The God Gad

RYAN THOMAS

WEST VALLEY CITY, UT

Although a Canaanite deity named Gad has long been known to have had a cultic following in the Levant, relatively little attention has been devoted to elucidating its character, status, and relationship to other major gods. The following study aims to investigate the nature of the deity by culling information from a broad analysis of West Semitic personal names carrying this theophoric as well as synthesizing the data with diverse biblical and inscriptional material. Several lines of evidence are adduced to suggest that Gad is not an independent West Semitic divinity but merely a descriptive epithet of the personal god El.

The cult of the god Gad in ancient Israel-Judah is obscure. As a god identified with good fortune—*gad* is a common noun meaning "fortune, luck"[1]—the divine name is attested sporadically in the Bible as well as in personal names and inscriptions from throughout the ancient Near Eastern/Mediterranean world. The laconic quality of personal names provides few hints about his character and identity, while the single literary text in which the divine name occurs is highly polemical and of limited use (Isa. 65:11). Further complicating matters is that not only was there a god in the southern Levant known as Gad, but that the noun *gad* was also commonly used in personal names in its appellative sense to identify a particular god as a source of good fortune.

During the first millennium it seems a multitude of gods are described as a source of *gad*, as reflected in the personal names *gdmlqrt* ("Melqart is fortune"), *gdʿštrt* ("Astarte is fortune"), *gdnbw* ("Nabu is fortune"), *gdyhw* ("YHW is fortune"), *gdyʾl* ("El is fortune"), *mlkmgd* ("Milkom is fortune"), *ṣlmgd* ("Ṣlm is fortune"). Eventually the concept *gad* was generalized and came to be used as a title for patron deities of cities, tribes, and localities in the Graeco-Roman Near East (Höfner 1965: 438–39; Lipiński 1995: 62–64; Kaizer 1997, 1998; Dirven 1999).

So who was the god Gad? Why was he worshipped among so many cultures? And what was his relationship to other, better known, regional/national gods? Unfortunately, there has been rather limited investigation into the origin and nature of the deity. Although the existence of a god named Gad has long been recognized (e.g., Baethgen 1888: 76–80; Skinner 1910: 387–88; Noth [1928] 1966: 126–27), the general tendency of biblical scholarship has been to treat him as an abstract figure exclusively associated with the concept of fortune and thus essentially a lesser divinity in the West Semitic pantheon. For example, Tigay classified Gad among "semi-divine beings or spirits instead of full-fledged deities . . . Like *tyche*, *gad* was sometimes personified and worshipped as the genius or fortune of an individual, a tribe, a city, a garden, or a well" ([1987] 2009: 163–67), and Ribichini similarly states, "Gad is the name of a deity of good luck, equivalent to the Greek Tyche and Latin Fortuna" (1999: 339).[2] Furthermore, in connection with the assumption that Gad arose as a personification, the worship of this deity has often been regarded specifically as a late religio-historical phenomenon, corresponding to its occurrence in Isa. 65 and attestation in Aramaic, Nabataean,

---

1. On the term's etymological origin, see Kogan 2015: 33 n. 64, 293.
2. See also Baltzer 1962: 507–8; Pappani 2014: 879.

Palmyrenian, and Safaitic personal names from the fifth century and later (e.g., Schunck 1999: 383–84; Worschech 1991: 722; Maier 1992: 863–64).

However, the assumption that Gad was a personification comparable to Greek *tyche* or essentially a late development in West Semitic religion is not borne out by a closer examination of the available onomastic evidence. For we have clear attestation of Gad used as a self-standing theophoric in West Semitic proper names throughout the first millennium BCE:[3]

1. *gdrm* "Gad is exalted" (eighth c.), *gdql* "Gad has spoken" (eighth c.), and *gdʿzyz* "Gad is strong" (fifth c.) in Aramaic;[4] cf. *ʾlrm* "El is exalted" in Hebrew and Ammonite and *bʿlrm* "Baal is exalted" in Phoenician;[5] *qlyhw* "YHW has spoken" in Hebrew and *bʿlrgm* "Baal has spoken" in Aramaic;[6] *ʿzzyhw* "YHW is strong" in Hebrew (1 Chron. 15:21).

2. *gad-iata'* "Gad has delivered" in West Semitic preserved in Neo-Assyrian (seventh c.);[7] cf. *Adda-iata'* "Adda has delivered" and *lata'-il* "El has delivered."[8]

3. *ʾbrgd* "Gad is strong/my strength" (eighth c.); *gdytn* "Gad has given" (Punic), and *gdnʿm* "Gad is kind" (Punic) in Phoenician;[9] cf. *ʾbrbʿl* "Baal is strong" in Phoenician and *ʾbryhw* "YHW is strong" in Hebrew;[10] *ytnbʿl* "Baal gave" in Phoenician and *yhwntn* "YHW gave" in Hebrew;[11] *nʿmʾl* "El is kind" in Phoenician and Hebrew.[12]

