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SATAN שָׂטָן Σατάν, Σατανᾶς

I. The proper name 'Satan' is an Anglicization of the Hebrew common noun *śātān*. The noun *śātān* has been related etymologically to a variety of geminate, third weak and hollow verbs in Hebrew and in the cognate languages. These proposals include verbs meaning 'to stray' (Ar šṭṭ, Heb šṭṭ, Eth šṭṭ, Akk *šātu* 1 and Syr *šṭ*), 'to revolt/fall away' (Aram swṭ, Mandaean swṭ and Heb swṭ), 'to be unjust' (Ar šṭṭ), 'to burn' (Syr swṭ and Ar šṭṭ) and 'to seduce' (Eth šṭṭ and Heb šṭṭ). These proposals require discounting the *nūn* of the noun *śātān* as part of the root, and attributing it to an **-ān* suffix which has been appended to a nominal base. There are two reasons why it is unlikely that the *nūn* should be attributed to an **-ān* suffix. Firstly, the **-ān* suffix when appended to a nominal base normally results in an abstract noun, an adjective or a diminutive. The noun *śātān* fits none of these categories. Secondly, in Hebrew **-ān* is typically realized as *-ōn*. There are exceptions, but among the standard conditions proposed to explain the atypical retention of **-ān*, none apply to the noun *śātān*. Therefore it is preferable to regard the *nūn* as part of the root and analyze *śātān* as a noun of the common *qātāl* pattern. The fact that the geminate, third weak and hollow verbs listed above have meanings that are arguably appropriate to Satan should be viewed as resulting from interaction between popular etymological speculation and developing traditions about Satan.

The root **šṭn* is not evidenced in any of

the cognate languages in texts that are prior to or contemporary with its occurrences in the Hebrew Bible. KB (918) incorrectly cites an alleged Akk *śātānu*, but the forms to which KB refers are *šṭ* lexical particples of *etēnu/etēnu* (AHW, 260). Thus the meaning of the noun *śātān* must be determined solely on the basis of its occurrences in the Hebrew Bible, where it occurs in nine contexts. In five it refers to human beings and in four it refers to celestial beings. When it is used of human beings it is not a proper name, but rather a common noun meaning 'adversary' in either a political or military sense, or 'accuser' when it is used in a legal context. In the celestial realm there is only one context in which *śātān* might be a proper name. In the other three contexts it is a common noun, meaning 'adversary' or 'accuser'. [P.L.D.]

Σατάν and Σατανᾶς are transliterations of the Heb *śātān* (cf. 3 Kgdms 11:14,23; Sir 21:27) or Aram *śātānā* and mean 'adversary'. In such instances 8HevXIIgr and the LXX translate the Hebrew expression with *Diabolos* → Devil, meaning 'the Slanderer'. *Ho Satanās* (rarely used without article) thus designates the opponent of →God. In the NT *Satanās* and *Diabolos* can refer to the same supernatural being (cf. Rev 20:2) and can thus be interchanged (cf. Mark 1:13 and Luke 4:2). This highest evil being can also be referred to as *ho ponēros* ('the evil one', cf. Matt 13:19) and *ho peirazōn* ('the tempter' – cf. Matt 4:3; 1 Thess 3:5). [C.B.]

II. Although the noun *śātān* has no cognates in texts that are prior to or contemporary with the biblical texts in which it occurs, there are in Akkadian three legal terms meaning 'accuser' that can have both terrestrial and celestial referents. These terms are *bēl dabābi*, *bēl dini* and *ākil karši*. Each can refer either to a human legal opponent or to a deity acting as an accuser in a legal context, and thus each term functionally parallels the noun *śātān* even though there is no etymological relationship. For example, the deities Nanay and Mār-Biti are charged to guarantee an agreement sworn in their names. Should anyone attempt to alter the

agreement, these deities were to assume the role of legal adversaries (EN.MEŠ *di-ni-su* [VAS I 36 iii.4]). Standing behind this notion of deities playing legal roles with respect to earthly happenings is the well-known idea of the divine →council, acting as a judiciary body.

