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Light of the Land, Sun of the People: The Solarization of Ancient Near Eastern and Biblical Lawgivers

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Abstract

Ancient Near Eastern kings were always assumed to mediate between the divine and human worlds, but where they fell in the spectrum between mortal and divine varied from one king or dynasty to the next. Additionally, human kings could claim divine or semi-divine status through certain activities attached to the office of kingship. Through a diachronic survey, this study examines how the royal act of lawgiving elevated human rulers above other people. As lawgivers, these rulers could embody certain attributes of gods of justice within their political realms—most evident in metaphors attributing solar imagery and solar language to human rulers in royal ideology. Using cognitive metaphor theory, I examine the various ways that ancient audiences received and processed this figurative language, answering for themselves how the king could simultaneously be a mortal man and represent a solar god of justice.

Keywords

lawgiving – solarization – biblical law – ancient Near Eastern law – sun god – divine kingship

While Near Eastern rulers were always assumed to mediate between the divine and human worlds, where they fell in the spectrum between mortal man and a god could vary based not only on the individual king or dynasty, but also on specific aspects of their kingship. In their capacity as lawgivers, Near Eastern rulers were imagined to access divine judicial wisdom and to embody certain attributes

of the gods of justice within their political realms.¹ This is most evident in the attribution of solar imagery and solar language to human rulers in their exercise of justice. Although few Near Eastern kings were divinized within their lifetimes, the office of kingship and the judicial prerogatives attached to it could bring human lawgivers in proximity to the gods, enabling them to “walk in divine circles.”²

This study is not an overview of divine kingship in the Near East, but rather a survey of texts and iconography that attribute divine qualities to human lawgivers.³ In particular, it is an assessment of where such depictions went beyond the realm of figurative literature to influence how ancient audiences may have perceived the office of kingship. Representing a cultural continuum stretching from the mid-third to the late-first millennia BCE,⁴ the sources gathered in this study depict the various

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¹ C. Zaccagnini, “Sacred and Human Components in Ancient Near Eastern Law,” *HR* 33 (1994): 269.

² P. Machinist, “Kingship and Divinity in Imperial Assyria,” in *Text, Artifact, and Image: Revealing Ancient Israelite Religion*, ed. G. Beckman and T. J. Lewis, BJS 346 (Providence: Brown Judaic Studies, 2006), 152.

³ In this study, the term *lawgiver* is not synonymous with that of a *legislator*. The latter term refers to a legal official with the publicly recognized authority to formulate decisions as impersonal and universally valid rules, which were theoretically applicable in any number of individual cases. The term *lawgiver* encompasses a broader range of adjudicating entities (human or divine) who resolve legal conflicts on the basis of another normative source or their own sense of justice/equity. The reason for this more flexible definition is that Near Eastern kings represented both legislators—capable of promulgating positive law—as well as judges (W. F. Leemans, “King Hammurabi as Judge,” in *Symbolae Iuridicae et Historicae Martino David dedicatae, II*, ed. J. A. Ankum et al. [Leiden: Brill, 1968], 105–28; E. Dombardi, *Die Darstellung des Rechtsauftrags in den altbabylonischen Prozessurkunden*, 2 vols., FAS 20/1-2 [Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1996], 1:217–21). In their latter capacity, there is substantial overlap between royal judicial ideology and the judicial practices of lower administrative officials who could render verdicts but did not necessarily promulgate positive law.

⁴ The divinely mandated judicial responsibility of ancient Near Eastern kings to their subjects forms a central tenet of royal ideology from the earliest Sumerian texts to the biblical, Persian, and even Seleucid documents of the latter-half of the first millennium BCE. Legal motifs first appear in the royal inscriptions of Kings Enmetena and Urukagina of Lagaš (ca. 2500 BCE). These motifs continued in the Mesopotamian stream of tradition for millennia, eventually appearing in a cylinder inscription of Antiochus I Soter (281–261 BCE) from Borsippa, where the Seleucid king petitioned the god Nabû to grant him a “reign of justice” (*šarrūtu mišari*)—adopting a millennia-old Mesopotamian tradition that equated “justice” with the

ways that Near Eastern scribes articulated the complex notion that human kings could embody or emulate the gods through the act of lawgiving, while simultaneously recognizing that the king was a mortal man. There is heuristic value in a survey of this scope; the solarization of Near Eastern lawgivers was a remarkably durable conceptual tradition embedded in larger thought structures. Intertextual transmission was one mechanism communicating this conceptual metaphor, but as will be seen, the solarization of human kings was a referential cognitive network influencing discourse on the judicial roles of kingship.

An important methodological component of this study, therefore, is how to understand metaphor in ancient texts. Cognitive metaphor theory is helpful in this regard because it presents metaphor as more than the transference of a word from one category to another: it is a cognitive process realized through an expressive medium.⁵ Specifically, metaphor consists of two components that are in tension: the *target* (that is, the principal subject), which is illuminated by the *source* (that is, the actual figurative expression). By “mapping” certain aspects, attributes, and propositions from one domain to another, the target is partially understood in terms of the source.⁶

institution of kingship and posturing Antiochus I as a cultural successor to the great kings of Babylon (see RIBO/Babylon 10 Antiochus I 01: 21', <http://oracc.org/ribo/Q004179/>).

⁵ A sub-discipline of cognitive linguistics, cognitive metaphor theory first emerged in the work of P. Ricoeur (*La métaphore vive* [Paris: Seuil, 1975]; idem “The Metaphorical Process as Cognition, Imagination, and Feeling,” *Critical Inquiry* 5 [1978]: 143–59). However, it was G. Lackoff and M. Johnson who placed metaphor at the heart of understanding human cognition (*Metaphors We Live By* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980], 1–6). They characterized metaphor as a “cognitive model” that was experientially motivated, used for pragmatic purposes, and activated in the process of language understanding and production. In effect, all human thought processes were metaphorical (Lackoff and Johnson, *Metaphors*, 61–8; A. Barcelona, “Introduction: The Cognitive Theory of Metaphor and Metonymy,” in *Metaphor and Metonymy at the Crossroads: A Cognitive Perspective*, ed. A. Barcelona [Berlin: de Gruyter, 2003], 6).

⁶ In other cognitive metaphor models, the *target* is referred to as the *topic* or the *recipient*, whereas the *source* has been called the *vehicle* or the *donor domain* (E. F. Kittay, *Metaphor: Its Cognitive Force and Linguistic Structure* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1987], 14–30, 67).

Even those royal inscriptions that make reserved comparisons between the judicial activities of human rulers and the gods could influence how ancient audiences perceived the figure of the king and the office of kingship. In this study, I assert that royal inscriptions and letters to various Near Eastern kings reveal a critical link between discourse and cognition: discourse (either verbal or written) is predicated on a conceptual representation of events or ideas (in this case lawgiving) that the speaker/writer wants to replicate in the mind of the listener/reader. Memory, perception, and creativity form a kind of cognitive metaphor framework that conditions this discourse, which reveals how ancient audiences absorbed and repeated royal judicial ideology.⁷ By mapping the experiential realities of divine justice onto the domain of human lawgiving—and vice versa—a certain degree of blending or conceptual integration occurs, where the boundaries and functions between mortal and divine are no longer so clear. The results of this study reveal that the conceptualization of divine kingship in the ancient Near East cannot be understood in binary terms, that it requires more nuanced lines of questioning, and that it was a far more widespread phenomenon than previously believed. Limiting the data to the metaphor, THE KING IS A SUN GOD/GOD OF JUSTICE, I find that ancient audiences knew of this concept and processed it in different ways. Based on texts composed both inside and outside of royal circles, an entire world of discourse centered on the conceptual representation of the king in his judicial capacity as a re-presentation of the sun god comes into view. This enduring metaphor was a heuristic

⁷ A more recent trend in cognitive metaphor theory has sought to explain how speakers and hearers absorb, store, and repurpose referential values of metaphors in discourse (M. Turner and G. Fauconnier, “Conceptual Integration and Formal Expression,” *Metaphor and Symbolic Activity* 10 [1995]: 183–203; D. Ponterotto, “The Cohesive Role of Cognitive Metaphor in Discourse and Conversation,” in *Metaphor and Metonymy at the Crossroads: A Cognitive Perspective*, ed. A. Barcelona (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2003), 283–98; Z. Kövecses, *Extended Conceptual Metaphor Theory* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020], 166–8). These theorists argue that discourse, and in particular the use of metaphor in discourse, presupposes that speaker and hearer share a metaphorical system, subscribe to some cultural ideology, and share certain interests and concerns. The ultimate aim of these scholars is to create a framework explaining the cognitive processes that prompt a speaker to use a metaphor in discourse and how it is received by a listener.

frame that fundamentally influenced dialogue between the king and his subjects in legal contexts, especially in letters whose senders used idiomatic expressions found in royal inscriptions for rhetorical and strategic emphasis.

1 Sumerian Lawgivers and the Gods of Justice in the Late Third Millennium BCE

In the late third millennium BCE, human lawgivers compared themselves to the two primary Sumerian deities of justice: the sun-god Utu (venerated at the site of Larsa) and Ištarān (god of justice at the site of Dēr).⁸ In one of his cylinder inscriptions, Gudea of Lagaš enumerates his judicial activities—remitting debt (ur₅ mu-du₈), heeding divine justice (nig₂-gi-na-d^dnanše d^dnin-gir₂-su-ka), protecting the orphan and widow (nu siki/nu-ma-su)—before rhetorically asking: “had he not himself risen for his city from the horizon like the sun god (d^dutu-gin₇)?”⁹ Although there was already a clear connection between the sun god and justice in this period, Sumerian rulers most frequently equated their judicial activities with Ištarān.¹⁰ Several decades after the reign of Gudea, royal hymns dedicated to Šulgi of Ur praised the king who “rose over his city like Utu (d^dutu-gin₇),” and was “like Ištarān in rendering verdicts (d^dIštaran-gin₇ di ku₅-ru).”¹¹ In both cases, the comparison made between the ruler and the gods of

⁸ In addition to these two gods, the patron deities of Lagaš (Ningirsu and Nanše) along with Nanše's attendant Ĥendursanga were also associated with justice. The latter two have hymns dedicated to this aspect of their divine identities (Nanše Hymn A [ETCSL 4.14.1] and the Hymn to Ĥendursanga [ETCSL 4.06.1]), known from many copies dating to the OB period. These OB copies likely trace back to *Vorlagen* composed in the late 3rd millennium BCE—perhaps during the reign of Gudea. The *Sitz im Leben* of the Hymn to Nanše is readily apparent from the text itself. It commemorates the New Year's festival (za₂-mu u₄-garza-ka [line 94']) at the site of Nigin (AB-ĤA^{ki}), in the immediate vicinity of Lagaš. It mentions not only the famous Lagašite ruler Gudea, but also an obscure contemporary of his named Ur-Nanše (lines 35'–39'), who bears the titles *šennu* (en.me.ad.ku₃) and “beloved en-priest” (en ki-ag₂) in both the hymn and a third millennium BCE alabaster votive statue (see A. Cavigneux, “Ur-Nanše et Ur-Ningirsu, prêtres de Nanše,” *RA* 85 [1991]: 63-6).

⁹ RIME3/1 1.1.7.CylB : xviii 12'–13'.

¹⁰ P. Delnero, “On Editing Šulgi Hymns in the 21st Century (AD),” review of *Die sumerische Königshymne Šulgi F*, by K. Lämmerhirt, *WZKM* 108 (2018): 301; W. G. Lambert, “Ištarān,” *RLA* 5:211.

¹¹ ETCSL 2.4.2.03 (Šulgi Hymn C): 25'; ETCSL 2.4.2.02 (Šulgi Hymn B): 262'–65'.

justice focused on their mutual judicial actions, rather than their identities or essential qualities. Jacob Klein argued that the similarities between Gudea's inscriptions and those of Šulgi were not coincidental. After Lagaš fell under the control of Ur, either in the reign of Šulgi or his father Ur-Namma, Klein surmised that the edubba of Lagaš—or at least a component of it—was transferred to Ur.¹² Whether Klein's historical reconstruction is accurate or not, it seems likely that Šulgi's scribes (and likely those of his father Ur-Nammu as well) drew on the judicial tradition of Lagaš and modified it to fit the political interests of the kings of Ur.

Šulgi's scribes were more willing to elevate their royal patron to the rank of a Sumerian god of justice than their counterparts at Lagaš. In his hymns, there are three ways that Šulgi is equated with Ištarān: through a simile comparing his judicial activities with those of the god of justice; through a simile of the king as the Ištarān of foreign lands; and finally, through the identification of the king as the god of justice in Sumer:

¹² Klein added that Šulgi sought to ensure that his hymns reached a wider audience than what was achievable with the individual votive statues and cylinders of the Lagaš II rulers. He argued that Šulgi charged the Ur III scribal schools not only to compose his hymns, but also to copy and disseminate them more widely ("From Gudea to Šulgi: Continuity and Change in Sumerian Literary Tradition," in *DUMU-E2-DUB-BA-A: Studies in Honor of Åke W. Sjöberg*, ed. H. Behrens, D. Loding, and M. T. Roth, OPSNKF 11 [Philadelphia: University Museum, 1989], 301). K. Lämmerhirt rejected Klein's assertion, indicating that this scholastic treatment of the hymns only began in the Isin-Larsa period, and their transformation in the edubbas only occurred in the OB period (*Die sumerische Königshymne Šulgi F*, TMHC 9 [Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2012], 20 n.133).

