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I The Old Testament

I.1 THE FIRST SUPERNATURAL SATAN IN THE HEBREW BIBLE: THE ANGEL OF YAHWEH AND A TALKING ASS

It may come as a surprise to some of the readers of this book that there is no devil, Devil, or DEVIL in the Book of Genesis. The interpretation of the Serpent in the Garden of Eden as the Devil is one of those retro-fittings of past data with later ideas that I noted in my Introduction. Later on, we will see some of the ways in which this transformation occurred. When we look at the beginning of Genesis with unblinkered eyes, we see that there is no creation or fall of Angels, but only a very clever talking Serpent (let's give him a capital letter, however, because he is clearly unique).

At the end of the account of Adam and Eve, however, we do hear that "Cherubim" are placed to the east of Eden, with a flaming sword between them, to block the way to the Tree of Life. But these Cherubim seem very lifeless, and perhaps only Sphinx-like statues are meant. When Cherubim are alive, as in the Book of Ezekiel, they are not Angels but rather work-animals of the Heavenly world, like the horses that pull celestial chariots and serve as mounts for Angels.

Further on in Genesis, before the story of Noah gets going, we are told of Sons of God who mated with Human women and produced the heroes of old (Gen. 6.1-4). In later literature, as we will see, these Sons of God will be identified as Angels called Watchers, who violated their function of watching or guarding and fell into sin and were punished. This is the only historical fall of Angels mentioned in the Bible. It is recalled again only in the New Testament, in the Epistle of Jude and the Second Epistle of Peter. The first eleven chapters of Genesis, telling of the creation and the Flood, are not referred to in the rest of

the Old Testament, and they have the look of a "prequel," that is, an introduction written later. In other words, another retro-fitting, but one that is actually built into the Bible.

The rest of Genesis, beginning with the story of Abraham, is, on the contrary, constantly recalled in the later books. It is here that the term "Angel" is first used. It is a functional term, *malak* in the original Hebrew, meaning "messenger" or "emissary." It appears in the Greek Septuagint as *angelos* (actually *aggelos*), but in the Latin Vulgate either as *angelus* or *nuntius*, depending on whether the translators interpreted the original text as speaking about a supernatural or a Human emissary.

Angels don't always give an actual message in the Book of Genesis, but it can safely be said that they do always "make a statement." This holds true even of the many Angels who go up and down the ladder in Jacob's vision. Here the Angelic statement is merely to serve as backdrop to Yahweh Himself, who speaks directly to Jacob (Gen. 28.12–16). Multiple messengers appeared earlier in Genesis, when three men visited Abraham to tell him that his wife would conceive a son. At first, it appears that all three are Yahweh, or represent Yahweh (Gen. 18.1–21), but then it seems that one is Yahweh while the other two are identified as "Angels" (18.22; 19.1).

Something similar seems to happen with the mysterious "Messenger of Yahweh" (*Malak YHWH*), who keeps shifting between being a spokesman of Yahweh and being Yahweh Himself. One of his most interesting appearances comes in the Book of Numbers, the fourth book of the Torah, or Pentateuch. Genesis ends with Joseph and his brothers in Egypt, Exodus deals with Moses leading their descendants out of Egypt into the desert of Sinai, while Leviticus and Numbers tell of their life in the desert. In fact, the Hebrew name of the Book of Numbers is "In the Wilderness."

When the Israelites camp on the plain of Moab, across the Jordan from Jericho, the Moabites seek protection against them by proposing to hire a free-lance prophet named Balaam. The Moabite king,

Balak, sends envoys to him, asking him to come back with them to Moab and pronounce a curse on the interlopers. In answer, Balaam responds that he must first consult with God – who is referred to under His main two names of Yahweh and Elohim. He tells them, "I will bring back word to you, just as Yahweh speaks to me." Then Elohim comes to him (presumably in a dream) and asks who these men are. Balaam responds that they are Moabites who wish him to curse the newcomers from Egypt. Elohim tells him not to go, because these people are blessed; Balaam accordingly tells the emissaries that Yahweh has forbidden him to go with them. When the Moabite emissaries come a second time, Balaam says that he will seek further instructions from Yahweh, and this time Elohim tells him to go with them, but to do only what He tells him to do. Thereupon Balaam saddles his jenny (she-ass) and sets out with the Moabites (Num. 22.1–21).

