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## The Apotropaic Potential of the Name “Shadday” in the Hebrew Bible and the early Rabbinic Literature

The Rabbinic Judaism recognizes the special value of the divine names: since the early midrashes, through the medieval exegesis up till the modern era, these appellations have been believed to possess extraordinary performative potential. For instance in BT Berakhot 55a it is said of Betzalel,<sup>1</sup> the divinely inspired architect of the Tent of Meeting (Exodus 31:1–6) that he was in possession of the knowledge how to permute the letters “by means of which the heavens and the earth have been created.”<sup>2</sup> Rashi, the medieval French

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<sup>1</sup> Worth noting is the very meaning of the name of the artisan itself. It could be translated as “in the shade of El” what reverberates with the phrase *betzelem elohim* in Genesis 1:27. In other words, Betzalel both due to his name and the nature of his profession could be considered to mimic the divine creation. For a throughout study of the idea of *tzelem* in the HB as well as in the surrounding ancient Near Eastern cultures see: S.L. Herring, *Divine Substitution. Humanity as the Manifestation of Deity in the Hebrew Bible and the Ancient Near East*, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 2013.

<sup>2</sup> All the sources cited in the present study come in author’s own translation. The square brackets indicate the words introduced in translation, the curly brackets – the words translated freely, whereas the soft brackets – additional remarks. The priority of the translations was to maintain the inherent ambiguity of the source text.

commentator adds that Betzalel knew the techniques described in the mysterious *Sefer Yetzirah*, “The Book of Formation” believed to convey the instructions on how to make things with words thus mimicking the creative powers of the deity and his name. Similar instances appear in two other often cited stories. The first one in BT Hagigah 14b tells of the four rabbis, who have entered Pardes, the heavenly orchard<sup>3</sup> while the second in BT Sanhedrin 65b recounts how Rabba created an artificial human and sent him to his colleague, rabbi Zera.<sup>4</sup> The supernatural abilities of the *hazalim* witnessed by these two instances find their explanation in the commentary of Rashi, who claims that the four rabbis “have ascended the firmament by means of the Name” whereas Rabba created the artificial human “by means of *Sefer Yetzirah* which {explained} how to permute the letters of the Name”.

Among such literary instances there is a group witnessing to the apotropaic purpose of the divine appellations. One such example comes in Bamidbar Rabbah 12:3 which recounts the story of Moses’ ascent to the Mount Sinai during which he was assaulted by a band of hostile angels wishing to prevent him from acquiring the Torah. According to the midrash, the patriarch defended himself by singing the words of Psalm 91, the so called “psalm of plagues”. The first two verses are abundant in the divine names: “The one sitting in the cover of Elyon, in the shadow of Shadday will dwell, says to Yahveh: my refuge and my fortress, my Elohim, I will trust in him.” Moses acknowledged the protective strength of the biblical poem concluding that “by means of his name I shall repel the {demons} and the angels of destruction”. The further interpretation of Psalm 91 develops the idea of the power of the divine name:

*Under his wing you shall take refuge* – [for] the one who comes to take refuge under the wing<sup>5</sup> of the Holy, blessed be he, he shall be *a shield and a buckler* of truth. What is the meaning of *a shield*

<sup>3</sup> Cf. the variant in JT Hagigah 2:1.

<sup>4</sup> Aram. *Rabba’ bara’ gavra’* consists of paronomasia and permutations. Moreover, the very name of the other rabbi evokes the associations with the word *zera’* meaning “seed” or metonymically – “offspring”.

<sup>5</sup> The image of a deity covering his followers with the wings appears in other biblical passages as well, e.g. in Exodus 19:4; Deuteronomy 32:11; Psalms 17:8; 36:7; 57:1; 61:4; Malachi 4:2. The sources suggested by: R. Good, *El Shadday: Its*

and a buckler? Rabbi Shime'on ben Laqish said: the Holy, blessed be he, said: a weapon I {forge} for everyone who deals with the truth of the Torah [and] the truth of the Torah is the weapon for {those who possess it}.<sup>6</sup> {He also said}: a weapon has given the Holy, blessed be he, to Israel on Sinai, and on it the {explained name} was written.

## Protective seal

One could then ask, precisely which of the appellatives is endowed with such an enormous power. After all, the Jewish tradition knows of many names initially belonging to various deities of the ancient Near East and with time attributed to one god of Israel, who is sometimes addressed as, *nomen-omen*, *ha-Shem* (“the name”).<sup>7</sup> It seems that at least in case of the protective function it is “Shadday” which is believed to be of particular significance. The name often appears on the devices such as amulets or dedicatory plaques<sup>8</sup> but more importantly it is associated with the traditional Jewish apotropaic customs: male circumcision, mezuzah and tefillin.<sup>9</sup> The

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*Meaning and Implications*, “Affirmation and Critique. A Journal of Christian Thought”, vol. XII 2/2007, p. 69.

