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An Oath, Its Curse and Anointing Ritual

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INTRODUCTION

Scholars have long acknowledged that curses were expressed in conventional ways throughout the ancient Near East.¹ Thus, maledictions could endure over many centuries in diverse texts with relatively minor changes in terminology.² Since curses were somewhat standardized, it may not be surprising to find they could be incorporated into oaths which are nothing other than a form of conditional self-cursing. The purpose of this brief examination is to demonstrate how a well-known malediction could be incorporated into an oath whose accompanying ritual is specifically designed to intensify the anathema. Such a “ceremonial curse” appears to be intrinsically linked to the nature of the malediction’s punishment.³ This, in turn, may have contributed to the endurance of certain terminological expressions that remained a feature of the same curse not only in Neo-Assyrian texts but also in Psalm 109 of the Hebrew Bible.

A Hittite oath ritual which links anointing with the “putting on a garment” of an oath-curse will be examined through an investigation of a similar, recurrent simile curse that is found in Akkadian texts. The Middle Babylonian texts demonstrate the independent nature of the curse. Here the simile is expanded by the reference to the skin condition *saḫar.šub.ba*, which results in social expulsion. *Šurpu*, a collection of Akkadian and Sumerian invocations and rituals, provides additional information on the character and activities of a personified *māmītu*, curse, oath-curse, and her relationship with the moon deity *Šin*. The well-known Neo-Assyrian loyalty oath (*adê*) agreements of Esarhaddon use expressions reminiscent of the Hittite oath ritual and the Babylonian *Šin*-curses.⁴ As will be shown, Psalm 109 shares a similar range of standardized vocabulary that immediately suggests a connection with the Akkadian maledictions as well as the Hittite ceremonial curse incorporated into oath rituals.

I would like to thank Peter Machinist and Raymond Westbrook for reading various versions of this manuscript. Any errors that may remain are mine alone.

1. F. C. Fensham, “Common Trends in Curses of the Near Eastern Treaties and *Kudurru*-Inscriptions Compared with Maledictions of Amos and Isaiah,” *ZAW* 75 (1963): 173–75; D. R. Hillers, *Treaty Curses and the Old Testament Prophets* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1964), 85–89.

2. D. R. Hillers, “A Difficult Curse in Aqht (19 [I Aqht] 3.152–154),” in *Biblical and Related Studies Presented to Samuel Iwry*, ed. Ann Kort and S. Morschauser (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1985), 106.

3. The “ritual or ceremonial curse” was first described by D. R. Hillers, who identified it according to the following characteristics: it is a simile malediction in which “a demonstrative pronoun is used with the object compared, indicating that the object was present and was handled in some sort of ritual (at least when the curse was first composed),” *Treaty Curses*, 19.

4. For the most part, discussions on curses in the *adê* agreements have centered on the treaty context rather than the relationship of the arrangement to the oath. See F. Charles Fensham, “Maledictions and Benedictions in Ancient Near Eastern Vassal-Treaties and the Old Testament,” *ZAW* 74 (1962): 1–9; *idem*, “Common Trends,” 155–74.

It may be helpful to keep in mind that it is the oath, a divinely guaranteed self-imprecation sworn by the oath taker, that assured loyalty to any agreement. This means that when an oath is involved, the curses and blessings are primarily attached to the oath.

HITTITE LITERATURE

An Oath Ritual

Let us open by reviewing an important Hittite text, *KUB* 26.25, that *CTH* dates to the reign of Suppiluliuma II (c. 1200–1180).⁵ The passage is a fragment of an oath ritual which compares the act of coating a person with oil to smearing *MĀMIT*^{H1.A}, oath-curses, into the body. This is followed by a garment simile, the effectiveness of which depends on the unique characteristic of oaths as a form of self-cursing.

[Just as] you ^{5a}rub yourself ⁴down with oil, ^{5b}[thus also] let these oath-curses ⁶be rubbed down onto [you]! Just as you put on a garment, ⁷so also put on these oath-curses!⁶

The text is simple and to the point. The action of *katta iškiške-*, “rubbing oneself down,” with I₃, “oil/fat,” is paralleled with the rubbing of oath-curses into the body, *katta iškiyan ešdu*. The fact that the anointing is self-administered most likely reflects the conditional self-imprecation assumed by the one who takes the oath. The terminology also emphasizes the internalization of the oath-curse. The oil penetrates the skin and forms a protective, repellant layer or an invisible cloak, if you will. The next sentence uses a metaphor to illustrate an external characteristic of the oath-curse. It is like a garment that is put on the body and worn as though it were an article of clothing.