4. *mgdlgd* "Tower of Gad" (Josh. 15:37) and *ʿzgd* "Gad is protection" (Ezra 2:12; 8:12; Neh. 7:17; 10:16) in Hebrew;[13] cf. *ʿzyhw* "YHW is protection" in Hebrew and *ʿzʾl* "El is protection" in Ammonite and Aramaic;[14] *ʾšr* "happiness," a near synonym of *gd*, also occurs as a theophoric in *ʾšrhy* "Asher lives" and *ʾšryḥt* "?" in Hebrew and *ʾšršlḥ* "Asher has set free" in Phoenician.[15]

5. *gdmlk* "Gad is king" in Moabite (sixth c.);[16] cf. *ʾlmlk* "El is king" in Ugaritic, Aramaic, and Ammonite and *Il-milkī* "El is my king" in Neo-Assyrian.[17]

---

3. I am aware of no certain reference to Gad as a deity in second-millennium sources. The name *ndrgd* in KTU 1.81 (cf. Gröndahl 1967: 126) is now read *ndrg* (Pardee 2000: 440). If Ahlström's (1983) reading of *gdy* in a twelfth-century inscription from Lachish is correct, it would merely constitute an appellative use of *gad*, "my fortune is [DN]." The element *gad* appears in West Semitic personal names already at Ebla and Emar, where it is unclear whether it functions as an appellative or divine name (see Pagan 1998: 112; Pruzsinszky 2003: 324). There is also a mention of a temple of *gadda* at Emar, which some have interpreted as a reference to Gad (cf. Pentiuc 2001: 50; Dietrich 1990: 36).

4. Maraqten 1988: 75; Silverman 1985: 139. The interpretation of the Aramaic names *srgd* ("Ashur is fortune" or "Gad is king"?) and *gdyʾ* ("Gad has given" or "El is my fortune"?) is uncertain (cf. Lemaire 2001: 86, 91).

5. Albertz and Schmitt 2012: 571; Avigad and Sass 1997: no. 864; Benz 1972: 98.

6. Albertz and Schmitt 2012: 586; Maraqten 1988: 73.

7. Radner 1998–99: 418. For other potential examples of Gad used as a theophoric element in Neo-Assyrian, see Radner.

8. Radner 1998–99: 46; Baker 2000–1: 495.

9. Avigad 1966: 243–44; Benz 1972: 102.

10. Benz 1972: 55; Albertz and Schmitt 2012: 557.

11. Benz 1972: 129; Albertz and Schmitt 2012: 593.

12. Benz 2012: 147; Albertz and Schmitt 2012: 573.

13. The element *gad* in the place name Baal-gad, the tribe Gad, and personal name Gad is likely appellative, the latter two being shortened forms of longer names, i.e., "DN is fortune."

14. Albertz and Schmitt 2012: 560; Avigad and Sass 1997: no. 961; Maraqten 1988: 95.

15. Avigad and Sass 1997: nos. 457, 579, 580; Benz 1972: 73.

16. Mitchell 1994: 191–200.

17. Gröndahl 1967: 158; Maraqten 1988: 128; Deutsch and Lemaire 2000: 163; Baker 2000–1: 522.

6. *gdʿzr* "Gad has helped" in Ammonite (fifth-fourth c.);[18] cf. *ʾlʿzr* "El has helped" in Hebrew, *bʿlʿzr* "Baal has helped" in Phoenician, and *hddʿzr* "Hadad has helped" in Aramaic.[19]

7. *gdṭb* "Gad is good" in Nabatean;[20] cf. *ṭbʾl* "El is good" in Hebrew.[21]

In none of the above personal names is it plausible to interpret *gad* (or *ʾšr*) in its generic appellative sense. In line with West Semitic theophoric personal names more generally, *gad* is appended to a predicative element in the form of an adjective or verb, implying that it functions as the subject of the simple clause, i.e., a proper name.

Furthermore, the god Gad is treated as a distinct mythological figure with powers to intervene in the lives of individuals virtually indistinguishable from those of established high gods. Gad is said to be exalted and strong, to rule as king, to have responded to a vow, provided protection, and bestowed a child, etc., statements that elsewhere in the West Semitic onomasticon are regularly used to describe deities such as El, Baal, or YHWH. In addition, Gad is consistently implied to have been male, based on the use of masculine verbs and adjectives in the associated predicative elements. The evidence of personal names shows that Gad was conceptualized as a male divinity throughout his early career and it is only in the Hellenistic period when we find *gad* used as an epithet for female deities in the Punic world and in Graeco-Roman Syria, likely a result of Greek influence that conceived the patron goddess of a city/kingdom as *tyche* (cf. Barré 1983: 64–73; Lipiński 1995: 62–64; Kaizer 1998; Lichtenberger 2008: 140).

The traditional interpretation of Gad as a personification of "fortune" has relied to a great extent on Isa. 65 as well as later Graeco-Roman sources that equate *gad* with *tyche* (e.g., Blenkinsopp 2003: 278–79). But Isa. 65 is a problematic source for elucidating the earlier West Semitic understanding of Gad. The consensus of modern scholarship is that chapter 65 belongs to a very late stratum of the book and the reference to Gad is found in a polemical accusation that members of the Jerusalem community have abandoned YHWH to worship Gad and Meni, the god and goddess of fortune and fate. The language is highly rhetorical, as suggested by the dense use of wordplay and metaphor in the surrounding literary context.[22] In this case, the prophetic author is not describing Gad and Meni as they would have been understood by actual worshippers of these deities, but is using them as a foil for YHWH to dramatize and exaggerate the impiety of his adversaries (cf. Hanson 1979: 198; Koenen 1990: 180, 2009; Rom-Shiloni 2013: 127–34). Further, the Hellenistic usage of *gad* as a generic appellative equivalent to *tyche* is clearly a late historical development. As I mentioned above, in earlier West Semitic sources Gad is used as the proper name of a male deity.