- <sup>6</sup> The Hebrew words *Torah* and *be-’evrato* (“under his wing”) are gematrically identical and equal 611. This may be the reason behind the Rabbinic interpretation of the verse.
- <sup>7</sup> K. Reichert, M. Cohen, *What is Translating? The Endless Task as Reflected in Examples from the Bible*, “Jewish Studies Quarterly”, Vol. 14, No. 2, Translating Texts, Translating Cultures, 2007, p. 124. The list of the biblical divine names is even longer when augmented with the appellatives like *ha-qadosh barukh hu’*, *rabeynu shel ha-’olam* or *’eyn sof*, which come from the later periods.
- <sup>8</sup> S. Sabar, *Torah and Magic: The Torah Scroll and Its Appurtenances as Magical Objects in Traditional Jewish Culture*, “European Journal of Jewish Studies” Vol. 3, Number 1 (2009), pp. 154–156. M. Schniedewind, *Calling God Names: An Inner-Biblical Approach to the Tetragrammaton*, in: *Scriptural Exegesis. The Shapes of Culture and the Religious Imagination. Essays in Honour of Michael Fishbane*, D.A. Green, L.S. Lieber (eds.), Oxford University Press 2009, p. 76. J. Trachtenberg, *Jewish Magic and Superstition. A Study in Folk Religion*, New York 1939, p. 148. E.R. Wolfson, *Circumcision and the Divine Name: A Study in the Transmission of Esoteric Doctrine*, “The Jewish Quarterly Review”, New Series, Vol. 78, No. 1/2, 1987, p. 81.
- <sup>9</sup> Additional arguments for the protective purpose of the said customs are furnished by: W. Kosior, *Brit milah. Some Remarks on the Apotropaic Meaning*

connections of the first one with the name Shadday are twofold. According to the biblical chronology it is El Shadday who ordains the custom of circumcision in Genesis 17:1 and, as is apparent in midrash Tanhuma Tzav 14<sup>10</sup> the *brit milah* itself is the inscription of the part of the name on the body:

The Holy, blessed be he, has put his name on Israel so they would enter the garden of Eden. And what is the name and the seal that he had put on them? It is "Shadday". [The letter] *shin* he put in the nose, *dalet* – on the hand, whereas *yod* on the {circumcised} [membrum].<sup>11</sup>

The presence of all the three letters of the divine name is crucial, also in the eschatological plane. Soon after, in the same passage we find an additional explanation:

Accordingly, {when} Israel goes to {his eternal home} (Ecclesiastes 12:5), there is an angel {appointed} in the garden of Eden who picks up every son of Israel which is circumcised and brings him {there}. And those who are not circumcised? Although there are two letters of the name "Shadday" present on them, {namely} *shin* from the nose and *dalet* from the hand, the *yod* (...) is {missing}. Therefore it hints at a demon (Heb. *shed*),<sup>12</sup> which brings him down to Gehenna.

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*of Circumcision in Agadic Midrashes (Brit mila. Uwagi o apotropaicznym znaczeniu obrzezaniu w midraszach agadycznych)*, "Polish Journal of the Arts and Culture" 4 (1/2013), pp. 103–118; Idem, "It Will Not Let the Destroying [One] Enter". *The Mezuzah as an Apotropaic Device according to Biblical and Rabbinic Sources*, "Polish Journal of Arts and Culture", 9 (1) 2014, pp. 127–144; Idem, "The Name of Yahveh is Called Upon You". *Deuteronomy 28:10 and the Apotropaic Qualities of Tefillin in the Early Rabbinic Literature*, "Studia Religiosa" 48 (2/2015), pp. 143–154.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. a parallel passages in Tazri'a 5 and Shemini 5. See also: E.R. Wolffson, op. cit., p. 77.

<sup>11</sup> *Yod* is the last letter of *Shadday* and the first letter of *Yahveh*. E.R. Wolffson, op. cit., p. 86.

<sup>12</sup> See the biblical instances of *shedim* in Deuteronomy 32:17 and Psalm 106:37 usually interpreted as referring to the Babylonian *shedu*. G.J. Riley, *Demon*, in: *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, K. van der Toorn, B. Becking, P.W. van der Hoorst (eds.), Leiden-Boston-Koeln, Brill, 1999, [DDD], pp. 237–238.

Analogous is the case with mezuzah – a piece of parchment with two passages from the Book of Deuteronomy, curled up in a small encasement and affixed to a doorframe. At least since the Geonic times, the name “Shadday” is often written on the back of the parchment containing the *shema* and sometimes also on the casing itself. The name is traditionally interpreted as being an acronym of *shomer daltot Yisra’el* (“the guardian of the doors of Israel”) or *shomer dirot Yisra’el* (“the guardian of the dwellings of Israel”).<sup>13</sup> The name “Shadday” can also be found on tefillin – a set of two black leather boxes strapped to head and arm during the prayers. The binding of particular knots of tefillin is supposed to resemble the shape of the letters: the leather strap of the *tefillah shel rosh* is knotted at the back of the head thus forming the letter *dalet* whereas the one that is passed through the *tefillah shel yad* forms a *yod*-shaped knot. In addition to this, the box itself is inscribed with the letter *shin* on two of its sides. All of the above presented devices appear in several places in the Rabbinic literature being listed and interpreted explicitly as bearing the protective function. One such example comes in BT Menahot 43b:

