Ugaritic god lists, and the Deir 'Alla plaster texts. Most of these extra-biblical attestations are either problematic or ambiguous. In what follows, I review all of these suggestions, starting with the least plausible.

In 1950, A. van den Branden discovered the divine name *ʾl sʾdy* in the 6th-century BCE Thamudic B inscription JSTham 255 and attributed its appearance

2 Gen 17:1; 28:3; 35:11; 43:14; 48:3; Exod 6:3. Outside of P, *ʾēl šadday* appears once in Ezek 10:5, a priestly text.

3 Num 24:4, 16; Job 8:3, 5; 13:3; 15:25; 22:17; 23:16; 27:2, 11, 13; 33:4; 34:10, 12; 35:13.

in this Ancient North Arabian text to a Jewish author.[4] Modifying van den Branden's suggestion, E. A. Knauf has argued that *ʾl s²dy* is an Ancient North Arabian cognate of *ʾēl šadday*.[5] Similarly, T. Römer has suggested that P referred to the god of the patriarchs as El Shadday in order to evoke contemporary Arabian religious practices and add an exotic flavor to his composition.[6] Ultimately, van den Branden's reading of JSTham 255 cannot bear the weight of these arguments. JSTham 255 should actually be read as 'O Shamed, save us from the hands of the enemy!'(*h s²md wqy-n yd s²nʾ*); the name *ʾl s²dy* only appears when the inscription is read backwards and the penultimate *n* is interpreted as an *l*.[7] Furthermore, Thamudic *s²* corresponds to Hebrew *ś* and so Knauf must posit an irregular correspondence between Hebrew *šadday* and the alleged Thamudic *s²dy*.

A Palmyrene text found in the temple of Bel at Palmyra mentions *šdyʾ* alongside the common Palmyrene deity *bwlʿstr* (PAT 2749:6, 9).[8] The meaning of *šdyʾ* in this inscription is unclear. It could be the name Shadday with the definite article *–ʾ* (which would indicate that Shadday had a nominal origin) or the emphatic plural of the noun *šd* 'protective spirit' originally borrowed from Akkadian.[9] Because the inscription is so short and *šdyʾ* only appears once in the Palmyrene corpus, it is impossible to decide between the two options. Therefore, it is best to bracket this inscription when discussing the deity Shadday until more Palmyrene evidence is forthcoming.

Shadday may also appear as a theophoric element in a Semitic personal name written in Egyptian script from the 14th century BCE: *sꜣ-d-j-*(ʿ)*-m-j-j*. In his study of Semitic names in group writing, T. Schneider interprets this name as *šadī-ʿammī* 'my (divine) kinsman is my mountain', but W. F. Albright and

4 A. van den Branden, *Les inscriptions thamoudéennes* (Bibliothèque du Muséon; Louvain, 1950), p. 12.

5 E. A. Knauf, "El Šaddai", *BN* 16 (1981), pp. 20-26; "El Šaddai—der Gott Abrahams?" *BZ* 1 (1985), pp. 97-99; "Shadday", in Karel van der Toorn, Bob Becking, and Pieter W. van der Horst (eds.), *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, 2nd rev. ed. (Leiden, 1999), p. 750.

6 T. Römer, *The Invention of God* (trans. R. Geuss; Harvard, 2015), pp. 81, 226.

7 I would like to thank Ahmad Al-Jallad for his insight on this inscription and Ancient North Arabian inscriptions in general.

8 J. Cantineau, "Textes palmyréniens provenant de la fouille du Temple de Bêl", *Syria* 12 (1931), pp. 130-132; D. R. Hillers, *Palmyrene Aramaic Texts* (Publications of The Comprehensive Aramaic Lexicon Project; Baltimore, 1995), p. 319.

9 The Arabian deity *šʿd*(*w*) appears twice in the Palmyrene corpus (PAT 1700:3; 2239). The name of this deity is cognate with Akkadian *šēdu* but was most likely loaned into Palmyrene from an Ancient North Arabian language. Hillers, *Palmyrene Aramaic Texts*, p. 416.

Knauf treat it as an early variant of Hebrew *ʿammîšadday*.[10] Again, it is difficult to decide between the two options given the available information: both names are linguistically plausible interpretations of the Egyptian transcription. Thus, it is best to set this piece of evidence aside until more data are forthcoming.

Shadday appears in one or possibly two texts from Ugarit: KTU 1.108 and KTU 1.179. The first text describes a divine drinking ritual and mentions several deities including the enigmatic *ỉl šdyṣdmlk* in line 12. The appearance of Shadday in KTU 1.108 depends in part on how one divides the final eight letters of the line, which are not separated by a word divider, and more specifically how one treats the *y*. D. Pardee parses this sequence of letters as *ỉl šdy ṣd mlk* "the god Shaddayyu, the hunter (of) Milku".[11] He does so because grouping the *y* with *ṣd* would create a verb, and the preserved portions of the text do not contain any unambiguous verbal forms.[12] Although Pardee's reading is plausible and will be adopted here, his vocalization of *šdy* is problematic. As I will demonstrate in section III, Hebrew *šadday* cannot reflect the underlying form **šaddayyu* and so a more plausible vocalization of Ugaritic *šdy* would be *šaddayu*.[13] Furthermore, Pardee's translation of *ỉl šdy* as 'the god Shaddayyu' instead of 'El Shaddayu' requires revision in light of the evidence presented in section IV. In any case, the spelling of Shadday as *šdy* in Ugaritic shows that the underlying form of *šadday* began with an etymological *s* and not an etymological *ṯ* since Ugaritic orthography distinguished between these two consonants.

Shadday may also appear at Ugarit in KTU 1.179, which contains a list of astral deities. Line 11 of the inscription mentions the bipartite deity *ydd w šd* 'beloved and *šd*'. As in the Palmyrene and Egyptian examples, the meaning of *šd* in this text is ambiguous. It could be either a borrowing of Akkadian *šēdu* or a Ugaritic form of *šaddayu* that underwent contraction of the final triphthong, and without more information, it is difficult to decide between the two options.[14]

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10 T. Schneider, *Asiatische Personennamen in ägyptischen Quellen des Neuen Reiches* (ObO 114; Freiburg, 1992), pp. 195-196; W. F. Albright, *From the Stone Age to Christianity: Monotheism and the Historical Process* (Baltimore, 1946), p. 183; Knauf, "Shadday", p. 750.