Šulgi Hymn B

⁽²⁶⁵⁾ Since Enlil enabled me to command his numerous people ⁽²⁶²⁾ [because of] my wisdom, my great strength, my justice (nam-si-sa₂-gu₁₀-uš), ⁽²⁶³⁾ my true words, my unforgettable deeds. ⁽²⁶⁴⁾ (In view of) my skill, like Ištarān (in rendering) verdicts (^dištaran-gin₇ di ku₅-ru gal-zu-gu₁₀-uš).¹³

As with Gudea, Šulgi's scribes used the equative particle GIN₇ (corresponding to Akkadian *kī/kīma* and Hebrew *kə/kəməd*) to express how these rulers resembled certain gods in their judicial capacities.¹⁴ Inasmuch as this particle equates or compares the human ruler with the gods Utu/Ištarān, it simultaneously marks a fundamental difference between them on both a grammatical and conceptual level. Yet, Šulgi's scribes did not always use the particle GIN₇ when they identified their royal patron with the god of justice:

Šulgi Hymn F

The king, the Ištarān of Sumer (lugal ^dištaran-a ki-en-gi-^rra-ka¹), shall pronounce the judgment of the land (di-kalam-ma ku₅-^rde₃), decide the decisions of the land (garaš₃ kalam-ma bar-re-^rde₃); that the city (of) Ur shall lift (proudly) its neck. This is why his mother, Ninsumuna,¹⁵ gave birth to the hero. This is why his mother, Ninsumuna, gave birth to Šulgi.¹⁶

Šulgi Hymn C

⁽¹⁰³⁾ My vision enables me to be the dream-interpreter of the land; ⁽¹⁰⁴⁾ my heart enables me to be the Ištarān of the foreign lands (^dištaran kur-kur-ra-me-en₃). ⁽¹⁰⁵⁾ I am Šulgi, good shepherd of Sumer. ⁽¹⁰⁶⁾ Like my brother and friend Gilgameš, ⁽¹⁰⁷⁾ I can recognize the virtuous and I can recognize the wicked. ⁽¹⁰⁸⁾ The virtuous gets justice in my presence (zid-du si sa₂-am₃ igi-gu₁₀-še₃), ⁽¹⁰⁹⁾ and (as for) the wicked and evil person, fire² will carry [him] off.¹⁷

¹³ ETCSL 2.4.2.2: 262'–65' (G. Castellino, *Two Šulgi Hymns (BC)*, StStem 42 [Rome: Istituto di studi del Vicino Oriente, Università di Roma, 1972], 56–8). In this hymn, Šulgi's scribes are still relying on analogy, rather than metaphor, to describe their patron's judicial activities. Unlike a metaphor, an analogy is a symmetrical relation between two linguistically described objects, not between meanings or linguistic expressions (H. G. Coenen, *Analogie und Metapher: Grundlegung einer Theorie der bildlichen Rede*, [Berlin: de Gruyter, 2002], 31).

¹⁴ GAG §114 f–g.

¹⁵ Ninsumuna is the divine mother of Gilgameš.

¹⁶ Lämmerhirt, *Šulgi F*, 39, 55, 72–3.

¹⁷ ETCSL 2.4.2.3: seg. A 103'–109' (Castellino, *Two Šulgi Hymns*, 256–7). Castellino proposed that NA-ma-a should be read ku m₂-ma-a = *emmu/emmutu*, “hot,” as a substantive (p. 288). Add ePSD for lexeme?

Šulgi Hymn X

⁽¹⁴¹⁾ He took his seat on the holy dais in the Egal-maḥ of Ninegala. ⁽¹⁴²⁾ He [Šulgi], the Ištarān of Sumer (^dištaran ki-en-gi-ra), knowing everything since birth, ⁽¹⁴³⁾ decrees judgments in due order for the land (di kalam-ma ki-bi-še₃ i₃-ku₅-re₆), ⁽¹⁴⁴⁾ and makes decisions in due order for the land, ⁽¹⁴⁵⁾ so that the strong do not abuse[?] the weak (a₂-tuku sig₉-ga ša-ga₂-aš-še₃ la-ba-an-LAGAB-e), ⁽¹⁴⁶⁾ so that the mother speaks tenderly with her child and the child answers truthfully to his father.¹⁸

In the texts where Šulgi is identified with Ištarān, the immediate context points towards scribal efforts to divinize the king. Piotr Michalowski observed how equating Šulgi's parentage with that of Gilgameš was an important method that his scribes used to divinize their royal patron, clearly at play in Hymns B and C.¹⁹ Largely overlooked, and what I want to emphasize here, is how these scribes set Šulgi to the rank of a god by equating the king in his judicial capacity with Ištarān.

In his twenty-third regnal year, Šulgi joined a very small group of Mesopotamian kings whom scholars generally agree were divinized in their inscriptions and worshipped as gods in their lifetimes.²⁰ This honor passed to Šulgi's son Amar-Sîn, whose epithet, "true god, sun god of his land" (^dingir-zi ^dutu kalam-ma-na), may therefore have represented more than a figurative expression.²¹ The kings of Ur qualified their judicial divinity in terms of politically defined space: foreign lands (kur-kur-ra), Sumer (ki-en-gi-ra), or the land (kalam-ma-na), perhaps to distinguish their earthly jurisdiction

¹⁸ ETCSL 2.4.2.24: 141'–46' (J. Klein, *Three Šulgi Hymns: Sumerian Royal Hymns Glorifying King Šulgi of Ur* [Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1981], 144–5).

¹⁹ P. Michalowski, "The Mortal Kings of Ur: A Short Century of Divine Rule in Ancient Mesopotamia," in *Religion and Power: Divine Kingship in the Ancient World and Beyond*, ed. Nichole Brisch, OIS 4 (Chicago: Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 2008), 36–7.

²⁰ Representing the minimalist view of divine kingship in Mesopotamian tradition, Michalowski circumscribes the deification of Mesopotamian kings to brief periods in the late 3rd and early 2nd millennia BCE ("Mortal Kings of Ur," 41). W. Sallaberger ("Ur III-Zeit," in *Mesopotamien: Akkad-Zeit und Ur III-Zeit*, ed. W. Sallaberger and A. Westenholz, OBO 160/3 [Freiburg/Göttingen: Universitätsverlag/Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999], 153–4) offered a checklist approach to identifying divine kingship. Yet, it is based on a model stemming from the Ur III period that proves to be too rigid in the face of beliefs and practices that adapt and evolve with changing social, cultural, and political contexts.

²¹ RIME 3/2 1.3.16: 10'–11'. Amar-Sîn's assumption of Utu's identity contrasts with the more clearly metaphorical image of Šulgi "rising like Utu" (^dutu-gin₇ ba-ta-e₃-en₃), as found in Šulgi Hymn C (ETCSL 2.4.2.3: seg. A 25').

from the heavenly one overseen by the gods. It is unclear if Mesopotamia kings continued to be divinized after the Ur III period; yet the later rulers of Isin, Larsa, Mari, and Babylon certainly drew on the depictions of kingship developed by the kings of Ur.

2 Šamaš and the Great Lawgivers of the Old Babylonian Period

In the Old Babylonian (OB) period, solar imagery expands in the royal ideology of the successor states to the Ur III dynasty. The most important innovation is the sun god's displacement of other deities (e.g., Ištarān, Nanše, and Hendursanga) as the Mesopotamian god of justice *par excellence*. Associated with justice since at least the time of Gudea, the rise of Utu/Šamaš in the OB pantheon may have been tied to the emergence of Larsa and later Sippar as important political, cultural, and cultic sites during this period.²² Inscriptions of Isin kings like Šū-ilišu, Būr-Sîn, Enlil-bani, and the famous Lipit-Ištar largely adopted epithets used by rulers of the Ur III dynasty, referring to the king as the “sun god/light of the land/Sumer.”²³ In the prologue to Hammurabi's law collection, the heads of the celestial pantheon Anu

²² The preeminence of Ištarān appears to have declined with the town of Dēr following the fall of the Ur III dynasty. After a brief period of political independence under native rulers like Nidnuša, Ilum/Anum-muttabil and two unnamed figures, Ištarān disappears from OB royal inscriptions after Dēr was destroyed by Rim-Sîn I of Larsa in his 20th regnal year (E. Unger, “Dēr,” *RLA* 2:199). Although Lagašite hymns to Nanše and Hendursanga survived into the 2nd millennium BCE, the latter became syncretized with the Semitic underworld/fire deity Išum (P. Attinger and M. Krebernik, “L'Hymne à Ĥendursaġa [Ĥendursaġa A],” in *Von Sumer bis Homer: Festschrift Manfred Schretter zum 60. Geburtstag am 25. Februar 2004*, ed. Robert Rollinger, AOAT 325 [Münster: Ugarit Verlag, 2005], 30-1; D. O. Edzard and C. Wilcke, “Die Ĥendursanga-Hymne,” in *Kramer Anniversary Volume: Cuneiform Studies in Honor of Samuel Noah Kramer*, ed. B. Eichler, AOAT 25 [Neukirchen-Vluyn: Butzon & Bercker, 1976], 143). Although the identity of Išum as the attendant of the underworld deity Nergal/Erra largely superseded the characteristics of Hendursanga, the Neo-Assyrian *Underworld Vision of an Assyrian Prince* may recall this earlier role as an intercessor for justice: “Išum, his councilor, the intercessor who saves life, who loves justice, said thus: ‘Do not kill the man, O king of the wide underworld!’” (^dI.ŠUM *ma-lik-šú mu-kil ab-bu-ut-ti KAR-ir ZI-tim ra-'i-in ki-na-a-ti ù ki-a-am iq-ta-bi eš-lum la tuš-ma-ta LUGAL KL.TIM* ¹DAGAL-tim¹) (SAA 3 32: rev. 16').

²³ M.-J. Seux distinguished royal epithets with the dingir determinative (^dutu = the sun god) from those without it (u₄ = ūmu “[day]light”) (*Épithètes royales akkadiennes et sumériennes* [Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1967], 455–6, 460). Lipit-Ištar reintroduces the equative particle (GIN₇) when comparing his movement and radiance to that of Utu (^dutu-gin₇ du še-er-zid kalam-ma [*Lipit-Ištar Hymn B* = ETCSL 2.5.5.2: 1'–3']).

and Enlil invoke the lawgiver’s name, “to rise like Šamaš (*kīma Šamši*) over the black-headed people, to illuminate the land.”²⁴ Dropping the equative *kīma*, Hammurabi later identifies himself as “the sun-god of Babylon (*Šamšu Bābilim*), the one who makes light emerge for the lands of Sumer and Akkad.”²⁵ By locating his divinity in the city of Babylon, Hammurabi could simultaneously represent the sun god of his capital while recognizing other manifestations of Šamaš, declaring himself “he who listens” (*šēmû*) to Šamaš and his “ally” (*rēšu*) elsewhere in the stela.

In most discussions of lawgiving in the ancient Near East, the major law collections of the late third/early second millennium BCE serve as the primary object of study: the legal collections of Ur-Namma of Ur, Lipit-Ištar of Isin, Daduša² of Ešnunna, and most famously Hammurabi of Babylon. According to the standard model of the king as the earthly representative of the gods, the obligation to “establish justice in the land” (*nig₂-si-sa₂ kalam-ma gar/mišaram ina mātīm šakānum*) was an integral component of kingship, which had descended from the astral heads of the pantheon: Anu and Enlil. The god of justice (Utu/Šamaš) was not the only, or even the primary, connection between these high gods and the earthly king. Rather, kingship was said to pass from Anu and Enlil to the heads of each king’s local pantheon (Nanna of Ur, Ninisina of Isin, and Marduk of Babylon).²⁶ These are the patron deities mandating the king to establish justice, intimating that lawgiving was tied to local political ambitions. Recognizing Utu or Šamaš’s shared mandate to ensure justice, kings like

²⁴ LH Prologue i 40’–41’: *ki-ma* ^dUTU *a-na* SAG-GE₆ *wa-še-e-em-ma ma-tim nu-wu-ri-im*.

²⁵ LH Prologue v 4’–9’: ^dUTU-*šu* KA.DINGIR.RA^{ki} *mu-še-ši nu-ri-im a-na ma-at šu-me-rí-im ù ak-ka-di-im*. See P. Barmash, *The Laws of Hammurabi: At the Confluence of Royal and Scribal Traditions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 40–1.

²⁶ See Gerhard Ries, *Prolog und Epilog in Gesetzen des Altertums*, Müncher Beiträge zur Papyrusforschung und Antiken Rechtsgeschichte 76 (Munich: Beck, 1983), 41.

Hammurabi could therefore equate themselves with the sun god in the confines of their political realms.

Akkadian-speakers did not distinguish between the promulgation of a law collection and the enactment of more limited edicts that annulled non-commercial debt, freed debt slaves, and returned redeemable property to its original owners: both were considered “establishing justice in the land.”²⁷

One of Hammurabi’s successors, Ammi-šaduqa, commemorated his first regnal year with one of these edicts:

mu *Am-mi-ša-du-qa*₂ lugal-e ^den-lil₂-le “Year that Ammi-šaduqa, the king, Enlil having
nam-en-nun-na-ni bi₂-ib₂-gu-la magnified his princely lordship, rose forth reliably
^dutu-gin₇ kalam-ma-ni-še₃ zi-de₃-eš like the sun god over his land and established
ib₂-ta-e₃-a un šar₂-ra-ba si bi₂-ib₂- justice for all his people.”²⁸
sa₂-sa₂-a

Few would consider a regnal year name evidence for any active notion of divine kingship in the OB period. More likely, the content of the year name would be taken as a symbolic metaphor describing the king’s ascension in terms of the rising sun, or a figurative reference to the promulgation of an edict. For many Assyriologists, the notion of divine kingship ended with the Ur III dynasty—once royal scribes stopped writing kings’ names with the determinative dingir-sign and an active cult venerating

²⁷ See D. Charpin, “Le statut des «Codes de Lois» des souverains babyloniennes,” in *Le législateur et la loi dans l’Antiquité: Hommage à Françoise Ruzé: Actes du Colloque du Caen 15–17 mai 2003*, ed. P. Sineux (Caen: Presse Universitaire de Caen, 2005), 96–7; idem, *Writing Law and Kingship in Old Babylonian Mesopotamia*, trans. J. M. Todd (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 74; S. Démare-Lafont, “Les actes législatifs des rois mésopotamiens,” in *Auctoritates Xenia R.C. van Caenegem oblata, Iuris Scripta Historica: La formation du droit et ses auteurs*, ed. S. Dauchy et al., *Iuris scripta historica* 13 (Leuven: Peeters, 1997), 3–7; Dombardi, *Die Darstellung*, 1:17–20; J. J. Finkelstein, “Ammišaduqa’s Edict and the Babylonian ‘Law Codes,’” *JCS* 15 (1961): 101–3; F. R. Kraus, *Königlichen Verfügungen in altbabylonischer Zeit*, SDIOA 11 (Leiden: Brill 1984), 8–14; K. Veenhof, “The Relation between Royal Decrees and ‘Law Codes’ of the Old Babylonian Period,” *JEOL* 35/36 (2000): 49–83, 49–58; R. Yaron, *The Laws of Eshnunna*, 2nd ed. (Jerusalem/Leiden: Magnes/Brill, 1988), 121–6.