III. The noun *šātān* is used of a divine being in four contexts in the Hebrew Bible. In Numbers 22:22-35 Balaam, a non-Israelite seer, sets out on a journey, an act that incurs God's wrath. God responds by dispatching his celestial messenger, the *mal'āk yhwē*, described as a *šātān*, who stations himself on the road upon which Balaam is travelling. Balaam is ignorant of the sword-wielding messenger but his donkey sees the danger and twice avoids the messenger, for which Balaam beats the animal. The messenger then moves to a place in the road where circumvention is impossible. The donkey lays down, and is again beaten. At this point Yahweh gives the donkey the ability to speak, and she asks why Balaam has beaten her. A conversation ensues and then Yahweh uncovers Balaam's eyes so that he can see the sword-wielding messenger, and Balaam falls down to the ground. The messenger asks why Balaam struck his donkey and then asserts that he has come forth as a *šātān* because Balaam undertook his journey hastily. The messenger states that, had the donkey not seen him and avoided him, he would have killed Balaam. Balaam then admits his guilt, saying that he did not know that the messenger was standing on the road, and offers to turn back if the messenger judges the journey to be wrong. The messenger gives Balaam permission to continue, but adjures him to speak only as instructed.

Prior to the work of Gross (1974) most scholars attributed the above passage to the J source, which would have made it the earliest context in which the noun *šātān* is applied to a celestial being. However, since Gross' study the tendency has been to date the passage to the sixth century BCE or later. With the exception of the above story, which obviously ridicules Balaam, he is characterized in an extremely positive way

in Num 22-24. Outside those chapters, the first clear indications that he is being viewed negatively are attributable to P (Num 31:16) and Dtr² (Josh 13:22), both of which are typically dated to the sixth century. Thus the available evidence suggests that Balaam was viewed positively in earlier, epic tradition, but negatively in later sources. Given that the story under discussion views Balaam negatively, the story most likely stems from a later source.

As can be readily seen, the heavenly being who acts as a *šātān* in Numbers 22 has very little in common with later conceptualizations of Satan. He is Yahweh's messenger, not his archenemy, and he acts in accordance with Yahweh's will rather than opposing it. Indeed, Yahweh's messenger here, as elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, is basically an hypostatization of the deity. Hence, as KLUGER (1967:75) has remarked, the 'real' *šātān*/adversary in Numbers 22 is none other than Yahweh himself.

The opening chapter of the book of Job describes a gathering of the →'sons of God', i.e. a meeting of the divine →council. Present at this gathering is a being called *haššātān*: this is the common noun *šātān* preceded by the definite article. The definite article makes it virtually certain that *šātān* is not a proper name (contra B. WALTKE & M. O'CONNOR, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* [Winona Lake 1990] 249). Most scholars translate *haššātān* as 'the Accuser', which they understand to be a title that describes a specific role or office. However, it should be noted that no analogous office has been convincingly identified in the legal system of ancient Israel, nor do the divine councils of the surrounding cultures include a deity whose specific assignment is to be an accuser. Some scholars have argued that professional informers/accusers existed in the early Persian period, and that the *šātān* in Job 1 and 2 is modelled on these informers. The evidence for this is inconclusive. Given the uncertainty of the existence of adducible legal parallels, another possibility would be to understand the force of the definite article

differently. For example, in Gen 14:13 a certain person who has escaped from a battle is referred to as *happālit*. The precise identity of the character is not important to the story. What is important for the narrative is the character's current and temporary status of escapee. The force of the definite article is to deemphasize precise identity and focus on the status of the character as it is relevant to the narrative plot (cf. Ezek 24:26; 33:21 and P. JOÜON, *Grammaire de l'Hébreu biblique* [Rome 1923] 137n). Attributing this force to the definite article of *haššātān* in Job 1:6 would lead us to understand that a certain divine being whose precise identity is unimportant and who has the current and temporary status of accuser is being introduced into the narrative. The advantage of this interpretation is that it is consistent with known Israelite (and Mesopotamian) legal practice in that 'accuser' was a legal status that various people temporarily acquired in the appropriate circumstances, and not a post or office.