11 It is unclear whether *ṣd mlk* was an epithet of *ỉl šdy* or an independent deity. The lack of word dividers in the consonantal sequence *šdyṣdmlk* may support the first option.

12 D. Pardee, *Les textes paramythologiques de la 24e campagne (1961)* (RSO 4; Paris, 1988), p. 110.

13 Triphthongs of the form *–ayu* usually contract to *û* in Ugaritic, but are regularly retained in divine names like *pdry*. J. Tropper, *Ugaritische Grammatik: Zweite, stark überarbeitete und erweiterte Auflage* (AOAT 273; Münster, 2012), pp. 198-199.

14 J. Tropper, *Ugaritische Grammatik*, p. 198.

The Deir ʿAlla plaster text furnishes another reference to Shadday outside the Hebrew Bible. In lines 5 and 6 of combination 1, the plural noun *šdyn* appears in parallel to *ʾlhn* 'gods' in the phrase "the gods gathered together // the Shaddayin stood in assembly" (*ʾl*[*h*]*n ʾtyḥdw . wnṣbw . šdyn . mwʿd*).[15] In her seminal translation and interpretation of the Deir ʿAlla texts, J. A. Hackett argues that *šdyn* refers to a group of deities associated with the god Shadday, for whom they are named.[16] In this regard, they resemble the Kôtharat-goddesses (*kṯrt*; KTU 1.118:12), Baal-gods (*bʿlm*; KTU 1.118:5-10), and Reshep-gods (*ršpm*; KTU 1.91:11) from Ugarit and point to the existence of the deity Shadday at Deir ʿAlla even though this deity never appears in the Deir ʿAlla text. The poetic parallelism between *šdyn* and *ʾlhn* in this text also constitutes indirect evidence for the combination of El and Shadday at Deir ʿAlla just like the parallelism between the singular forms *ʾēl* and *šadday* does in the biblical text.

At the very least, the divine name Shadday or its derivatives are attested in Biblical Hebrew, Ugaritic, and the language of the Deir ʿAlla plaster text. This distribution suggests that Shadday was a Northwest Semitic deity, which would also fit the ambiguous Palmyrene data.[17] Unfortunately, the distribution of the evidence has not helped winnow the etymological possibilities for *šadday*. To date, seven different etymologies have been proposed for *šadday*, none of which has won universal acceptance.[18] In the following sections, I will review and critique these etymologies and then propose my own.

15 J. A. Hackett, *The Balaam Text from Deir ʿAllā* (HSM 31; Decatur, 1984), p. 25; E. Blum, "Die Kombination I der Wandinschrift vom Tell Deir ʿAlla: Vorschläge zur Rekonstruktion mit historisch-kritischen Anmerkungen", in I. Kottsieper, R. Schmitt, and J. Wöhrle (eds.), *Berührungspunkte: Studien zur Sozial- und Religionsgeschichte Israel und seiner Umwelt. Festschrift für Rainer Albertz zu seinem 65. Geburtstag* (AOAT 350; Münster, 2008), p. 577

16 Hackett, *The Balaam Text*, pp. 86-87.

17 For the classification of the Northwest Semitic languages in general see J. Huehnergard, "Remarks on the Classification of the Northwest Semitic Languages", in J. Hoftijzer and G. van der Kooij (eds.), *The Balaam Text from Deir ʿAlla Re-Evaluated: Proceedings of the International Symposium Held at Leiden 21-24 August 1989* (Leiden, 1991), pp. 282-293; and N. Pat-El and A. M. Wilson-Wright, "Features of Aramaeo-Canaanite", *JAOS* 138 (2018), 781-806.

18 For a detailed overview of the scholarship on the etymology of Shadday see M. Weippert, "Šadday (Gottesname)", in E. Jenni and C. Westermann (eds.), *Theologisches Handwörterbuch zum Alten Testament* vol. 2. (München, 1976), pp. 873-881; and H. Niehr and G. Steins, "Šadday", in G. J. Botterweck, H. Ringgren, and H.-J. Fabry (eds.), *Theologische Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament* vol. 7 (Stuttgart, 1993), pp. 1078-1082.

II Previous Etymologies

One of the most popular etymologies of *šadday* is to derive it from the noun *śādê* 'field' or its less common alloform *śāday*.[19] At first glance, this etymology is particularly attractive because Athtart bears the epithet *ʿṯtrt šd* 'Athtart of the field' at Ugarit (KTU 1.48:16; 1.91:10-11; 1.148:18).[20] Under this interpretation, *ʾēl šadday* would mean 'El of the field'. Despite the potential parallels, however, this etymology runs into several phonological problems. First, the noun *śādê* begins with Proto-Semitic *ś*, while *šadday* begins with Proto-Semitic *s*. Because of the mismatch between sibilants, proponents of this etymology must either posit a systematic mispointing of the name *šadday* in the Masoretic text or suggest that *šadday* is a loanword from a language where *ś* merged with *s*, such as Ugaritic. While not impossible, such suggestions complicate this derivation. Second, this etymology cannot explain the gemination in *šadday*. Some scholars claim that the gemination in *šadday* is secondary on the basis of the Septuagint transcriptions of *šadday* as Σαδαι in the personal names *ṣûrîšaddāy* and *ʿammîšaddāy* (Num 1:6, 12; 2:12, 25; 7:36, 41, 66; 10:19, 25), but according to J. Krašovec the Septuagint "originally transliterated Semitic consonants consistently using single consonants".[21] Thus, the Septuagint cannot be used uncritically as evidence for the absence of gemination in Hebrew.

Another popular etymology for *šadday* is to relate it to Akkadian *šadû* 'mountain' (Old Assyrian *šadwum*). W. F. Albright, for example, compared *šadday* with the rare Akkadian noun *šaddāʾu* (variant *šaddûʾa*) 'mountain-dweller' and argued that Hebrew speakers borrowed this noun during the early 2nd millennium BCE to refer to Yahweh.[22] Albright's student, F. M. Cross took a slightly different tack. He argued that *šadday* was cognate to Akkadian *šadû* 'mountain' and Ugaritic *ṯd* 'mountain' as well as the common Semitic word

19 M. Weippert, "Erwägungen zur Etymologie des Gottesnamens *ʾĒl Šaddaj*", *ZDMG* 111 (1961), pp. 42-62; W. R. Wifall, "El Shaddai or El of the Fields", *ZAW* 92 (1980), pp. 24-32; and O. Loretz, "Der kanaanäische Ursprung des biblischen Gottesnamens *El Šaddaj*", *UF* 12 (1980), pp. 420-421. John Huehnergard, p.c., suggests that *śāday* reflects the *qatall* pattern: **śadayy* > *śāday*.