²⁸ M. Horsnell, *The Year-Names of the First Dynasty of Babylon*, 3 vols. (Hamilton: McMaster University Press, 1999), 2:325. Ammi-šaduqa’s edict is famously preserved in numerous copies published by F. R. Kraus (*Ein Edikt des Königs Ammi-šaduqa von Babylon*, SDIOA 5 [Leiden: Brill, 1958], 239–41; idem, *Königliche Verfügungen*, 168–307).

images of the living king ceased.²⁹ Hammurabi's identification with Šamaš in his law collection was nothing more than a figurative metaphor, to be understood in the same terms as his equation with “a dragon of kings” (*ušumgallu šarri*) or a “wild goring bull” (*rīnum kadrūm*).³⁰ For as much as metaphor is expressed through a particular medium (often language, though not exclusively), it is important to explore the cognitive functions that occur when individuals process a metaphor. This may be accessible through some OB personal names: “Hammurabi-is-my-sun-god” (*Ḫammurapi-Šamšī*) and “Samsuiluna-is-the-light-of-the-land” (*Samsuiluna-nūr-mātīm*).³¹ These names may suggest that the idea of divine kinship was still understood among the population, even if scribes balked at labeling their royal patrons with the dingir sign. Unlike other figurative expressions, the identification of the king and his office with the sun god was not limited to the expressive medium of writing alone. Often lost in written texts, discourse includes many non-verbal sign systems like gestures, eye gaze, head movements, and body posture that constitute “multimodal acts of contextualized meaning-making.”³² Some traces of these semiotic gestures are recoverable (in/through/by means of) the ceremonial rites of royal ascension, gestures that contributed to the verbal components of the metaphor: THE KING IS A SUN GOD.

²⁹ Michalowski, “Mortal Kings of Ur,” 41; Barbara Porter, “Blessings from a Crown, Offerings to a Drum: Were there Non-Anthropomorphic Deities in Ancient Mesopotamia?,” in *What Is a God? Anthropomorphic and Non-Anthropomorphic Aspects of Deity in Ancient Mesopotamia*, ed. Barbara Nevling Porter, Transactions of the Casco Bay Assyriological Institute 2 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2009), 153–94.; Sallaberger, “Ur III-Zeit,” 153–4; G. J. Selz, “‘The Holy Drum, the Spear, and the Harp’: Towards an Understanding of the Problems of Deification in Third Millennium Mesopotamia,” in *Sumerian Gods and Their Representations*, ed. I. Finkel and M. Geller, CM 7 (Groningen: Styx, 1997), 181–2.

³⁰ Zaccagnini, “Sacred and Human,” 269.

³¹ CT 8 22c and VAB 5 79 (= HG 3 462); AbB 2 72: 1.

³² I. Mittelberg and G. Joue, “Source Actions Ground Metaphor via Metonymy: Toward a Frame-Based Account of Gestural Action in Multimodal Discourse,” in *Metaphor: Embodied Cognition and Discourse*, ed. B. Hampe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 119–37.

2.1 “Lifting the Golden Torch”: The Ceremonial Ascension of Babylonian Kings

There was a performative side to the metaphor of the king as a sun god, namely, in the enigmatic references to a rite known as “the raising of the golden torch” (^{giš}*dipār hurāši*[*m*] ... *našû*).³³ Though the evidence is sparse, at least one event that the ceremony commemorated was the ascension of a new Babylonian king early in his reign—coinciding with, and in some sense symbolizing, the act of establishing justice in the land (*mīšaram ina mātīm šakānum*).³⁴ Extremely little is known about this ceremony, since it is mentioned only in passing in three OB letters:

⁽²⁴⁾ MU US₂.SA I₇^d *a-a* HE₂.GAL₂

⁽²⁵⁾ *wa-ar-ki šar-rum di-pa-ar* KU₃.GI *iš-šu-ú*

“The year after ‘(The year: he dug) the canal Aya means abundance (= Sîn-muballiṭ 8)’; after the king raised the golden torch.”³⁵

⁽⁸⁾ *ki-ma be-lí i-du-ú mi-šar ma-tim*

⁽⁹⁾ *šar-rum iš-ku-un di-pa-ar* KU₃.GI

⁽¹⁰⁾ *a-na [m]a-tim iš-ši ù ma-li ma-tim im-si*

“As my lord knows, the king has established justice (for) the land, he has lifted up the golden torch for the land and ended the period of mourning (lit. “washed the matted hair”) of the land.”³⁶

⁽¹⁾ *i-nu-ma be-lí*^{giš} *di-pa-ar* KU₃.GI

⁽²⁾ *a-na* UD.KIB.NUN^{ki} *iš-šu-ú*

^(1–3) When my lord raised the golden torch for Sippar, he established justice for Šamaš, who loves him. ^(4–6) He convened in Sippar: Taribatum

³³ D. Charpin, “Les prêteurs et le palais: Les édits de *mīšarum* des rois de Babylone et leurs traces dans les archives privées,” in *Interdependency of Institutions and Private Entrepreneurs. Proceedings of the Second MOS Symposium (Leiden 1998)*, ed. A. C. V. M. Bongenaar, MOS Studies 2 (Leiden: NINO, 2000), 185; idem, “Le roi est mort, vive le roi!” *NABU* 2001/2 (2001): 47–8; idem, “I am the Sun of Babylon’: Solar Aspects of Royal Power in Old Babylonian Mesopotamia,” in *Experiencing Power, Generating Authority: Cosmos, Politics, and the Ideology of Kingship in Ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia*, ed. J. A. Hill, P. Jones, and A. J. Morales (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, 2013), 72–5; Jean-Marie Durand, “Les dames du palais de Mari à l’époque du royaume de Haute-Mésopotamie,” *MARI* 4 (1985): 416.

³⁴ This rite may relate to the occasional allusions to “establishing justice” (*mīšarum šakānum/šutēšurum*) in the first or second regnal years of Zimri-Lim, Hammurabi, Samsu-iluna, Abi-ešuh, and Ammi-šaduqa (D. Charpin and N. Ziegler, *Mari et le Proche-Orient à l’époque amorrite: Essai d’histoire politique*, FM 5/Mémoires de N.A.B.U. 8 [Paris: SEPOA, 2003], 258; Horsnell, *Year Names*, 2:106–7, 177–8, 242, 325).

³⁵ CT 48 71: rev. 24’–26’. This date corresponds to Sîn-muballiṭ Year 9, with an abbreviated reference to the previous Sîn-muballiṭ Year 8 (= mu i, ^d*a-a* he₂.gal₂ mu.un.ba.al) (Horsnell, *Year Names*, 2:94–5). The reference to the golden torch ceremony does not necessarily indicate that it also occurred in Sîn-muballiṭ 8, merely that the loan described in the tablet occurred after the ceremony and was not subject to any kind of remission (anytime between Sîn-muballiṭ 1 and Sîn-muballiṭ 8).

³⁶ AbB 12 172: obv. 8’–10’.

- (3) *mi-ša-ra-am a-na* ^dUTU *ra-i-mi-šu i[š-ku]-nu-*
ma
- (4) ^m*Ta-ri-ba-tum ša-pí-ir* AGA.US₂.MEŠ
- (5) DI.KU₅.MEŠ KA₂.DINGIR.RA^{ki} ù DI.KU₅.MEŠ
UD.KIB.NUN^{ki}
- (6) *i-na* UD.KIB.NUN^{ki} *ú-še-ši-bu-ma*
- (7) *di-na-a-tim ša* LU₂UD.KIB.NUN^{ki}.MEŠ *i-mu-ru-ma*
- (8) *ṭup-pa-a-at ši-ma-tim ša* A.ŠA₃E₂ ù ^{giš}KIRI₆ *iš-mu-*
ma
- (9) *ša i-na mi-ša-ri wa-ši-a ú-he-ep-pu-ú*

the secretary of infantry, the judges of Babylon, and the judges of Sippar. ⁽⁷⁾ They (re)viewed the cases of the citizens of Sippar, ⁽⁸⁾ “heard” the sale documents of the field, house, and orchard ⁽⁹⁾ (and) ordered broken those (in which the land was) to be released by (the terms of) the *mīšarum*-edict.”³⁷

The first letter, composed at Sippar, reveals nothing about what the raising of the golden torch symbolized, though the date does indicate that the rite must have occurred sometime prior to Sîn-muballiṭ’s ninth regnal year. The second letter, composed at Sippar in Abi-ešuh’s ascension year, notes that the symbolic gesture of raising the torch coincided with the promulgation of a remission edict (*mīšarum*),³⁸ which concludes a period of mourning for the deceased former king (Samsu-iluna) as indicated by the figurative expression, “washing the matted hair of the land” (*mali mātim imsi*).³⁹ The new king (Abi-ešuh) emerged bearing a raised golden torch (where or in what ceremonial circumstances is unclear), which was likely a solar symbol associated with Šamaš, whom the human king was thought to embody.⁴⁰

³⁷ AbB 7 153: obv. 1’–3’, 46’–49’.

³⁸ This legal act may be mentioned in the name of Abi-ešuh’s second regnal year: “The year: Abi-ešuh, the king, the beloved shepherd of An and Enlil, who looked toward Sumer and Akkad with a loyal eye, led aright the feet of the people, established goodwill and reconciliation in his land, *caused justice and equity to exist* (nig₂.gi.na nig₂.si.sa₂ ba.a.n.gal₂.la) and made the land to prosper” (Horsnell, *Year Names*, 2:242).

³⁹ Charpin (“Les prêtres,” 185 n. 1; idem, “Le roi est mort,” 47–8; idem, “Sun of Babylon,” 72) pointed to a parallel found in the Standard Babylonian version of the Gilgamesh Epic (Gilg. VI 1: 144’–46’//VIII: 88’–90’), where Gilgamesh allows his hair to become matted in reaction to the death of his companion Enkidu: “⁽¹⁴⁴⁾ [Gilgamesh will make] weep for you the people of Uruk, he will make them sob for you; ⁽¹⁴⁵⁾ the people [so beautiful] he will fill full of grief (*dul₆-la*) for you; ⁽¹⁴⁶⁾ [and] he, after you are gone he will have himself bear the matted hair of mourning (*ma-la-a pa-gar-^lšu¹*)” (A. R. George, *The Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic: Introduction, Critical Edition and Cuneiform Texts*, 2 vols. [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003], 1:642–3, 657).

⁴⁰ Charpin, “Sun of Babylon,” 75. In a Neo-Assyrian text from Assur (KAR 32 [= VAT 08264] obv. 32’), Šamaš is also said to carry a torch: “O Šamaš, your torch covers the lands” (^dUTU *di-par-ka ka-tim* KUR.KUR.MEŠ).

Charpin understood the rite to evoke the mythological complex surrounding the celestial movement of the sun: Šamaš visited the underworld each night and judged its denizens before rising again each morning to judge the living.⁴¹ To slightly refine Charpin’s observation from the Mesopotamian point of view, the course of the sun was known as the “path of the sun/Šamaš” (*ḥarrān šamši*) in astronomical, omen, and literary texts.⁴² The rising and setting of the sun god was imagined and symbolized by his disappearance and re-emergence between two mounds or mountains,⁴³ a popular iconographic motif in the glyptic art of the Old Akkadian (OA) period.⁴⁴

What is most striking about Charpin’s proposal, and what I wish to emphasize, is that the metaphor equates Šamaš’s movement between the earth and the netherworld with both the living and the dead king. Because of their mortality, the OB kings were not conceptual or metaphorical equals of Šamaš; rather, the office of kingship, which survived death and was renewed with the coronation of a new king, enabled these mortal rulers to assume some aspects of his divinity for the time that they lived.⁴⁵ Using the terminology of cognitive metaphor theory again, the image of the solar god of justice

⁴¹ In the Great Šamaš Hymn, the sun god is called “shepherd of that beneath, herder of that above” (*rē’u šaplāti nāqīdu elāti* [line 33’]), the god of justice who oversees the underworld and the world of the living: “Below (*šaplāti*) you care for the counsellors of Kusu, the Anunnaki; Above (*elāti*), you direct all the affairs of men” (lines 32’–33’). See W. G. Lambert, *Babylonian Wisdom Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1960; repr., Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1996), 126–7. The same worldview may explain the development of Gilgamesh traditions that identify him as a divinized king, whom Šamaš delegated to judge the shades of the underworld (George, *Gilgamesh*, 1:127–35).

⁴² W. Horowitz, *Mesopotamian Cosmic Geography*, MC 8 (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1998), 98–100, 256–8, 320.

⁴³ These mountains/mounds were known as “the mountain of sunrise” (*kur-utu-e₃-a-ta*) and the “mountain of sunset” (*kur-utu-šu₂-ke₄-ne*), symbolizing both the ends of the world and the entrances to the underworld (*kur*) (Horowitz, *Cosmic Geography*, 97, 249, 331–2, 361). This mytho-cognitive map of the world is most striking in the so-called “Šamaš cycle” of the Neo-Assyrian *bīt rimki* purification ritual (lines 1’–4’): “Sun-god, when you rise from the Great Mountain (*šadû rabû*), when you rise from the Great Mountain, the Mountain of the Spring; when you rise from Duku (= the underworld), the place where the destinies are determined, when you rise at the place where heaven and earth embrace at the horizon” (J. Borger, “Das dritte ‘Haus’ der serie *bīt rimki* [VR 50-51, Schollmeyer HGŠ NR. 1],” *JCS* 21 [1967]: 2–3; Horowitz, *Cosmic Geography*, 315–6, 331).

⁴⁴ M. Krebernik, “Sonnengott(heit) A.1,” *RLA* 12:604.

⁴⁵ This is why King Ammi-šaduqa is said to “rise like Šamaš” (*ḏutu-gin₇ . . . im-ta-e₃-a*) in his first regnal year (Horsnell, *Year Names*, 2:325).

setting each evening only to rise again each morning is a metaphorical source, whose meaning extends to the office of kingship and the judicial prerogatives imbued in it (the target). Thus, raising the golden torch and verbal/written expressions were multimodal acts communicating the idea that the new king rose like the sun and emitted justice upon his coronation (e.g., Ammi-šaduqa Year 1).

The third reference to the golden torch ceremony cited above (AbB 7: 153) comes from a letter dated to the 24th regnal year of Samsu-iluna (ca. 1726 BCE).⁴⁶ Lacking the normal epistolary introduction, the letter immediately begins with a reference to a previous occasion when Samsu-iluna “raised the golden torch” for Sippar, thereby establishing justice for Šamaš, the patron deity of the city. In practical terms, this meant that the legal officials from Babylon and Sippar examined all the tablets in Sippar’s archives and broke each contract that the remission edict invalidated. In the process, tablets belonging to the letter sender were erroneously broken, necessitating this petition to the king. At the end of the letter, when the sender pleads with Samsu-iluna to exercise his judicial power and render a verdict, he refers to the king as “god” (DINGIR = *ilum*). The term “god” is not a common honorific bestowed on human kings in the OB period—especially in a text composed outside of royal circles.⁴⁷ This letter may reflect a similar phenomenon as that encountered in the OB personal names discussed above: reflections of how the population cognitively processed the metaphor of the king as a sun god. In more

⁴⁶ Charpin, “Lettres et procès,” 91.