When Yahweh asks the *šātān* whether he has given any thought to the exemplary and indeed perfect piety of Job, the *šātān* links Job's piety with the prosperity he enjoys as a result. If the pious inevitably prosper, how do we know that their piety is not motivated by sheer greed? Given that God is responsible for the creation and maintenance of a world order in which the righteous reap reward, what the *šātān* is in fact challenging is God's blueprint for divine-human relations. In other words, the *šātān* is questioning the validity of a moral order in which the pious unfailingly prosper. The test of true righteousness would be worship without the promise of reward. Yahweh accepts the *šātān*'s challenge: he permits the *šātān* to sever the link between righteousness and reward. Although Job is blameless, he is made to suffer, losing first his wealth and his children, and eventually his own good health. In the end, a suffering and impoverished Job nevertheless bends his knee to a god whose world order is devoid of retributive justice, thus proving the *šātān* wrong.

In Job, the *šātān* seems clearly to be a divine being, although most scholars would agree that *šātān* is not a proper name. Though he challenges God at a very profound level, he is nonetheless subject to God's power and, like Yahweh's messenger in Num 22, acts on Yahweh's instructions. He is certainly not an independent, inimical force.

The book of Job does not contain references to historical events, and hence dating it is problematic. Most modern scholars read it as a response to theological problems raised by the Babylonian exile and consequently date it to the latter half of the sixth century BCE.

In a vision of the prophet Zechariah (Zech 3), the high priest Joshua is portrayed as standing in the divine council, which is functioning as a tribunal. He stands in front of Yahweh's messenger, with *haššātān* on his right-hand side to accuse him. The messenger rebukes the *šātān*, and orders that Joshua's filthy garments be removed and replaced with clean clothing. In the name of Yahweh the messenger promises Joshua continuing access to the divine council in return for obedience.

As in Job 1 and 2, the noun *šātān* appears with the definite article, and hence is not a proper name. The presence of the definite article also raises the same question as to whether it denotes an office of Accuser in the divine council. See the above section on Job 1 and 2 for a discussion of this problem. In order to understand Zechariah's vision and the *šātān*'s role in it, it is necessary to address the historical context of the vision. While the vision cannot be dated exactly, the general context of Zechariah's prophecy was the Jerusalem community after the return from exile around the time of the rebuilding of the temple (ca. 520 BCE). Those scholars who see this community as basically unified view Joshua as a symbol of the community and interpret his change of clothes as symbolizing a change in the community's status from impure to pure, or sinful to forgiven, in the eyes of Yahweh. In this interpretation, the *šātān* is understood as

objecting to the change in the community's status: Yahweh wishes to pardon his people, and the *šātān* is opposed. However, this interpretation overlooks evidence that the restoration community was deeply divided over cultic issues, including the issue of the priesthood (HANSON 1979:32-279). When this fact is taken into account it becomes unlikely that Joshua should be understood as a cypher for the whole community. Rather, the vision reflects a rift in the community over the issue of whether Joshua should become the high priest. Zechariah's vision supports Joshua, and implicitly claims that the matter has been decided in Joshua's favour in the divine council itself, with Yahweh taking Joshua's side. In this interpretation, the *šātān* can be described as a projection into the celestial realm of the objections raised by the losing side. If this interpretation is the correct one, then the noun *šātān* is here associated with a division that is internal to the community in question. This interpretation would add support to PAGELS' (1991) theory that the notion of Satan developed among Jews who wished to denounce other Jews whose opinions they did not share.

As in Num 22 and Job 1 and 2, *šātān* in Zech 3 is not a proper name. In Zech 3 the *šātān* is clearly not Yahweh's messenger; indeed, the *šātān* and Yahweh's messenger are on opposing sides of the issue of whether Joshua should become the high priest. Hence Num 22 and Zech 3 use the noun *šātān* to describe different divine beings. It is unclear whether the *šātān* of Job 1 and 2 is the same celestial being as the *šātān* of Zech 3. If *haššātān* should be translated 'the Accuser' with the understanding that there is a post or office of Accuser in the divine council, then it is most likely that the same divine being is envisaged in both contexts. However, if the definite article carries the connotations outlined above, then it is quite possible that Job 1 and 2 and Zech 3 do not have the same divine being in view.