Our Rabbis taught: beloved are Israelites, for the Holy, blessed be he, surrounded them with *mitzvot*: tefillin on their heads, tefillin on their arms, tzitzit on their cloth, and mezuzah {on} their doors. And about these David said: *seven [times] a day I praise you, over the decrees of your righteousness* (Psalm 119:164). When David {used to enter} the bath house and see himself standing naked, {he would say}: woe is me that I stand naked without [the sign of any] *mitzvah*. And when he would remember the circumcision in his flesh, he would {calm down}. (...) Rabbi Eliezer ben Ya’aqov said: everyone who has tefillin on his head, tefillin on his arm, tzitzit on his cloth and mezuzah on his doors – is in strength so as he will not sin, as has been said: *a triple yarn will not be broken quickly* (Ecclesiastes 4:12b). [It also] says: *the angel of Yahveh encamps around those who fear him and delivers them* (Psalms 34:8).

<sup>13</sup> The notarikon itself has its source most probably in Zohar Va’ethanan where it explains the meaning of the word Shadday and connects it to mezuzah. It appears later in Tur Yoreh De’ah 288. H. Aviezer, *Ha-Mezuzah – beyn Mitzvah le-Qamiya*, “Ma’aliyot” 19/1997, p. 229. Worth mentioning is also Mekhilta de-rabbi Ishmael 12 which attributes the power of mezuzah to the divine names contained therein.

The association between these customs and the name “Shadday” is relatively late and no actual explanation is given for the choice of this particular appellation. The question then is whether “Shadday” possesses any distinctive linguistic or semantic qualities which would make it attractive for the apotropaic purposes. In this regard several aspects need to be considered: the position of “Shadday” in relation to the tetragram, its etymology and the strong ambivalence witnessed by the linguistic puns in both the Hebrew Bible [HB] and the Rabbinic Literature.

### Nickname

The name occurs almost 50 times in the HB, both in its short and elaborate form, “El Shadday”. The latter, although it appears 7 times only,<sup>14</sup> poses more hermeneutical challenges, because it can convey various types of semantic relations between the two: El of a place known as Shadday,<sup>15</sup> El possessing the quality of *shadday* or El who is known as Shadday – exactly as is the case with the names like “El ‘Olam”, “El ‘Elyon” or “El Bet’el”.<sup>16</sup> However, since the second element of the phrase appears also individually, “El Shadday” may be considered an example of the juxtaposition of two distinct divine names and, by extension, merging the traditions of two separate deities, analogously to the appellation “Yahveh ‘Elohim”.<sup>17</sup> Frequency-wise

<sup>14</sup> Genesis 17:1; 28:3; 35:11; 43:14; 48:3; Exodus 6:3, Ezekiel 10:5.

<sup>15</sup> Some try to draw the connection with the Bronze Age Amorite city Tel eth-Tadyen in northern Syria. L.R. Bailey, *Israelite ‘El Šadday and Amorite Bēl Šadē*, “Journal of Biblical Literature”, Vol. 87, No. 4, 1968, pp. 434–438.

<sup>16</sup> W.F. Albright, op. cit., p. 180. D. Biale, op. cit., p. 244. M. Haran, *Qavim le-Te’ur ‘Emunatam shel ha-‘Avot: ‘Emunat Shivtey ha-‘Ivrim*, in: *Oz le-David: Qovetz Mehqarim be-Tanakh, Mugash le-David Ben-Gurion bi-Mel’ot lo Shiv’im ve-Sheva’ Shanim*, Y. Kaufmann (ed.), Qriy’at Sefer Yerushalayim 1975, [online], <http://lib.cet.ac.il/Pages/item.asp?item=10629>, [29.I 2014]. R. Laird Harris, G.L. Archer, B.K. Waltke (eds.), *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, vols. 1 & 2, Chicago Moody Press 1980 [TWOT], 2333.

<sup>17</sup> G. Levy, op. cit., pp. 111–112. W.M. Schniedewind, op. cit., p. 78. An interesting approach to the problem of the divine names has emerged at the meeting point of Biblical Studies and cognitive sciences. According to some scholars, the exceptional power of names lies in the fact that they activate the bio-semantic network of associations in a way which is incomparable to the effects

“Shadday” occupies the third place, right after “Yahveh” (over 6800 instances) and “Elohim” (over 2600 instances), what makes it the most popular from among the less rife divine appellations. In addition to this, the power of “Shadday” seems to be at least partially derived from the “default” name of the god of Israel, “Yahveh”, all the more so as these appellations are tightly connected by the HB. Although there is only one instance which explicitly juxtaposes these two deities, it is also the sole verse which directly qualifies “Shadday” as the nickname of Yahveh. The passage from Exodus 6:3 reads:

I have appeared to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob {as} El Shadday, yet my name – Yahveh – I have not revealed to them.<sup>18</sup>

When approached from the later Rabbinic perspective this affinity bears additional significance. The rabbis have obviously noted the broad variety of the divine names<sup>19</sup> and put special restrictions

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of regular nouns. This is so due to the fact that the signals used for identifying particular individuals have a longer phylogenetic history than language in general. In result, names are the way to organize attention and as such they are “semantic anchors” for complex of emotions, thoughts and memories. G. Levy, *‘I Was El Shaddai, But Now I’m Yahweh’: God Names and the Informational Dynamics of the Biblical Texts*, in: *Mind, Morality and Magic. Cognitive Science Approaches in Biblical Studies*, I. Czachesz, R. Uro (eds.), Durham, Acumen 2013, pp. 98, 105, 100, 119. See also: H.M. Müller, M. Kutas, *What’s in a Name? Electrophysiological Differences between Spoken Nouns, Proper Names and One’s Own Name*, “NeuroReport”, Vol. 8, No. 1, 1996, pp. 221–225.

<sup>18</sup> The assumption that the name “Yahveh” had not been known before is of course wrong. See the utterance of Eve in Genesis 4:1 or the calling of the name of Yahveh in Genesis 4:26. L.F. Hartman, S.D. Sperling, op. cit., pp. 673, 675. For the review of the traditional Jewish interpretations aimed at dealing with the discrepancy see: S. Regev, *‘Al Shemot ha-’El ve-Kinuyav*,” *Daf Shavu’i*,” No. 166, 1966, [online], <http://www.biu.ac.il/jh/parasha/vaera/regev.html>, [29.I 2014].

<sup>19</sup> See for instance *Shemot Rabbah* 3:6: “Rabbi Abba ben Mammel said: the Holy, blessed be he said to Moses: You inquire to know my name – I am called according to my deeds. Sometimes I am called as ‘El Shadday, as Tzeva’ot, as ‘Elohim, as {Yahveh}. When I am judging the creatures, I am called Elohim. When I am waging war against the wicked, I am called Tzeva’ot. When I suspend over the transgressions of man, I am called El Shadday, and when I show mercy to my world, I am called {Yahveh}.”

on the tetragram. It is said for example that the one pronouncing it “in its letters” has no share in the world to come (M Sanhedrin 10:1) as the name was allowed to be uttered by the High Priest during the Yom Kippur fest only (M Yoma 6:2). Apart from this occasion it was supposed to be substituted with other appellations like *’Adonay* as suggested by BT Qiddushin 71a.<sup>20</sup> Obviously then, the initial restrictions concerning “Yahveh” must have engendered the utilization of the variety of other biblical names interpreted simply as alternative addresses. The latter have of course differed in terms of their frequency and specific associations: “Shadday”, being the codename of “Yahveh” reveals as much as possible without defecting the divine identity. In other words, the close proximity of “Shadday” to “Yahveh”, together with its relatively high frequency, may be one of the reasons for the former’s popularity.

### Fertility and destruction

The etymology of the word is dim and there are several hypotheses concerning its origins.<sup>21</sup> The most widespread is that which derives it from the Akkadian root *šd* along with *shadu* – “mountain” and *shadda’u/shaddu’a* – “mountaineer”. This root is cognate with the Hebrew word *sadeh* meaning elevated plateau or wild, uncultivated field and accordingly, the appellation “El Shadday” would mean “El of the wilderness/mountains”.<sup>22</sup> The next hypothesis points at the

<sup>20</sup> The source reads “do not pronounce *yod-hey* but *’alef-dalet*”. It is usually interpreted as referring to the word *’adonay* but on the other hand one could ask whether it is not a hint concerning the vocalization of “Yahveh” since both *’alef* and *dalet* are pronounced along the a-e vowel pattern. More on the status of particular divine names can be found in BT Shavuot 35a-b. See also: J.Z. Lauterbach, *Substitutes for the Tetragrammaton*, “Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research”, Vol. 2, 1930 – 1931, pp. 39–67.

<sup>21</sup> For the concise review see: D. Biale, op. cit., pp. 240–241. F. Brown, S.R. Driver, C.A. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, Oxford Clarendon Press 1907 [BDB], 9714. TWOT 2333.