Since all ancient Near Eastern oaths involve self-cursing, whether implicit or explicit, the nature of the harm in the curse expressed by the oil simile may be determined according to the negative qualities implied in the comparisons. Faithfulness to the oath will sustain the positive features of the oil such as shine, protection, resistance, and a sound physical appearance. Failure to honor the oath will allow the skin to become dull, enhance vulnerability to disease, and attract harm. Just as the oil softens and smoothes the skin, the curse will make it rough, dull, scaly, and even flaky. Moreover, as a feature of the malediction’s public disclosure, the curse’s appearance on the body as a garment would indicate to all the divinely condemned status of the oath violator.

AKKADIAN LITERATURE

Kassite and Post-Kassite Kudurru/Narû Inscriptions

It is curious to find that certain Akkadian texts use similar terminology. Typically, these imprecations retain the garment imagery and identify the skin affliction as *saḥar.šub.ba*, a Sumerian term that was borrowed into Akkadian as *saḥaršubbû*.⁷ Often described as “Sîn-Fluche” because the moon deity Sîn is regularly invoked in these anathemas, curses of this

5. *CTH*, p. 126.

6. *KUB* 26.25 ii? 7–9.

7. Scholars have long recognized the unique function of skin afflictions in Near Eastern texts. M. Stol observed that “skin diseases were a special case because according to popular belief they can originate from gods, and man has to withdraw in some cases” (“Diagnosis and Therapy in Babylonian Medicine,” *Ex Orient Lux* 32 [1991–1992]: 65). See also the comment by K. van der Toorn, “Among the afflictions that filled the ancients with spontaneous disgust, skin diseases seem to outstrip all others” (*Sin and Sanction in Israel and Mesopotamia* [Assen: van Gorcum, 1985], 72).

Although *saḥar.šub.ba* is not mentioned, an incantation against a variety of illnesses specifically describes diseases as originating in heaven: “⁵. . . itch, ⁶fall, burden(?), dryness, ⁷rejection, boil(?), ⁸inflammation . . . from the lead rope of heaven they have come down” (A. Goetze, “An Incantation Against Diseases,” *JCS* 9 [1955]: 10 obv. 5–11).

variety generally appear in two types of texts. The earliest are the *kudurru/narû* inscriptions, which date to the Middle Babylonian period, followed by Neo-Assyrian usage, which is attested in the *adê* agreements. Additional information about the nature and effect of oath-curses on human beings is provided by the *Šurpu* texts.⁸

The first “Sîn-Fluch” appears on a *kudurru/narû* dating to the reign of the Middle Babylonian king Meli-Šihu (c. 1186–1172) of the Kassite dynasty. The relevant passage reads: “May Sîn . . . clothe his body with *saḥaršubbû* like a garment, and while he is alive, may he be deprived of his house and may he roam the open country like a wild animal but not walk over the square of his city.”⁹

When compared to the Hittite oath ritual, the Hittite expression TUG₂-anza GIM-an . . . *waššiškiši*, “just as you put on a garment,” finds a certain level of correspondence in the Akkadian phrase *kīma šubāti paḡaršu lilabbišma*. The curse, however, has been expanded with the addition of *saḥar.šub.ba/saḥaršubbû*, a skin affliction, which appears to be a physical manifestation of the anathema. This, in turn, is associated with deprivation of dwelling, a wandering lifestyle, and restriction from the city.

The second *kudurru/narû* inscription, believed to date to the reign of Marduk-nādin-aḥḥē (c. 1100–1083) of the Second Dynasty of Isin, illustrates several other important expansions: “May Sîn . . . clothe his whole body in *saḥaršubbû*, which will never lift so that all the days of his life he will be unclean and, like an onager, he will wander outside the walls of his city.”¹⁰

This text makes a correlation between a *saḥar.šub.ba* that *lā tēbâ* “does not lift” and the vetitive verb *ayyibib* “may he not be clean.” The state of uncleanness is directly dependent on the continuing presence of the skin affliction on the cursed person’s body. Additionally, it is likely that the punishment of social expulsion is merely the human realm’s response to the heavenly realm’s prior rejection of the individual as indicated by the skin affliction. Thus, banishment remains a consistent feature of *saḥaršubbû* curses.¹¹

Of course, the qualification of *saḥar.šub.ba* with *lā tēbâ* naturally implies that the condition was generally curable and transitory.¹² This characteristic is confirmed by the statement in *BRM* 4 24:61–62: “The one who was full of *saḥaršubbû* will become clean and enter his house (again).”