At this point, scholars perceive a different hand at work in the text, but they cannot agree upon its vintage. Some say that the first half of the chapter is by the Elohist (the hypothetical author who favors the name Elohim for God), and from verse 22 onwards it is the account of the older Yahwist (who, of course, usually refers to God as Yahweh), though in fact, as I have just noted, both Divine names appear in the first half of the chapter, and the same is true of the second half. One reason given for assigning the second half to the Yahwist is that it features a talking animal, like the Serpent in Genesis 3 (but, as I noted above, there is good reason to think that the Serpent story with all of the surrounding chapters has nothing to do with the Yahwist, but is a more recently composed part of Genesis).

Another idea, favored by the disciples of Frank Moore Cross at Harvard, is that it's the Yahwist who is writing the first part, and a later writer from the time of the Babylonian Captivity who adds the part about the donkey. This latter author is known by the cumbersome name of "the Deuteronomistic Historian," but we'll call him

"D.H." for short. This would put the composition of the story around 560 BC.¹

At all events, the story continues: "Balaam's departure aroused the wrath of Elohim [or "the wrath of Yahweh" – both readings occur], and the Angel of Yahweh stood in the road as a satan against him" (Num. 22.22). This is a momentous occasion. God has opposed the actions of Men before this, but now, for the first time, He, or His Angelic manifestation, is characterized as an adversary, a satan.

However, the Divine opposition does not go smoothly. As I noted, Balaam is riding on his jenny, and two of his servants are accompanying him on foot. But only the jenny can see the satan standing there with sword in hand. She swerves off the road and goes into the field, whereupon Balaam starts to strike her, turning her back onto the road. By the time that the jenny and Balaam are on the road again, it has narrowed, with vineyard walls on both sides. The jenny swerves again, and scrapes Balaam's foot against one of the walls, and Balaam strikes her again. Then the Angel of Yahweh goes farther ahead and takes his stand in an even narrower part of the road. When the jenny sees that there is no way to turn aside, she simply lies down with Balaam still on top of her. Now Balaam's wrath is fully aroused, and he takes his staff to her in earnest.

Finally, Yahweh gives the jenny the power of speech, and she asks Balaam, "What have I done to you, to make you beat me these three times?" Balaam, showing no surprise at the sudden speaking ability of his favorite ass, replies, "Because you have made a fool of me! If only I had a sword in my hand, I would kill you right now!" The jenny replies, "Am I not your ass, which you have ridden all your

¹ Representing the Harvard school of thought on "D.H." (the Deuteronomistic Historian) is Brian Peckham, *History and Prophecy: The Development of Late Judean Literary Traditions* (AB Reference Library, New York: Doubleday, 1993). A collection of essays on the question is *Those Elusive Deuteronomists*, ed. Linda S. Shearing and Steven L. McKenzie (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999). I recommend also *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 6 vols. (New York, 1992), and the Anchor Bible commentaries on individual books (all published by Doubleday). There are, of course, many other reputable Bible commentaries, which are listed in the AB volumes.

life up to this very day? Have I been in the habit of treating you in this way?" Balaam can only respond, "No."

Then Yahweh revises the strategy of appearing only to the ass and not to Balaam, and so He opens Balaam's eyes. Balaam suddenly sees the Angel of Yahweh standing in the road, sword in hand, and he scrambles off the jenny and prostrates himself on the ground. The Angel says, "Why have you struck your ass these three times? I have come out as a satan, to stop your journey, which is displeasing to me. The ass saw me and turned away from me three times and saved your life. If she had not done so, I would have killed you and let her live."

Balaam responds, "I have sinned – but it was only because I didn't know that you were standing there to meet me. So if it displeases you, I will go back home."

The Angel of Yahweh replies, "No, that's all right, go with the men, but speak only what I tell you to say."

So Balaam continues on with the emissaries of King Balak, but his encounters with the Divine now are not with the Angel of Yahweh, but, as before, with Elohim or Yahweh Himself.

It is hard to avoid seeing humor in this episode, even though there seems to be little place for humor in the rest of the Bible. My retelling of the story has highlighted the amusing element, perhaps, but Biblical exegetes are generally agreed that it is there. The OAB commentators even see a touch of humor later on, when King Balak says to Balaam, "What have you done to me? I brought you to curse my enemies, but now you have done nothing but bless them!" and especially in Balaam's response: "Must I not take care to say what Yahweh puts into my mouth?" (23.11–12).