On the basis of personal names alone, we would have to conclude that Gad was far more than simply a personification or secular notion that existed alongside deity and competed for attention as an explanatory model (so Eissfeldt 1963: 200). Indeed, because the god Gad is only sporadically attested in personal names before the Hellenistic period and yet appears with the same kinds of predicates as established high gods, it seems an unavoidable conclusion that the name functioned as an epithet and referred to a deity commonly known

18. Aufrecht 1989: no. 147:4:1.
19. Albertz and Schmitt 2012: 546; Benz 1972: 96; Avigad and Sass 1997: no. 785.
20. Negev 1991: 18.
21. Albertz and Schmitt 2012: 573.
22. E.g., the echo of Deuteronomistic accusations about worshipping strange gods on mountains and hills (v. 7); the progression from the mountains of Israel-Judah (v. 9) to "my holy mountain," i.e., temple (v. 11); the alliteration with *mmlʾym*, *mny*, and *mmsk* (v. 11b); the wordplay between *mny* (v. 11) and *mnyty* (v. 12); the contrast between setting out feasts for the gods of wealth and fortune (v. 11); and prophesied hunger and deprivation (vv. 13–14).

by another name. The widespread attestation of theophoric personal names that link a major national god to *gad* in the predicative element noted above shows that the concept of good fortune was not unrelated to these deities' profiles; on the contrary, it appears to have been integral to their role in personal religion. So if a god could be tied to *gad* in an appellative sense (deity X is "good fortune"), it is not so strange to think that a god could be referred to as "(the) Gad" or "Fortune" itself. Otherwise we would have to assume that Gad was a god who was believed to intervene favorably in the lives of individuals and had the powers of other major deities but was only occasionally called upon or credited with having served as personal god.

We have many examples from the ancient Near East where a deity was known by multiple epithets (e.g., El = Shaddai, Elyon, Baal, etc.), and the use of a common noun as though it were a proper name is certainly not exceptional in the wider context of West Semitic divine names (e.g., *ʾb* "father" = Father; *ʾl* "god" = El; *bʿl* "lord" = Baal; *mwt* "death" = Death; *šm* "name" = Name).

Assuming that Gad is an epithet of another common West Semitic divinity, one candidate looms before all others as the preeminent source of fortune in the West Semitic sphere, namely, the god El. Based on several lines of evidence, El seems to have been closely linked to *gad* as a determiner of fate and fortune. First, in personal names El is frequently associated with *gad* as an appellative. This includes *gdyʾl* "El is my fortune" in Hebrew (Num. 13:10); *ga-di-ilu* "El is my fortune" preserved in Neo-Assyrian and Babylonian; and *gdʾl* "El is fortune" in North Arabian.[23] Considering that El and YHWH were the dominant theophoric elements employed in Israel-Judah, the shortened forms *gd*, *gdy*, and *gdʾ* well attested in Hebrew (Albertz and Schmitt 2012: 564) likely had reference to El or YHWH as the intended subject of the names.

Second, most of the above-discussed names with Gad as theophoric have close analogues in El names with the same predicate in West Semitic. For example:

- *gdrm* "Gad is exalted" corresponds to *ʾlrm* "El is exalted" in Hebrew and Ammonite and *Ilā-rāmu* in Neo-Assyrian;[24]
- *gdql* "Gad has spoken" to *ʾmrʾl* "El has spoken" in Ammonite and Moabite and *ʾlʾmr* "El has spoken" in Aramaic;[25]
- *gdʿyz* "Gad is strong" to *ʿzzʾl* "El is strong" in Nabatean;[26]
- *gad-iata'* "Gad has delivered" to *lata'-il* "El has delivered" in Neo-Assyrian;[27]
- *gdytn* "Gad has given" to *ʾlntn* "El has given" in Hebrew, Ammonite, and Aramaic and *Il-natan* "El has given" in Neo-Assyrian;[28]
- *gdnʿm* "Gad is kind" to *nʿmʾl* "El is kind" in Hebrew and Phoenician;[29]
- *ʿzgd* "Gad is protection" to *ʿzʾl* "El is protection" in Ammonite and Aramaic, *ʿzyʾl* "my protection is El" in Hebrew, and *ʾlʿz* "El is protection" in Hebrew;[30]

23. Tallqvist 1914: 79, 255; Radner 1998–99: 418; Zadok 1978: 62; Harding 1971: 154. The interpretation of the name *ilgdn* in Ugaritic is uncertain; cf. Gröndahl 1967: 126; Ribichini and Xella 1991: 160; *DUL³*: 292.