8. E. Reiner, *Šurpu: A Collection of Sumerian and Akkadian Incantations* (Graz: Im Selbstverlage des Herausgebers, 1958; rpt. Osnabrück: Biblio Verlag, 1970), 3.

9. V. Scheil, “Kudurru de l’époque de Mili-Šihu (c. 1186–1172),” in *MDP* vol. 2 (Paris: Ernest LeRoux, 1900), 23 vi 44–53.

10. L. W. King, *BBSI* (London: British Museum, 1912), 7 ii 16–18.

11. Another intriguing *kudurru/narû* inscription that includes *saḥaršubbû* shows two important expansions. First *saḥaršubbû* is described as a *kabitta*, “heavy,” or “serious,” divine punishment, and, second, it equates expulsion with mourning rites. The text dates to the period of Marduk-apal-iddinna I. “¹⁴May *saḥaršubbû*, the heavy divine punishment, clothe his body (so that) ¹⁵he may be driven out of the gate of his city. ¹⁶And may they ¹⁷(the aforementioned gods) make him stay outside his city; ¹⁸May he be mourned all the days of his life ¹⁹for he may not approach his people.” V. Scheil, “Kudurru de l’époque de Marduk-apal-iddin (1129–1117),” in *MDP*, vol. 6 (Paris: Ernest LeRoux, 1905), 38 vi 14–19.

12. Those who believe that *saḥaršubbû* was incurable include K. van der Toorn, *Sin and Sanction*, 73; J. V. Kinnier Wilson, “Leprosy in Ancient Mesopotamia,” *RA* 60 (1960): 49. Additional evidence for the curability of *saḥaršubbû* may be found in a so-called “medical text” that may originate from Emar. Here a person suffering from *saḥar.šub.ba* is rubbed with a wide variety of substances and on each occasion the text states *TI-uṭ*, “he will recover,” r. 54, 62, 69, 71, 81, 84. A. Tsukimoto, “‘By the Hand of Madi-Dagan, the Scribe and *Apkallu*-Priest’—A Medical Text from the Middle Euphrates Region,” in *Priests and Officials in the Ancient Near East* (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter, 1999), 199–200.

The Šurpu Ritual

The *Šurpu* texts preserve a variation of the garment simile and also provide key information concerning the nature of punishment for the breach of an oath. The best preserved copies of the series date to the reign of Assurbanipal and were found in his library at Nineveh.¹³ Although the extant tablets are Neo-Assyrian, linguistic evidence suggests that the ritual itself was formulated in the Kassite period.¹⁴ If this is so, then the series would be fairly contemporaneous with the *kudurru/narû* passages quoted above.

KAR 67 of *Šurpu* describes one of Sîn's traditional roles. It informs us that unlike the other major deities Sîn has a special affiliation with *māmitu*, "curse, oath-curse": "May Sîn, Lord of the Month, stand ready.¹⁵ May he dissolve his oath-curse."¹⁶ Since Sîn can "dissolve/loosen" (*pašāru*) a *māmitu*, it seems likely that Sîn can dispatch one of the consequences contingent on its violation, *saḥar.šub.ba/saḥaršubbû*.

In IV R/2 19, 1 3–4, a Sumerian/Akkadian bilingual section of *Šurpu*, we learn that a *nam.erim₂/māmitu*, "oath-curse has descended from the midst of heaven."¹⁷ The feminine nature and heavenly origins of *māmitu* are suggested elsewhere by the incipit of an invocation: "Incantation: Oath-curse daughter of the sky (or [the sky deity] An)."¹⁸ In another section of *Šurpu*, she allies herself with *dimîtu* and *Aḥḥazu*, and together they seek out a particular place and individual:¹⁹

^{17/18} They rush to where the deity's divine wrath (is directed) and cast silence.²⁰

^{19/20} They have approached the man from whom his god has withdrawn and covered him like a cloak.²¹

According to these lines, these beings function as agents of the offended deity, and operate only when the divine presence has departed. They actualize his/her anger and vigorously seek out the offender to execute divine punishment. The general effects of their activity on the miscreant are expressed by the verb *dul/katāmu*, "cover." When this is considered in light of the cloak simile, it suggests an external attack, enveloping the individual's entire person. Several lines later, we learn the specific effect that the *mu sag.ba/nīšu māmit*,²² "oath and oath-curse," have on the skin of the offender: "Oath and oath-curse have burned (TAB/*šarāpu*) his body."²³

Based on the information here, we may extract the following rationale. The absence of divine protection leaves the individual vulnerable to attack by heavenly agents. The activation

13. E. Reiner, *Šurpu*, 1.

14. A. Schott, *ZDMG* 6/1; 81 (1927): xlvi; A. Falkenstein, "Zur Chronologie der sumerischen Literatur," *MDOG* 85 (1953): 6 n. 27; W. von Soden, "Das Problem der zeitlichen Einordnung akkadischer Literaturwerke," *MDOG* 84 (1952): 24.