⁴⁷ Only Samsu-iluna had his name written with the divine determinative, which may have simply marked the theophoric element *Samsu* (M. Karlsson, “The Divine Determinative and the Names of Babylonian Rulers,” *NABU* 2020/2: 134). However, Hammurabi is twice explicitly identified as a god (*dīngir/ilum*) in texts composed by royal scribes: (i) the Code of Hammurabi (LH Prologue iii 16’) calls Hammurabi, “god of kings” (*i-lu LUGAL-ri*); and (ii), a royal inscription from Sippar dating sometime between Hammurabi’s 34th and 36th regnal years declares, “Hammurabi, god of his land” (*ha-am-mu-ra-pí dīngir-kalam-[ma-na]*) (RIME 4 3.6.10:1’). The latter epithet recalls titles born by Old Akkadian, Ur III, and Isin kings (Seux, *Épithètes royales*, 108–9, 389–90). Both Ries (*Prolog und Epilog*, 47–8) and Zaccagnini (“Sacred and Human,” 269–70) dismiss Hammurabi’s claims as propagandistic metaphors, but as argued throughout this study, such metaphors communicate important cultural mentalities.

certain terms, Charpin asserted that the performative act of Samsu-iluna raising the golden torch indicated that, “the king who exercises justice is the ‘sun of his people’ and as such he becomes identical to the gods.”⁴⁸ Maybe the sender believed this royal rhetoric, or maybe he was simply flattering the king—saying what he thought the king would like to hear in order to have his case resolved in his favor. Regardless, this data offers some critical insight into how royal rhetoric—whether figurative or not—was received, processed, and repurposed in ancient discourse.

2.2 *Gift of the Perception of kittu(m)*

Was there something about temporal kings that made them closer to the divine world than other human beings, particularly in their capacity as lawgivers? In a well-cited section of the epilogue of Hammurabi’s law collection, the king proclaims himself “the king of justice, to whom Šamaš has gifted *kīnātum*.”⁴⁹ A pluralized form of the more common singular noun *kittu*, *kīnātum* is often translated as “truth,” “righteousness,” or “justice.”⁵⁰ Some have equated this passage with the iconographic “presentation scene” atop the stele, where the human ruler approaches the super-sized enthroned sun god who extends the “rod and ring” to the king.⁵¹ Yet, Hammurabi does not reach out to receive these symbols; he instead places his hand over his mouth in a pious gesture. In a parallel scene from the

⁴⁸ Charpin, “Sun of Babylon,” 75.

⁴⁹ LH Epilogue xlvi 95’–99’: ^m*Ḫa-am-mu-ra-pí* LUGAL *mi-ša-ri-im ša* ^dUTU *ki-na-tim iš-ru-ku-šum a-na-ku*.

⁵⁰ *AHw*: 494a; *CAD K*: 383a; K. Lämmerhirt, *Wahrheit und Trug: Untersuchungen zur altorientalischen Begriffsgeschichte*, AOAT 348 (Münster: Ugarit Verlag, 2010), 293, 335; M. P. Streck, “Die Nominalformen maPRaS(t), maPRa:S und maPRiS(t) im Akkadischen,” *JBVO* 5 (2002): 223–57.

⁵¹ K. Slanski argued that the rod and ring were surveying tools (a stake and line) used to “straighten” (*ešēru*) architectural foundations, which also carried an extended symbolic meaning denoting the king’s ability to “straighten” (*mīšaru*) society through law and order (“The Mesopotamian ‘Rod and Ring’: Icon of Righteous Kingship and Balance of Power between Palace and Temple,” in *Regime Change in the Ancient Near East and Egypt, From Sargon of Agade to Saddam Hussein*, ed. H. Crawford, Proceedings of the British Academy 136 [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007], 37–59; eadem, “Justice,” in *A Cultural History of Law in Antiquity*, ed. J. Etxabe [London: Bloomsbury, 2019], 28).

Middle-Babylonian Šamaš-tablet of Nabû-apla-iddina—likely based on OB exemplars—it is even more clear that the sun god is not giving these symbols to the king but holding them as markers of his own divine identity.⁵²



Fig.1 Left: Relief atop the Code of Hammurabi (ca. 1750 BCE). Photo adapted from https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:P1050763_Louvre_code_Hammurabi_face_rwk-gradient.jpg. © Wikimedia Commons. Right: The Sun God Tablet of Nabu-apla-iddina, ca. 860–850 BCE (BM 91000). Photo adapted from https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Detail_Sun_God_Tablet_from_Sippar_Iraq_9th_century_BCE_British_Museum.jpg. © Dr. Osama Shukir Muhammed Amin / Wikimedia Commons.

⁵² C. E. Woods, “The Sun-God Tablet of Nabû-apla-iddina Revisited,” *JCS* 56 (2004): 54. Based on a diachronic analysis of the presentation scene from the OA to the OB periods, M. Haussperger demonstrated that the extended hand of the seated deity was a welcoming gesture (ein Art Willkommensgeste), in which divine emblems may or may not be found (e.g., dingir-sign, mace, crescent moon, sun disk). Based on these parallels, it seems quite likely that the rod and ring functioned like these other divine emblems: to help clarify the identity of the seated divinity (*Die Einführungsszene: Entwicklung eines mesopotamischen Motivs von der altakkadischen bis zum Ende der altbabylonischen Zeit*, Münchener Universitäts-Schriften, Phil. Fakultät 12 [Munich: Ludwig Maximilians-Universität, 1989], 91, esp. figs. 25–43). S. Démare-Lafont noted that although the presentation scene does not depict the sun god giving the rod and ring to the king, these symbols were nonetheless important components of royal regalia that marked his capacity to construct temples, canals, and palaces as well as administer justice: “le roi savant sait calculer les dimensions d’un canal ou d’un temple, il sait trouver la juste mesure dans le droit.” She pointed to Isa 28:17 as a biblical example supporting this conceptual connection between architecture and the administration of justice (“La majesté royale en Mésopotamie: Une déambulation dans les salles orientales du Louvre,” in *Vertiges du droit: Mélanges franco-helléniques à la mémoire de Jacques Phyllis*, ed. A. Helmis, N. Kalnoky, and S. Kerneis [Paris: L’Harmattan, 2012], 162–5). See also M. Shepperson, “The Rays of Šamaš: Light in Mesopotamian Architecture and Legal Practice,” *Iraq* 74 (2012): 51–64.

Despite the temptation to correlate texts and images, it would be an oversimplification to say that the rod and ring were physical representations of justice and equity (*kittu u mišaru*).

In an inscription from the temple of Šamaš at Mari, dating just a few decades before Hammurabi's Code, we learn that justice and equity were not inherent aspects of the sun god, as he too received these capacities from another source.⁵³ In the Mari inscription, the notion of *kīnātum* is described as a gift (*šeriktum*) whereas *mišarum* is described as his *isqum*. Although the term *isqum* could refer to the nature, special qualification, or emblem of particular deities,⁵⁴ it literally denoted a "lot" cast to determine inheritance shares.⁵⁵ Following the metaphor of inheritance, therefore, Šamaš would have received these gifts from the earlier generation of deities, though there is no mythological tradition specifically describing this. Most interestingly, these excerpts cast Šamaš and Hammurabi in essentially the same role, leading Jacob J. Finkelstein to assert: "What the god 'gives' the king is not 'laws' but the gift of perception of *kittum*, by virtue of which the king, in distinction from any other individual, becomes capable of promulgating laws that are in accord or harmony with the cosmic principle of *kittum*."⁵⁶ This motif would prove particularly durable in royal judicial ideology, appearing in first millennium BCE inscriptions of Esarhaddon, Assurbanipal, and even in biblical tradition.⁵⁷

⁵³ RIME 4 6.8.2: 1'-6': *a-na* ^dUTU LUGAL *ša-me-e* *ù er-se-ti-im* *ša-pí-iṭ* DINGIR.MES *ù a-wi-lu-tim* *ša me-še-ru-um i-si-iq-šu-ma ki-na-tum a-na še-ri-ik-ti-im* *ša-ar-ka-šu-um*.

⁵⁴ *AHw*:388b; *CAD* I:201b. Thus, in a prayer of Assurnasirpal I to the goddess Ištar, the king states: "Lady Ištar, whose essence is preserving life" (*ḏiṣ-tar NIN ša búl-lu-tu i-si-iq-ša* [ZA 5 79: obv. 11']) (R. E. Brünnow, "Assyrian Hymns," ZA 5 [1890]: 67).

⁵⁵ *CAD* I:198b.

⁵⁶ Jacob J. Finkelstein *apud* M. Greenberg, "Some Postulates of Biblical Criminal Law," in *Essential Papers on Israel and the Ancient Near East*, ed. F. E. Greenspahn (New York: New York University Press, 1991), 349 n. 7.

⁵⁷ Esarhaddon claimed, "the great gods gifted me *kittu* and *mišaru*" (*ki-tú u mi-šá-ri iṣ-ruk-in-ni* DINGIR.MEŠ GAL.MEŠ) (RINAP 4 33: rev. iii 31'-36'). The author of Assurbanipal's Coronation Hymn petitioned Šamaš on his king's behalf: "may speech, hearing, *kittu*, and *mišaru* be given to him as a gift" (*qa-bu-ú še-mu-ú ket-¹ti¹ me-šá-ru* [*a-na ši*]-*rik-ti lu šar-ku-šú*) (SAA 3 11: obv. 8'). In Ps 72:1, a biblical author made a similar request to Yahweh: "Give your justice to the king, O God, and your righteousness to the son of the king" (אלהים משפטיך למלך תן וצדקתך לבן מלך). M. Arnoeth proposed that the biblical

Almost fifty years after his death, Finkelstein’s observation about the relationship between the gods, the human ruler, and justice remains cogent, though it now requires some additional nuance. Like Finkelstein, many interpreters of Hammurabi’s law collection add the word “perception” to their translations of the passage, “Šamaš has gifted him *kīnātum*” (without any corresponding Akkadian term).⁵⁸ These translators are trying to explain what it means “to give” (*šerēku[m]*) an abstract concept like justice, and what it says about the relationship between Hammurabi and Šamaš. Some support for understanding this expression as a reference to a form of perception comes from a first millennium BCE text: *Assurbanipal’s Coronation Hymn*. In that text, the author asks Šamaš to bestow the king with the divine gifts of *kittu* and *mīšaru*, along with other capacities of perception: “may speech, hearing, *kittu*, and *mīšaru* be given to him as a gift.”⁵⁹ Thus, the gift of *kittu/kīnātu* may rightly be called a form of perception, but it is one given to gods and mortals alike.

author of Ps 72 knew of Assurbanipal’s coronation hymn and transformed it for use according to Israelite/Judahite sensibilities (“*Sonne der Gerechtigkeit*,” *Studien zur Solarisierung der Jahwe-Religion im Lichte von Psalm 72*, ZABRB 1 [Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2000], 57–78). Arneth’s theory repurposes an idea familiar to biblical scholars from the parallels between Deuteronomy and Esarhaddon’s Vassal Treaties: that biblical authors adopted textual forms of their imperial overlords with the purpose of subverting the celebration of the Assyrian king under the divine authority of Yahweh. By identifying the *Vorlage* of Ps 72 with a Neo-Assyrian text, Arneth equates solar elements and unique ideas about the human king’s relationship to justice as foreign and non-Israelite elements of the psalm. This is a missed opportunity to explore vestiges of royal judicial ideology of the kings of Israel and Judah. Whereas Ps 72 begins by praising the king’s God-given judicial capacity that gradually moves to solar imagery and motifs associated with fecundity (cf. 2 Sam 23:3b–4), there is no sign that Assurbanipal is equated with the sun-god Šamaš (mentioned alongside other deities only in the first line) as is the biblical king in Ps 72:5–6 (cf. 2 Sam 23:4). The parallels Arneth does identify are known from texts aside from Assurbanipal’s Coronation Hymn alone, including important themes like royal justice, lengthening the king’s reign, and celestial imagery, which are all attested in the West before the reign of Assurbanipal (see the inscription of King Yeḥimilk of Byblos [KAI: 4 1–7] and the Karatepe inscription [KAI: 26 AIV 2–3]). The insistence on a direct textual relationship between Ps 72 and Assurbanipal’s Coronation Hymn overshadowed Arneth’s more meaningful observations of connections between royal judicial ideology and solar imagery across a variety of biblical and Near Eastern sources.

⁵⁸ As seen in the standard English reference work published by M. Roth: “I am Hammurabi, king of justice, to whom the god Shamash has granted (insight into) the truth” (*Law Collections from Mesopotamia and Asia Minor*, 2nd ed., SBLWAW 6 [Atlanta: Scholars, 1995], 135).

⁵⁹ SAA 3 11: obv. 8’.

The capacity to perceive what is just and equitable did not distinguish the human king “from any other individual,” as demonstrated in an OB letter between a merchant and an administrator of the *naditum*-cloister at Sippar. The merchant (the letter sender) sent a suspicious grain weight (GIŠ.3.BAN₂^dUTU) to the cloister administrator, asking him to compare it with the measure he had with him in Sippar. As the merchant was completely at the mercy of the administrator’s assessment of this grain measure, he appeals to his divinely-gifted *kittum*:

<p>Obv. (5-8) <i>ki-ma ki-it-tam ša</i> ^dUTU ^ù ^dAMAR.UTU <i>ra-i</i> <i>im-ka iš-ru-ku-ni-ik-kum</i> ^{rev. (1-8)} GIŠ.3.BAN₂ ^dUTU <i>šu-a-ti it-ti</i> GIŠ.3.BAN₂ ^dUTU <i>ša še-am im-du-du ša</i> <i>ma-aḥ-ri-ka li-iš-pu-ku-ma</i> SAG₂.IL₂.LA</p>	<p>“[The merchant says:] According to the <i>kittum</i> that Šamaš and Marduk—who love you [the cloister administrator]—have gifted to you, (compare) this 3 <i>sūtum</i>-measure of Šamaš⁶⁰ with the 3 <i>sūtum</i>-measure of Šamaš at your disposal (that) they (used to) measure grain, by pouring (barely from one to the other measure).⁶¹</p>
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In this text, the gift of *kittu* appears more like a moral virtue than divine judicial wisdom. To refine Finkelstein’s observation, therefore, *kittu* was a divine gift of perception, but it did not necessarily distinguish the king from any other individual. The king relied on his understanding of *kittu* in his unique capacity to enact laws (a prerogative of the office of kingship), just as merchants would rely on their shared sense of fair dealings—both defined as the divine gift of *kittu*.⁶² The awareness of some kind of culturally defined moral standard, which we may call justice or equity, simultaneously implies

⁶⁰ The “*sūtu*-measure of Šamaš” (^{giš}BAN₂ ^dUTU) was a unit of dry measure (ca. 10 liters) used as the institutional standard for economic exchange in the *naditum*-cloister at Sippar in the OB period (R. de Boer, “Measuring Barley with Šamaš in Old Babylonian Sippar,” *Akkadica* 134 [2013]: 103–16).