24. Albertz and Schmitt 2012: 571; Avigad and Sass 1997: nos. 864, 907–10; Baker 2000–1: 512.

25. Avigad and Sass 1997: nos. 899, 919, 1019; Deutsch and Lemaire 2000: 111.

26. Negev 1991: 50.

27. Baker 2000–1: 495.

28. Albertz and Schmitt 2012: 593; Avigad and Sass 1997: no. 904; Maraqten 1988: 69; Baker 2000–1: 522–23.

29. Albertz and Schmitt 2012: 573; Benz 1972: 147.

30. Avigad and Sass 1997: no. 961; Maraqten 1988: 95; *HALOT*: no. 6918; Albertz and Schmitt 2012: 559.

- *gdmlk* "Gad is king" to *ʾlmlk* "El is king" in Ammonite, Aramaic, and Phoenician and *Il-milkī* "El is my king" in Neo-Assyrian;[31]
- *gdʿzr* "Gad has helped" to *ʾlʿzr* "El has helped" in Hebrew, Ammonite, and Aramaic and *Il-izrī* "El is my help" in Neo-Assyrian;[32]
- *gdṭb* "Gad is good" to *ṭbʾl* "El is good" in Hebrew.[33]

In other words, across a wide geographical area the same kinds of devotional statements made about Gad are also expressed in reference to El. The overlap between Gad and El is particularly apparent in the Arabian sphere, where we find names such as *gdšfq* "Gad had compassion" (Harding 1971: 155) and the corresponding *gdnʿm/nʿmgd* "Gad is kind" (Harding 1971: 156, 594) and *ʾlnʿm/nʿmʾl* "El is kind" (Harding 1971: 71, 594); *gdyfʿ* "Gad has shone forth" (Harding 1971: 154) and *ʾlyfʿ/yfʿʾl* "El has shone forth" (Harding 1971: 73, 679); and *slmgd* "Gad has made whole" (Harding 1971: 154) and *slmʾl* "El has made whole" (Harding 1971: 325).

Third, in Israel-Judah we have more specific support for equating Gad and El. The place name Baal-gad can mean either "Baal is good fortune" (Naʿaman 1999: 144) or "Gad is lord" (Noth [1928] 1966: 126 n. 3). In any case, the Baal referenced is likely to have been El, since his cult site is located in the valley of Lebanon below Mount Hermon (Josh. 11:17; 12:17; 13:5). Steiner has presented biblical and inscriptional data that the "Baal" of this vicinity was in fact Canaanite El (2009: 511–12). In addition, a border town in Judah is named *mgdl-gd* "Fortress of Gad"[34] and in Naphtali there is a *mgdl-ʾl* "Fortress of El," implying a functional identity between Gad and El. In the Hebrew Bible the *mgdl* of Shechem is associated with another El deity, El-berith, also called Baal-berith (Judg. 8:33; 9:46–47).[35]

Fourth, in Gen. 30:9–13 Gad and Asher seem to be used as divine epithets for the personal god of the narrative. Leah's maid Zilpah bears a son and then she exclaims *bgd* "By [the help of] Fortune!" A second son is born and she exclaims again *bʾšry* "by [the help of] my Luck."[36] Throughout much of the birth narrative of the tribal ancestors YHWH is called Elohim (30:2, 6, 18, 20, 22), in other words, El.

As I mentioned earlier, the theophoric element Asher is attested in Hebrew and Phoenician personal names, including *ʾšrḥy* "Asher lives," *ʾšryḥt* "?," and *ʾšršlḥ* "Asher has set free." In the past Asher has often been explained in relation to Asherah, either as a defective writing of the name or as a male counterpart to the goddess (Skinner 1910: 388; Burney 1920: 197–98; Noth [1928] 1966: 131; Avigad and Sass 1997: no. 486; Römer 2015: 278 n. 15). More recently, Sass has proposed that Asher stems from the root *ʾšr* meaning "place" and designates the "divinized temple" (2014: 47–66). However, a basic problem with the above proposals is that Asher does not seem to be etymologically related to the root common to the name Asherah or *ʾšr* "place." In Middle Kingdom Egyptian writing of the Northwest

---

31. Deutsch and Lemaire 2000: 163; Maraqten 1988: 69; Deutsch and Heltzer 1997: no. 80.15; Baker 2000–1: 522.

32. Albertz and Schmitt 2012: 546; Avigad and Sass 1997: nos. 770, 953; Baker 2000–1: 518.

33. Albertz and Schmitt 2012: 573.

34. *mgdl-gd* has recently been identified with Tel el-Hesi (Hardin, Rollston, and Blakely 2012). Interestingly, Hardin, Rollston, and Blakely suggest that *mgdl-gd* may be equivalent to the "Enclosure of el-gad" mentioned in the Palestinian campaign of Shoshenq I recorded at Karnak. The name "El-gad," which recalls the place name Baal-gad, may thus further suggest a relationship between El and *gad* "fortune."

35. See Lewis 1996: 401–23.

36. Westermann 1995: 475; cf. Burney 1920: 197–98; Frevel 1995: 162. For the instrumental use of the preposition *b-* with divinity as object, see *BDB*, 89, 2b-c. The traditional rendering of the above expressions in terms of profane luck or good fortune, "Good fortune!" and "How happy am I" (NRSV), misses the theological interests of the birth narrative (e.g., 29:32, 33, 35; 30:2, 6, 18, 20, 23–24) as well as the theophoric background of *gd* and *ʾšr*.