20 For an overview of this goddess and her role at Ugarit see A. M. Wilson-Wright, *Athtart: The Transmission and Transformation of a Goddess in the Late Bronze Age*, (FAT II 90; Tübingen, 2016), pp. 108-115.

21 J. Krašovec, *The Transformation of Biblical Proper Names*, (New York, 2010), p. 101. I would like to thank Benjamin P. Kantor for this reference and for his insight into the transcription of proper names in the Septuagint.

22 W. F. Albright, "The Names Shaddai and Abram", *JBL* 54 (1935), pp. 180-193.

for 'breast' **ṯaday*.[23] Both variants of this etymology fall short. It is unclear whether Hebrew was a distinct Semitic language during the early 2nd millennium let alone whether Hebrew speakers were in contact with Akkadian during this time period. Furthermore, Cross's etymology relies on the assumption that Akkadian *šadû* comes from the root *ṯdw*. The only evidence for this assumption, however, is the putative Ugaritic cognate *ṯd* 'mountain', which has been exposed as a ghost word and exorcised from the most recent Ugaritic dictionary.[24] The most likely cognates of Akkadian *šadû* are Hebrew *śādê* 'field' and Ugaritic *šd* 'field', and as noted above, *śādê* begins with a different sibilant in Hebrew than *šadday*.

P. Haupt and D. Biale derive *šadday* from the isolated Proto-West Semitic noun **ṯaday* 'breast' and translate *šadday* as 'the god with breasts'.[25] In support of this etymology, they cite Gen 49:25, where Jacob invokes *ʾēl šadday* to confer "blessings of breasts and womb" (*birkōt šādayim wā-rāḥam*) upon Joseph along with other natural bounties: "by El, your father, that he may help you and El[26] Shadday that he may bless you with blessing of heaven above,

23 F. M. Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel* (Cambridge, 1973), pp. 52-60.

24 Cross, *Canaanite Myth*, p. 55, also claimed that *ṯd* 'mountain', had an allomorph in *ḏd*, but G. del Olmo Lete and J. Sanmartín, *A Dictionary of the Ugaritic Language in the Alphabetic Tradition*, 3rd rev. ed. (2 vols.; trans. Wilfred G. E. Watson; Leiden, 2015), p. 285, only give 'grotto, cave' and 'tent' as possible meanings of this word. For a summary of scholarship on this term see N. Mastnjak, "Hebrew *taḥaš* and the West Semitic Tent Tradition", *VT* 66 (2016), p. 7 n. 34.

25 Paul Haupt, "Die Schlacht von Taanach", in ed. K. Marti (ed.), *Studien zur semitischen Philologie und Religionsgeschichte: Julius Wellhausen zum Siebzigsten Geburtstag am 17. Mai 1914 gewidmet von Freunden und Schülern*, (BZAW 27; Giessen, 1914), p. 212; D. Biale, "The God with Breasts: El Shadday in the Bible", *History of Religions* 21 (1982), pp. 240-256.

26 The Samaritan Pentateuch, Septuagint, and Peshitta read *ʾēl* where the Masoretic text reads *ʾēt*. Despite the overwhelming evidence in favor of *ʾēl*, M. Köckert, *Vätergott und Väterverheissungen: Eine Auseinandersetzung mit Albrecht Alt und seinen Erben* (Göttingen, 1988), p. 79 n. 154, and R. de Hoop, *Genesis 49 in Its Literary and Historical Context*, (Leiden, 1999), pp. 206-207, among others, have argued that *ʾēt* is the preferred reading since it supposedly provides a semantic parallel for the preposition *min-* that introduces *ʾēl ʾābîkā* in the previous hemistich. This argument is linguistically and text critically problematic. By itself, the preposition *ʾēt* means 'with' or 'together with', not 'by' or 'from'. Theoretically, we could translate *mēʾēl ʾābîkā wə-yaʿzərekā wə-ʾēt šadday* as "from El, your father, that he may help you, together with Shadday …", but the *wāw*-conjunctive that precedes *ʾēt* makes such a translation difficult. Furthermore, the text critical data do not support this line of argumentation. The Septuagint, Samaritan Pentateuch, and Peshitta (which was translated from a proto-Masoretic text) represent three independent

blessings of the deep lying beneath, blessings of breast and womb". This etymology, however, cannot explain the gemination in *šadday* and therefore remains implausible.

T. Nöldeke, H. Vorländer, and B. Lang derive *šadday* from the Akkadian term *šēdu* 'protective spirit',[27] but they are divided on whether *šadday* is cognate with *šēdu* or simply borrowed from it.[28] Neither option is particularly persuasive. It is unlikely that *šadday* represents a borrowing of Akkadian *šēdu* since the latter word was borrowed into Hebrew as **šēd* (*šēdîm* in Deut 32:17; Ps 106:37).[29] Nor can *šadday* be cognate with Akkadian *šēdu* since the Akkadian term comes from a II-ʕ root. Akkadian *šēdu* is cognate with Classical Arabic *saʕd* 'luck' and *saʕida* 'to be or become prosperous, fortunate, happy', Sabaic *sʾʕd*; 'to grant a favor (deity as subject), beneficence', Safaitic *sʾʕd* 'good fortune, aid', and the Palymerene divine name *šʕd*(*w*). The native Hebrew reflex of this word would be **šaʕad* not *šadday*.

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text traditions. Köckert and de Hoop's argument requires us to posit changes in three independent text traditions rather than a single change in *some* exemplars of the Masoretic text tradition.

