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**Akkadian egerri
and Hebrew bt qwl**

Rabbinic Judaism generally avoided recourse to the divinatory methods which were in vogue in the Hellenistic world.¹ A notable exception to this avoidance was the rabbinic reliance on the bt qwl (= bat qôl). The bt qwl was generally considered a licit form of divine revelation and hence specifically excluded from the biblical prohibition against nhš or divination.²

¹ Dream interpretation was, of course, sanctioned by the bible and consequently never viewed as illicit. The activities of the rabbis in interpreting dreams are well-documented in TB. For some interesting examples see J. Neusner, A History of the Jews of Babylonia, Vol. IV (Leiden, 1969), 341-347. An interest in such matters on the part of Babylonian Jewry is hardly surprising considering the well-known Babylonian predilection for the art. Rabbinic Judaism would naturally be compelled to modify or adapt those features which opposed its basic religious tenets. Thus the Babylonian ilu ša šunāte, "the god of dreams," became bcl hhlwmwt (TB Ber. 10b) or bcl hhlwm (TB San. 30a) "the master of dream(s)" ("The prince who shows dreams at night." -Rashi ad loc). See A. L. Oppenheim, The Interpretation of Dreams in the Ancient Near East (Philadelphia, 1956), 236-237. Similarly, the interest of the Hellenistic world in dream-interpretation accords nicely with native Palestinian Jewish tendencies. Some of the Greek methods of dream-interpretation were appropriated by the Jews and employed as an aid in Biblical exegesis. See S. Lieberman, Hellenism in Jewish Palestine (New York, 1950), 70-78, [hereafter, Hellenism].

² See Lieberman, ibid., 197. The severe rabbinic strictures against nhš recorded in TP Shab. 8d may indicate that the prohibition was honored in the breach as well as in the observance. In actual fact, the bible specifically refers to one aspect of bt qwl as nhš. See below.

Lieberman made a major contribution to the understanding of bt qwl in an appendix to his Hellenism in Jewish Palestine.³ Briefly, it had been clear all the while that the rabbis recognized the revelatory character of various pronouncements which were subsumed under the heading bt qwl. The TP, followed by medieval Jewish commentators,⁴ explained the term as hbrh⁵ meaning, "echo," "reverberation," taking bt qwl as a derivative of an

3 Pages 194-199. E. A. Urbach made an extensive collection of bt qwl references in Tarbiz 18 (1947), 23ff. For the most recent collection see Encyclopedia Talmudit, Vol. 5 (Jerusalem, 1963), s.v. bt qwl. An earlier essay (with references) was written by S. Schechter in Studies in Judaism (Philadelphia, 1958), 62f. (the material there was first presented as a paper in 1899).

4 See Lieberman, op. cit., 194, n. 3. Add the comment of the author of Matnot Kehunah to Ex. R. 29:9. Note the explanation of Tosafot in TB San. 11a: "There is an opinion that they did not hear a voice emanating from heaven. Rather from that (heavenly) voice emanated another. It is like those instances in which a man strikes something forcefully which is audible for a distance. It was this (secondary voice) which they heard. Therefore it is called bt qwl (i. e. product of a voice)."

5 For the meaning "reverberation," "echo," see Mishna Rosh Hashana 3:7. J. J. Finkelstein tentatively connected this late Hebrew word with Akkadian ḥubūru "din," in "Hebrew hbr and Semitic *ḥBR," JBL 75 (1956), 331. There can be little doubt that he was correct. His hesitation was apparently based on errors in M. Jastrow's translations. See M. Jastrow, Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature (New York, 1950), 330, hereafter, M. Jastrow, Dictionary. In fact hbrh clearly attests the meanings "din," "clamor," and "uproar," in addition to "echo," "reverberation." See e.g. TB Yoma 19b; TB Git. 89a. (passim). Morphologically hbrh is even closer to Akkadian ḥabarratum. Note the following OB (Malgium) passage: inūmišu urdam mātum innaphari kalūšu iškun ḥabarratum rabītam "At that time the entire people in its totality came down here, raised a great clamor (and committed a dreadful deed)" ZA 31 (1917-1918), 92:18f. With this cf. the usage of hbrh in the following: myd nplh hbrh b'cyr "A clamor immediately broke out in the city" TP Sheq. 5:2 (48d). As regards the pair ḥubūru/rigmu, see Finkelstein ibid., 329; W. Moran, "Atrahasis and the Biblical Story of the Flood," Biblica 52 (1971), 53ff. See further W. von Soden, "Der hymnisch-epische Dialekt des Akkadischen," ZA 41 (1932), 168. Other synonyms of ḥubūru are ikkillu, šisītu and tanūqātu.