In 1 Chr 21:1 the noun *šātān* appears without the definite article. The majority of

scholars therefore understand *šātān* to be the proper name Satan, though some maintain that the noun refers to a human adversary and others argue that it refers to an unnamed celestial adversary or accuser.

1 Chr 21:1-22:1 is paralleled in the Deuteronomistic History by 2 Sam 24. Both passages tell the story of a census taken during the reign of David, an ensuing plague, and an altar built on the threshing floor of Araunah/Ornan (→Varuna). In 2 Sam 24 the story begins, "and the anger of Yahweh again burned against Israel, and he provoked David against them, saying 'Go number Israel and Judah'". The corresponding verse in Chr reads, "And a *šātān*/Satan stood up against Israel and he provoked David to number Israel." In both versions the act of taking a census is adjudged sinful. Given that the Chronicler used the Deuteronomistic History as a source text, it is clear that the Chronicler has altered his source in such a way as to take the burden of responsibility for the sinful census away from Yahweh. Some scholars interpret this to mean that the Chronicler was striving to distance Yahweh from any causal relationship to sin, or to rid Yahweh of malevolent behaviour in general. However, this explanation cannot account for passages such as 2 Chr 10:15 and 18:18-22, where Yahweh is clearly portrayed as sanctioning lies and instigating behaviour that was designed to cause harm. Another explanation notes that, in comparison to the Deuteronomistic History, the Chronicler presents an idealized portrait of David's reign. In general, the Chronicler deletes accounts that cast David in a dubious light. Contrary to this general tendency, the Chronicler was obliged to retain the story of the census plague because it culminated in the erection of what the Chronicler understood to be the altar of the Solomonic Temple, and David's relationship to the Jerusalem Temple is another theme of crucial concern to the Chronicler. Given that the incident could not, therefore, be deleted, the Chronicler modified his source text so that the incident no longer compromised Yahweh's relationship with David, the ideal

king. The Chronicler also shifts blame for the sinfulness of the census from David to Joab by stating that the census was not sinful *per se*, but was sinful because Joab did not take a complete census (1 Chr 21:6-7; 27:24).

It is important to establish why the Chronicler changed his source text because his motivation has implications for how we understand *śātān* in this passage. If the Chronicler was trying to generally distance Yahweh from malevolent behaviour and accomplished this by attributing such behaviour to another divine being, then we can see in this passage the beginnings of a moral dichotomy in the celestial sphere. If Yahweh is no longer thought to be responsible for malevolent behaviour toward humankind, and another divine being capable of acting efficaciously, independent of Yahweh, is, then it would be quite appropriate to translate *śātān* with the proper name Satan. However, if the introduction of *śātān* into the census story has the more circumscribed objective of portraying the relationship between Yahweh and David favourably, and not of ridding Yahweh of malevolent intent more generally, then even if *śātān* in this passage is a proper name, the term is still a long way from connoting Satan, God's evil archenemy.

Although there is no consensus position regarding the dating of Chronicles, the most persuasive arguments favour dating the first edition of the Chronicler's history to ca. 520 BCE. If this is correct, then there are two additional reasons against translating *śātān* as a proper name. Firstly, Zechariah, a contemporary, does not use *śātān* as a proper name. Secondly, the earliest texts that indisputably contain the proper name Satan date to the second century BCE (*Ass. Mos.* 10:1; *Jub* 23:29; possibly *Sir* 21:27), which would mean that more than 300 years separate the Chronicler's text from the first certain references to Satan.

In summary, the four Hebrew Bible texts that mention a celestial *śātān* are most probably dateable to the sixth century BCE or later, and it is clear that the *śātān* envisaged in *Zech* 3 is not the same divine being who

acts as a *śātān* in *Num* 22. Moreover, in none of the four texts is *śātān* indisputably used as a proper name. Given these data, it is difficult to maintain, as many scholars have, that we can see in the Hebrew Bible a developing notion of Satan. First of all, if Satan is not mentioned in the Hebrew Bible, then the statement that the Hebrew Bible evidences a developing notion of Satan is obviously anachronistic. Secondly, the statement is difficult to maintain because at least two of the texts clearly refer to different divine beings. And thirdly, if the texts are relatively closely clustered in terms of date, then there is less likelihood that they would evidence conceptual development.