15. This verb, *li-iz-zi-zu*, is found at KAR I/2, 67 r. 34.

16. KAR I/2, 67 r. 37. *ma-mi-ti-šu* is restored based on H. Zimmern, *Die Beschwörungstafeln Šurpu: Beiträge zur Kenntnis der babylonischen Religion*, I (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1896), 12 r. 1. See also E. Reiner, *Šurpu*, 28, 92.

17. T. G. Pinches, *A Selection from the Miscellaneous Inscriptions of Assyria* (London: British Museum, 1891) = IV R/2; cf. E. Reiner, *Šurpu*, 36, ll. 3–4.

18. KAR I/4, 165 r. 5. Her relationship to Sîn as a consort also seems possible.

19. It might be noted here that unlike *nam.erim₂/māmitu*, *buru₅/dimîtu* and *du₃.du₃/Aḥḥazu* originate elsewhere. *dimîtu* emerges from the Apsu (1/2) while *Aḥḥazu* comes up from the ground (5/6). When the three are taken together, we find that the major divisions of the world are represented—the sky, water, and earth respectively.

20. IV R/2 19:17–20. See also E. Reiner, *Šurpu*, 36, ll. 17–20.

21. See the duplicate, KAR II/4 (8), 371:1–2.

22. Note how the text distinguishes between *mu = nīšu*, "oath" and *sag.ba = māmit*, "oath-curse," as if to suggest that the two terms, although related, are clearly distinct in their meanings.

23. IV R/2, 19:27–28; E. Reiner, *Šurpu*, 36, ll. 27–28.

of the oath-curse arises from the arousal of divine wrath incited by oath violation. The oath-curse then descends from heaven, searches out the miscreant, and levels an attack. It burns the offender's body, penetrates the flesh, and diminishes vitality.

Neo-Assyrian Adê Agreements

We turn now to one of the best known of the ancient Near Eastern loyalty oath forms, the *adê* agreements of Esarhaddon. This well-studied form served as a model for several agreements drawn up with various subject rulers on behalf of Esarhaddon's son Assurbanipal. Two sections are of particular interest, the Sîn curse in ll. 419–21 and one of the oath rituals described in ll. 622–25:²⁴

⁴¹⁹May Sîn, the luminary of heaven and earth, clothe you in saḫar.šub.ba

⁴²⁰and not permit you to enter the presence of god and king.

⁴²¹Roam the wilderness like the onager (and) gazelle!²⁵

⁶²²Just as (this) oil enters your flesh,²⁶

⁶²⁵so may they make ⁶²³this oath²⁷ enter²⁸ into the midst of your flesh,²⁹

⁶²⁴the flesh of your brothers, your sons, (and)³⁰ your daughters.³¹

In this text, we find that the oath ritual in the Hittite passage has been separated into two components: a curse element and an oath-ritual element. This is primarily due to the literary structure of the document, which prefers to list the curses in one section and the oath ritual(s) in another. In conformity with the *kudurru/narû* inscriptions, the “clothing” language continues to be associated with the curse. Only the Babylonian *labāšu* has been replaced with *ḫalāpu*, “clothe, cover.” Even so, the punishment of saḫar.šub.ba remains a consistent feature of both the *adê* and *kudurru/narû* curses. The Neo-Assyrian feature of denial of access to god and king is merely the explicit articulation of what was only indirectly expressed in the similes found in the Middle Babylonian Sîn curses.

On the other hand, the oil remains a feature of the oath-curse ritual. The *tamītu*, “oath,” *erēbu*, “enters,” the flesh. Thus, the simile of putting on an oath-curse “like a garment,” as found in the Hittite text, is only implied in the reference to flesh in *uzu.meš* of the *adê* agreement. It would seem, then, that both an oath and its potential consequence, a curse, were still worn on the skin. This is what penetrates the body.