27 T. Nöldeke, "Review of F. Delitzsch, *Prolegomena eines neuen hebr.-aram. Wörterbuch zum AT* (1886)", ZDMG 40 (1886), pp. 735-736; "Review of F. Baethgen, *Beiträge zur semitischen Religionsgeschichte: Der Gott Israels und die Götter der Heiden* (1888)", ZDMG 42 (1888), pp. 480-481; H. Vorländer, *Mein Gott: Die Vorstellungen vom persönlichen Gott im Alten Orient und im AT* (AOAT 23; Kevelaer, 1975), pp. 216-219; B. Lang, *Monotheism and the Prophetic Minority: An Essay in Biblical History and Sociology* (SWBA 1; Sheffield, 1983), pp. 50-51.

28 Nöldeke sees *šadday* as a cognate of Akkadian *šēdu*, while Vorländer favors borrowing. Lang does not explain how he conceptualizes the relationship between *šadday* and *šēdu*.

29 P. V. Mankowski, *Akkadian Loanwords in Biblical Hebrew* (HSS 47; Winona Lake, 2000), pp. 138-140, suggests that these verses originally referred to the Shadday-gods like lines 1:5-6 of the Deir 'Alla plaster text, but were later repointed under the influence of the term *šēd*. The Septuagint renders *šēdîm* as δαιμόνιον, which has prompted many scholars to translate *šēdîm* as 'demon'. Such a translation, however, does not fit the Akkadian and Greek evidence. By itself, the Akkadian source of *šēdîm* never means 'demon' or 'evil spirit'; it only assumes these meanings when modified by the adjective *lemnu* 'evil'. And until the early Christian era, Greek δαιμόνιον could refer to benevolent or at least morally-neutral spirits (see, for example, Acts 17:18). Thus, Hebrew *šēdîm* most likely refers to "protective spirits". If Deuteronomy 32:17 did not originally refer to Shadday-gods, as Mankowski argues, then it criticized the Israelites for sacrificing to an inferior class of divine being: "they sacrificed to protective spirits, not G/god". The rest of this verse would then polemically cast these spirits as recent additions to the Israelite pantheon: "deities which they had not known // new ones recently arrived // whom your fathers had not feared".

D. Redford argues that *šadday* derives from the Egyptian epithet and divine name *šdj* 'the savior', which comes from the Egyptian verb *šdj* 'to save'.[30] This term was originally used as a divine epithet that could be applied to a variety of gods, but in the New Kingdom it came to refer to an independent deity. Although Redford did not elaborate on his suggestion, M. Görg and M. Neumann have subsequently advanced religious historical and iconographic arguments in favor of his proposal.[31] Such supporting arguments cannot make up for the phonological problems with this etymology, however. In all of the other secure Egyptian loanwords into Hebrew, Egyptian *d* corresponds to *ṭ* not *d*.[32] Furthermore, *šite*, the Coptic reflex of *šdj*, suggests that *šdj* was originally pronounced *šidVy*.[33] Depending on the quality of the final vowel, the Hebrew outcome of such a form would be **šēṭÎ*.

M. Noth argued that *šadday* means 'the strong one' on the basis of the Arabic adjective *šadīd* 'strong'.[34] Such a derivation is phonologically unlikely, however. Arabic *šadīd* comes from the root **šdd*, which would appear in Hebrew as **šdd*, not *šdd*. As in the case of *śādê*, Noth must posit a systematic mispointing of the Masoretic text or suggest that *šadday* is a loanword from a language where *s* and *ś* merged in order to account for this mismatch in sibilants. Moreover, this derivation cannot easily explain the final *–y* of *šadday*. In Hebrew, final *–ay* could be either the dual ending *–ay* or the alternative feminine ending of the same form, but neither morpheme suits the name of a male deity.

Finally, F. Schwally and E. Lipiński argue that *šadday* is related to the Aramaic verb *šdy* 'to throw, to rain' and means either 'the thrower (of lightning)' or 'the rainmaker'.[35] Initially, this etymology seems promising. Syriac even contains a *nomen agentis* of *šdy*, which takes the form *šaddāy* and means 'one who throws stones or seeds'. Upon closer inspection, however, this etymology appears less plausible. The Aramaic root *šdy* does not develop the meanings 'to rain' until

30 D. B. Redford, *A Study of the Biblical Story of Joseph* (*Gen 37-50*) (Leiden, 1970), p. 129 n. 1.

31 M. Görg, "Šaddaj—Ehrenrettung einer Etymologie", *BN* 16 (1981), pp. 13-15; M. Neumann, "(El) Šadday—A Plea for an Egyptian Derivation of the God and Its Name", *WdO* 46 (2016), pp. 244-263.

32 Compare *ʾabnēṭ* < *bnd.w* 'sash', *ṭabbaʿat* < *dbʿ.t* < *ḏbʿ.t* 'seal ring', *ṭeneʾ* < *dnỉ*(*.t*) 'basket', and *šiṭṭâ* < *šnd.t* < *šnḏ.t* 'acacia'. See also Y. Muchiki, *Egyptian Loanwords and Proper Names in Northwest Semitic* (SBLDS 173; Atlanta, 1999), p. 264.

33 J. P. Allen, *The Egyptian Language: An Historical Study* (Cambridge, 2013), p. 26.

34 M. Noth, *Die israelitischen Personennamen im Rahmen der geimsemitischen Namengebung* (BWANT 3; Hildesheim, 1966), pp. 130-131.

35 F. Schwally, "Lexicalische Studien", *ZDMG* 52 (1898), p. 136; E. Lipiński, "Shadday, Shadrapha et le dieu Satrape", *ZA* 8 (1995), pp. 249-250.

late in the history of Aramaic and then only in Jewish Babylonian Aramaic.[36] If *šadday* came from the root *šdy*, it would simply mean 'the thrower', an improbable name for a deity.[37]

III A New Etymology

The previously proposed etymologies of *šadday* all suffer from serious linguistic problems including the inability to explain the gemination of the medial consonant and the reliance on roots containing the wrong sibilant. A more plausible etymology, I argue, is to treat *šadday* as a *qattal* noun from the root *sdy* attested in other West Semitic languages like Ethio-Semitic and Arabic. Such an etymology has one, easily overcome problem: the normal reflex of *qattal* nouns in Biblical Hebrew is *qattāl*—even for III-y roots (e.g., *dawwāy* 'sick')—since singly-closed final syllables undergo tonic lengthening in Biblical Hebrew.[38] As I will demonstrate in the following paragraphs, alternate attempts to explain the morphology of *šadday*—such as deriving *šadday* from **šaddayyu*—fall short, while comparison with the personal name *šāray* suggests that *šadday* does reflect a *qattal* pattern.