If it is D.H. who has intervened here, his use of "satan" is paralleled in other writings that have been attributed to him, specifically, the Books of Samuel and Kings. When David is in the service of the Philistines, the Philistines fear that he will return to the Israelites and become a satan to them (1 Sam. 29.4). Later, when he takes over as king, David rebukes some of his followers for acting like a satan to him. They do this by urging him to put Shimei to death rather than

forgive his offenses against him (2 Sam. 19.22). When Solomon takes over as king, he rejoices that there is no satan against him (1 Kings 5.4). But later on, we are told, Yahweh becomes angry with Solomon because of his sins and raises up a satan against him in the person of Hadad the Edomite, and then Elohim raises up another satan against him, this time Rezon son of Eliada (1 Kings 11.14–25).

But when the same author (if we concede that it is the same) tells of a non-Human opponent of King Saul, he does not use the term “satan” but rather refers to him as a “Troubling Spirit.” We read, “Now the Spirit of Yahweh departed from Saul, and a Troubling Spirit from Yahweh tormented him.” Again: “Whenever the Troubling Spirit from Elohim came upon Saul, David took the lyre and played it with his hand, and Saul would be relieved and feel better, and the Troubling Spirit would depart from him” (1 Sam. 16.14–23).

What I call here a “troubling” Spirit is usually called “evil,” but I dislike the word “evil” on general grounds, because it has been so infused with later philosophizing (more retro-fitting) that it suggests a fathomless iniquity. Even though “evil” is an adjective, like “good,” and “yellow,” and, as we all know, adjectives have no existence except in a subject, we turn “evil” into a noun, and then we make it an abstraction (“all evil”) and then a personification of “Evil,” which in turn often changes into a real person. And guess who the real person is? None other than Satan. The existence of evil is in effect taken as a self-contained argument that there must be a Principle of Evil in the person of a person, to counterbalance the Supreme Good, God. Moreover, to use “evil” in the present context, referring to the Spirit who performs Divine missions against King Saul, is especially inappropriate, since it attributes iniquity to God Himself.

We will discuss this subject again, in connection with the title “the Evil One” as a name for Satan, in the chapter on the Gospels, specifically on Matthew (**chap. 4.2**).

In another passage of the First Book of Kings, D.H. reports the vision of the prophet Micaiah concerning yet another non-Human opponent, this time of Ahab. (Remember the story of Ahab? After

becoming king of Israel he married the foreigner Jezebel, who introduced the worship of Baal, and together Ahab and Jezebel caused all sorts of trouble.) Once again, “satan” is avoided in favor of “Spirit.” D.H. gives these words to Micaiah:

Hear the word of Yahweh: I saw Yahweh sitting on His throne, with all the Host of Heaven standing beside Him to the right and to the left of Him.

And Yahweh said, “Who will entice Ahab, so that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-Gilead?”

Then one said one thing, and another said another, until a Spirit came forward and stood before Yahweh.

He said, “I will entice him.”

“How?” Yahweh asked him.

He replied, “I will go out and be a Lying Spirit in the mouth of all his Prophets.”

Then Yahweh said, “You are to entice him, and you shall succeed. Go out and do it.”

Micaiah concludes, “So you see, Yahweh has put a Lying Spirit in the mouth of all these your Prophets. Yahweh has decreed disaster for you.” Ahab’s response to this alleged revelation of the Divine scheme is to slap Micaiah on the face and ask, “Which way did the Spirit of Yahweh pass from me to speak to you?” This was apparently meant as an unanswerable come-back, but Micaiah has a response: “You will find out” (1 Kings 22. 19–25).

Another noteworthy passage of D.H. is his account of the sons of Eli, whom he calls “sons of Belial” (1 Sam. 2.12). Belial is the personification of Perdition, that is, the total loss that comes with death, and it is found used in this sense a couple of dozen times in the Old Testament. Later, the term is used in ways that has made it possible to interpret it as a synonym of Satan (see **chap. 2.2–3**, and **chap. 3.3**).

One final example. The Book of Numbers is so called because at the beginning Yahweh orders Moses to take a census of the Israelites. But in an isolated story at the end of the Second Book of Samuel

(chapter 24), Yahweh arranges another census to be taken by David, but He holds him blameworthy for it. First we read, "Again, the Anger of Yahweh was kindled against Israel, and He incited David against them, saying, 'Go, count the people of Israel and Judah'" (2 Sam. 24.1). After he does so, David says to Yahweh, "I have sinned greatly in what I have done. But now, O Yahweh, I pray you, take away the guilt of your servant; for I have done very foolishly" (2 Sam. 24.10).