IV. In Hebrew texts from the Second Temple Period the use of *śātān* is limited. The sinner seeks forgiveness from →Yahweh, who is asked to prevent the rule of Satan or an unclean spirit (cf. 11 QPs^a *Plea* 19:15). Satan's power threatens human beings. Accordingly the time of salvation is marked by the absence of Satan and evil (4 QDibHam^a 1-2, IV, 12; cf. *Jub.* 23:29; 40:9; 46:2; 50:5). Satan is standing among the winds (3 *Enoch* 23:16). The council of the Qumran community had a curse in which they imprecated that satan with his hostile design and with his wicked spirits be damned (cf. 4 QBer^{a,b}). In the LXX 'Satan' as a divine name possibly occurs in *Sir* 21:27: "When the ungodly curses Satan, he curses his own life."

Being a transliteration from the Hebrew or Aramaic and almost lacking in the LXX, the Greek form of the name "Satan" is rarely used in Jewish literature of the Second Temple Period (cf. *T. 12 Patr.*, *T. Job* and *Life of Adam and Eve* 17:1). *Ho Diabolos* (Devil), preferred by *Life of Adam and Eve*, Philo and Josephus, is more common. "Satan" and →"Belial" are used to refer to the same superterrestrial being (cf. the Dead Sea Scrolls; *Mart. Isa.* 2:1.4.7 [= Gk 3:2; 3:11]) and "Satan" and "Devil" are synonymous in their reference (cf. *T. Job.* 3:3.6 and 16:2 + 27:1 with 17:1 + 26:6). The incidental use of *Satanās* in some Greek texts, such as the NT, is a clear Semitism.

According to the various NT authors Satan (in Q the Devil) rules over a Kingdom of darkness. Satan is thus depicted as major opponent of →Jesus and tries to deceive him (Mark 1:13). As the opposing force to God, the Synoptic Tradition identifies Satan with Beelzebul, the principal of the devils (Luke 11:15-19 // Matt 12:24-27 // Mark 3:22-23.26). Jesus defeats his power by exorcizing →demons and curing the ill and thus inaugurates the reign of God which ends Satans' rule (Matt 12:28 // Luke 11:20). For Luke, Jesus' ministry is the time of salvation and thus puts a temporary end to the reign of Satan (10:18). The conversion of the gentiles leads them from darkness to light, from the power of Satan to God (Acts 26:18). Apostates are handed back to Satan (1 Cor 5:5; 1 Tim 1:20 cf. 5:15). As principal of the God-opposing forces, Satan poses a threat to the Christian communities (e.g. Rom 16:20; 2 Cor 2:11). He can still influence the daily life and thwart human plans (1 Thess 2:18). Through demons he causes illness (e.g. Luke 13:16; 2 Cor 12:7); he deceives humans (1 Cor 7:5; Rev 20:3) and is even disguised as an angel of light (2 Cor 11:14). Grave errors of members of the community are ascribed to the influence of Satan. Peter is rebuked as "Satan" intending "the things of man" and thus opposing God (Mark 8:33; Luke 22:31). Judas' betrayal of Jesus (Luke 22:3; John 13:27) and Ananias' fraud (Acts 5:3) for instance, are understood to be caused by Satan. Opposing religiosity, such as the Jewish refusal to accept →Christ (cf. Rev 2:9; 3:9), heresy (cf. Rev 2:24) or cults which endanger the Christian communities in Asia (cf. Rev 2:13) are seen as threats coming from Satan. In Jewish apocalyptic tradition, the eschatological fall of Satan is expected (Rom 16:20; Rev 20:7-10).

In the *post-NT tradition* the →Antichrist is very closely associated with the Devil and Satan. False teaching originates with them (Pol. Phil. 7:1). The "angels of Satan" control the dark way of false teaching and authority, opposing the angels of God, who are guiding to the way of light (Barn. 18:1. On the Apostolic Fathers, Apologists and Gnostics, see RUSSEL 1981).

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