<sup>22</sup> D. Biale, op. cit., pp. 241–242. A. Even-Shoshan, שדח, שדד, in: *Ha-Milon he-Hadash*, Qriyat Sefer Yerushalayim 1979, [ES], vol. 7, p. 2618. E.A. Knauf, op. cit. p. 750. J. Oullette, *More on ‘El Šadday and Bêl Šadê*, *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 88, No. 4 (Dec., 1969), pp. 470–471. W.H. Propp, *On Hebrew šāde(h)*, “*Highland*”, “*Vetus Testamentum*”, Vol. 37, 1987, pp. 230–236. For

word *shad*, “breast”, a derivate of the root שד meaning “to pour forth”. This in turn would suggest that Shadday is the one responsible for bringing rains and securing fertility.<sup>23</sup> The other options are the root שדד meaning “to overrun” or “to destroy” as witnessed by the phrase *shodedey laylah* in Obadiah 1:5 and Jeremiah 51:53<sup>24</sup> or the word *shed*, most probably originating from the Akkadian *shedu*,<sup>25</sup> meaning initially a protective spirit, which eventually came to denote a demon in the later biblical and rabbinic sources.<sup>26</sup>

As it turns out, the etymology of the name is by all means obscure and the further analyses should include the actual usage of the word. Thus almost 50 biblical appearances can be organized into several larger clusters:<sup>27</sup> “Shadday” appears 6 times in Genesis,

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the associations between transgressions and the open field see: A. Shinan, Y. Zakovitch, *From Gods to God. How the Bible Debunked, Suppressed, or Changed Ancient Myths and Legends*, Nebraska University Press 2012, pp. 191, 234–235.

<sup>23</sup> BDB 9703, 9714. A. Even-Shoshan, שד, in: ES, vol. 7, p. 2617. L. Koehler, W. Baumgartner (eds.), *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, Brill 2000 [HALOT], 8409, 8414. Worth noting here is the hypothesis advanced by K. and K. Massey. The said authors agree for the validity of the etymology which connects *Shadday* to *shad*, yet propose a slight nuance to its meaning. Accordingly, *shad* refers primarily to animal udder and only by means of semantic extension – to human breast. In consequence, Shadday should rather be initially connected with the pastoral life and prosperity rather than with fertility. K. Massey, K. Massey, *God of the Udder: Another Look at El Shaddai*, [online], <http://www.keithmassey.com/files/elshaddaymassey.pdf>, [29.I 2014], especially pp. 3–7.

<sup>24</sup> A. Even-Shoshan, שדד, in: ES, vol. 7, p. 2618. BDB 9718. TWOT 2331. HALOT 8413. The root is akin also to Arabic *shadiid* (strong). *Names of God* in: JE. See also the root שדש conveying the idea of scorch, blight, blast and also a hot, dry wind. BDB 9718. HALOT 8420. TWOT 2335.

<sup>25</sup> W.F. Albright, op. cit., pp. 181–182. BDB 9714

<sup>26</sup> See for example BT Hagigah 15a and BT Sanhedrin 67b which discuss the position of *shedim* between angels and humans. The word in modern Hebrew can convey the idea of proficiency and skillfulness. W.F. Albright, op. cit., p. 180. A. Even-Shoshan, שד, in: ES, vol. 7, p. 2617.

<sup>27</sup> All the linguistic statistics have been calculated by means of BibleWorks 8.0. The search included the hypothetical theophoric names and the results may therefore deviate from the data furnished by other treatises. The word *el* is considered to be the oldest known Semitic term for “deity”. The root might serve for a category of celestial beings, both “own” (Psalms 18:31, 33, 48; 57:3) and “foreign” to the Hebrews (Psalms 44:12, 81:10), as well as a personal name “El”. L.F. Hartman, S.D. Sperl, *God, Names of*, in: *Encyclopedia Judaica*,

almost exclusively in the context of the fertility blessings; once in Exodus in the revelation of the “real” name of Yahveh; 15 times throughout Numbers as a part of three theophoric names<sup>28</sup> and twice in Numbers 24 as one of the deities of the prophet Balaam. Interestingly, a lion’s share of the instances presents Shadday in rather negative terms. The name appears twice in Ruth 1:20–21 as the deity responsible for Ruth’s distress; approximately 60% of occurrences are concentrated in Job, where Shadday is presented as the one who afflicts his servant;<sup>29</sup> 6 times appears in the Prophets and Psalms, which speak about Shadday as a mighty and ruthless destroyer (Psalm 68:15; Isaiah 13:6 paralleled by Joel 1:15; Ezekiel 1:24; 10:5)<sup>30</sup> with but one exception when he is portrayed as the protector in Psalm 91:1. This general ambivalence is also reflected in the linguistic puns appearing in particular passages. In this regard there are two main directions; the first one which elaborates on the root שדח, conveying the idea of fertility and the other which plays with דדח, denoting destruction.<sup>31</sup>

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F. Skolnik, M. Berenbaum (eds.), vol. 7, Thomson Gale 2007, p. 672. Contra: *Names of God*, in: *Jewish Encyclopedia*, C. Adler, I. Singer et. al. (eds.), Funk and Wagnalls, New York 1901–1906, [online], <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/>, [29.I 2014], [JE].