Yahweh, through the mediation of the prophet Gad, offers David three choices of punishment: three years of famine, three months of defeat by his enemies, or three days of pestilence. David chooses the last option, and Yahweh sends plague on Israel, killing 70,000 people by the hand of an Angel. But when the Angel is about to attack Jerusalem, Yahweh relents and says to him: "It is enough; now stay your hand" (2 Sam. 24.16). The Destroying Angel is now identified as the Angel of Yahweh. David sees him near the threshing-floor of Araunah the Jebusite, and he begs Yahweh to spare his sheep, since he alone has sinned, and to let His hand be against him alone. Thereupon, following instructions from Gad, David buys the threshing-floor and offers holocausts and sacrifices of well-being. Yahweh accepts his supplication and the plague is averted (2 Sam. 24.25).

This is a very odd story, and it was found so by the author of Chronicles, who, as we will see, relieves Yahweh of the charge of "entrapment" by supplying a satan – or Satan – to instigate the census (1 Chron. 21.1). But he keeps the sword-bearing Destroying Angel, who could just as easily be called a satan as the Angel of Yahweh described above, who comes with a sword as a satan against Balaam.

So far we have seen that in the Old Testament the term *malak* or *angelos* (emissary) can be used of both Human and supra-Human figures, and the same is true of another common word, *satan* (adversary). We found only one case in which a supra-Human figure was called both angel and satan, namely the just-mentioned Angel of Yahweh who comes as a satan against Balaam. Other such supra-Human figures, specifically the Troubling Spirit who afflicts Saul and the Lying Spirit who deceives Ahab, could well have been called Angels and

satans, but they are not. In the next section, we will see a *satan* who is not called an Angel but (by implication) a Son of God.

I.2 A SON OF ELOHIM AS A SATAN: THE SPY AND TESTER OF THE BOOK OF JOB

The Book of Job is a mystery. It does not deal with the history of Israel, and its form is unusual. It begins with a prose Prologue of two chapters, explaining how Job came to be in his unfortunate situation, followed by a long versified debate between the afflicted Job and various interlocutors, beginning in chapter 3 and continuing to the end. But it is possible that the Prologue was added later, constituting therefore a prequel.

Most authorities consider the book, or at least the prose framework, to have been written after the return of the Israelites from the Babylonian Exile in 537 BC; others place it before the Exile (that is, before 597 or 587 BC), while still others place it during the Exile. A recent theory (again, out of Harvard²) theorizes that it is by someone who is responding to the view of D.H. We can say at least that the author of the Prologue seems to be familiar with the "satans" that we have tentatively assigned to D.H.

The book starts out, after briefly introducing us to Job and his family, like this:

One day Sons of God [*Bene ha-Elohim*] came to present themselves before Yahweh, and the satan [*ha-satan*] also came among them. Yahweh said to the satan, "Where have you come from?" The satan answered Yahweh, "From going to and fro on the Earth, and from walking up and down on it." Yahweh said to the satan, "Have you considered My servant Job?" (Job 1.6–8)

And so on. We all know what follows. Yahweh praises Job as a man who fears God and turns away from all that is bad. The satan advises Yahweh to test him by stretching out His hand against him. Yahweh

² I refer to Peckham, *History and Prophecy*, again.

gives the satan power over all his goods, and the next thing we know, fire from God destroys Job's servants and sheep, and other horrible disasters occur, but Job still blesses Yahweh.

Then, in chapter 2, there is an almost exact repetition of the text we have just quoted: "One day Sons of God came to present themselves before Yahweh, and the satan also came among them to present himself before Yahweh." Again Yahweh asks him where he has come from, and again the satan gives the same answer: patrolling the Earth. Once again Yahweh asks him, "Have you considered My servant Job?" Yahweh goes on to praise him as before, but this time He adds, "He still persists in his integrity, although you incited Me against him, to destroy him for no reason" (Job 2.3). The satan maintains that he needs more testing, and Yahweh agrees.

There is no follow-up of this Heavenly scene at the end of the book, and no hint of what the other Sons of God do when they present themselves before Yahweh. And we must remember that the actions of Yahweh and the satan have been hidden from Job and the other Humans of the story.