original qwl.⁶ This "reverberation" might be human⁷ or non-human⁸ in origin. It might emanate from heaven,⁹ from Mt. Horeb,¹⁰ from the temple sanctuary,¹¹ or from an

⁶ See n. 4. This interpretation is borne out by Ex. R. 29:9: kš'dm qwr' lhbrh yš lqwlw bt qwl whqwl šhyh ywš' mpy hgbwrh l' hyh lqwlw bt qwl "When a man calls to his fellow his voice has a reverberation, but the voice which was emanating from God had no reverberation." Similarly Shir. R. 1:21 "Just as oil has no reverberation (bt qwl) when poured, so Israel has no reverberation in this world." See M. Jastrow, Dictionary, 200. According to Payne-Smith, Thesaurus Syriacus, col. 596 s.v. "brt ql'" Wis. 17:18 has brt ql' for ḥχṳ. There is at least one instance, however, in which qwl and bt qwl are used interchangeably. TB San. 96b records a midrashic elaboration of the destruction of the first temple in which Nabû-zēr-iddin is addressed first by a ql' and then by a bt ql' with no apparent difference in meaning. The Munich manuscript has npqt (sic!) ql' which the editor emends to npqt bt ql'. See R. Rabinovicz, Variae Lectiones in Mischnam et in Talmud Babylonicum Pars IX (Nürnberg, 1926), 282.

⁷ Mishna Yeb. 16:6; Tosefta Yeb. 14:7 (ed. Zuckermann, 259:15f.). The human voice could be masculine or feminine. See TB Meq. 32a.

⁸ In TB Ber. 3a it is related that R. Yose heard bt qwl šmnhmt kywnh "An oracular voice moaning like a dove." The moaning of a dove is a familiar image. Aramaic mnhmyn renders hmwt in Ezek. 7:16. Biblical Hebrew can express the same concept by gnn (Jer. 48:28) and hgh (Is. 38:14, 59:11; Nah. 2:8). The same simile occurs in Akkadian as kīna summati damāmu. For references, see CAD D, 60. By itself this reference would merely take its place alongside the Biblical and Akkadian similes for sorrow. However another rabbinic passage indicates that the bt qwl could actually be conceived of as sounding like a bird in a context which has nothing to do with sadness. In Petihta 23 of Echah R. we find the following explanation of the enigmatic Eccles. 12:4: wyqwm lqwl hšpr "He rises at the sound of a bird": "This refers to RN the wicked...for eighteen years an oracle (bt qwl) sounded in RN's palace saying, 'O wicked slave! Go and destroy the temple of your master whose children do not obey him!'" That a bt qwl should sound like a bird is in keeping with what we know of the egerrû (see below). Note the following: šumma amēlu egerrî eššûri ina šamê ipulšu "if the oracle of a bird answers a man from heaven..." CAD I/J, 212; see CAD A², 162. An egerrû could come from various animals. See A. L. Oppenheim, "Sumerian: inim.gar, Akkadian: egirru = Greek: kledon," Afo 17 (1954/6), 50, 55. (On Eccles. 12:4, see H. L. Ginsberg, Koheleth (Tel-Aviv-Jerusalem, 1961), 130.

⁹ TB B.M. 59b; TB San. 11a.

¹⁰ Mishna Abot 7:2; TB Ber. 17b.

¹¹ H. S. Horowitz-I. A. Rabin, Mechilta D'Rabbi Išmael (Jerusalem, 1960), 200:13-14.

unspecified source.¹² It could assume various forms.¹³ The contents of the bt qwl were likewise diverse. These could consist of factual information,¹⁴ evaluative statements,¹⁵ legal decisions,¹⁶ predictions of coming events¹⁷ or counsels to individual courses of action.¹⁸ In performing these functions, the bt qwl largely filled the vacuum left by the disappearance of recognized prophecy in the Persian period of Jewish history.¹⁹ Though most of the above had been noted by scholars,²⁰ Lieberman was the first to recognize the significance of the fact that the term bt qwl could be applied to such cases as the following:²¹ R. Yoḥanan wR. Šimon b. Laqiš hww mthmdyn myhmy 'pwvyy dšamuel 'mryn nlk btr šmyCyt bt qwl cbrwn qwmy sydr' šmCyn qlyh dtly' wšamuel mt wsyywmwn wkn hwt lyh "Rabbi Yohanan and Rabbi Šimon b. Laqiš desired to see Samuel personally. They said 'Let us act in accord with a bt qwl oracle.' They passed a study-hall and heard the voice of a child reciting the biblical verse 'Samuel died.'²² They noted the time of the pronouncement and (later) established that this had in fact happened to him."²³ In the above incident the bt qwl