HEBREW LITERATURE

Psalms 109

Vestiges of this same oath ritual illustrated in the Hittite and Neo-Assyrian texts are found in Psalm 109, one of the so-called “curse psalms” that have unsettled scholars throughout

24. D. J. Wiseman, “The Vassal-Treaties of Esarhaddon,” 59–60, 77–78; R. Borger, *ZA* 54 (1961): 173–96; K. Watanabe, *Die adê-Vereidigungen anlässlich der Thronfolgeregelung Asarhaddons* (Berlin: Gebr. Mann, 1987); S. Parpola and K. Watanabe, *Neo-Assyrian Treaties and Loyalty Oaths* (Helsinki: Helsinki Univ. Press, 1988), 28–58.

25. The cuneiform texts are found in D. J. Wiseman, “Vassal-Treaties,” 419–21 = plate 36, 56 vi 1–3.

26. *Ibid.*, 622 = plate 38, 28A r. viii 15.

27. *Ibid.*, 623a = plate 16, 28C viii 21.

28. *Ibid.*, 625 = plate 13, 28A r. viii 18.

29. *Ibid.*, 623b = plate 9, 27 viii 25.

30. *Ibid.*, 624a = plate 16, 28C viii 22.

31. *Ibid.*, 624b = plate 9, 27 viii 26.

the centuries due to their harsh language.³² Nevertheless, with the introduction of form criticism by Herman Gunkel, the *Gattung* of this particular psalm has been subsequently identified as a “lament of the individual.”³³ For the matter at hand, only vv. 17–19 of the Masoretic text need concern us:

וַיֵּאָהֶב קִלְלָה וַתְּבוֹאֶהוּ וְלֹא־חָפֵץ בְּבִרְכָּה וַתִּרְחַק מִמֶּנּוּ¹⁷
וַיִּלְבַּשׁ קִלְלָה כְּמִדּוֹ וַתֵּבֵא כַּמִּים בְּקִרְבּוֹ וְכִשְׁמֵן בְּעֲצָמוֹתָיו¹⁸
וַתֵּהֵי־לוֹ כִּבְגָד יַעֲטָה וְלִמְזוֹחַ תָּמִיד יִחְגְּרָה¹⁹

¹⁷He loved curse; and so it entered him.

He did not like blessing; and so it was far from him.

¹⁸He clothed himself with curse as his cloak.

and so it entered his inward parts like water,
like oil into his bones.

¹⁹May it be like a garment that he wraps around himself,
like a belt that he wears everyday.³⁴

It is quite evident that the terminology found here is related to the language found in both the oath ritual and Sîn curse discussed thus far.³⁵ The Mesopotamian image of *saḥar.šub.ba* enveloping a person is implied in the garment simile, *כִּבְגָד* (v. 19) and *כְּמִדּוֹ* (v. 18) as well as the complementary verb, *וַיִּלְבַּשׁ* (v. 18). This verb is of particular note because it is a cognate of Akkadian *labāšu*, the verb of choice in the Babylonian Sîn curses. In Psalm 109, however, it is the *קִלְלָה* that will enter into the individual's body, and we are left with the impression that, under these conditions, *קִלְלָה* refers to an oath-curse. This is likewise suggested in *לבש*, which clearly bears the reflexive sense. Therefore, the notion of wrapping oneself in curses derives its full implication from the context of the conditional, self-cursing feature of oaths. Since the offender is clothing *himself*, he alone is responsible for his punishment and not the psalmist, who is merely recounting the fact that the offender's actions have activated the latent curse. Given the identification of *saḥar.šub.ba* as the harm in Middle Babylonian and Neo-Assyrian garment simile curses, we might also assume that the invoked punishment in v. 19 is the Hebrew equivalent of *saḥar.šub.ba*, which would be *צָרַעַת*, biblical “leprosy.”

Features of the oath ritual are indicated in two other areas, the verb *בּוֹא* (vv. 17, 18) and the use of *שָׁמֵן* (v. 18). While the Hebrew verb immediately recalls Akkadian *erēbu*, what actually “enters” the flesh in the *adē* agreement is the *tamētu*, “oath.” The Hittite text refers to *MĀMĪT*^{HI.A}, oath-curses, which are likewise rubbed into the body and worn as a garment.

32. The other curse psalms are Pss 35, 40, 55, 129, 137. The first to examine the connection between Akkadian curses and the curse psalms was F. Steinmetzer, “Babylonische Parallelen zu den Fluchpsalmen,” *BZ* 10 (1912): 133–42.