The first sentence of this episode can be paraphrased to say, "One of the Sons of God who served as a satan came before Yahweh," or, "One of the satans among the Sons of God reported to Yahweh." We can speculate that this characterization is simply an extension of the sort of language and ideas that we saw in previous books of the Bible. But it may be that the author of the prose prologue took inspiration from the poetic dialogues that he was prefacing.

First, let's look at the discourses of one of Job's so-called friends, Eliphaz the Temanite. He notes that God charges even His Angels with error (4.18) – something that we have seen Yahweh do with the satan, telling him that he was mistaken about Job. Later on, Eliphaz says, "God puts no trust even in his Sons of God, and the Heavens are not clean in his sight" (15.15). He also tells Job, "Call now; is there anyone who will answer you? To which of the Sons of God will you turn?" (5.1), as if he can surely find no hope of aid from Angels.

Job eventually responds: "Even now, in fact, my witness is in Heaven, and he that vouches for me is on high" (16.19). As we have seen, Yahweh Himself was keeping tabs on Job – and Job resents it and calls God, "you Watcher of Humanity" (7.20). But Job may be referring to a Guardian Angel or Angelic spokesman of some kind. (If Job does have a Guardian Angel, he has not been able to guard him from the satan-inflicted disasters.)

The Guardian-Angel idea seems to be confirmed by the fourth friend, Elihu the Buzzite (Job comes from the land of Uz and Elihu from the land of Buz: Uz and Buz were nephews of Abraham). Elihu says that, if a person should be in dire straits and close to dying and to going into the Abyss of Sheol, "if there should be for him an Angel, a mediator, one of a thousand," who would declare him upright and find a ransom for him, God may repay him for his righteousness and bring him back from the Abyss (33.22–30).

Finally, Yahweh Himself responds, and, in describing His creation of the World, He says that, at that time, "the Morning Stars sang together and all the Sons of God shouted for joy" (38.7). (We will hear about another *the* Morning Star later.)

So, there you have the Book of Job's indications of the various functions performed by Angels, ranging from attendants at the Court of Yahweh, singers and applauders, guardians, observers, testers, and even agents of entrapment; and there is also a hint or two that some of the Angels have sinned or have somehow offended God.

Where did the satan figure come from? We will entertain some speculations about his origin in the next section.

I.3 A CELESTIAL SATAN AS ACCUSER: THE TRIAL OF JOSHUA THE HIGH PRIEST IN THE BOOK OF ZECHARIAH

The next appearance of a supernatural satan in the Hebrew Scriptures comes just after the Exile, back in Jerusalem, among the prophecies of Zechariah.

The book begins with a vision, dated very precisely to the middle of February of the year 519 BC. Zechariah sees the vision, and

converses with an Angel who explains it to him, but it is still rather confusing, like a dream. It is night-time, and Zechariah sees a man who is both standing among the myrtle trees of the glen and sitting astride a red horse, and behind him are other horses, red, sorrel, and white. "What are these?" asks Zechariah, and the Angel says, "I will explain."

But then the man standing in the myrtles speaks, and says: "They are those whom Yahweh has sent to patrol the World." Presumably he is speaking of the riders of the horses, or of charioteers who are pulled by the horses.³ He is saying, in effect, that they have the same function that was being filled by the satan of the Book of Job before making his reports to the Court of Heaven.

The "cavalry" then reports to the man standing among the myrtles, who turns out to be the Angel of Yahweh. They say, "We have patrolled the Earth, and, as you may see, the whole Earth is at peace and rest." Then the Angel of Yahweh actually addresses Yahweh Himself, as Ruler of the Hosts – the Sabaoth – of Heaven: "Yahweh Sabaoth, how long will you withhold mercy from Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, with which you have been angry these seventy years?" Yahweh then replies with consoling words to the Angel who was speaking with Zechariah, and this Angel passes on to Zechariah the words of Yahweh Sabaoth: "I feel jealous love for Jerusalem and Zion, but bitter anger against the proud Nations." He ends by saying that He will once more make Jerusalem His own (Zech. 1.7–17).

In another vision, Zechariah sees a man set on measuring the boundaries of Jerusalem, and the Angel who is speaking with the prophet comes forward, and another Angel comes out to meet him, with instructions to the man not to measure Jerusalem; there is no need, for Yahweh will be a wall of fire around it (Zech. 2.1–5).

³ In a later vision, in chapter 6, he sees four chariots, pulled by red, black, white, and piebald horses, respectively, and once again, no riders are mentioned; they represent the four winds of Heaven, or have jurisdiction over the four winds of North, East, West, and South. The steeds are ordered to patrol the Earth.