¹² TB Ber. 51b; TB Šhab. 56b; TB Erub. 13b; TB Taanit 24b; TB Hul. 86a.

¹³ See TB A.Z. 17a. I refer here not to the bt qwl designated as such, but rather to the prostitute's interpretation of her flatulence as oracular. This has well-attested Akkadian parallels. See CAD, Š, 107 s.v. šarātu. See further BWL, 260.

¹⁴ Mishna Yeb. 16:6 and TB ad loc., 122a.

¹⁵ See below.

¹⁶ TB Erub. 13b; TB B.M. 59b.

¹⁷ TB Sot. 2a.

¹⁸ TB B.B. 3a; TB San. 96b.

¹⁹ See the sources cited by Lieberman loc. cit.

²⁰ See n. 6.

²¹ TP Šhab. 6:9; p. 8c.

²² 1 Sam. 23:8.

²³ That this is the meaning of sym is evident from TP Sot. 24b: mcšh šyš'w nCrym lhlhm b'ntwky' wšmC Yoḥanan khn gdl bt qwl yš' mbyt qdš hqdšm w'mrt nšhw tlyy' d'għw qrb' b'ntwky' wktbw 'wth hct wntnw bw zmn wkwnnw šb'wth š'ch hyth "It happened that the young men went out to battle Antioch. Yohanan the high priest heard an oracle (bt qwl) emanating from the innermost sanctuary saying, 'The lads who battled Antioch were victorious.' So they wrote down that date and indicated the hour and (later) determined the event had occurred at that very time." The parallel to the above in Tosefta Sot. 13:5 (ed. Zuckermann, 319:8-9) has: wkywnw 't 'wth hš'ch wkywnw šnšhw 'wth š'ch.

and to show how the bt qwl and the inim.gar/egerrû may mutually elucidate each other.²⁹

The terms bt qwl and egerrû are semantically close. egerrû is a loan from the Sumerian compound inim.gar, composed of the elements inim corresponding to Akkadian amatu "word," and gar corresponding to Akkadian šakānu "to put, place." It is thus best translated "utterance."³⁰ bt qwl attests the meanings "echo, reverberation,"³¹ "voice,"³² and possibly "word."³⁴ The respective etymologies of both terms indicate that the respective phenomena are acoustic. This is borne out by the verbs used to describe their operation. Turning first to bt qwl we note that the verbs associated with it are yš', npq (in Aramaic sources) 'mr, šm^c and hšyb.

The following examples are typical:

yš': yšth bt qwl w'mrh lw rš^c bn rš^c bn bnw šl cšw hrš^c
 "A voice rang out and said to him, 'O wicked man (Titus): Son of a wicked man (Vespasian)! Scion of Esau the wicked!'"³⁵

²⁹ The linguistic relationship between inim.gar and egerrû was explained by B. Landsberger in "Das gute Wort," MAOG IV (1929), 315ff. Note that in CT 16:8:280-283 egerrû is associated with ubāna tarāšu. I will show in a later study that this last phrase has a rabbinic parallel in mr'yn 'wtw b'šb^c.

³⁰ See CAD E, 43.

³¹ Cant. R. 1:21: mh hšmn hzh 'yn lw bt qwl kk ysr'l 'yn lhm bt qwl b^cwlm hzh "Just as oil has no reverberation, so too has Israel no reverberation in this world." Wis. 17:18 has b^rt ql' for Greek ἠχώ. See Payne-Smith, Thesaurus Syriacus, col. 596 s.v. b^rt ql'.

³² This is the most common meaning. See, e.g., TB Ber. 12b, 17b, 51b; TB Shab. 33b (bis), 56b; TB Yoma 22b; TB Ket. 103b; TB Git. 55b; TB B.M. 59b; TB B.B. 3a; TB San. 96b. The Arabic šwt corresponds to Syriac b^rt ql' in the Ahiqar story. See F. C. Conybeare, J. Rendel Harris, and Agnes Smith Lewis, The Story of Ahiqar (Cambridge, 1913), 38 (Syriac numeration) and page 1 of the Arabic version.