There are two possible ways to analyze **šaddayyu*: as a *qattall* noun or as a nisbe form of *šadd* in *–ayy*. Because Biblical Hebrew does not preserve any *qattall* nouns,[39] several scholars derive *šadday* from the putative nisbe form **šaddayyu*.[40] Yet none of the Semitic languages preserve unequivocal evidence for an ending of the form *–ayy*. Jewish Palestinian Aramaic and Akkadian provide the best evidence for this ending, but the data are either ambiguous or susceptible to other explanations. In Jewish Palestinian Aramaic, the nisbe

36 "The Comprehensive Aramaic Lexicon", 5 April 2017, http://cal1.cn.huc.edu/.

37 Semitic divine names usually express something fundamental about the character of the deities that they represent. Some deities, like Shamash 'sun' and Hadad 'lightning', are named after the natural phenomenon they were thought to control; others, like Rakkab-El 'El's charioteer', refer to the social role or attributes of the deity. 'Thrower' *tout court* does not easily fit these categories.

38 J. Huehnergard, "Biblical Hebrew Noun Patterns", in J. M. Hutton and A. D. Rubin (eds.), *Epigraphy, Philology, and the Hebrew Bible: Methodological Perspectives on Philological and Comparative Study of the Hebrew Bible in Honor of Jo Ann Hackett* (SBLANEM 12; Atlanta, 2015), p. 50.

39 J. Fox, *Semitic Noun Patterns* (HSS 52; Winona Lake, 2003), pp. 284-285.

40 Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, p. 56; Weippert, "Šadday (Gottesname)", p. 879; O. Loretz, "Der kanaanäische Ursprung", pp. 421; D. Pardee, *Les textes paramythologiques*, p. 110.

ending regularly takes the form *–ay*, which becomes *–āy* in pause.[41] The alternation of the two forms, however, suggests that the *–ay* ending was either an orthographic variant or the result of an otherwise obscure sound change **āC > aC / _#*. In cuneiform orthography, *–Cāy* and *–CayyV* are written C*a-a-a*, making it impossible to tell whether the nisbe ending was *–āy* or *–ayy*.[42] Most Assyriologists, however, do not reconstruct *–ayy* as a nisbe ending for Akkadian due to the absence of this ending from the other Semitic languages.[43] Overall, the ambiguity of the evidence suggests that the Semitic languages did not possess a nisbe ending in *–ayy*,[44] which means that *šadday* cannot reflect the underlying form **šaddayyu*.

Comparison of *šadday* with the personal name *śāray*, by contrast, suggests that *šadday* could come from a *qattal* pattern. The name *śāray* comes from the primary noun **śarr-* 'prince' with the addition of the alternative feminine suffix *–ay*.[45] In the Masoretic vocalization, *r* cannot be geminated and triggers compensatory lengthening of the preceding vowel (**śarray > śāray*), but gemination can still be seen in the Akkadian cognate *šarratu* 'queen'. *śāray* thus assumes the form of a *qattal* noun from a III-y root, although it was originally composed of two separate morphemes. But, unlike other *qattal* nouns, *śāray* did not undergo tonic lengthening even though its final syllable was only singly closed. The reasons for this linguistic conservatism are unclear. Perhaps the name **śarray* did not take case endings in Pre-Proto-Hebrew, which would have left the final syllable closed and blocked tonic lengthening in the

41 G. Dalman, *Grammatik des Jüdisch-Palästinischen Aramäisch nach den Idiomen des Palästinischen Talmud, des Onkelostargum und Prophetentargum und der Jerusalemischen Targume*, 2nd ed. (Leipzig, 1905), p. 193.

42 I. J. Gelb, "Review of W. von Soden and W. Röllig *Das Akkadische Syllabar* (1967)", *Orientalia* 39 (1970), pp. 537, 540-542; R. Borger, *Mesopotamisches Zeichenlexikon*, 2nd ed. (AOAT 305; Münster, 2010), pp. 434-435.

43 See, for example, W. von Soden, *Grundriss der akkadischen Grammatik*, 3rd ed. (AO 33; Rome, 1995), p. 85; J. Hämeen-Antilla, *A Sketch of Neo-Assyrian Grammar* (SAAS 8; Helsinki, 2000), p. 84; B. Kienast, *Historische semitische Sprachwissenschaft* (Wiesbaden, 2001), pp. 173-174.

44 A. M. Butts, "The Etymology and Derivation of the Syriac Adverbial Ending **–ɔʾiθ*", *JNES* 69 (2010), pp. 81-85, comes to a similar conclusion when he reconstructs the Proto-Semitic nisbe endings as **–āy* and **–īy*.

45 This suffix is only productive in Arabic, but it is found vestigially in Hebrew, Syriac, and Ethiopic. Apart from *śāray*, the *–ay* feminine suffix appears in Hebrew as part of the word for 'eleven' *ʿaštê ʿāśār* < **ʿast-ay ʿaśar* according to A. M. Wilson-Wright, "The Word for One in Proto-Semitic", *JSS* (2014), p. 8. It may also appear on the noun *gobay* 'locusts' although John Huehnergard, p.c., interprets this word as an example of the *qutall* nominal pattern.

Masoretic vocalization. In any case, proper nouns are often more linguistically conservative than common ones, so it is not surprising that *śāray* does not appear to follow Masoretic sound rules. Because *šadday* itself is a proper noun, I argue that it too reflects the *qattal* pattern without tonic lengthening.[46]

Comparison with the personal name *śāray* suggests that *šadday* is an anomalous *qattal* noun from the root *sdy*. In Biblical Hebrew, the *qattal* pattern usually serves as the *nomen agentis* or denotes habitual action, so *šadday* most likely comes from a verbal root.[47] Of all the Semitic verbal roots in *sdy*, Ethio-Semitic and Arabic *sdy* preserves the most plausible meaning for a divine name.[48] In the Ethio-Semitic languages Ge'ez and Tigrē, this root means 'to help, encourage, sustain';[49] the semantics of the Arabic root are more complicated. In the G stem, it means 'to stretch one's arm(s) or leg(s)' or 'to move randomly', while, in the C stem and occasionally the D stem, it means 'to help, confer a benefit'.[50] The semantic connection between the meaning of *sadā* in the G stem and its meaning in the derived stems is opaque. Perhaps Arabic *sadā* comes from two different verbs that fell together.[51] Or perhaps stretching the arms and legs was a way of signaling for help and the G meaning of the Arabic verb reflects this social convention. In any case, Arabic *sadā* is likely related to Ethio-Semitic *sadaya* since it shares both form and meaning with the Ethio-Semitic forms. As a *qattal* noun from this root, *šadday* means something like 'the helper' or 'the helpful one'.