⁶¹ AbB 11 85; obv. 5’–8’.

⁶² In the OB Hymn to Hendursanga (Attinger and Krebernik, “L’Hymne à Hendursaga,” 35), Utu presides over the various transactions at, “the place of the scales” (*ki geš-rin₂-na-ka*), perhaps somewhere like a central market. Each hypothetical transaction—formulated as a series of casuistic cases—can only occur with the approval of Utu, reified through his determination of fate (*nam tar*). Although Utu “sees” (*igi gal₂*) each case, perhaps part of his identity as the all-seeing sun god, the god Hendursanga (attendant deity of Nanše, goddess of social justice) renders the decision based on his consideration of what must occur before or after the transaction.

the existence of injustice. The following section explores how the judicial roles of divine and human lawgivers overlapped in their capacities to redress legal wrongdoings and miscarriages of justice. This shared commitment to rectify injustice offers another avenue to explore how the solarization of Near Eastern kings centered on their judicial responsibilities.

2.3 *Muštēšir: He Who Creates/Maintains Order*

A more indirect way that human lawgivers were equated with the judicial roles played by the gods—and vice versa—was through the use of shared epithets. The title *muštēšir*—literally meaning, “he who causes (something/someone) to be straight,” and figuratively meaning, “he who creates/maintains (legal/cultic) order”—illustrates how legal metaphors can work in an opposite manner to the examples cited above.⁶³ Originally designating a particular judicial-administrative role of social authorities and judges in the OB period, the title *muštēšir* was bestowed upon Šamaš and it was hypostasized as a minor deity in the service of Marduk.

The title first appears in an official inscription commissioned by a man named Nidnuša (ca. 2000 BCE), who was governor of the site of Dēr (cultic center of Ištārān, god of justice) shortly after the end of the Ur III dynasty:

<p>(1) 𒀭𒀭𒀭¹ <i>Ni-id-¹nu-ša¹</i> (2) NITA KALA.[G]A (3) <i>mi-gir</i> ^dIŠTARAN (4) <i>na-ra-am</i> ^dINANNA (5) GIR₃.NITA (6) BAD₃.AN.KI (7) <i>da-ia-an ki-na-tim</i> (8) <i>la ḥa-bi-il₅</i> (9) <i>mu-uš-te₉-ši-ir ḥa-ab-lim</i> (10) <i>ù ḥa-bi-il₅-tim</i> (11) <i>ša-ki-</i> <i>in me-ša-ri-im</i> (12) <i>mu-ḥa-li-iq 𒀭ra-gi-im¹</i></p>	<p>Nidnuša, mighty man, favorite of the god Ištārān, beloved of the goddess Ištār, governor of Dēr, just judge, who oppresses no one, who (legally) straightens (the case of) the wronged man and woman, who establishes justice, who chases off the evil one.⁶⁴</p>
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⁶³ *AHW*:686b; *CAD* M/2:289b. A few post-OB texts write *multēširu*, reflecting the well-documented phonetic shift from OB /št/ to MB /lt/.

⁶⁴ RIME 4 12.1: 1'–12'.

This brief inscription from an otherwise unknown ruler of Dēr offers an early glimpse at important judicial archetypes and concepts that would come to define the act of lawgiving in the OB period. Nidnuša identified himself as a “just judge” (*dayyān kīnātim*) who oppressed no one (*lā ḥabil*). In addition to the generic ethical meaning of the verb *ḥabālu*, “to oppress/wrong,”⁶⁵ royal inscriptions and practical legal documents throughout the OB period implore legal officials (from local judges to the king himself) not to wrong (*lā ḥabālum*) litigants. Those who suffered injustice at the hands of the legal system became known as “wronged persons” *ḥablu(m)/ḥabiltu(m)*, best known as the social archetype invited to come and find their case in the epilogue of Hammurabi’s law collection.⁶⁶ By what measure and based on what concepts litigants could consider themselves “legally wronged” is neither clearly defined nor consistent across the extant documentation. Surveying the attested references to legally wronged persons in OB letters,⁶⁷ Martha Roth demonstrated that this socio-juridical category could include (i) individuals who had suffered injustice at the hands of corrupt or inept human judicial officials, and (ii) those who suspect human error in cases decided by ordeal/oath.⁶⁸ These same letters and royal inscriptions of the OB period make it clear that an essential role of lawgivers—royal or otherwise—was to rectify (*šutēšurum*) such miscarriages of justice, which is clearly the meaning behind

⁶⁵ *AHw*:301b; *CAD* H:3b.

⁶⁶ LH Epilogue xlviix 3’-13’: “let any wronged man (*awilum ḥablum*) who has a lawsuit come to the statue of me, king of justice, and let him have my inscribed stela read aloud to him.” In her analysis of the “wronged man” (*ḥablu[m]*) in legal literature, S. Démare-Lafont considered this figure a social category that included those oppressed by social circumstances (the poor, widows, and orphans) and those who have been treated unjustly: the “occasionally oppressed” (*des opprimés occasionnels*). Though local forms of conflict resolution remained the primary mechanism of adjudication, these individuals had the right to appeal to higher forms of institutional law (either in the king or his officials). Drawing on Canon Law of the Middle Ages, Démare-Lafont deemed this system *subsidiarité* (“Codification et subsidiarité dans les droits du Proche-Orient ancien,” in *La codification des lois dans l’antiquité: Actes du colloque de Strasbourg, 27–29 novembre 1997*, ed. Edmond Lévy, *Travaux du Centre de recherche sur le Proche-Orient et la Grèce antiques* 16 [Paris: Boccard, 2000], 53–5).

⁶⁷ For example, see AbB 4 73.

⁶⁸ M. T. Roth, “Hammurabi’s Wronged Man,” *JAOS* 122 (2002): 44–5.

Nidnuša's title: "he who renders justice to the wronged man and woman" (*muštēšir ḥablim u ḥabiltim*). Further supporting this conclusion, a prophet (*āpilum*) of the god Addu of Aleppo living several centuries after Nidnuša reminded King Zimri-lim of Mari (ca. 1775–1761 BCE) of his judicial obligation as the highest court of appeal: "whenever a wronged man or a wronged woman appeals to you, be present and judge their case!"⁶⁹

In many respects, the title *muštēšir* is an apt description for the role of Mesopotamian lawgivers defined in the broadest possible way: "to see that justice is done." Indeed, Nidnuša was a righteous judge (*dayyān kīnātīm*) who would never deliver unjust verdicts (*lā ḥābil awīlim*). But as a *muštēšir*, he was obliged to review cases where the legal system failed litigants and to offer new verdicts if necessary, recognizing the fallibility of "lower" adjudicating entities.⁷⁰ In its technical usage during the OB period, the verb *šutēšurum* described legal redress offered to those who had suffered some form of injustice.⁷¹ Yet, there seems to have been little distinction between rendering justice in an individual case and much broader normative proclamations. Like the expression, "to establish justice" (*mīšara šakānu*) the verb *šutēšuru* could describe the enactment of normative edicts and the promulgation of law

⁶⁹ FM 7 39: rev. 53'–54': [*i*]-*nu-ma* ^{hi}*ḥa-ab-lum* ^u ^{munus}*ha-bi-i*[*l-tum*] *i-ša-as-sé-ek-kum i-zi-iz-ma di-i*[*n*]-*šu-nu di-in*. Similarly, see FM 7 38: rev. 7'–10' (Charpin, "Sun of Babylon," 79).

⁷⁰ Démare-Lafont, "Codification," 53–5; V. A. Hurowitz, *Inu Anum širum: Literary Structures in the Non-Judicial Sections of Codex Hammurabi*, OPSNKF 15 (Philadelphia: University Museum, 1994), 45–61; Ries, *Prolog und Epilog*, 27, 55; Roth, "Wronged Man," 38–45.

⁷¹ The participle *muštēšir* and the verb *šutēšuru(m)* represent the *št*-lexical (or *št²*) form of the Semitic root *y-š-r*, "to be straight/level/upright/just," the same root from which the term *mīšaru(m)*, "justice/equity," derives (*CAD* E: 357b, mng. 6e; 359a, mng. 12a). Von Soden (*AHW*:255b) and Lämmerhirt (*Wahrheit und Trug*, 362) distinguish between *ešēru* Št¹ (in Ordnung gebracht werden) and Št² (in Ordnung halten). Lämmerhirt surmised that the base meaning of *šutēšuru(m)* was "to make two different objects align (*išrum*) with one another," and that its derived meaning was "to show the right way (to solve a problem)" (*Wahrheit und Trug*, 342). The verb *šūšuru(m)* had the same semantic meaning, though it appears far less frequently.

collections.⁷² Much like any other high judicial functionary or judge, the king was expected to adjudicate justly and review potential cases of injustice. By virtue of his office, however, the king’s verdicts had the potential to take the form of sweeping normative edicts that differentiated him from other types of human judges—placing him at least somewhat closer to the status of divine judges.

I wish to emphasize here that the solarization of OB kings was not limited to figurative language found in texts, it was a cognitive metaphor that affected perceptions of reality, it provided idiomatic expressions that created a metaphorical network, and it formed a blueprint or heuristic frame conditioning subsequent discourse. Take, for example, a letter from a Addu-priestess of Aleppo named Šewrum-parat addressed to King Zimri-lim of Mari:

Say to (King) Zimri-lim, thus says Šewrum-parat, your female servant. Without hearing from you, you sent me here. Now, I am legally wronged (*ḥablāku*)—wipe away my tears! Sîn-mušallim has legally wronged me! He took my nurse and now she dwells in his house. Now if it had been my lord who took her, and she dwelt in the house of my lord, my heart would be satisfied. But Sîn-mušallim legally wronged me! Now, since you established light for the entire land (*ana mātīm kališa nūram taškunu*), establish light for me (*ayyašim nūram šuknam*)! Give me my nurse so that I may pray for you in the presence of Addu and Hebat. Now, do not refuse this woman (*aššati šāti*) my lord. Here I am, your servant, I belong to you, place you name upon me!⁷³

Without understanding the cognitive metaphorical network shared by Šewrum-parat and Zimri-Lim, this letter makes little sense; but cognizant of this framework, Šewrum-parat’s petition becomes rather

⁷² Thus, Marduk commands Hammurabi to render justice for the people (*ana šutēšur nīši* [LH Prologue v 16’]); Hammurabi invites any future leader who reads his stele to “render justice (in) his land” (*māssu šutēšuram* [LH Epilogue xlvi 77’]); Ammī-ditāna boasts of rendering justice for Sumer and Akkad (RIME 4 3.9.2: 14’–15’); and, one of Zimri-lim’s year names commemorates “rendering justice” (*šutēšurum*) for the Aḫ-Puratim (Charpin and Ziegler, *Mari et le Proche-Orient*, 258). In a letter from Samsu-iluna to an official named Etel-pī-Marduk (AbB 14 130), the prince informs that his father, King Hammurabi, had fallen ill and that he had taken his throne, “in order to provide justice for the land” (*aššum mātīm šutēšurim*). After Samsu-iluna annulled the debts of various categories of farmers and soldiers, he claimed that he had successfully “established justice in the land” (*mīšaram ina mātīm aštakan*)—a fait accompli.

⁷³ ARM 10.92 (= LAPO 18: 1211). Also see J. Sasson, *From the Mari Archives: An Anthology of Old Babylonian Letters* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2015), 320.

ingenious. Building on her memory and perception of the metaphor, THE KING IS A SUN GOD, Šewrum-parat crafted a coherent verbal act, structured by discrete strategies of persuasion that use idiomatic expressions stemming from metaphorical ways of conceptualizing royal lawgiving.⁷⁴ Šewrum-parat opens the letter by identifying herself as a “legally wronged” (*ḥabālum*) person, who was therefore subject to the king’s justice. Recalling the self-presentation of kings as sun gods of their realms, Šewrum-parat then introduces two metaphorical overlaps: (i) LIGHT IS A REMISSION EDICT (*ana mātīm kališa nūram taškunu*), and (ii) A NEW VERDICT IN HER CASE IS LIGHT (*ayyašim nūram šuknam*). This conceptual complexity is only explainable through a mental device that absorbs, stores, and creatively repurposes cognitive referents for rhetorical and strategic purposes.

A number of kings and deities bore the title *muštēšir* without reference to the “legally wronged person” (*ḥablu/ḥabiltu*). Šamaš bears the epithet “the *muštēšir* of all living things” (*muštēšir šaknat napištim*) in the Code of Hammurabi and “the *muštēšir* of all light” (*muštēšir nūr kiššati*) in the first millennium BCE *Great Hymn of Šamaš*.⁷⁵ Perhaps in deference to Šamaš, Hammurabi assumed the title of “he who makes straight/provides justice for the people” (*mušūšer ammi*), using the rarer š-stem participle of *ešērum*.⁷⁶ Assyrian kings would bestow the epithet *muštēšir* on numerous deities, but would not adopt it for themselves.⁷⁷ Later Babylonian kings who assumed Hammurabi’s famous title, “king of

⁷⁴ See Ponterotto, “Cohesive Role,” 287–95. On Mari kings as lawgivers, see Charpin, “Sun of Babylon,” 73; Charpin and Ziegler, *Mari et le Proche-Orient*, 184 n. 108; J.-M. Durand, “Les dames,” 415–6.

⁷⁵ LH Epilogue i 17’–18’. W. G. Lambert prefers to read *muštēšir nūr kiššati* in apposition: “You Šamaš, direct, you are the light of everything” (*Babylonian Wisdom Literature*, 129). [I saw that you are abbreviating Horowitz, Mesopotamian Cosmic Geography to Cosmic Geography in notes subsequent to the first appearance of the title. But with this one the book is, I think, almost at the level of a Pentateuch volume in this business, so I would suggest keeping with Lambert’s graceful short title.]