33. Thus, Pss 35, 55, 109 are also “laments of the individual,” Ps 40 a “thanksgiving psalm of the individual,” and Pss 129 and 137 “community laments.” H. Gunkel, *The Psalms* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967), 15, 19–20, 32–33.

34. There has been some concern expressed over the Masoretic vocalization of *וַיֵּאָהֶב וַיִּלְבַּשׁ וַתְּבוֹאֶהוּ*, which points the conjunction *waw* as *waw* consecutives. NRSV, for instance, prefers to understand these *waw* as conjunctive, thereby allowing *וַתְּבוֹאֶהוּ* and *וַתִּרְחַק* in particular to be understood as expressing wishes. Some justification for this may be found in v. 19. Here the opening verb *תֵּהֵי* is clearly jussive. This lends strength to the possibility that the preceding verbs could also be jussives. Even so, it is not necessary to alter the Masoretic text in this way. Based on the present discussion, one can substantiate that these verses do not express pronouncements of curses, as the *waw* + imperfect construction would suggest. Rather, vv. 17–18 report the violation of an oath, which has subsequently activated the oath-curse so that it has entered the oath-taker. The *waw* consecutives of the Masoretic text would corroborate this important nuance. See also, M. Dahood, *Psalms III 101–150*, AB 17A (New York: Doubleday, 1970), 106; H.-J. Kraus, *Psalms 60–150: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1989), 337.

35. F. Steinmetzer, “Babylonische Parallelen,” 133–35.

CONCLUSION

Ancient Near Eastern texts document a common malediction based on a clothing simile which linked a skin condition to the physical manifestations of a curse. The so-called Sîn curses in Akkadian *kudurru/narû* texts not only feature the garment imagery, but they also identify the anathema. Together with *labāšu* and *našû* (Š-stem), *saḥar.šub.ba* consistently appears in the *kudurru/narû* Sîn curses to describe various features of the affliction. Therefore, *saḥar.šub.ba* clothes, i.e., covers, an individual, compelling that person to bear the offense as marks on the skin, thereby publicly exposing his or her guilt and necessitating removal from the community. Therefore, the curse *is* the skin affliction *saḥar.šub.ba/saḥaršubbû*.

The roughly contemporaneous *šurpu* texts reveal that Sîn also has control over the dispatch of *māmītu*, “oath-curse,” that is, a curse imbedded in an oath. Here, *māmītu* “burns” the body of the offender, and the resulting marks become the physical manifestation of an oath violation. Behind the eruption of these burns stands the divine wrath of Sîn. Its appearance signals the withdrawal of heavenly protection. This prompts a reflexive human response in the removal of the afflicted individual from the protection offered by city, house, and king as articulated in the *kudurru/narû* inscriptions.³⁶

The Hittite text shows that this malediction could be featured as a curse in oaths. Here, the clothing simile is ritually reinforced by rubbing the skin with oil. When self-administered, as the text implies, the rite would reflect the conditional self-cursing character of all oaths. By comparing this act to putting on a garment, the Hittite text strengthens the notion that latent oath-curses could be worn invisibly on the skin. The violation of the oath would then cause the curse to become active and manifest itself on the flesh of the offender. The Neo-Assyrian *adê* agreements support a similar understanding. There, however, the desire to group all the ceremonial oath-curses in one section has led to the separation of the garment simile malediction from the anointing rite listed in the ritual malediction section.

As we have seen, Psalm 109 reflects the oath ritual found in the Hittite text and the *adê* agreements. This is not only indicated in the reflexive meaning of *לִבִּשׁ*, but also in the reference to the curse entering the offender, *כִּשְׁמֶרֶן בְּעֵצְמוֹתָיו*, “like oil into his bones.” Behind this simile lies a standardized curse and its oath ritual, the evidence of which can be traced to the twelfth century B.C.E.

36. The same concept is expressed in an Old Babylonian “omen text”: “⁴²If the flesh of the body of a man shows white spots ⁴³and is covered with marks, ⁴⁴this man is rejected by his deity, ⁴⁵(and) rejected by humanity” (F. Köcher and A. L. Oppenheim, “The Old Babylonian Omen Text VAT 7525,” *AfO* 18 [1957]: 66). The use of *nadû* (*itaddu*, l. 43) is also significant. *nadû* is frequently represented by the Sumerian logogram *šub*, which recalls *saḥar.šub.ba* and can mean “dust-covered,” or “cast dust.” Unfortunately, this is the only reference to *nuqdu* we have, and its translation as “marks” is based purely on this context. Given this setting, a possible relation to *nakādu*, “throb, worry,” does not seem likely.