IV Implications for the Study of Israelite Religious Traditions

The new etymology that I have proposed provides insight into Shadday's character: his worshippers considered him to be a helpful deity. But it cannot clarify the relationship between El and Shadday. In particular, it remains unclear whether Shadday originated as an epithet of El, meaning something

46 The personal name *ḥaggay* may also reflect an anomalous *qattal* pattern.

47 J. Fox, *Semitic Noun Patterns* (HSS 52; Winona Lake, 2003), p. 256.

48 The other possibilities are Ugaritic *šdy* 'to pour', Aramaic *šdy* 'to throw', and Jewish Babylonian Aramaic *šdy* 'to spin, twist thread', all of which reflect original **sdy*.

49 W. Leslau, *Comparative Dictionary of Ge'ez (Classical Ethiopic): Ge'ez-English / English-Ge'ez, with an Index of Semitic Roots* (Wiesbaden, 1991), p. 487; E. Littmann and M. Höffner, *Wörterbuch der Tigrē-Sprach: Tigrē-Deutsch-Englisch* (Wiesbaden, 1962), p. 197.

50 G. W. F. Freytag, *Lexicon Arabico-Latinum* vol. 2 (Halle, 1837), p. 302; A. de Biberstein Kazimirski, *Dictionnaire arabe-français* vol. 2 (Paris, 1860), p. 537; W. E. Lane, *Maddu-l-Kamoos: An Arabic-English Dictionary* vol. 4 (London, 1872), pp. 1335-1336.

51 In this case, the G stem form of the verb could be cognate to Aramaic *šdy* 'to throw'.

like 'El the helper' or 'Helpful El', or whether the two terms were combined at a later period into a compound divine name.[52] Fortunately, religious and literary data can help solve this problem. A comparison of El Shadday in P with the deity El (*ʾil*) in the Ugaritic epics suggests that El Shadday represents a survival of an earlier El tradition and that Shadday originated as an epithet of El highlighting his ability to grant children.

Many of the Ugaritic texts emphasize El's benevolent character and his ability to grant children to childless individuals.[53] In both the Kirta and Aqhat epics, El blesses his devotees and helps them acquire offspring. In the Aqhat epic, El blesses king Danel at the behest of Baal and promises him a son (KTU 1.17.I:34-48), while in the Kirta epic, El appears to Kirta in a dream and tells him how to find a new wife after his wife and children die (KTU 1.14.II:6-III:49). Later, he blesses Kirta in the divine council and states that his new wife will bear eight children: "He blesses [his servant]; El blesses Kirta [the noble, prosp]ers the Pleasant One, Lad of El: 'the w[ife you have tak]en, Kirta, the wife you've taken to your palace, the girl you've brought to your court, seven children will she bear to you and an eighth she'll add!'" (KTU 1.15:18-25).

In the literary conception of P, *ʾēl šadday* behaves much like El from the Ugaritic texts. Like his Ugaritic counterpart, he confers blessings on his worshippers and helps them acquire offspring.[54] The promise to Abraham in Gen 17:1-22 provides the clearest example of this behavior, but the other references to El Shadday in P fit this pattern as well. In Gen 17, El Shadday appears to the elderly and childless Abraham and promises him that his wife Sarah will bear a son (Gen 17:16).[55] Subsequent episodes emphasize El Shadday's ability to provide abundant offspring as expressed in the verbal pair *pry* and *rby*.[56] In Gen 28:3, for example, Isaac invokes El Shadday to bless Jacob, stating: "May El Shadday bless you and make you fruitful and numerous so that you become a company of nations." Later, Jacob encounters El Shadday at Luz, where he fulfills this blessing: "Be fruitful and numerous. A nation and a company of nations will come from you and kings shall issue from your loins" (Gen 35:11).

52 It is even possible that *ʾēl šadday* meant 'the god Shadday'. Compare, for example, the use of *ʾlhʾ* at Elephantine in phrases like 'the priests of Yahû, the god' (*khnyʾ zy yhw ʾlhʾ*; TAD A4 3:1).

53 J. A. Hackett, "Can a Sexist Model Liberate Us? Ancient Near Eastern 'Fertility' Goddesses", *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 5 (1989), p. 69.

54 N. Fredman, "The Divine Name *E-l Shad-dai*: He Who Created Families", *Dor le Dor* 9 (1980), pp. 73-74, also notes this pattern but does not connect it to the Ugaritic epics.

55 Unlike the blessings of Ugaritic El, El Shadday's blessings also include the promise of land.

56 In the P narrative, he shares this ability with *ʾĕlōhîm* (Gen 1:28; 9:1), but only El Shadday provides individual children.

And, on his deathbed, Jacob tells Joseph about this encounter and reports that El Shadday said: "I am about to make you fruitful and numerous and make you into a company of nations" (Gen 48:4). Outside of this cycle of blessing promised, blessing fulfilled, and blessing recounted, Jacob invokes El Shadday to ensure the safe return of his sons Benjamin and Judah from Egypt: "may El Shadday grant you mercy before the man so that he sends your other brother and Benjamin" (Gen 43:14). This episode shows that El Shadday not only provided children but was thought to protect them as well.

Even the reference to El Shadday in Gen 49:25, which stands outside P, fits this pattern.[57] In this verse, Jacob invokes El Shadday to confer "blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep, lying beneath, blessings of breasts and womb" (*birkōt šāmayim mē-ʿāl birkōt tĕhôm rōbeṣet tāḥat birkōt šādayim wā-rāḥam*) upon Joseph. The "blessings of breast and womb" in this verse most likely refer to human fertility,[58] which suggests that the author of this verse considered El Shadday to be an effective guarantor of human reproduction.