⁷⁶ LH Prologue iv 54’.

⁷⁷ Aššur (RIMA 2 A.o.87.1: i 1’); Marduk (RINAP 1 35: i 2’; RINAP 1 37: 2’); Sumuqan (RINAP 1 37: 10’); a palace gate in Kalḫu (RINAP 1 47: rev. 35’–36’); Ea (RINAP 2 8: 46’//9: 88’//43: 70’); Enlil (RINAP 2 8: 46’//9: 88’//43: 70’); and, Šamaš (RIMA 3 A.o.102.2: i 2’–3’; SAA 2 1: rev. 8’–9’).

justice” (*šar mišarim*)—such as Simbar-Šipak (1025–1008 BCE) and Nebuchadnezzar II (605–562 BCE)—deviated from their Assyrian counterparts by adopting the title *muštēšir* for themselves.⁷⁸ Although the epithet *muštēšir* retained its judicial connotations in the royal ideology of first millennium BCE kings, it was more frequently associated with the maintenance of temples and ensuring the observance of proper cultic rites. This is not particularly surprising, as the legal (*dīnu/purrussû/šimdatu/awātu*), moral (*kībsu/ūsu*), and cultic (*paršu/mû/pilludû*) decrees that human rulers and the gods implemented to maintain social order were connected through a “complex differentiated system of regulation.”⁷⁹

Yet, these first millennium kings continued to use the title *muštēšir* as a divine epithet for Šamaš as well. In one inscription, Nebuchadnezzar II claimed to be “the one who gives justice to the subjects of Enlil, Šamaš, and Marduk” (*muštēšir ba’ulāti Enlil Šamaš u Marduk*), while in another he described Šamaš as “the one who renders just verdicts” (*muštēšir purussê kītti*).⁸⁰ Like other attributes and epithets of major Mesopotamian deities, the judicial obligation of lawgivers to render justice (*šutēšuru*) to those who had experienced injustice (*hablu/habilitu*) was also hypostasized as a divine being. The creation myth known as *Damkina’s Bond*, perhaps dating to the late Kassite period or the Second Dynasty of Isin (ca. twelfth–eleventh centuries BCE), mentions an attendant deity of Marduk named *Muštēšir-hablim*:

⁷⁸ Nebuchadnezzar I would adopt the title in reference to his maintenance of the cultic shrines (*kullat māḥāzī*) in his kingdom (RIMB 2 4.8: obv. 4’, 7’). Less clearly, it seems that Nabonidus also used the epithet, “he who maintains/provides order for the people of the land” (*muštēšir nīši mātīm*), to promote his pious maintenance of cultic ordinances and shrines (AOAT 256 2.11: i 12’; RIBO/Babylon 7 Nabonidus 42: i 13’, <http://oracc.org/ribo/Q005439/>).

⁷⁹ Based on the pioneering observations of B. Landsberger (“Die Termini für Gesetz und Recht,” in *Symbolae ad iura orientis antiqui pertinentes Paulo Koschaker dedicatae*, SD 2 [Leiden: Brill, 1939], 222–3), E. Cancick-Kirschbaum explained how Mesopotamian scribes tried to organize moral, legal, and cultic regulatory forces under more totalizing principles like the loaded Mesopotamian concepts of *me/mû* (“divine essence/attribute/power”) or *nam.tar/šīntu* (“destiny/fate”) (“König der Gerechtigkeit: Ein altorientalisches Paradigma zu Recht und Herrschaft,” in *Torah Nomos Ius: Abendländischer Antinomismus und der Traum vom Herrschaftsfreien Raum*, ed. Gesine Palmer, Christiane Nasse, Renate Haffke, Dorothee C. von Tippelskirch [Berlin: Vorwerk, 1999], 64–6).

⁸⁰ RIBO Nebuchadnezzar II 19: i 1’–3’, <http://oracc.org/ribo/Q005490/>; RIBO Nebuchadnezzar II C31: ii 26’–27’.

“the one that brings justice to the wronged man.”⁸¹ This divine figure is described as a hero of the gods (*qarrād ilāni*) and part of Marduk’s vanguard (*ālik maḥri*).⁸² A Neo-Assyrian ritual manual identifies this *Muštēšir-ḫablim* as a divine weapon of Marduk (^dGIŠ.TUKUL), but says nothing of its relationship to the patron deity of Babylon.⁸³ A Neo-Babylonian literary commentary equates *Muštēšir-ḫablim* with Marduk’s flood weapon (^{giš}*kakkašu abūbu*) and a deity named Šazi,⁸⁴ probably a river ordeal deity known from OB Susa.⁸⁵ The reason that these two minor deities were syncretized likely relates to how first millennium BCE scribes understood the role of the river ordeal in the judicial procedures of their respective legal traditions. Just as human lawgivers could rectify cases of injustice through a new trial, the river ordeal could render just verdicts in cases where human courts proved incapable or unsatisfactory, representing a form of divine legal appeal.⁸⁶

Thus, the epithet *muštēšir* reveals another way that human and divine lawgivers were imagined to fill similar judicial roles. The longstanding association between “rendering justice” (*šutēšuru*) and the “wronged person” (*ḫablu/ḫabiltu*) suggests that those who bore the title *muštēšir* had a special or superior ability to rectify injustices suffered at the hands of lower courts and decision-making bodies.

⁸¹ W. G. Lambert, *Babylonian Creation Myths*, MC 20 (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2013), 322, 484, 497.

⁸² A 7882 (= BM 27776): 9’–10’ (Lambert, *Creation Myths*, 322, 484, 497). [Same comment as above: perhaps with all these thankfully short titles you do not need to abbreviate further? A thought.]

⁸³ SAA 20 40: rev. vi 11’–12’.

⁸⁴ See W. G. Lambert, “An Address of Marduk to the Demons,” *AfO* 17 (1954-1956): 313, 316; idem, “An Address of Marduk to the Demons: New Texts,” *AfO* 19 (1959-1960): 115.

⁸⁵ Lambert (*Creation Myths*, 484, 497) noted that Šazu was absorbed into the identity of Marduk in *Enūma eliš* (Tablet VII: 35’–56’).

⁸⁶ A similar preoccupation with the judicial roles of kings and the ordeal procedure appears in the Neo-Babylonian composition, *The King of Justice* (see W. G. Lambert, “Nebuchadnezzar King of Justice,” *Iraq* 27 [1965]: 1–11; see the bibliography in B. Foster, *Before the Muses: An Anthology of Akkadian Literature*, 2 vols. SECOND EDITION [Bethesda: CDL, 1996], 2:751–2).

Much like other essential acts or concepts connected to the phenomenon of lawgiving,⁸⁷ the hypostatization of this legal obligation grants further credence to the idea that the judicial activities of lawgivers were in some sense divine. This is perhaps the strongest evidence that the *tertium comparationis* between the human lawgivers and the sun god was their shared judicial responsibilities, rather than some essential characteristic of the king. The analogues were not between any individual king and the sun god, but rather between the role of kingship in the legal system and the imagined role of Šamaš as the supreme judge of heaven and earth. As the following section will illustrate, however, Mesopotamian scribes of the late second and early first millennium began to speculate on this relationship in new ways, specifically, how could human kings physically embody the sun god if they were indeed mortal men?

3 Solar Imagery in Royal Inscriptions of the Late Second to First Millennia BCE

Middle Assyrian, Kassite, and Middle Babylonian kings of the latter half of the second millennium BCE continued to use solar imagery in their royal titulary. King Nebuchadnezzar I of Babylon (1125–1104 BCE) referred to himself as “the sun-god of his land” (*Šamšu māssu*) and “the just king who renders righteous decisions” (*šarru kīnāti ša dīn mišari idinnu*).⁸⁸ Middle and Neo-Assyrian kings, however, assumed the epithet “sun-god of all peoples” (*Šamšu kiššat nišī*) with few clear references to their judicial function—

⁸⁷ For example, the notions of “justice and equity” (*kittu u mišaru*)—essential attributes associated with human and divine lawgivers—would similarly appear as divine attendants (^dnig₂.gi.na/^dnig₂.si.sa₂ and ^dkittu/^dmišaru) of Šamaš and Addu in Middle Assyrian god lists (see R. L. Litke, *A Reconstruction of the Assyro-Babylonian God-Lists, An: ^dA-nu-um and an: anu ša amēlu* (= *TBC* 3) [New Haven: YBC, 1998], 132–3, 143, 153), even being venerated in temples dedicated to their worship during the OB period (see CUSAS 8 60: obv. 1’). These deities were later represented in the temples of Šamaš in Neo-Assyrian Assur (SAA 20 52: rev. iv 45’) and in Neo-Babylonian Sippar (SAA 20 52: rev. iv 45’–46’).

⁸⁸ RIMB 2 4.11: i 1’–6’.

epithets that may have just as easily referred to the king's sun-like numinous radiance (*melammu/puluḫtu*) as to his judicial roles.⁸⁹ Even more generically, these titles may point to the lofty position of the king over other humans, the same position the sun held over the other celestial and terrestrial deities.

Yet, such metaphors were not entirely “free of ontological implications.”⁹⁰ Although Assyrian kings may not have deified themselves in the same ways as the rulers of the Ur III dynasty, they were assumed to possess certain attributes that made them something more than mortal. Neo-Assyrian letters affirm that solar imagery and the king's judicial functions were still part of the shared cognitive metaphorical network in that period, as seen in a letter to King Esarhaddon:

⁽¹⁻³⁾ [To the king], my lord: your servant Mardî. May [Ninurta], Zababa, Nergal, Madanu [and Nabû] bless the strong and righteous [kin]g, my lord . . . ⁽⁹⁻¹⁷⁾ I constantly prayed to [B]el, Nabû and Šamaš for the king, my lord, saying, “May the crown prince, my lord, seize the royal throne of his father's house! I am his servant and his dog, who fears him; may I see light under his shadow (*ina šillišu lāmur nūru*)!” Bel, Nabû and Šamaš heard (this) prayer for you, and they gave the king, my lord, an everlasting kingship (and) a long reign. And like the sun god rises, all the countries are illuminated by your rising (*kīma šēta Šamši mātāti gabbi ina šētika namrū*). But I have been left in darkness (*ina libbi eṭūti*); no one brings me before the king. My outstanding debts, because of which I appealed to the crown prince, my lord, and (because of which) the king, my lord, sent (his messenger) with me, saying, “Give his outstanding debts back to him!”⁹¹

The letter sender, a man named Mardî, reminded Esarhaddon of his loyal service during the king's conflict to seize the throne from his brothers. As seen in the OB letter from the Addu-priestess Šewrum-

⁸⁹ The epithet was a common feature in the royal titulary beginning in the reign of Tukulti-Ninurta I (1243–1207 BCE) (see RIMA 1 A.o.78.5: 1'–3') followed by numerous Neo-Assyrian kings who emulated him: Adad-nirari II (911–891 BCE) (RIMA 2 A.o.99.2: 10'); Assurnāširpal II (883–859 BCE) (RIMA 2 A.o.101.28: i 7'–8'); and, Esarhaddon (681–669 BCE) (RINAP 4 48: obv. 33'–34'). On numinous radiance as a *tertium comparationis* equating the sun god and the mortal king, see E. Frahm, “Rising Suns and Falling Stars: Assyrian Kings and the Cosmos,” in *Experiencing Power, Generating Authority: Cosmos, Politics, and the Ideology of Kingship in Ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia*, ed. J. A. Hill, P. Jones, and A. J. Morales (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, 2013), 100.

⁹⁰ Frahm, “Rising Suns,” 101.

⁹¹ SAA 16 29: obv. 1'–3', 9'–17'.

parat, Mardî is juggling several metaphorical overlaps in his heuristic frame for royal lawgiving. Using solar language in reference to the king's sweeping judicial or economic acts,⁹² Mardî also relies on the related metaphors of SHADE IS PROTECTION, LIGHT IS JUSTICE, and DARKNESS IS INJUSTICE. Much like OB kings, certain Neo-Assyrian rulers may have used their coronations as opportunities to exercise their normative authority—perpetuating or reviving an OB custom.⁹³ Given the ignominious circumstances of his father's death and the civil war that followed, judicial ideology was a potent means to express continuity in the office of kingship between the reigns of Sennacherib and Esarhaddon. Based on Mardî's rhetoric, the solar identity of Assyrian kings remained a powerful cognitive metaphor in the first millennium BCE, allowing for dynamic and flexible forms of expression, but holding the entire referential framework of this letter together.⁹⁴

In another Neo-Assyrian letter to Esarhaddon or his son Assurbanipal, a scholar named Adad-šumu-ušur expressed his concern for the king's health,⁹⁵ describing the king as “the image of the sun

⁹² Mardî may be alluding to an earlier (*an*)*durāru*-edict of Esarhaddon with the expression *mātāti gabbi ina šētika namrū*, although the metaphorical language makes this assertion difficult to substantiate (P. Villard, “L'(an)durāru à l'époque néo-assyrienne,” *RA* 101 [2007]: 116–7).

⁹³ Villard observed: “On voit donc que dans la plupart des cas attestés, une *andurāru* suit immédiatement la montée sur le trône d'un souverain. Celle que proclama Sargon II en Babylonie est liée à une conquête, mais relève en partie du même principe, puisqu'il venait de se faire couronner roi de Babylone. On constate donc la perpétuation d'une coutume, qui remonte au moins à Hammurabi, voulant qu'un édit soit proclamé l'année même de l'avènement d'un nouveau roi. Les *andurāru* instaurées en cours de règne sont pour l'instant moins bien attestées qu'à l'époque amorrite, mais la possibilité en existait néanmoins, puisqu'il fut question d'en proclamer une en 676. Au total, les éléments de continuité semblent assez forts avec les usages de l'époque amorrite” (“L'[an]durāru,” 119).

⁹⁴ Ponterotto, “The Cohesive Role,” 295–7.