³⁴ I could find no clear case of this usage. Lieberman infers this meaning from R. Yohanan's homiletical interpretation of dabar in Isa. 30:21. See TB Meg. 32a; Hellenism, 195.

³⁵ TB Git. 56b. Further e.g. Mishna Abot 6:2; TB Ber. 61a; TB Shab. 33b, 56b, 88a; TB R.H. 21b; TB Meg. 3a, 12a; TB Hag. 15a; TB M.Q. 9a; TB Sot. 2a; TB B.M. 59b, 85a, 86b; TB San. 104b; TB Mak. 23b; TB A.Z. 10b, 17a; TB Hul. 87a.

was merely a biblical verse recited by a student in the course of his lesson. For the two rabbis, however, it possessed oracular significance.²⁴ On the basis of this and similar examples, Lieberman concluded that the bt qwl was identical to the Greek φήγη or κληδών.²⁵ Both the Hebrew and Greek phenomena attribute oracular efficacy to "an omen contained in a chance uttering."²⁶ Lieberman noted similar phenomena in other parts of the classical and Hellenistic world.²⁷

A few years later A. L. Oppenheim demonstrated the existence of a close relationship between the Greek φήγη and κληδών phenomena and the Mesopotamian phenomenon known as Sumerian inim.gar and Akkadian egerrû. Though he adduced Biblical and Islamic parallels to the phenomenon,²⁸ Oppenheim ignored Lieberman's work. Consequently, he did not refer to the rabbinic material in his discussion. The obvious inference from the results of the two studies is that the egerrû and the bt qwl are related phenomena. It is the purpose of the present study to draw attention to that relationship

24 A similar story is related ad loc about Bar Kappara who applied a recited verse to himself. It is important to note that though the children involved quote biblical verses, the rabbis do not consult these verses directly. Their method is not to be confused with stichomancy. In TB Hul. 95b the following distinction is made between methods favored by different rabbis: Rab bdyq bmb'r' w Samuel bdyq bspr' w R. Yohanan bdyq bynwq' "Rab consults (the omen offered) by a ferry (mbr' = m^cbr' see M. Jastrow, Dictionary, 725, 813 = Akk. nēberu. For attestations, see AHW, 773). Samuel consults a bible (= stichomancy). R. Yohanan consults a child." The consultation as narrated in TB ad loc was direct. R. Yohanan asked the child: pswk ly pswkyk "Recite your verse." Presumably the verse would be the most recent one taught the child. For other examples see TB Hag. 15a-b. R. Yohanan also taught, "If one rose in the morning and found himself uttering a Biblical verse - this is minor prophecy." (TB Ber. 55b.) Stichomancy survived in the medieval Jewish šimūša. See M. Gaster in J. Hastings (ed.) Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics (New York, 1955), 813.

25 Loc. cit., 194.

26 Ibid., 195.

27 Ibid., 196ff.

28 Op. cit., in n. 8 above, 52-53. His interpretation of 1 Kgs. 20:30 shows that what the rabbis termed bt qwl was termed nhš by the Bible. See n. 2.

npq: npq bt ql' w'mr kl mn dhwh b'škbtyh drby mzwmn hw' lhyy h^cwlm hb' "A voice rang out and said, 'Whoever was present at the death of PN is designated for life in the world to come.'"³⁶

'mr: ywm' hd šm^c hhw' qbr' bt ql' d'mr kl ^cbd' dmryd hšt' mšlh "One day that man heard a voice saying, 'Any slave who rebels now succeeds.'"³⁷

šm^c: šm^cty bt qwl šmnhmt kynh "I heard a voice moaning like a dove."³⁸

hšyb: 'mr R. Yohanan b. Zakkai mh tšwbh hšybtw bt qwl l'wtw rš^c "R. Yohanan ben Zakkai said, 'What answer did the voice give to that wicked man..?'"³⁹

The verbs employed with egerrû indicate that it too is acoustic. It is especially noteworthy that a number of these verbs correspond closely with those verbs associated with bt qwl. Thus šūšû, dabābu/ qabû, šemû and apālu correspond respectively to yš', 'mr, šm^c, and hšyb in the above citations. Note the following references:

šūšû: ina qūlti mūši ina sūq erbetti tazzazzāma egerrâ tušešši⁴⁰ "You (figurines) stand at a crossroad in the stillness of the night and you will call forth an egerrû."

dabābu: šumma inūma uššî bīti nadû egerrû damqu idbub (var. ipul)⁴¹ bīta šû libbašu tāb šumma inūma uššî bīti nadû egerrû lemnu uttazzam bīta šû niziqtum sadrassu⁴² "If a favorable egerrû spoke when the foundations of a

³⁶ TB Ket. 103b. Further e.g. TB Ber. 51b; TB Erub. 54b; TB Pes. 114a; TB Ket. 77b, 103b; TB B.B. 73b; TB San. 96b.

³⁷ TB B.B. 3b. Usually 'mr is part of a sequence with yš'. See, e.g. TB Taanit 29a; TB M.Q. 18b; TB Hag. 15a.

³⁸ TB Ber. 3a. See n. 8. TB B.B. 3a, 74a; Tosefta Sot. 13:2 (ed. Zuckermann, 318:21f; TP Shab. 6:9; p. 8c).

³⁹ TB Pes. 94a = TB Hag. 13a.

⁴⁰ CAD E, 34. For qūltu, see AHW, 927; B. Meissner, BAW I, 65-66.

⁴¹ Though not indicated in CAD A², 155ff., apālu here merely means "speak up," as do its semantic equivalents Hebrew, Aramaic Cnh and Ugaritic Cny.

⁴² CT 38, pl. 10:20-21.

house were laid, that house will be happy. If an unfavorable egerrû cried out when the foundations of a house were laid, that house will have constant annoyance."

šemû: šuttušu diliqte amrat egerrâšu assimme⁴³ "His favorable dream is seen. I hear the oracle concerning him."

apâlu: šumma amêlu egerrû ina šumêlišu îpulšu kašād šibûti⁴⁴ "If an oracle answered a man on his left--achievement of desire."

When the egerrû and the bt qwl have the meaning "oracular response," that response may be rather detailed or a simple "yes" or "no" answer which might be repeated for emphasis. This may be seen if we compare the following two statements, the first from the Talmud, the second from an Akkadian source: w'mr R. Shephatiah 'mr R. Yoḥanan mnyyn šmštmšyn bbt qwl šn'mr...whw' d'mr hn hn whw' d'mr l'w l'w "R. Shephatiah said in R. Yoḥanan's name, 'Whence the scriptural permission to employ a bt qwl? It is written....'⁴⁵ The bt qwl is reliable if it repeats "Yes, yes" or if it repeats "No, no."⁴⁶ šumma amêlu egerrû annu 2-šu îpulšu tazbiltum šumma amêlu egerrû ulla 2-šu îpulšu kašād šibûti⁴⁷ "If an oracle twice answered a man 'Yes'-- deferment...If an oracle twice answered a man 'No'-- attainment of wish." The Akkadian material clearly emphasizes that it is the repetition which is crucial rather than the affirmative or negative quality of the response.⁴⁸ We may surmise that the same holds true for the rabbinic material though as yet no final decision is possible.

⁴³ CAD E, 45.

⁴⁴ CT 39, pl. 41:16.

⁴⁵ His source is Isa. 30:21 "Your ears shall hear a word (perhaps understood as 'prophecy') behind you." Does this indicate that the bt qwl was heard from behind? An egerrû could come from any direction including from behind. Note: egerrî eššûri ana panišu îpulšu and šumma anêlu egerrû ana arkišu îtanappalšu. Both references in CAD A², 162.

⁴⁶ TB Meg. 32a.

⁴⁷ CT 39, pl. 41:10.

⁴⁸ Cf. Oppenheim, op. cit., 54-55.