The parallels between the depiction of El in the Ugaritic epics and the representation of El Shadday in P and Genesis 49:25 suggest that the name El

57 J. van Seters, "The Religion of the Patriarchs in Genesis", *Biblica* 61 (1980), pp. 226-227, argues that the blessing of Joseph in Gen 49:22-26 is a late priestly adaptation of Deut 33:13-17. Yet the two poems are sufficiently different to rule out direct literary dependence. Other than the similar formulae "heaven // deep below" (*šāmayim … təhôm rōbeṣet tāḥat* Gen 49:25; *šāmayim … təhôm rōbeṣet tāḥat* Deut 33:13), "eternal mountains // everlasting hills" (*harərê ʿad* [emended from *hôray ʿad*] … *gibʿôt ʿôlām* Gen 49:26; *harərê-qedem … gibʿôt ʿôlām* Deut 33:15), and "may these come upon the head of Joseph, upon the brow of the chosen one of his brother" (*tihyên lə-rō(ʾ)š yôsēp û-lə-qodqōd nəzîr ʾeḥāyw* Gen 49:26; *tābô(ʾ)tâ lə-rō(ʾ)š yôsēp û-lə-qodqōd nəzîr ʾeḥāyw* Deut 33:16), the two poems have little in common. More recently, Karin Schöpflin, "Jakob segnet seinen Sohnen: Genesis 49,1-28 im Kontext von Josefs- und Vätergeschichte", *ZAW* 115 (2003), pp. 501-523, has argued that the blessing of Joseph is an independent poem which dates before the fall of the Northern Kingdom.

58 B. Vawter, "The Canaanite Background of Gen. 49", *CBQ* 17 (1955), pp. 16-17; D. N. Freedman, "'Who is Like Thee Among the Gods?' The Religion of Early Israel", in P. D. Miller, P. D. Hanson, and S. D. McBride (eds.), *Ancient Israelite Religion: Essays in Honor of Frank Moore Cross* (Philadelphia, 1987), pp. 325-25; and M. S. Smith, *The Early History of God: Yahweh and the Other Deities in Ancient Israel*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, 2002), pp. 50-53, have suggested that "breasts and womb" in this verse could refer to Asherah in her role as a fertility goddess. Such an identification is unlikely for two reasons. First, "breasts and womb" is not attested as an epithet of Asherah at Ugarit or anywhere else in the ancient Near East, although KTU 1.23:23-24 does portray Asherah as a divine wet nurse and KTU 1.6.2:27, 1.15.2:6, and 1.23.16 refer to Anat and Asherah as *rḥm*(*y*). Second, it is the male god El who oversees human fertility at Ugarit, not Asherah.

Shadday is associated with an earlier El tradition in these texts.[59] This, in turn, suggests that Shadday originated as an epithet of El that served to highlight his benevolent qualities. In this regard, Shadday resembles the title *ltpn il d pid* "sagacious El, the kind-hearted," which appears fifteen times in the Ugaritic corpus (e.g., KTU 1.4.4:58; 1.6.3:4, 10, 14; 1.16.5:23) and is often associated with El's oversight of human fertility (e.g., KTU 1.15.2:13-14))[60] El Shadday thus represents a form of the deity El who corresponded to the daily routines of family life such as family planning and inheritance. Over time, Shadday came to be used as separate name for El, but the full title survived in Ugaritic, P, Ezek 10:5, and the Septuagint, Samaritan, and Peshitta versions of Gen 49:25, and left traces in the poetic parallelism between *ʾēl* and *šadday* in the Hebrew Bible and *ʾlhn* and *šdyn* in the Deir 'Alla plaster text.

Biblical scholars have long argued that Yahweh absorbed the attributes of El early in the history of Israelite religions and, as a result, independent manifestations of El did not survive apart from Yahweh.[61] The case of El Shadday challenges this long-held notion. The P source uses the name El Shadday to refer to Yahweh prior to the revelation at the burning bush in Exod 3. This usage suggests that—for the Priestly author at least—El Shadday and Yahweh were one and the same deity.[62] But at the same time it points an earlier *religious* distinction between El Shadday and Yahweh, especially given the distinctive portrayal of El Shadday and the use of El Shadday and Yahweh in separate narrative domains within P. In the literary conception of P, El Shadday is the god of the patriarchs and ensures the continuity of their lineage by promoting human fertility and providing his worshippers with offspring. He is a familial god.[63] Yahweh, by contrast, is the god of the fledgling Israelite nation and helps

59 It is unclear why other biblical texts that employ the name El Shaddday do not preserve relics of this tradition.

60 A. Rahmouni, *Divine Epithets in the Ugaritic Alphabetic Texts* (trans. J. N. Ford; HdO 93; Leiden, 2007), p. 204. For this translation of *ltpn il d pid* see J. Tropper and H. Hayajneh, "El, der scharfsinnige und verständige Gott: Ugaritisch *ltpn il d pid* im Lichte der arabischen Lexeme *laṭīf* und *fu'ād*", *Orientalia* 72 (2003), pp. 159-182.

61 Cross, *Canaanite Myth*, pp. 71-75; Smith, *The Early History of God*, p. 35. In a future article titled "Bethel and the Persistence of El: Evidence for the Survival of El as an Independent Deity in the Jacob Cycle and 1 Kings 12:25–30," I plan to challenge this argument by demonstrating that an independent cult of El survived at Bethel until monarchic times.

62 K. Schmid, "The Quest for 'God': Monotheistic Arguments in the Priestly Texts of the Hebrew Bible," in B. Pongratz-Lesiten, *Reconsidering the Concept of Revolutionary Monotheism* (Winona Lake, 2011), pp. 279, 285.

63 So R. Albertz, *Religionsgeschichte Israels in alttestamentlicher Zeit* vol. 1 (Göttingen, 1992), p. 56, but compare Knauf, "Shadday", p. 751.

his followers by providing all the necessities of a polity including military victory (Exod 14:1-4, *8-10, 15-17, *21-23, *26-29), and a centralized cult (Exod 25-31, 45-40). He is a national god. P thus preserves relics of earlier religious traditions about Yahweh and El Shadday while, at the same time, subsuming these relics into a monotheistic framework.