Semitic element ʾšr, the sibilant is written with an š and not an s, which militates against the view that it is derived from Proto-Semitic ʾṯr (Albright 1954: 229–30 n. 51; Janzen 1965: 216). Further, in Ugaritic the form išryt "happiness" is distinguished from aṯrt "Asherah," suggesting that Asher stems from Proto-Semitic ʾsr (Frevel 1995: 162 n. 447). On analogy with the name Gad, it seems reasonable to assume that the tribal name and theophoric element Asher is related to ʾšr "happiness, felicity" and was a fairly common epithet/appellative of the personal god. Also, the nominal element ʾšr "happiness" may function as predicate in the unsatisfactorily explained Hebrew proper names אשריאל, אשראלה, אשראל, meaning "El is my happiness."[37]

Fifth, an altar from Nabataean Hauran from the first century CE may provide late confirmation for the link between El and Gad. The dedicatory inscription written upon it describes the dedicants as rḥmy gdʾ "friends of the Gad" (Littmann 1904: 93–94). Significantly, *gad* here is simply "the gad," not the *gad* of "X," as in so many contemporary inscriptions from Palmyra and Hatra. His identity as personal god is thus obvious enough for the dedicators that no further specification was necessary. Several contextual clues allow us to identity him as an El-type deity:

1) The phrase "friends of Gad" is evocative of the kinds of terms of endearment that were characteristic of West Semitic El. At Ugarit various divine "beloveds" of El are known (Rahmouni 2008: 193–97, 212–18), and El appears as a theophoric in the Akk. Ugaritic name *il-tappa* "El is friend" (Gröndahl 1967: 201). Closer in time and space are the personal names ḥbbʾl "beloved of El," wddʾl "beloved of El," and šᶜl "companion of El," in Thamudic and Safaitic inscriptions (Harding 1971: 172, 364, 637), or even the later Islamic concept of Wali Allah "beloved of Allah." In the Hebrew Bible several figures bear the name rᶜl, "companion of El," including Moses' father-in-law (Exod. 2:18); the name šlmyʾl means "My ally is El" (Levine 1993: 136), ʾldd perhaps "El has loved" (cf. Noth [1928] 1966: 183; Zadok 1988: 49). In the New Testament Abraham is called *philos theou*, "the friend of God" (James 2:23).

2) On each side of the altar sculpted bull images are displayed prominently. Known for its virility and strength, the bull was a long-enduring and widely distributed symbol of Canaanite El (Smith 2001: 32, 146–47; 2002: 83–84; Ornan 2001: 1–26; Koenen 2003: 95–132).

3) The personal names contained in the inscription highlight El as protective deity. One of the dedicants is named ṣʿdʾl "El helps." He is the son of wtrw, which, interestingly, is cognate to the name of Moses' father-in-law Jethro. In addition, the name of the sculptor is ḥnʾl "El was gracious" (Littmann 1904: 94).

Of course, this *gad* may have been recognized by other names in Nabataean culture—an inscription from Palmyra identifies ʾlh ṣʿbw as the "*gad* of the Nabataeans" (Healey 2000: 153–54). But the evidence of Nabataean personal names suggests that the cult of El deeply impacted local family religion as well (Negev 1991: 155–56).

Finally, as the ancestral god of the Canaanite peoples, it makes sense that El would have been closely linked to the concepts of fortune and fate. In the ancient Near East gods were commonly believed to be responsible for the maintenance of the cosmos and the well-being of the individual and family, and in the southern Levant this role fell particularly to the gods El and Asherah. At Ugarit, El is the highest authority and source of blessing; he is famously said to have the power to determine ḥyt ḥẓt "a life of good fortune" (KTU 1.3 V 30–31;

---

37. In the MT the שׁ is vocalized as a *sin* rather than a *shin*. Cf. *HALOT*: nos. 916–19; Noth [1928] 1966: 183; Zadok 1988: 29; Fowler 1988: 337; Sass 2014: 56 n. 59.

1.4 IV 41–43).[38] In Amherst Papyrus 63 Bethel, an Aramaean version of El, is portrayed as creator and father god with power over the destinies of his people; he provides fertility, food, and protection.[39] At Byblos King Yehawmilk prays that the Lady of Byblos may "bless [him], and may she keep him alive, and prolong his days and years over Byblos . . . and give him favor in the eyes of the gods and in the eyes of the people" (*KAI* 10, 8–10).

As is well known, comparable roles are ascribed to YHWH-El in the Bible. 1 Sam. 2:3–8 preserves an early poetic text that presumably reflects once common beliefs about El as a god of fortune and fate:[40]

> For YHWH is a god [ʾēl] of knowledge,
> a god [ʾēl] who balances his actions;
> The bows of the mighty are broken,
> but the feeble gird on strength;
> Those who were full have hired themselves out for bread,
> but those who were hungry cease forever[?];
> The barren has borne seven,
> but she who has many children is bereaved;
> YHWH causes to die and brings to life,
> he brings down to Sheol and raises up;
> YHWH makes poor and makes rich,
> he makes low, he also exalts;
> He raises up the poor from the dust,
> he lifts the needy from the ash heap,
> To make them sit with princes
> and inherit a seat of honor.