<sup>28</sup> These are: *Tzurishadday* (“my rock is Shadday”, Numbers 1:6; 2:12; 7:36, 41; 10:19), *Ammishadday* (“the people of Shadday”, or “Shadday is my kinsman”, Numbers 1:12; 2:25; 7:66, 71; 10:25) and *Shdey’ur* (“Shadday shines”, or “the light of Shadday”, Numbers 1:5; 2:10; 7:30, 35; 10:18). R. Good, op. cit., p. 70. There is an ongoing discussion whether these names are “authentic” or just a later addition, influenced by Exodus 6:3, intended to give the narration the flavor of antiquity. D. Biale (*The God with Breasts: El Shaddai in the Bible*, “History of Religions”, Vol. 21, No. 3, 1982, p. 244) argues for the ancient origins whereas E.A. Knauf (*Shadday*, in: DDD, p. 751) opts for the late invention. For the discussion see: W.F. Albright, *The Names Shaddai and Abram*, “Journal of Biblical Literature”, Vol. 54, No. 4, 1935, p. 188, footnote number 55.

<sup>29</sup> See: E.A. Knauf, op. cit., p. 749.

<sup>30</sup> Some assume that these instances were intended at relegating the aspect of fertility and substituting it with the destructive nature. D. Biale, op. cit., pp. 254–255. G. Mushayabasa, *The Effect of Etymology on the Rendering of the Divine Epithet (El) Shaddai in the Peshitta Version*, “Journal for Semitics”, Vol. 19, No. 1, 2010, pp. 27–29.

<sup>31</sup> G. Mushayabasa, op. cit., p. 24. See also: E.A. Knauf, op. cit., p. 751. D. Biale, op. cit., p. 245. R. Good, op. cit., p. 67. For the details concerning the distinction between semantic and historical etymologization see: J. Bronkhorst,

This first aspect is reflected in the fertility blessings which utilize the variants of the formula “be fruitful and multiply” as is the case in 17:1; 28:3; 35:11 and 48:3.<sup>32</sup> Here the blessing of Jacob in Genesis 49:25 deserves special attention:

{E} Shadday – he has blessed you with the blessings of heavens from above, blessings of the {watery chasm}<sup>33</sup> breeding below, blessings of the breasts (Heb. *shadaym*) and the womb.

Of the foremost interest here is of course the wordplay between *shadaym* (“breasts”) and *Shadday* which has led some scholars to hypothesize about the initially feminine nature of the god.<sup>34</sup> According to D. Biale this deity with breasts is Asherah or Anat, who has been subject to a semantic “sex change” and afterwards incorporated into the cult of Yahveh.<sup>35</sup> The other option has been proposed by H. Lutzky who argues that the ending *-ay* is a typical marker of a feminine form found also in the names of Ugaritic goddesses like Tallay, Artzay, Pidray or Rahmay. In fact, *rahmay* and *shadday* may be two epithets of Asherah paralleled by the phrase *shadaym va-raham* in Genesis 49:25d.<sup>36</sup> These considerations should not be that surprising given the relatively developed tendency to present Yahveh as a woman (Isaiah 42:14; 46:3; 49:15; 66:7–9,12–13), a rock

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*Etymology and Magic: Yaska's Nirukta, Plato's Cratylus, and the Riddle of Semantic Etymologies*, “Numen”, Vol. 48, Fasc. 2 (2001), pp. 147–203.

<sup>32</sup> D. Biale, op. cit., p. 247, 251–252.

<sup>33</sup> Heb. *tehom*. For the connections between *tehom* and Babylonian Tiamat, the mother of all life, see: H.G. May, *Some Cosmic Connotations of Mayim Rabbim*, “Many Waters”, “Journal of Biblical Literature”, Vol. 74, No. 1, 1955, p. 21.

<sup>34</sup> E.A. Knauf, op. cit., p. 750. See also: D. Biale, op. cit., pp. 240–256. Heb. *shaday* (without the doubling of *dalet*) means literally “my breasts” and appears in Canticles 1:13.

<sup>35</sup> D. Biale, op. cit., pp. 254–256.

<sup>36</sup> H. Lutzky, *Shadday as a Goddess Epithet*, “Vetus Testamentum”, Vol. 48, 1998, pp. 17, 23–24. For the discussion concerning the hypothetical goddess Shadday along with her entourage (*shedin*) see: B.A. Levine, *The Deir 'Alla Plaster Inscriptions. The Book of Balaam, Son of Beor*, in: *The Context of Scripture. Canonical Compositions from the Biblical World*, W.W. Hallo, K.L. Younger Jr. (eds.), vol. II, Leiden-Boston, Brill 2003, pp. 140–145.

which begot Israel (Deuteronomy 32:18) or specifically a mother (Psalm 131:2).<sup>37</sup>

The second aspect is apparent in these places where the wordplay with the root  $\text{דדש}$  is involved. One of the most vivid examples comes from the proclamation against Babylon in Isaiah 13:5–6<sup>38</sup> where it is said:

They come from the distant land, from the border of heavens, Yahveh and the tools of his wrath, to destroy the whole land. Wail, as the day of Yahveh is near, as the destruction will come from Shadday (Heb. *ke-shod mi-Shadday yavo*’).