Lieberman drew special attention to the bt qwl in its aspect of being an unintentional oracular statement. This is a feature of the egerrû, as Oppenheim noted, in the following Akkadian prayer: šutlimamma eqirri⁴⁹ dumqi ina sūqi lū magir qabûa "Grant me a favorable oracle (to utter) so that in the street my utterances will be pleasing." The wish of the worshipper is to make statements which will promote well-being for other people. The fact that the statement is purely accidental in no way detracts from the effect which it can have in the real world. This was seen in the example of the egerrû, uttered when the foundations of the house were laid, above, and can be seen in greater detail in the following story in TP.⁵⁰ R. Yonah wR. Yosah slqyn mbqrh lrby Aha dhw' tšyš 'mryn nlk btr šmy^ct bt qwl šm^cyn glyh d'tt' 'mrh lhbyrt' 't^py bwsyn' 'mrh lh l' yt^py wl' my^ty bwsynhwn⁵¹ dyšr'l "Rabbi Yonah and Rabbi Yosah were going to visit Rabbi Aha who was sick. They said, 'Let us act in accord with a bt qwl oracle.' They heard the voice of a woman saying to her friend, 'Has the lamp been extinguished?' She answered her, 'It will not be extinguished.' And the lamp of Israel is not extinguished (i.e. Rabbi Aha was still alive at the time this story was transmitted)." Similarly a negative accidental pronouncement could bring about a misfortune. Again, a source in TP⁵² illustrates how: R. Yohanan hwh cbr bšwq' hm' hd mzbryn ml^tmy⁵³ 'mr lyh mn 'ylyn 't hyy 'mr lyh 'yn šbqyh w'zl lyh btr š^ch cbr qbyh 'mr lyh rby šly clwy dmn hhy' s^ct' l' zbnyt klwm

⁴⁹ Ibid., 53. Cf. Ebeling's translation in AGH, 48-51 and CAD E, 43.

⁵⁰ TP Shab. 8c.

⁵¹ bwsyn' = Akk. bušīn(n)nu. See AHW, 143. Both the Akkadian and the Aramaic term can each refer to a plant. The respective plants, however, are quite dissimilar. See B. Landsberger, "Akkadisch-Hebraische Wortgleichungen," in Supplements to Vetus Testamentum XVI (Leiden, 1967), 194, n. 4. The metaphor of death as the extinguishing of a flame is widespread. See T. H. Gaster, Thespis (New York, 1950), 335, n. 2. See further napišta bullû in CAD B, 74. For the phrase "to extinguish a flame," in the Semitic languages see M. Held, "The Action-Result (Factitive-Passive) Sequence of Identical Verbs in Biblical Hebrew and Ugaritic," JBL 84 (1965), 276, n. 19. Add mkbš 'wr (= išāta kabāsu) in TP Shab. 8d.

⁵² TP Shab. 8c-8d.

⁵³ See S. Krauss, Lehnwörter (Hildesheim, 1964, Reprographischer Nachdruck der Ausgabe Berlin, 1899), 340.

"R. Yohanan was walking in the street. He saw a man selling honey cakes. He said to him, 'Do you make a living from these?' He told him, 'Yes.' R. Yohanan left him and went on his way. A while later the man came to him. He said, 'Rabbi pray for me, for since that time (we met) I've sold nothing.'"

The first story, specifically termed a šmyct bt qwl, is an example of an egerrî dumqi, which resulted in R. Aha's recovery. The second is an egerrû lemnu, resulting in economic hardship. Though the text is not without difficulty, it appears that the unfavorable street oracle is a major source of complaint on the part of the suffering protagonist in Ludlul Bêl Nêmeqi: dalhâ têrêtûa⁵⁴ nuppuhâ uddakam itti bârî u ša'ili⁵⁵ alaktî ul parsat⁵⁶ ippî⁵⁷ sûqi lemun egerrûa attilma iššât mûši šuttî pardat "The omens are confused and inflamed for me daily; the diviner and the dream-priest

54 Cf. Ugaritica V, 267: dalhâ têrêtum šutâbulum šîru.

55 On these two priests see BWL, 284, n. 52; J. Renger, "Untersuchungen zum Priestertum der altbabylonischen Zeit," ZA 59 (1969), 203-218. Renger mentions the possibility that ša'ilum is the correct vocalization, to be translated "Befragter."