Here YHWH—note the repetition of ʾēl in v. 2—is praised as lord over good and bad fortune with the power to reverse life's conditions. Because El was the primary head of the early Israelite-Judahite pantheon,[41] we can reasonably infer that he would have had a preeminent role with regard to general prosperity and well-being, as well as the cyclic processes of life. This de facto made him the locus of fate and fortune for both communities and individuals.[42] Similar to the way many religious believers today relate their good or bad fortune to a transcendent high god who governs the affairs of humankind, so did people in the ancient southern Levant see El as particularly implicated in the vicissitudes and precariousness of life. As we saw earlier, other gods during the first millennium could be invoked as sources of good fortune. But apparently only the supreme deity of the Canaanite pantheon was so closely identified with fortune that he could be invoked as Fortune itself.[43]

As with so many other religious themes, the concept of *gad* had a long history of development from the Late Bronze Age to the Hellenistic period, and so it is important when trying to reconstruct the worldviews of ancient Israelites-Judahites that we not telescope later ideas or biblical polemics onto earlier religious patterns. The above analysis suggests that in its pre-Hellenistic Levantine career the term *gad* was used to designate the personal god par

---

38. On the meaning of *ḥẓt*, cf. Smith and Pitard 2009: 327, 353–54; Kogan 2015: 326–27.

39. For translation and edition, see Steiner 2003; Steiner and Nims 2017; van der Toorn 2018. On Bethel in Amherst Papyrus 63, see Röllig 1994: 174; Kottsieper 1997a; 1997b; 2013; van der Toorn 2018: 6–37.

40. For the text, cf. McCarter 1980: 67–69; Hutzli 2007: 93–96.

41. Cf. Römer 2015: 71–82, 127–28; Day 2002: 13–41; Smith 2001: 135–48.

42. We can assume that something similar was the case with El's spouse, Asherah. Cf. the description of the "Queen of Heaven" in Jer. 44:17–18.

43. The differentiation between *Gad* as proper name and *gad* as appellative parallels the use of ʾēl as both proper name and common noun, "the God" vs. "a god."

excellence in the southern Levant, namely El. Gad was not an independent West Semitic divinity of only minor import or an abstract personification of the power of fortune and fate, but an emblematic title of the personal god, who was conceived as the source of well-being and protection. Based on its widespread usage in Canaanite culture, its application to El probably occurred quite early, sometime before the first millennium BCE.

An important ramification of the above study is that El had a wider presence in Levantine cult during the first millennium than has generally been appreciated. If El or an El-type personal god is hiding behind epithets such as Gad and Asher in personal names, it points to the multifaceted character of the deity as well as the creative means by which his power and benevolence could be invoked.

REFERENCES

Ahlström, G. W. 1983. Was Gad the God of Tell Ed-Duweir? *PEQ* 115: 47–48.

Albertz, R., and R. Schmitt. 2012. *Family and Household Religion in Ancient Israel and the Levant*. Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns.

Albright, W. F. 1954. Northwest-Semitic Names in a List of Egyptian Slaves from the Eighteenth Century B.C. *JAOS* 74: 222–33.

Aufrecht, W. E. 1989. *Corpus of Ammonite Inscriptions*. Lewiston: Mellen.

Avigad, N. 1966. Two Phoenician Votive Seals. *IEJ* 16: 243–51.

―――――. 1968. The Seal of Abigad. *IEJ* 18: 52–53.

―――――, and B. Sass. 1997. *Corpus of West Semitic Stamp Seals*. Jerusalem: Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

Baethgen, F. 1888. *Beiträge zur semitischen Religionsgeschichte: Der Gott Israel's und die Götter der Heiden*. Berlin: Reuther.

Baker, H. D., ed. 2000–1. *The Prosopography of the Neo-Assyrian Empire*, vol. 2. Helsinki: The Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project.

Baltzer, K. 1962. Gad. In *Biblisch-historisches Handwörterbuch*, ed. B. Reicke and L. Rost. Vol. 1, 507–8. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.

Barré, M. L. 1983. *The God-List in the Treaty between Hannibal and Philip V of Macedonia: A Study in Light of the Ancient Near Eastern Treaty Tradition*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press.

Benz, F. L. 1972. *Personal Names in the Phoenician and Punic Inscriptions*. Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute.

Blenkinsopp, J. 2003. *Isaiah 56–66: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. New York: Doubleday.

Burney, C. F. 1920. *The Book of Judges with Introduction and Notes*. London: Rivington.

Day, L. 2002. *Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan.* New York: Sheffield Academic.

Deutsch, R., and A. Lemaire. 2000. *Biblical Period Personal Seals in the Shlomo Moussaieff Collection*. Tel Aviv: Archaeological Center.

―――――, and M. Heltzer. 1997. *Windows to the Past*. Tel Aviv: Archaeological Center.

Dietrich, M. 1990. Die akkadischen Texte der Archive und Bibliotheken von Emar. *UF* 22: 25–48.

Dirven, L. 1999. *The Palmyrenes of Dura-Europos: A Study of Religious Interaction in Roman Syria*. Leiden: Brill.