In its form the passage presents a great example of the Hebrew poetic parallelisms: the border of heavens is juxtaposed with the whole land, the chastisement coming from far away corresponds to the closing of the day of Yahveh whereas the destruction from Shadday parallels both the day of Yahveh and laying waste to the country.<sup>39</sup> The factual re-etymologization takes place in v. 6b which utilizes the wordplay between *Shadday* and *shod*.<sup>40</sup>

## Enough said

Surprisingly, when it comes to the more direct expressions of the meaning of “Shadday” in the early Rabbinic literature, the sources are extremely scarce and to the best of the author’s knowledge there are just two passages which tackle the problem explicitly. These few instances in turn follow the directions marked by the biblical re-etymologizations: closeness to Yahveh, fertility and destruction.

<sup>37</sup> D. Biale, op. cit., pp. 253–254. R. Good, op. cit., p. 69. The idea of a breasted god goes very well in line with the notion of the androgynous nature of the first man who had been created *be-tzelem ’elohim*. This is the case e.g. in Bereshit Rabbah 8:1 or Rashi to Genesis 1:27.

<sup>38</sup> This pun is also present in Joel 1:15.

<sup>39</sup> BDB 9707. HALOT 8412.

<sup>40</sup> According to some scholars, it is also possible that this particular name has been “excavated” from the more ancient textual strata and applied to Yahveh to denote his militant qualities. E.A. Knauf, op. cit., p. 751.

Thus, there is an acknowledgement of Shadday’s providence in a short passage from Shemot Rabbah 42:4<sup>41</sup> which elaborates on the giving of the Torah:

Just as Moses was about to descend [from mount Sinai], so the angels were about to kill him. What did he do? He grasped the throne of the Holy, blessed be he, [who] spread (Heb. *parash*) his tallit over him so as [the angels] would not assault him, as it has been said *he grasps the face of the moon and covers* (Heb. *parshez*) *it with the clouds* (Job 26:9). What does *parshez* mean? It is a notarikon of the words *parash, rahum, shadday, ziv* [meaning: the merciful Shadday spread the {glamour}] over him.

In addition to this, there is an account in the Babylonian Talmud which explains the name “Shadday”. The passage of BT Hagigah 12a is an excellent example of the rabbinic ingenious mixing of various motifs and conveying plenty of meaning in but a few words:

R[esh] L[aqish] said: what is it that is written: *I am El Shadday* (Genesis 35:11)? I am he who said to the world “enough!” (Heb. *’ani hu’ she-’amarti le-’olam: day.*). R[esh] L[aqish] [also] said: in the hour that the Holy, blessed be he, created the sea, it started to expand – until the Holy, blessed be he, reproached it.<sup>42</sup> [Then] it dried out as it was said: *He reproaches the sea and makes it dry; and all the rivers makes desolate* (Nahum 1:4).

This account has two parallel variants with some minute changes. One appears in Bereshit Rabbah 5:8, where Shadday stops the world from expanding and in 46:3 where he limits the earth and heavens. What is common to all these instances is the cosmogonic context and the exposition provided by Resh Laqish, who explains the ap-

<sup>41</sup> Cf. BT Shabbat 88b.

<sup>42</sup> It worth noting that the text utilizes the verb *lig’or*, (Eng. “to reproach,” “to rebuke”), which has often been used in the apotropaic context of the post-biblical literature. See for instance BT Berakhot 51a. J. Joosten, *The Verb גער “to Exorcize” in Qumran Aramaic and Beyond*, “Dead Sea Discoveries”, 21 (2014), p. 347–355.

pellation as a compound form consisting of *she* and *day*.<sup>43</sup> These passages in turn have often been exposed in a sophisticated way as indicating the divine plan of drawing the borders between mind and matter, keeping the balance between his right and left hand or as an early manifestation of the kabbalistic idea of *tzimtzum*.<sup>44</sup> It seems however, that they should rather be approached in their immediate context and in relation to another parallel narrative, although it does not contain any direct reference to Shadday. The text comes in BT Sukkah 53 a-b and reads:

When David dug the Pits, the {watery chasm}<sup>45</sup> arose and threatened to submerge the world. David asked: «is there anyone who knows whether it is allowed to inscribe the [divine] name upon a {piece of clay}, and cast it into the {watery chasm} that its waves would subside?» (...) He thereupon inscribed the name upon a {piece of clay}, cast (Aram. טַו) it into the {watery chasm} and it subsided sixteen thousand cubits.<sup>46</sup>

If to approach these passages from the structural perspective, it is possible to discern two basic essences engaged in the opposition:

<sup>43</sup> This way of explanation is commonly believed to be already witnessed by the Greek translation of the HB which in several instances utilizes the word *hikanos* meaning “self-sufficient”. Worth emphasizing here is that such interpretation, although theologically grounded is “historically impossible”. G. Mushayabasa, op. cit., p. 26. With all probability however this option became the default one in the Jewish tradition as is witnessed by Rashi’s commentary to Genesis 17:1 and Exodus 6:3 or Rambam’s interpretation in *Moreh Nevukhim* 1:63. See also the further part of this paper.