⁹⁵ SAA 10 196: rev. 4'–5'. Adad-šumu-ušur was a multi-vocational scholar in the service of Assurbanipal and Esarhaddon. Over his long career, he bore the title of chief diviner (^{lu}GAL.MAŠ.MAŠ), exorcist (*āšipu*), purification priest (*šangamaḥḥu*), scribe/astrologer (*tupšarru*), and though he never bore the title of physician (*asû*), he cared for the health of the king (K. Deller, “Die Briefe des Adad-šumu-ušur,” in *Lišan miḥḥurti: Festschrift Wolfram Freiherr von Soden zum 19.4.1968 gewidmet von Schülern und Mitarbeitern*, ed. K. Bergerhof, M. Dietrich, and O. Loretz, AOAT 1 [Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1969], 45; H. Hunger, “Neues von Nabû-zuqup-kēna,” *ZA* 62 [1972]: 101; K. Šašková, “Adad-šumu-ušur and his Family in the Service of Assyrian Kings,” in *Who Was King? Who Was Not King? The Rulers and the Ruled in the Ancient Near East*, ed. P. Charvát and P. M. Vlčková [Prague: Institute of Archaeology of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, 2010], 122). In another letter (SAA 10 228: obv. 19'), Adad-šumu-ušur refers to Assurbanipal and his father Esarhaddon as the *šalmu* of Bēl.

god” (*šalmu ša Šamaš*). Assyriologists and art historians have shown that a *šalmu*, the Akkadian term designating a cultic statue installed in a temple, was more than just an image of a deity but a symbolic “re-presentation” of the model that contained some aspect of its essence or character.⁹⁶ In the Middle Assyrian *Tukulti-Ninurta Epic*, the king is called the “image of Enlil” (*šalam Enlil*), whose body was “reckoned with the flesh of gods (in) his limbs” (*mani itti šir ilāni minâšû*).⁹⁷ In the roughly contemporary Babylonian poem *Ludlul bēl nēmēqi*, the king is similarly described as both the “sun god of his people” (*Šamšu ša nišišu*) and “the flesh of the gods” (*šarru šir ilāni*).⁹⁸ These expressions rely on a double corporeal metaphor that connects the king’s body with the material used to construct cultic images (i.e., the wood of the *mēsu*-tree) and the physical essence (lit. “flesh”) of the gods.⁹⁹ According to Zainab Bahrani, the king was not an embodiment of the gods; rather, he served as a momentary substitute, an organic body double who spoke the words of the gods in a limited and liminal space and time. Just as the *āšipu*-exorcist could represent the *šalmu* of Marduk/Asarluḫi when reciting his incantations,¹⁰⁰ so too could the king be the *šalmu* of Šamaš in his execution of justice. As a *šalmu* of the sun god, Neo-Assyrian kings could lay claim to all the symbolic associations of this deity while simultaneously

⁹⁶ See Z. Bahrani, *The Graven Image: Representations in Babylonia and Assyria* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 23–48; Frahm, “Rising Suns,” 102–4; I. J. Winter, “Art in Empire: The Royal Image and the Visual Dimensions of Assyrian Ideology,” in *Assyria 1995: Proceedings of the 10th Anniversary Symposium of the Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project*, ed. S. Parpola and R. M. Whiting (Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 1997), 359–81.

⁹⁷ W. G. Lambert, “Three Unpublished Fragments of the Tukulti-Ninurta Epic,” *AfO* 18 (1957–1958): 50.

⁹⁸ *Ludlul I*: 55 (Lambert, *Wisdom Literature*, 32–3).

⁹⁹ CAD M/2:34a. In the first millennium BCE *Epic of Erra* (I: 148’–52’), the gods Erra and Išum look to replace Marduk’s cultic image (*šalmu*) in Babylon that has lost some of its divine radiance. They seek out suitable material, which was the *mēsu*-tree or the “flesh of the gods” (*šir ilāni*), whose roots extend down to the subterranean waters of the Apsû (see L. Cagni, *The Poem of Erra*, SANER 1/3 [Malibu: Undena, 1977], 32–3). On the use of *šir ilāni*/*šir ilāni* to refer to “divine nature,” see CAD Š/3:117a.

¹⁰⁰ In the first millennium BCE incantation series *bit mēseri*, the exorcist (^lgu₃-gi_r₃/*āšipu*) is identified as the “image of Asarluḫi/Marduk” (a lam d as ar-lu₂-ḫi/*šalam Marduk*) in the performance of his ritual incantations (G. Meier, “Die zweite Tafel der Serie *bit mēseri*,” *AfO* 14 [1941–1944]: 150).

recognizing the distinction between the two. This intellectual development complemented older metaphors that had focused on the shared judicial roles of human kings and Šamaš, relying on a conceptual framework that had emerged from cultic settings to influence the propagation and reception of royal ideology in first millennium Mesopotamia.

4 Divine and Human Lawgivers in Biblical Tradition

As Israel's divine lawgiver, Yahweh assumes many of the judicial epithets and characteristics that other Near Eastern cultures ascribed to human kings. Solar language appears in discussions of Yahweh's judicial responsibilities to his people (Hos 6:5b; Zeph 3:5), though the solarization of Yahweh was also part of the process by which certain attributes of solar deities like Šemeš, Šalim, and Šaḥar converged into the identity of Yahweh (Mal 3:20; Ps 84:12)—especially as he was venerated in the Jerusalem temple (2 Kgs 23:11; Ezek 8:16).¹⁰¹ The use of solar language and iconography to depict Israel's national god Yahweh is a well-trodden topic of research.¹⁰² How, when, and why Yahweh came to absorb solar aspects in his identity and to be worshipped as a solar deity at his cult center in Jerusalem relates to a series of localized processes that took place at different times, in different institutional contexts, and resulted in

¹⁰¹ See K. Schmid, "Gott als Gesetzgeber Entstehung und Bedeutung des Gottesrechts der Tora im Rahmen der altorientalischen Rechtsgeschichte," *ZThK* 118 (2021): 281–5.

¹⁰² There is an extensive bibliography on the study of solar Yahwism; important contributions include: M. Arnoth, *Sonne der Gerechtigkeit*; T. J. Glen, "Was Yahweh Worshiped as the Sun?," *BAR* 20 (1994): 52–61, 90–1; H. Irsigler, "Vom Mythos zur Bildsprache. Eine Einführung am Beispiel der 'Solarisierung' JHWHs," in *Mythisches in biblischer Bildsprache*, ed. H. Irsigler, QD 209 (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2004), 9–42; B. Janowski, "JHWH und der Sonnengott: Aspekte der Solarisierung JHWHs in vorexilischer Zeit," in *Die rettende Gerechtigkeit*, BTAT 2 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1999), 192–219; O. Keel and C. Uehlinger, "Jahwe und die Sonnengottheit von Jerusalem," in *Ein Gott allein?: JHWH-Verehrung und biblischer Monotheismus im Kontext der israelitischen und altorientalischen Religionsgeschichte*, OBO 139 (Freiburg: Universitätsverlag, 1994), 269–306; Niehr, *Der höchste Gott*, 147–63; M. S. Smith, "The Near Eastern Background of Solar Language for Yahweh," *JBL* 109 (1990): 29–39; H.-P. Stähli, *Solare Elemente im Jahweglauben des Alten Testaments*, OBO 66 (Freiburg/Göttingen: Universitätsverlag/Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1985); S. A. Wiggins, "Yahweh: The God of Sun?," *JSOT* 21 (1996): 89–106.

different outcomes.¹⁰³ Like other solar deities in the ancient Near East, Yahweh was the source, protector, and personification of justice in biblical tradition—leading numerous authors to evoke Yahweh’s solar attributes in conjunction with his preservation of moral/legal order.¹⁰⁴ Unlike his divine counterparts in Mesopotamia, however, Yahweh was also Israel’s lawgiver, the sole figure with the authority to promulgate a corpus of laws and cultic ordinances at a series of revelatory moments in Israel’s formative past.¹⁰⁵ While a variety of antecedent conditions could have inspired biblical authors to identify a divine source for Pentateuchal law, one largely overlooked factor was a widespread cultural assumption that lawgiving was in some sense a divine act. This cultural mentality, shared by both biblical authors and their Near Eastern neighbors, manifested itself in the attribution of divine qualities

¹⁰³ The development of monotheism undoubtedly played one part in the process, whereby attributes of various domestic (e.g., Šemeš, Šalim, and Šaḥar) and foreign (e.g., Šamaš and Amun-Re) solar deities converged with the identity of Yahweh and his veneration at Jerusalem. In the LXX tradition about Solomon’s dedication of the temple (3 Kgdms 8:53//1 Kgs 8:12–13), some see an allusion to a solar deity or the sun (“Ἡλιον”) that was imagined to cohabit the temple with Yahweh (cf. 2 Kgs 23:11) (O. Keel, “Der salomonische Tempelweihspruch: Beobachtungen zum religionsgeschichtlichen Kontext des Ersten Jerusalemer Tempels,” in *Gottesstadt und Gottesgarten: Zur Geschichte und Theologie des Jerusalemer Tempels* [Freiburg: Herder, 2002], 9–22.; T. Römer, “Salomon d’après les deutéronomistes: Un roi ambigu,” in *Le Roi Salomon un héritage en question Hommage à Jacques Vermeylen*, ed. C. Lichtert and D. Nocquet [Brussels: Lessius, 2008], 105). Coupled with the pervasive biblical metaphor of Yahweh’s divine kingship, the penchant of both Israelite and Judahite kings for solar iconography (as revealed in the traces of royal glyptic art) was another likely factor leading to the solarization of Yahweh (Keel and Uehlinger, “Jahwe und die Sonnengottheit,” 306).

¹⁰⁴ An early reference to this dual motif appears in Hos 6:5b: “Your judgments (are) light going forth (MT)/my justice goes forth like light” (LXX/Syriac/Targum). Even in the exilic period, Yahweh is remembered as a divine solar judge enacting justice in Jerusalem (Zeph 3:5). In what many consider an allusion to the iconographic image of the winged sun-disk, Mal 3:20 (= Mal 4:2 NRSV) describes Yahweh as, “the sun of righteousness (שֶׁשׁ צְדָקָה) (who) will rise with healing in its wings (בְּכַנְפֵיהָ).”

¹⁰⁵ B. Jackson identified two models (the dualistic model and the monistic model) that defined the relationship between human law and divine justice in Jewish tradition. In the older dualistic model, human law was enacted by human rulers under divine mandate but was distinct from divine justice. In the monistic model, human law and divine justice came from the same source and represented a single system (“Human Law and Divine Justice: Towards the Institutionalisation of Halakhah,” *JSJ* 9 [2010]: 223). Although Jackson saw traces of both the dualistic and monistic models in biblical tradition, his descriptions still essentialize Near Eastern (namely, Mesopotamian) mentality as a stage of thinking or “mode of thought” anterior to biblical tradition, one that Jewish thought ultimately leaves behind. This study outlined how both dualistic and monistic notions of lawgiving manifest in cuneiform literature as well.

to human lawgivers. The metaphor of Yahweh's divine kingship has largely subsumed the judicial ideology of the kings of Israel and Judah, but some traces are still detectable in certain biblical texts.

The use of solar imagery to depict Israelite and Judahite kings exercising their judicial rights likely stemmed from multiple vectors of influence. One vector was direct contact between biblical authors and broader Near Eastern literary trends of the first millennium BCE, namely those of Mesopotamia and Egypt.¹⁰⁶ Another vector of influence stemmed from the West Semitic-Levantine literary tradition to which the kingdoms of Israel and Judah were cultural heirs. Some biblical authors may have been familiar with solar imagery in legal contexts without any awareness of its long history in Mesopotamia or in the West. In the Amarna correspondence and Hittite treaties of the Late Bronze Age, the epithet "sun god" or "my sun god" was an honorific title bestowed on the great kings of the international stage: Egypt, Hatti, Babylon, Mitanni, and later Assyria.¹⁰⁷ The absence of any substantial collection of written documentation in the southern Levant between the fourteenth and eleventh centuries BCE leaves the question about continuities between the Amarna age and the beginning of biblical writing an open question.¹⁰⁸ When longer inscriptions do reappear in the Iron II period, lines of

¹⁰⁶ This direct transmission of legal literature has been convincingly demonstrated for Esarhaddon's Vassal Treaties and the Book of Deuteronomy (R. Frankena, "The Vassal-Treaties of Esarhaddon and the Dating of Deuteronomy," *OtSt* 14 [1965]: 122–54; B. M. Levinson, "Esarhaddon's Succession Treaty as the Source for the Canon Formula in Deuteronomy 13:1," *JAOS* 130 [2010]: 337–47; E. Otto, "Treueid und Gesetz: Die Ursprünge des Deuteronomiums im Horizont neuassyrischen Vertragsrechts," *ZABR* 2 [1996]: 1–52; H. U. Steymans, *Deuteronomium 28 und die Adê zur Thronfolgeregelung Asarhaddons: Segen und Fluch im Alten Orient und in Israel*, OBO 145 [Freiburg/Göttingen: Universitätsverlag Freiburg Schweiz/Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1995]; M. Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972], 94–129). Based on this model, scholars have less convincingly proposed direct literary relationships between the LH and the Covenant Code (D. P. Wright, *Inventing God's Law: How the Covenant Code of the Bible Used and Revised the Laws of Hammurabi* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009]) as well as Assurbanipal's Coronation Hymn and Psalm 72 (Arnoth, *Sonne der Gerechtigkeit*).

¹⁰⁷ Beckman, "My Sun-God;" Fauth, "Sonnengottheit."

¹⁰⁸ W. M. Schniedewind argues in favor of continuity between the cuneiform scribal culture of the Amarna age and the training of alphabetic scribes in the ninth and eighth centuries BCE (*The Finger of the Scribe: The Beginnings of Scribal Education and How It Shaped the Hebrew Bible* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019]). For the traditional view of a complete break in the scribal cultures of the Late Bronze and the Iron Age southern Levant, see A. Lemaire, *Les écoles et la formation*

continuity with the Late Bronze Age Levant and Mesopotamia are vague, at best. The tenth-century BCE royal inscription of Yehimilk of Byblos identifies him as, “the king of righteousness and justice” (*mlk.šdq.wmlk.yšr*), perhaps recalling the pairing *šdq w mšr* known from Ugarit.¹⁰⁹ The eighth century BCE Karatepe inscription uses the imagery of the sun and the moon as permanent and unchanging aspects of the cosmos, as seen in Psalms 72 and 89, but there is no connection to the theme of justice. Thus, it is only in biblical tradition that the motif of justice and solar imagery appear together in the Levant during the first millennium BCE. Nonetheless, the presence of these motifs in royal inscriptions from first-millennium western sites should caution against any supposition that solar imagery in royal judicial ideology was foreign to Israel and Judah, only introduced under imperial influence from the East.