In the next vision, "he" – presumably the prophet's Angelic interlocutor – shows him the High Priest Joshua in a court of justice, perhaps in the very Court of Heaven, or at the Gate of Heaven. Joshua stands before the Angel of Yahweh, and at the priest's right side is the satan, exercising the function of accuser. But before we hear any accusation from the satan, Zechariah says that "Yahweh" [the text should say, "the Angel of Yahweh"] intervenes, saying to the satan, "May Yahweh rebuke you, O satan! May Yahweh who has made Jerusalem His own rebuke you! Is not this man a brand snatched from the fire?" (Zech. 3.1–2).

What follows indicates not so much that the satan's charges of wrongdoing have been rejected, but rather that they have been admitted and absolved. Joshua had come to Court dressed in filthy clothes, which indicated that he was in a state of mourning over a national calamity and also that he was confessing guilt and repentance because of it. The Angel of Yahweh orders his clothes to be removed and replaced with robes of state. He proclaims, "You see, I have taken your iniquity and guilt away from you." He adds, "Thus says Yahweh Sabaoth: 'If you will walk in My ways and keep My requirements, then you shall rule My House and have charge of My Courts, and I will give you the right of access among those who are standing here'" (Zech. 3.3–7). In other words, Joshua will be able to communicate with the Court of Heaven. Whether this will involve any further dealings with the satan is not clear.

Back in 1939 Adolphe Lods⁴ analyzed both the Zechariah satan and the Job satan with an eye to seeing whether they resemble government ministers in any of the surrounding kingdoms or supernatural figures in the Mid-Eastern religions. He concluded negatively concerning the sort of attorney general or official prosecutor seemingly suggested by Zechariah. There is no accusing or prosecuting functionary evident in terrestrial or celestial contexts, either elsewhere in

⁴ Adolphe Lods, "Les origines de la figure de satan: ses fonctions a la cour céleste," *Mélanges syriens offerts a M. René Dussaud*, 2 vols. (Paris: Geuthner, 1939) 2:649–60.

the Hebrew Bible or in any surviving historical or literary religious and political contexts. Admittedly, in the Zoroastrian world-view, there is a "triage" that takes place after Human Beings die, in which they are classified as good or bad, but there is no trial or even pronouncement of sentence. The good simply make it over the bridge to Heaven, and the bad tumble down to Hell. Only later does a tribunal of three judges appear.

As for the satan of the Book of Job, however, Lods finds that he resembles a widespread figure in the Human governments of the time, namely the official inspector and informer employed by the central authorities. For instance, in Egypt, we hear of "the Two Eyes of the King in Upper Egypt" and "the Two Ears of the King in Lower Egypt." But it is particularly in the Persian kingdom that the "Eyes and Ears of the King" attracted notice. Xenophon speaks of these functionaries in his *Cyropedia* (8.6.16), and Lods surmises that Zechariah applies this concept not only in his earlier vision of the four horsemen, as I suggested above, but also and especially in another vision of Seven Lamps, which are the "Seven Eyes of Yahweh that range through the whole Earth" (Zech. 4.10). We can see a reflection of this in the New Testament as well, in the Lamb of the Apocalypse, who has seven horns and seven eyes, "which are the Seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth" (Rev. 5.6).

Xenophon reported on the Persian system of regional inspectors under Cyrus the Great, who captured Babylon in 539 BC and allowed the Jews to return to Israel in the following year. But the organization of the inspecting network became especially well developed under Cyrus's powerful successor, Darius I, who came to power in 522 and died in 486 BC. Zechariah's vision of the satan accusing the high priest should not be taken, therefore, as implying a permanent prosecutor but rather the activity of one of the field-inspectors who returns to court to make occasional accusations as his "research" warrants. This would reflect the situation in Jerusalem early in Darius's reign, and, if the author of the Prologue to Job was influenced by Darius's organization of government agents, it follows that he was writing after

Zechariah. Lods is inclined to date him accordingly, while admitting other possibilities (as noted above, the date of the whole of Job is still much debated).

We remember (see the Introduction) that the chief religion of the Persians was that of Zoroaster, but the government policy was one of religious toleration, and there was never any attempt to impose the Mazdean forms of worship upon conquered peoples, nor has any Biblical scholar or historian made bold to scent a whiff of the evil Angra Mainyu in either of the satans we have been discussing here, Job's persecutor or Joshua's accuser.