<sup>44</sup> E.g. in Pirkei de-rabbi Eliezer 3 it is said that the creation had been preceded by the existence of god and his name who has since then been restricting himself. For the review of the traditional exegeses adhering to this line of interpretation see: M. Altshuler, *Nishmat Shadday Tvinem*, [online], <http://www.jewish-studies.info/7.htm>, [29.I 2014].

<sup>45</sup> Cf. Genesis 49:25.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. BT Makkot 11a where David sees the *tehom* rising and stops it by means of the name inscribed upon a stone and Bereshit Rabbah 23:7 conveying the tradition that this was the abuse of the tetragram which brought about the flood. The sources suggested by M. Isaacson, *The Name of God and the Arava*, [online], [http://www.academia.edu/4496787/The\\_Name\\_of\\_God\\_and\\_the\\_Arava](http://www.academia.edu/4496787/The_Name_of_God_and_the_Arava), [29.I 2014], pp. 1–2. See also: M.I. Gruber, *God, Image of*, in: *Encyclopaedia of Judaism*, J. Neusner, A.J. Avery-Peck, W.S. Green (eds.), vol. II, Leiden-Boston, Brill, 2005, p. 870.

the active, dividing agent and passive amorphous matter. Moreover, each of the recalled accounts has strong cosmological undertones, what suggests assuming the comparative perspective. Accordingly, Shadday limiting the expansionist outburst of the world fits well the pattern of the so called *chaoskampf* – an initial divine battle followed by the triumph of the young and vivacious deity, subjugating the hostile, usually aquatic monster and building the palace or creating the cosmos. The mythological traditions of the ancient Near East are full of parallels: Babylonian Marduk and Tiamat, Ugaritic Ba‘al and Yam, Egyptian Ra and Apop, Hittite Tarhun and Illuyanka, etc. In fact, this rabbinic reiteration should not be surprising at all, given the semantic capacity of this myth. Not only does the HB recall the cosmic battle numerous times, especially in Psalms (e.g. 77:16–17; 89:10) and Prophets (e.g. Isaiah 51:9–10; Ezekiel 32:13)<sup>47</sup> but also plays with this ancient motif reiterating it to convey a specific meaning. Yahveh blowing the waters of the flood in Genesis 8:1 to make place for the new creation or dividing the *Yam Suf* in Exodus 14–15 to let the Hebrews walk to the other side and start a new national existence – all of these may be read as the retellings of the initial cosmogonic conflict. The deity “that says «enough»” could be than interpreted as the one controlling the broadly understood chaos, especially in its negative and threatening aspect and as such – protecting his people against the enemies.

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In sum, there are several factors which might have contributed to the popularity of the name “Shadday” in the context of the apotropaic customs. First, there are instances which suggest Shadday is the deity responsible for securing fertility and health. Second, Shadday appears in the accounts which emphasize his aggressiveness and strength and this image finds also its elaboration in later rabbinic literature which channels his vigor against chaotic matter. Finally, due to the later restrictions concerning the utilization of the names like “Yahveh” or “Elohim” on the one

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<sup>47</sup> For a broad selection of sources see: H.G. May, op. cit.

hand and the scarcity of the most of the “lesser” biblical names on the other, “Shadday” might have been the most adequate substitute. Still however, at least two issues remain unresolved. First and foremost, the uniqueness of Shadday is challenged by the fact that the ambiguous meaning could be very well attributed to nearly any other of the biblical deities. Secondly, the later rabbinic sources speaking about Shadday are brief and general and any conclusions drawn therefrom need to be treated as prudent hypotheses. In sum then, the above presented considerations by no means deplete the hermeneutic possibilities and the issue of the protective meaning of the appellation “Shadday” remains opened for further investigations.

#### **ABSTRACT**

The power of the divine appellations is widely recognized in the Rabbinic Judaism. Since the early midrashim, through the medieval exegesis up till the modern era these names have been believed to possess the extraordinary performative and protective potential. In this regard the position of “Shadday” is of particular significance. Not only it appears on various amulets and dedicatory plaques but more importantly it is strongly connected to the traditional customs which could be considered apotropaic in nature: male circumcision, mezuzah and tefillin. While this connection is explicitly drawn, no actual justification is given and the question arises, what factors might have contributed to this choice. The present paper argues that the apotropaic significance of “Shadday” probably derives from three factors. (1) It is the only divine appellation so closely and explicitly connected to the tetragram and as such might have been believed to participate in its power. (2) Numerous biblical instances utilize the ambivalent paronomasia with the roots שדד and דדש thus presenting Shadday as the one responsible for securing the flow of life and protecting against the enemies. (3) A few early rabbinic sources portray this deity as the one responsible for limiting the expansion of the chaotic matter during the creation process.

**KEY WORDS:** Shadday, apotropaism, Hebrew Bible, midrash, Talmud

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