The metaphor of Yahweh’s divine kingship pervades biblical tradition and largely displaces any trace of how the kings of Israel and Judah constructed their political identity through judicial ideology. Though quite rare, this ideology can be found in some narrative accounts of David and Solomon’s exercise of justice (2 Sam 14:1–20; 1 Kgs 3:16–28) and in some royal hymns/psalms praising the king’s commitment to legal order (2 Sam 23:3b–4; Pss 72:1–6; 89:37–38). Based on these texts, there are two general themes that seem to characterize the judicial ideology of biblical kings: (i) in their ability to decide between right and wrong and render just decisions, human kings were imagined to have access to divine or semi-divine wisdom; and (ii), on account of their role in maintaining justice (*הַצְדִּיק/צִדְקָה*), human rulers were occasionally equated with various aspects of the sun/sun god. As seen elsewhere in

de la Bible dans l’Ancien Israël (Fribourg-Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1981); C. Rollston, *Writing and Literacy in the World of Ancient Israel: Epigraphic Evidence from the Iron Age*, *Archaeology and Biblical Studies* 11 (Atlanta: SBL, 2010).

¹⁰⁹ H. Niehr, “The Constitutive Principles for Establishing Justice and Order in Northwest Semitic Societies,” *ZABR* 3 (1995): 113–6.

the ancient Near East, the act of lawgiving inspired biblical authors to attribute divine qualities to human kings.

Two legal narratives that report the judicial activities of Kings David and Solomon preserve some echoes of what may have been royal judicial ideology: The Wise Woman from Tekoa (2 Sam 14:1–20) and Solomon’s Judgment (1 Kgs 3:16–28).¹⁰⁰ In these stories, the legal acumen of Israel’s early kings is described as divine or semi-divine wisdom:

2 Sam 14:17

ותאמר שפחתך יהיה־נא דבר־אדני המלך למנוחה כי
כמלאך האלהים כן אדני המלך לשמע הטוב והרע ויהוה
אלהיך יהי עמך:

“And your servant said: ‘the word of my lord the king will give me rest; like a messenger of God, so is my lord the king, perceiving (lit. ‘hearing’) the good and the bad. May Yhwh your god be with you.”

2 Sam 14:20

לבעבור סבב את־פני הדבר עשה עבדך יואב את־הדבר
הזה ואדני חכם כחכמת מלאך האלהים לדעת את־כל־
אשר בארץ:

“In order to change (lit. ‘go around’) the face of the matter, your servant Joab did this thing. But my lord is wise, like the wisdom of a messenger of God to know everything that is on the earth.”

1 Kgs 3:28

וישמעו כל־ישראל את־המשפט אשר שפט המלך ויראו
מפני המלך כי ראו כִּי־חכמת אלהים בקרבו לעשות
משפט:

“All of Israel heard the judgement that the king had rendered, and they were afraid/reverent in the presence of the king because they saw that the wisdom of God was within him to execute justice.”

¹⁰⁰ Accepting that the narrative of Solomon fits the strict legal definition of a “judgment,” S. Démare-Lafont clarified that the narrative of the Wise Woman from Tekoa would better be designated as an “intervention personnelle du roi” (“La justice savante de Salomon,” in *Plenitudo Juris Mélanges en hommage à Michèle Bégou-Davia*, ed. B. Basdevant-Gaudemet, F. Jankowiak, and F. Roumy [Paris: Mare & Martin, 2015], 157). Regardless, both narratives draw on a common stock of judicial motifs typical of Near Eastern royal ideology.

In the first narrative, David hears the case of a widow (אלמנה) who asks him to overrule a death sentence that her clan (משפחה) had imposed on her son for killing his brother.¹¹¹ Parsing through a complex set of circumstances that included fratricide committed in the course of a fight and the question of the arbitrary imposition of blood vengeance, King David pardons the woman's son, prompting her to declare that the king's judicial aptitude was tantamount to the ability "to perceive (lit. hear) what is good and evil" (לשמע הטוב והרע) [v. 17]), or "to know everything that is on the earth" (לדעת את-כל-אשר) (לדעת את-כל-אשר) [v. 20]). Moreover, David's wisdom (חכמה) in the matter was comparable to a "messenger of God" (מלאך האלהים). In the famous story of Solomon's Judgement, the king decides the case between two prostitutes who both claim a surviving infant as their own. In response to Solomon's sagacious decision, the Israelites "were afraid/reverent in the presence of the king (ויראו מפני המלך), for the wisdom of God was in him" (חכמת אלהים בקרבו). Both texts imply a fundamentally divine quality behind the ability of these kings to render justice, an idea that would have fit well in the judicial ideology of Israelite and Judahite kings as long as the monarchy persisted.

The association of Israelite kings with divine justice was also achieved through solar imagery. In texts like 2 Samuel 23 and Psalm 72, solar imagery was a metaphorical fulcrum connecting several motifs of royal ideology:

¹¹¹ The entire case is a legal ruse concocted by David's general Joab to convince the king to forgive his son Absalom for killing his brother and end the rebellion Absalom had instigated. Thus, the details of the case were all hypothetical—even from the point of view of the biblical narrative—and purposely relied on stock judicial archetypes and royal judicial rhetoric. If these figures were defined according to Akkadian categories previously explored, David would fill the role of the *muštešīr* (offering a new trial in a case of previous injustice delivered by a local tribunal) whereas the widow embodies the archetypal figure of the "wronged woman" (*ḥabiltu*), whose clan had arbitrarily imposed the sanction of blood vengeance on the surviving son, and thus, had failed to deliver justice.

2 Sam 23:3-4

(3) אמר אלהי ישראל לי דבר צור ישראל מושל
באדם צדיק מושל יראת אלהים: (3) The God of Israel spoke to me; the Rock of Israel
said: “He who rules over humanity justly, is he who
rules (in) reverence of God.

(4) וכאור בקר יזרח־שמש בקר לא עבות מגגה
ממטר דשא מארץ: (4) Like light of (the) morning, the Sun rises on a
morning without clouds. From shining (and) from
rain, grass (grows/emerges) from the earth.”

Psalms 72:1-6

(1) לשלמה אהים משפטיך למלך תן וצדקתך לבן־
מלך: (1) “Of/for Solomon: Give your laws/justice to the king,
O God, and your righteousness to the son of the
king.

(2) ידין עמך בצדק וענייך במשפט: (2) May he judge your people with righteousness and
your afflicted with justice.

(3) ישאו הרים שלום לעם וגבעות בצדקה: (3) Let the mountains raise up peace to the people and
the hills, in righteousness.

(4) ישפט עניי־עם יושיע לבני אביון וידכא עושק: (4) Let him judge the case of the afflicted people, save
the sons of the poor, and crush the oppressors.

(5) ייראוך עם־שמש ולפני ירח דור דורים: (5) May they revere you (LXX: May he [live] long) with
the sun and in the presence the moon, (from)
generation to generation.¹¹²

(6) ירד כמטר על־גז כרביבים זרויף ארץ: (6) May he come down like rain upon the mown grass;
like showers sprinkling the earth.”¹¹³

Psalms 89:37-38

(36) זרעו לעולם יהיה וכסאו כשמש נגדי: (36) “His seed will be eternal; his throne is like the sun
before me.

(37) כירח יכון עולם ועד בשחק נאמן סלה: (37) Like the moon, he/it is established forever; (as) a
witness in the sky he/it is established/made firm.”

¹¹² The LXX reading of this line is preferable for two reasons. First, both Ps 89:37-38 and Ps 72:17 invoke the sun in reference to its eternal permanence, which is equated with the identity of the king. Second, the eighth century BCE Phoenician Karatepe Inscription (KAI 26 AIV: 2'-3') contains a similar motif in the context of a royal inscription: “May the name of Azitawada be established forever, like the name of (the sun-god) Šamš and of (the moon-god) Yariḥ (*šm 'ztwd ykn l'lm km šm šmš wyrḥ*).

¹¹³ The mixed metaphors of justice and fecundity can be seen in a Neo-Assyrian letter to Assurbanipal from the scholar Adad-šumu-ušur: ⁽⁹⁻¹²⁾ “A good reign—righteous days (*ūmē kēnūti*), years of justice (*šanāti ša mēšāri*); copious rains (*zunnī taḥdūti*), huge floods (*mīlī gapšūti*), a fine rate of exchange . . . ⁽²¹⁻²⁴⁾ The king, my lord, has revived the one who was guilty and condemned to death; you have released the one who was imprisoned for many [ye]ars. Those who were sick for many days have got well, the hungry have been sated, the parched have been anointed with oil, the needy have been covered with garments” (SAA 10 226: obv. 9'-12', 21'-24'). See Villard, “L'(an)durāru,” 117.

In addition to the ample evidence for solar characteristics attributed to Yahweh, these texts equate the human king of Israel or the dynasty with *שמ*: twice in the context of the king's relationship with justice (2 Sam 23; Ps 72) and once in the context of the perpetuation of the dynasty (Ps 89). Through the lens of cognitive metaphor theory, the sun serves as the metaphorical source that transfers its conceptual associations with justice, permanence, and fecundity to the figure of the king and the office of kingship as embodied in the Davidic dynasty (*זרע/כסא/דור*).

Archaeological remains contribute further information to the centrality of solar imagery in the political identity of Israelite and Judahite kings. Royal glyptic and the *mlk* seal impressions found throughout the Shephelah make frequent use of solar imagery as a symbol of kingship. As seen in Figure 3 below, there was substantial iconographic influence from Egypt (perhaps by way of Phoenicia), most evident in the Egyptian style winged sun-disk and ankhs in the royal seal of Hezekiah.¹⁴



Fig. 2 Clay bulla with seal impression of King Hezekiah (8th-7th century BCE). Recovered in the Ophel excavations under the direction of Eilat Mazar. Photo adapted from the Madain Project Website, https://madainproject.com/seal_of_hezekiah#gallery-3. © Madain Project 2017–2021.

¹⁴ Keel and Uehlinger, *Jahwe und die Sonnengottheit*.

Despite the predominant metaphor of Yahweh's divine kingship over the people of Israel, including his exclusive role as its lawgiver, there are traces of royal judicial ideology embedded in some biblical texts. Where it does appear, it looks much like the royal judicial ideology of Israel's neighbors, with certain features that mark it as distinctively Israelite—or at least West Semitic. There remains little doubt that the ideas and literature of Israel and Judah's imperial overlords exerted a certain level of influence over biblical authors. Yet, foreign influence cannot account for any and all similarities, as the solarization of human lawgivers and divine attributes of the human king were likely traditional motifs in the royal ideology in ancient Israel and Judah.

5 Conclusion

Beginning with the legal literature of the late third millennium BCE, lawgiving was compared to and equated with the activities of the gods. These metaphors worked in two directions: (i) human rulers embodied or emulated gods of justice through the act of lawgiving, and (ii) various deities assumed or even personified the administrative functions of human lawgivers. This conceptual traditum first appeared in Gudea of Lagaš's inscriptions, who compared the judicial prerogatives of his office with the role of Utu in maintaining social and cosmic order. King Šulgi of Ur adopted Gudea's judicial ideology for his own purposes of political image building, which played an important role in the deification of the king in his royal inscriptions and hymns. Scholars have long noted how Ur III scribes relied on the Gilgameš mythic tradition to explain and locate Šulgi in a divine hierarchy, but none have noticed how assuming the identity of Ištarān over his political domain also factored into this ideological project. After the fall of Ur, this political tradition survived in the second millennium states of Isin and Larsa,

whose model of kingship emulated that of the kings of Ur—as part of their claim as the legitimate successors to the last Sumerian dynasty.

The increased significance of Šamaš in the OB pantheon meant that solar imagery became the primary metaphor equating the king's judicial activities with the gods. Through the promulgation of law collections, the enactment of *mīšarum*-edicts, and judicial rites during coronation ceremonies, Mesopotamian kings assumed the judicial and solar identity of the sun god within their realms. The abundant documentation from this period demonstrates not only how the metaphor of the king as the sun god was communicated through literary and performative media, but also how the population cognitively processed this metaphor: they appealed to the king's divinity in their letters and used royal names as the theophoric element of their own. By coordinating royal inscriptions and OB letters, I have shown how the concept, THE KING IS A SUN GOD, was the central metaphor in a cognitive network that influenced discourse between the king and his subjects in legal contexts. Babylonian and Assyrian kings of the late second and early first millennia BCE continued to identify themselves with the sun god, though the epithets and titles become highly formulaic and exhibit few signs that these kings actively equated their judicial prerogatives with those of the gods as had their counterparts in the OB period. Instead, Assyrian and Babylonian scribes began to speculate about the human king as the physical embodiment the sun god in new ways: the king was a living re-presentation (*šalmu*) of the sun god, and as such, contained some component of his divine essence as long as he held office.

The ability to render just verdicts and proclaim equitable rules was occasionally understood as semi-divine. For the Mesopotamians and the biblical authors, this was a divine gift passed from various deities to mortal beings, which manifested as a divine-like wisdom of human kings. As mortal men,

human kings could embody the judicial role of the sun god within their political domains for a time, but they too eventually died. Near Eastern scribes dealt with this obvious incompatibility in different ways. In the OB period, the sun god was equated with *the office of kingship*, rather than any individual king. As a metaphor for the setting and rising of the sun god, the death of a king and the coronation of his successor was an important moment to exercise royal judicial authority. Later Mesopotamian scribes would describe the corporeal form of the human king as a living representation of the sun god, on analogy with cultic images installed in temples that were thought to possess some aspect of divine essence. Biblical authors seem similarly unsure of how to equate the judicial aptitude of human kings with God's wisdom: Solomon is said to possess the "wisdom of God" (חכמת אלהים בקרבו [1 Kgs 3:28]), whereas David's wisdom was merely that of a "messenger of God" (ואדני חכם כחכמת מלאך האלהים [2 Sam 14:20]). Despite the similarities across Mesopotamian and biblical literature, it is clear that there were internal developments and debates within these distinct cultural traditions.

The depiction of Yahweh giving Israel its civil and cultic law at a historical moment in Israel's formative past is without any parallel in cuneiform literature. However, the divine nature of lawgiving and the semi-divine status of lawgivers was deeply rooted in the symbols of justice and judicial administration throughout all periods of ancient Near Eastern literature. Through a diachronic survey of legal and nonlegal texts, this study revealed the various ways that scribes equated human rulers with the gods, specifically in the context of lawgiving. Cognitive metaphor theory filled out this analysis by examining the limited evidence for how ancient audiences received and processed this metaphor: revealing that they understood royal judicial ideology as a claim to divine or semi-divine status. These results broaden the scope for how scholars approach the topic of divine kingship in the ancient Near

East, revealing more nuanced ways that ancient scribes could bring their royal patrons in proximity with the gods and distinguish them from other human beings.