DUL³ = G. del Olmo Lete and J. Sanmartín. 2015. *A Dictionary of the Ugaritic Language in the Alphabetic Tradition*, Third Revised Edition. Leiden: Brill.

Eissfeldt, O. 1963. 'Gut Glück!' in semitischer Namengebung. *JBL* 82: 195–200.

Fowler, J. D. 1988. *Theophoric Personal Names in Ancient Hebrew*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic.

Frevel, C. 1995. *Aschera und der Ausschliesslichkeitsanspruch YHWHs: Beiträge zu literarischen*, *religionsgeschichtlichen und ikonographischen Aspekten der Ascheradiskussion*. Weinheim: Beltz Athenäum.

Gröndahl, F. 1967. *Die Personennamen der Texte aus Ugarit*. Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute.

HALOT = *Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament.* Leiden: Brill, 1994–.

Hanson, P. D. 1979. *The Dawn of Apocalyptic*. Philadelphia: Fortress.

Hardin, J. W., C. A. Rollston, and J. A. Blakely. 2012. Biblical Geography in Southwestern Judah. *NEA* 75: 20–35.

Harding, G. L. 1971. *An Index and Concordance of Pre-Islamic Arabian Names and Inscriptions*. Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press.

Healey, J. F. 2000. *The Religion of the Nabataeans: A Conspectus*. Leiden: Brill.

Höfner, M. 1965. Die Stammesgruppen Nord- und Zentralarabiens in vorislamischer Zeit. In *Götter und Mythen im Vorderen Orient: Wörterbuch der Mythologie*, I/1, ed. H. W. Haussig. Pp. 407–81. Stuttgart: E. Klett.

Hutzli, J. 2007. *Die Erzählung von Hanna und Samuel: Textkritische und literarische Analyse von 1. Samuel 1–2 unter Berücksichtigung des Kontextes*. Zürich: Theologischer Verlag.

Janzen, W. 1965. ʾAŠRÊ in the Old Testament. *Harvard Theological Review* 58: 215–26.

Kaizer, T. 1997. De Dea Syria et aliis deabusque: A Study of the Variety of Appearances of Gad, Part 1. *OLP* 28: 147–66.

————. 1998. De Dea Syria et aliis deabusque: A Study of the Variety of Appearances of Gad, Part 2. *OLP* 29: 33–62.

Koenen, K. 1990. *Ethik und Eschatologie im Tritojesajabuch: Eine literarkritische und redaktionsgeschichtliche Studie*. Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag.

————. 2003. *Bethel: Geschichte, Kult und Theologie*. Freiburg: Universitätsverlag.

————. 2009. Gad and Meni. *Das wissenschaftliche Bibellexikon im Internet*. https://www.bibelwissenschaft.de/wibilex/das-bibellexikon/lexikon/sachwort/anzeigen/details/gad-und-meni/ch/15a80e5557a3dc3d80ee2a88bc7c38c3/.

Kogan, L. 2015. *Genealogical Classification of Semitic: The Lexical Isoglosses*. Berlin: de Gruyter.

Kottsieper, I. 1997a. El—ferner oder naher Gott? Zur Bedeutung einer semitischen Gottheit in verschiedenen sozialen Kontexten im 1. Jtsd.v.Chr. In *Religion und Gesellschaft: Studien zur ihrer Wechselbeziehung in den Kulturen des Antiken Vorderen Orients*, ed. R. Albertz and S. Otto. Pp. 25–74. Münster: Ugarit-Verlag.

————. 1997b. Anmerkungen zu Pap. Amherst 63. Teil II-V. *UF* 29: 385–434.

————. 2013. El. *Das wissenschaftliche Bibellexikon im Internet*. https://www.bibelwissenschaft.de/de/stichwort/17172/.

Lemaire, A. 2001. *Nouvelles tablettes araméennes*. Geneva: Droz.

Levine, B. A. 1993. *Numbers 1–20: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. New York: Doubleday.

Lewis, T. J. 1996. The Identity and Function of El/Baal Berith. *JBL* 115: 401–23.

Lichtenberger, A. 2008. Artemis and Zeus Olympios in Roman Gerasa and Seleucid Religious Policy. In *The Variety of Local Religious Life in the Near East in the Hellenistic and Roman Periods*, ed. T. Kaizer. Pp. 133–53. Leiden: Brill.

Lipiński, E. 1995. *Dieux et déesses de l'univers phénicien et punique*. Leuven: Peeters.

Littmann, E. 1904. *Semitic Inscriptions*. New York: The Century.

Maier, W. A., III. 1992. Gad. *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. 2, 863–64. New Haven: Yale Univ. Press.

Maraqten, M. 1988. *Die semitischen Personennamen in den alt- und reichsaramäischen Inschriften aus Vorderasien*. New York: Olms.

McCarter, P. K., Jr. 1980. *I Samuel: A New Translation with Introduction, Notes and Commentary*. Garden City: Doubleday.

Mitchell, T. C. 1994. An Inscribed Neo-Assyrian Stamp Seal. In *Beschreiben und Deuten in der Archäologie des alten Orients: Festschrift für Ruth Mayer-Opificius*, ed. M. Dietrich and O. Loretz. Pp. 191–200. Münster: Ugarit-Verlag.