In the case of Job, we observe that the satan not only reports on earthly matters but also serves as the executor (*exécutor* or *exécutor*) of the approved action. But it is Yahweh who makes the decisions. The satan advises extreme measures and Yahweh approves them, even though He is convinced that they constitute uncalled-for harassment of a law-abiding citizen.

Another "Eye of the Heavenly King" who both observes and executes, or at least commands execution, is to be seen in the Book of Daniel, in a section that may come from the Persian period (539–333 BC) or from the following period (Early Hellenistic, 333–168 BC). In the dream of Nebuchadnezzar, which he reports to Daniel: "There was a Watcher, a Holy One, coming down from Heaven," who ordered the great tree that he saw in his vision to be cut down. Then the "it" (the tree) becomes a "he" (Nebuchadnezzar himself) in the Watcher's proclamation: "Let his mind be changed from that of a Human, and let the mind of an animal be given to him." The Watcher concludes: "Such is the sentence proclaimed by the Watchers, the verdict announced by the Holy Ones, so that every living thing may learn that the Most High rules over Human sovereignty" (Dan. 4.13–17). We noted above that later Watchers will neglect their duties and be punished, but without being characterized as satans, as we shall see in the so-called Inter-Testamental Period (**chap. 2.1–2**).

To sum up, the satan of Job 1–2, the satan of Zechariah 3, the Angelic patrolers of Zechariah 1, and the Watchers of Daniel 4 all seem

to function as Eyes of the King: they are on the look-out for both good and bad behavior and they report everything back to Divine headquarters. If we may generalize from these data, along with the episode of the Angel of Yahweh of Numbers 22, and include the Troubling Spirit of 1 Sam. 16 and the Lying Spirit of 1 Kings 22, we should be able to come up with a summary for the Department of Angelic Resources, which would run something like this:

Job Description of Official Satans. Patrol the Earth, observe Human behavior, test ostensible virtue by various means. Be prepared, upon consultation with High Command, to instigate preventative or punitive measures against sinful actions. Function as accusers in tribunal, and announce verdicts against culprits.

I.4 REVISIONS AND TRANSLATIONS: SATAN AND SATANS, DEVIL AND DEVILS

"*satan* stood up against Israel and incited David to count the people" (1 Chron. 21.1). This is how the author of the Book of Chronicles renders the passage in 2 Samuel about "the Anger of Yahweh" making David take a census.

What does he mean?

To back up a bit, let me explain that the Book of Chronicles (later divided into two books) originally formed the conclusion to the Hebrew Scriptures, but in the Greek Septuagint it is placed much earlier, after the Books of Samuel and Kings, and given the title of *Paralipomena*, that is, "Left-overs [Concerning the Kings of Judah]." The work is actually in large part an abridgment of Samuel and Kings, and it may have been written not long after those books were first compiled, still in the sixth century, or, alternatively, as much as 300 or 350 years later, in the second century BC.

The Chronicler omits the two episodes in the Books of Samuel in which the word *satan* is associated with David, and he also eliminates the three uses of the term in connection with Solomon in the First Book of Kings (he presents Solomon as completely

sinless, thereby eliminating the need for God to raise satans against him). But now, in the story of David and the census, when 2 Samuel only speaks of Yahweh's Anger, the Chronicler uses the word *satan* instead.

Is the Chronicler thinking of a Human *satan*, like the satans of 1-2 Samuel and 1 Kings? There are also Human satans in Psalm 109: this Psalm is a typical complaint of a man against his enemies; he says that they have conspired to appoint a wicked man as a *satan* against him (v. 6). May these and other satans be punished by Yahweh, he says (v. 20), and likewise all who "*satanize*" against him (v. 29).

Or does the Chronicler refer to a supernatural *satan*, like the "Son of God" who put pressure upon Job to test his fidelity to Yahweh under adverse conditions?

Or is it *Satan*? That is, is this adversary not only "a" *satan* like the one who persecuted Job, but one who has now taken the office of adversary to himself, or been appointed to this office, and goes by the proper name of *Satan*? Almost all modern translators and interpreters of this passage say "yes" to this interpretation.

But let's not be hasty and affirm any of the possible answers to our question before consulting one source of great authority. Let us ask the legendary seventy ancient Jews of Alexandria what their opinion is. I refer to the *Septuaginta translatōres*, the alleged group-translators of the Septuagint, who rendered Chronicles into Greek, perhaps 300 years after it was written, or perhaps only a few years after it was written – depending on *when* it was in fact written, and when this part of the Septuagint was translated (which could be as late as the first century BC).