56 CAD E, 43 (cf. CAD A¹, 299) has: "I cannot stop going to the divination priest." CAD sees here the idiom alakta parâsu. If so, the required translation would be: "I am not impeded from going to...", though itti would still be problematic. Cf. the objections of Lambert, BWL, 284. His own translation, however, (ibid., 32) is untenable for the following reasons. First, it requires parsat to have an active rather than a stative meaning. Secondly, if itti is understood as the construct of ittu "omen," it can only be an omen about the priest. It is more likely to take parâsu here as equivalent to arkata parâsu (= Mishnaic [M. Qid. 4:4, 5; M. Pes. 1:1] bdq 'hry), "to investigate." AHW (831, cf. 31b) now takes our passage in this sense. What is involved here is the inability of the priests to perform their function. In Ludlul itself the sufferer complains: bârû ina bîri arkat ul iprus/immaššakka ša'ilu ul ušâpi dîni "The divination-priest has not investigated through divination; the dream-interpreter has not clarified my case by means of the smoke-offering" (BWL, 38:6). Similarly, a bârû complains: dînu šupšuqma...parâs arkatu nesanni "The case is very difficult... the (successful) investigation is distant from me." See B. Landsberger BBEA (Amsterdam, 1965), 21, n. 28. Further, note Ugaritica V, 267:3: ul itarraš bârû purussâya with tarâšu a West-Semiticism for šutêšuru. Other Akkadian terms for "investigate" are sanâqu/sunnuqu, (See M. Held, "A Faithful Lover in an OB Dialogue," JCS 15 1961, 17 with references) ussusu, hâtu, and barû. See R. Borger, Asarhaddon (Graz, 1956), 106: 33ff.; CAD B, 115ff.

57 The phrase is cited without comment by AHW, 873b.

cannot investigate my case; in the...street oracles are of ill-portent for me; when I sleep at night my dream is frightening."

An important point of contact between the egerrû and the bt qwl is the evaluative function which each performs. In the polytheistic Mesopotamian cults, the worshipper depends on the lower gods to speak favorably of him before the high gods. Thus, Hammurabi⁵⁸ prays, šēdum lamassum ilū ēribūt TN libitti TN igirrê ūmīšam ina maḥar DN bēliya u DN2 bēltiya lidammīqū "May the protecting deities who enter TN and the brickwork of TN cause my oracles to be favorable before DN and DN2." At the same time the worshipper could call upon the lower gods to malign his enemies.⁵⁹ The bt qwl was similarly conceived of as making statements about the relative merits and demerits of individuals. Because of the monotheistic character of rabbinic Judaism, the divine speaker remained anonymous: 'mr R. Yehudah 'mr Rab bkl ywm wywm bt qwl yš't mhr hwrwb w'mrt kl h^cwlm kwlw nyzwnyn bšbyl Ḥanina bny wḤanina bny dy lw bqb hrwbyn m^crb šbt l^crb šbt "R. Yehudah said in Rab's name, 'Every single day a voice emanates from Mt. Horeb and proclaims, "The entire world is sustained for the sake of my son Hanina. Yet it is sufficient for my son Hanina to have one qab of carobs weekly."' "⁶⁰ Or, to cite another example: ḥlš d^ctyh 'mr rbwnw šl c^wlm l' plplty twrh kmwtw yšth bt qwl 'mrh lw twrh kmwtw plplt twrh kmwtw l' rybšt "He became dejected and said, 'Master of the world, have I not argued as much Torah as he has?' A voice spoke up

58 KH Rs. xxv:48-58.

59 Ibid., Rs. xxvi:81f.: DN mudammīqat igirrêya ašar šiptim u purussēm ina maḥar DN2 awassu lilemmīn šulput mātišu halāq nišišu tabāk napištišu kīma mē ina pī DN2 šarrim lišaškin "May DN the one who produces good oracles for me, malign his case in the place of judgment and decision. May she effect the placing of (a decree of) destruction of his land, extinction of his people, and the outpouring of his lifebreath like water, in the mouth of DN the king." Though Yaḥdun-Lim does not use the term egerrû, a comparison of his prayer with the above shows that he has this in mind: DN kallatum lū mulemmīnat awātišu ina maḥar DN2 ana dariātīm "May DN the bride be maligner of his affairs before DN2 forever!" -G. Dossin, "L' inscription de Fondation de Yaḥdun-Lim, Roi de Mari," *Syria* 32 (1955), 17:25f.

60 TB Ber. 17b; TB Taanit 24b; TB Hul. 86a.

and said to him, 'You've argued as much Torah as he has but you haven't disseminated Torah as he has.'⁶¹

A text from Mari published only recently attests egerrû in a slightly different nuance.⁶² It is hoped that when the problems of that text are solved, new light will be shed on both the egerrû and the bt qwl.

⁶¹ TB B.M. 85b. See also TB Ber. 61a; TB B.M. 85a; TB Men. 53b.

⁶² ARM X. Transliteration in W. Moran, "New Evidence from Mari on the History of Prophecy," Biblica 50 (1969), 46ff.

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