Naʿaman, N. 1999. Baal-Gad. In *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, ed. K. van der Toorn, B. Becking, and P. W. van der Horst. 2nd ed. P. 144. Grand Rapids: Brill/Eerdmans.

Negev, A. 1991. *Personal Names of the Nabatean Realm*. Jerusalem: Institute of Archaeology, Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

Noth, M. (1928) 1966. *Die israelitischen Personennamen im Rahmen der gemeinsemitischen Namengebung*. Hildesheim: Olms.

Ornan, T. 2001. The Bull and Its Two Masters. *IEJ* 51: 1–26.

Pagan, J. M. 1998. *A Morphological and Lexical Study of Personal Names in the Ebla Texts*. Rome: Missione Archeologica Italiana in Siria.

Pappani, N. 2014. Gad (Deity). In *Encyclopedia of the Bible and Its Reception*, ed. D. C. Allison, C. Helmer, V. Leppin, C.-L. Seow, H. Spieckermann, B. D. Walfish, and E. Ziolkowski. Vol. 9, p. 879. Berlin: de Gruyter.

Pardee, D. 2000. *Les textes rituels*, vol. 1. Paris: ERC.

Pentiuc, E. J. 2001. *West Semitic Vocabulary in the Akkadian Texts from Emar*. Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns.

Pruzsinszky, R. 2003. *Die Personennamen der Texte aus Emar*. Bethesda: CDL Press.

Radner, K., ed. 1998–99. *The Prosopography of the Neo-Assyrian Empire*, vol. 1. Helsinki: The Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project.

Rahmouni, A. 2008. *Divine Epithets in the Ugaritic Alphabetic Texts*. Leiden: Brill.

Ribichini, S. 1999. Gad. In *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, 2nd ed., ed. K. van der Toorn, B. Becking, and P. W. van der Horst. Pp. 339–41. Grand Rapids: Brill/Eerdmans.

Ribichini, S., and P. Xella. 1991. Problemi di onomastica ugaritica: Il caso dei teofori. *SEL* 8: 149–70.

Röllig, W. 1999. Bethel. In *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, 2nd ed., ed. K. van der Toorn, B Becking, and P. W. van der Horst. Pp. 173–75. Grand Rapids: Brill/Eerdmans.

Römer, T. 2015. *The Invention of God*. Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press.

Rom-Shiloni, D. 2013. *Exclusive Inclusivity: Identity Conflicts between the Exiles and the People Who Remained (6th–5th Centuries BCE)*. New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark.

Sass, B. 2014. On Epigraphic Hebrew ʾŠR and *ʾŠRH, and on Biblical Asherah. In *Bible et Proche-Orient: Mélanges André Lemaire III*, ed. J. Elayi and J. M. Durand. Pp. 47–66. Paris: Gadalba.

Schunck, K.-D. 1999. גד. In *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, vol. 2. Pp. 382–84. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

Silverman, M. H. 1985. *Religious Values in the Jewish Proper Names*. Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag.

Skinner, J. 1910. *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Genesis*. New York: Scribner's Sons.

Smith, M. 2001. *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism*. New York: Oxford Univ. Press.

─────── . 2002. *The Early History of God*, 2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

─────── , and W. T. Pitard. 2009. *The Ugaritic Baal Cycle*, vol. II: *Introduction with Text, Translation and Commentary of KTU/CAT 1.3–1.4*. Leiden: Brill.

Steiner, R. C. 2003. The Aramaic Text in Demotic Script. In *The Context of Scripture*, vol. 1: *Canonical Compositions from the Biblical World*, ed. W. H. Hallo. Leiden: Brill.

─────── . 2009. On the Rise and Fall of Canaanite Religion at Baalbek: A Tale of Five Toponyms. *JBL* 128: 507–25.

─────── , and C. F. Nims. 2017. The Aramaic Text in Demotic Script: Text, Translation, and Notes. *Academia.edu*. https://www.academia.edu/31662776/The_Aramaic_Text_in_Demotic_Script_Text_Translation_and_Notes.

Tallqvist, K. L. 1914. *Assyrian Personal Names*. Helsingfors.

Tigay, J. H. (1987) 2009. Israelite Religion: The Onomastic and Epigraphic Evidence. In *Ancient Israelite Religion: Essays in Honor of Frank Moore Cross*, ed. P. D. Miller, P. D. Hanson, and S. D. McBride. Pp. 157–94. Minneapolis: Fortress.

Toorn, K. van der. 2018. *Papyrus Amherst 63*. Münster: Ugarit-Verlag.

Westermann, C. 1995. *Genesis 12–36: A Commentary*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press.

Worschech, U. 1991. Gad. In *Neues Bibel-Lexikon*. Vol. 1, pp. 721–22. Zürich: Benziger.

Zadok, R. 1978. *On West Semites in Babylonia during the Chaldean and Achaemenian Periods: An Onomastic Study*. Jerusalem: H. J. & Z. Wanaarta.

─────── . 1988. *The Pre-Hellenistic Israelite Anthroponomy and Prosopography*. Leuven: Peeters.