It turns out that they translated *satan* here simply as *diabolos*. That means that they took it *not* as a proper name, but as a common word, meaning, "a devil," "an adversary." (Recall what I said in the Introduction, where I gave this example: the definite article in Greek indicates a proper name; no article indicates a common noun – usually!)

The Septuagint team used another term for the satans of Samuel, namely *epiboulos*, a word that usually means "plotter" (1 Sam. 29.4; 2 Sam. 19.22), and also once in Kings (1 Kings 5.4). However, for Hadad and Rezon they left the Hebrew term untranslated and simply said *satan* (1 Kings 11.14, 23), but when they came to the second passage in which the Hebrew text called Rezon a *satan* (v. 25), they substituted another term for opponent, namely, *antikeimenos*.

Now let's see what the Greek translators did in the celestial sphere, in the three passages in which a supra-Human *satan* appears: namely, Numbers, Job, and Zechariah.

In Numbers, the Septuagint scholars translated "the Angel of Yahweh" as "the Angel of the Lord," as usual, but they took away from him the epithet of "*satan*" during his encounter with Balaam. Instead, they provided him with a verb and a noun of opposition (*endiaballein* and *diabole*).

In Job, however, they did find a supernatural and "proper" Satan in the Son of God who patrols the Earth and functions as the tempter of Job. In their translation he is consistently called *ho Diabolos*, "DEVIL." The same person, DEVIL, is to be seen as the celestial prosecutor in the Book of Zechariah, whereas in the Hebrew of Zechariah (as in the Hebrew Job) there is only "a *satan*." Furthermore, DEVIL in Zechariah is accusing the High Priest *Jesus* – since "Jesus" is the Greek version of Joshua. We have here a forecast of the Epistle to the Hebrews in the New Testament. This Epistle says that Jesus through his death destroyed DEVIL, who had control over Death (Hebr. 2.14), and thereby Jesus was constituted as our High Priest at the Throne of God (Hebr. 8.1) (chap. 5.3).

Elsewhere in the Greek Bible we find *diabolos* used of a Human adversary, namely in the Book of Esther: "Haman the devil" (8.1, cf. 7.6). This story comes from the Early Hellenistic Period, around 300 BC. It is set in the Persian empire of Xerxes I, hotbed of Zoroastrianism, but there is no sign of the evil Ahriman (Angra Mainyu). Later on, in the First Book of Maccabees, after the forces of Antiochus took

over Jerusalem, the city itself became "a troublesome devil" (*diabolos poneros*) to Israel (1 Macc. 1.36).

Finally, in the Book of Wisdom (ca. 50 BC), we are told that Death first entered the World through the envy of "a devil" (2.24). Who is this devil? As we will see in due course (chap. 3.4), there is more than one candidate, apart from *the Devil*, that is, DEVIL.

Let us sum up what we have seen in this first chapter. The Hebrew word *satan* is a common noun meaning "adversary." In the Old Testament we find it applied in various ways to Human opponents, and, in three cases, to supra-Human or Angelic figures. First, there is the Angel of Yahweh who comes as a *satan* against Balaam and his ass (Numbers 22). Then there is one of the Sons of God who acts as a *satan* against Job (Job 1–2). And, finally, there is the *satan* who accuses the High Priest Joshua (Zechariah 3). A fourth possible instance is the *satan* who incites David to take a census, where the term could perhaps be a proper name, Satan (1 Chronicles 21). All four of these passages were probably composed in the sixth century before Christ.

The Jews who translated the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek – the Septuagint – perhaps some three centuries later (say, around 200 BC) sometimes saw a deceitful element in the word *satan*, and so translated it as *epiboulos*, "plotter." Or they left it alone, as "a *satan*." But at other times they translated it more directly as *diabolos*, "opponent." They avoided calling the Angel of Yahweh a *diabolos* in the story of Balaam. But they decided that it was not Satan who incited David to sin, but only "a *satan*," that is, "a devil," doubtless intending a merely Human adversary. However, they manifest a belief that one of God's Angels not only acted as a *satan*, but was actually named Satan, which they rendered in Greek as *ho Diabolos*, DEVIL in the Books of Job and Zechariah.

We have thus witnessed the Birth of Satan. And there is no need to think that any Zoroastrian midwifery was involved in the emergence of this singular character.