Ps 68:14 could support this earlier distinction between Yahweh and El Shadday. This verse belongs to a larger unit within Ps 68 which describes Yahweh (called *ʾĕlōhîm*[64] and *ʾădōnāy* in the rest of the psalm) bringing rain and routing his worshippers' enemies:

> My Lord gives the command. The bearers of good news are a great company:
> "The leaders of the armies, they flee, they flee!"
> The grazing places at home divide the spoil,
> though, they lie among the sheepfolds—
> the wings of a dove covered with silver, its pinions with green gold.

ʾădōnāy yitten-ʾōmer ha-məbaśśərôt ṣābā(ʾ) rāb
malkê ṣəbā(ʾ)ôt yiddōdûn yiddōdûn
û-nəwat bayit təḥalleq šālāl
ʾim-tiškəbûn bên šəpattāyim
kanpê yônâ neḥpâ bak-kesep wə-ʾebrôtêhā bî-raqraq ḥārûṣ
PS 68:12-13

Verse 14 describes the final act of this battle: *bĕ-pārēš šadday mĕlākîm bāh tašlēg bĕ-ṣalmôn* "When Shadday scattered generals on it, *tašlēg* on Zalmon." The meaning of this verse—and the potential distinction between Shadday and Yahweh—hinges on the meaning of the verb *tašlēg*. In terms of morphology, *tašlēg* is either a 3fs or 2ms hiphil jussive/preterit from the root *šlg* 'to snow'.[65] Most translations of this verse, including the Septuagint and Vulgate,

64 Ps 68 belongs to the Elohistic Psalter, a collection of Psalms where the common noun *ʾĕlōhîm* replaces the divine name Yahweh. Near parallel passages in Ps 68 and Jud 5 provide additional evidence for this replacement. Compare, for example, Jud 5:5 and Ps 68:9: "before Yahweh, the one of Sinai, before Yahweh, the god of Israel" *mip-pənê yhwh zeh sînay mip-pənê yhwh ʾĕlōhê yiśrāʾēl* (Jud 5:5) and "before God, the one of Sinai, before God, the god of Israel" *mip-pənê ʾĕlōhîm zeh sînay mip-pənê ʾĕlōhîm ʾĕlōhê yiśrāʾēl* (Ps 68:9).

65 In the Central Semitic languages, the short form of the prefix conjugation expressed the jussive and occasionally the preterit. In Hebrew, however, the preterit meaning of the short prefix conjugation was largely restricted to syntactic environments following a conjunction, although it occasionally occurs by itself in poetry as it does here. J. A. Hackett,

render *tašlēg* as an impersonal verb meaning 'it snowed'.[66] Such a rendering is not consistent with typical Hebrew usage, however. When other verbs of precipitation (*mṭr, gšm, nwp*) appear in the C stem, they do not have an impersonal meaning, but instead take a deity as an explicit or implicit subject. In Gen 7:4, for example, God informs Noah that "I will cause it to rain (*mamṭîr*) upon the earth for forty days and forty nights", while in Jer 14:22, the prophet asks rhetorically, "Can the idols of the nations cause it to rain (*magšīmîm*)?" And a mere four verses before Ps 68:14, the psalmist states, "You caused rain to drip freely (*gešem nədābôt tānîp*), O God." Based on these parallels, we would expect *tašlēg* to have a causative meaning and take a deity as its subject. I argue therefore that *tašlēg* is a 2ms causative form of *šlg* and signals a shift in person from Shadday to a 2nd person divine addressee: "When Shadday scattered generals on it, you caused it to snow on Zalmon." The identity of this 2nd person addressee is unclear, but given the references to Yahweh in previous verses—at least in earlier versions of the psalm before the name Elohim replaced Yahweh—it is possible that Yahweh was the implicit subject of *tašlēg*.[67] If this interpretation proves accurate, then this verse distinguishes between Shadday and Yahweh and attests to a different, potentially militaristic role for Shadday in the religions of Israel.[68] He would be depicted helping Yahweh rout the leaders of Israel's enemies during a battle on Mt. Zalmon. This could suggests that El Shadday was also thought to provide help in battle, an attribute which may shed light on the enigmatic phrase "for the name of El on the day of w[ar] …" (*lšm ʾl bym mlḥ*[*mt*]) in Kuntillet 'Ajrud inscription 4.2:6.[69]

"*Yaqtul* and a Ugaritic Incantation Text", in R. Hasselbach and N. Pat-El (eds.), *Language and Nature: Papers Presented to John Huehnergard on the Occasion of His 60th Birthday* (Chicago, 2012), p. 111.

66 Theoretically, *šlg* could have been an a ~ i class verb that was secondarily reinterpreted as a hiphil due to the similarity between the prefix form of this verb class and the hiphil prefix form (both *yaqtil*). In the history of the Hebrew language, this similarity led to the creation of several secondary hiphil verbs, such as *hiškîm*. It is unknown, however, whether *šlg* originally belonged to the a ~ i verb class. Most of the languages that preserve a verbal form of the root *tlg* only preserve the suffix form of the verb or its equivalent.

67 It is also possible that the switch in person reflects a direct address to Shadday, but it would be strange to switch person between two coordinated clauses.

68 Unfortunately, the dating of Ps 68 is highly disputed, with estimates ranging from the 12th century BCE to the exilic period, so it is unclear how long the distinction between Yahweh and Shadday survived. It is beyond the scope of this paper to decide between these different options.

69 Ze'ev Meshel, *Kuntillet 'Ajrud: An Iron Age II Religious Site on the Judah-Sinai Border* (Jerusalem, 2012), p. 110.

V Conclusion

In this paper, I have proposed a new etymology for the divine name (El) Shadday and sought to clarify the role of this deity in the religions of ancient Israel through comparative linguistic and religious means. In my estimation, *šadday* is a *nomen agentis* from the root *sdy* 'to help, encourage' meaning 'the helper' or 'the helpful'. Comparison of El Shadday in P with El in the Ugaritic epics suggests that Shadday originated as an epithet of El, which served to highlight his benevolent qualities much like the Ugaritic epithet *ltpn ỉl d pỉd* 'benevolent El, the kind-hearted'. Like Ugaritic El, El Shadday conferred blessings on his devotees and provided them with children. He thus represents a form of El who was associated with the daily routines of family life in the religious traditions of ancient Israel.

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