The Heart made Heavy, the Heart made Bold and the Heart made Strong: Re-examining the "Hardened Heart" Motif in the Mighty Acts Narrative (Ex. 7:8-11:10).

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Contents

Abbreviations 3
Introduction 4
Source-Critical Study of the Mighty Acts Narrative 6
Identifying the Patterns by means of Introductory Phrases 9
Evidence for the Three Patterns 12
The Nature and Function of the Mighty Acts as Signs/Wonders or Plagues 21
The "Hardened" Heart Motif 26
Redaction Criticism: Analysis of the Theology of Each Pattern 31
Word Study: כבד 39
Word Study: חזק 45
חזק in the Hebrew Bible 45
חזק in the Penta/Hexateuch 51
חזק in Exodus 55
חזק in the Mighty Acts 58
Theological preconceptions on glossing ו 65
Conclusion 68
Afterword: Egyptian Idioms Regarding the "Hardness of Heart" 71
Works Cited 73

Abbreviations

This dissertation uses the following abbreviations, in addition to those detailed in the *SBL Handbook of Style*:

CHALOT	A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament

Introduction

The Problem: Is Pharaoh simply a Theological Ninepin? Is God unjust?

The Mighty Acts narrative in Exodus presents the reader with a difficult question: why is it that God commands Pharaoh to let his people go and yet hardens his heart in order to prevent Pharaoh doing so? Coover-Cox asks, "when the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart and used force against him, was the Lord both unjust and inept?"[1] If the Lord wields control over the human "control centre"[2] in the Exodus narrative then Pharaoh is, as Davies colourfully describes, a "theological ninepin" set up only to be knocked down again.[3] This raises unsettling questions of the Lord's justness in his restrictive, even despotic,[4] hold over Pharaoh's decisions – decisions which bring Pharaoh into opposition with the Lord. Especially of concern are the Mighty Acts[5] which appear to act as punishments laid upon Pharaoh for actions over which he had no control.

If Gunn is correct when he says, "Pharaoh's destruction is not self-destruction, for Pharaoh is no longer a "self". Yahweh has split his mind, stolen his will,"[6] then we are dealing with a cruel God who prolongs the suffering of his own people, inflicts incredible suffering on the Egyptians and who curses Pharaoh for actions which God himself is forcing

[1] Dorian G. Coover-Cox, "The Hardening of Pharaoh's Heart in Its Literary and Cultural Contexts," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 163 (2006): 292-311, 294.
[2] In the Hebrew imagination, the heart is not the seat of emotion but instead encompasses all of a human being, cognitive, rational and affective. See: Carol Meyers, *Exodus*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 71 and Nahum M. Sarna, *Exploring Exodus: The Origins of Biblical Israel*, (New York: Schocken Books, 1996), 64.
[3] G. Henton Davies, *Exodus*, (London: SCM Press, 1967), 91.
[4] Thomas B. Dozeman, *God at War: Power in the Exodus Tradition*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 5.
[5] I have chosen not to refer primarily to the events of the narrative as plagues (though this will sometimes be appropriate). Driver has effectively demonstrated the prominence of descriptions of the events as "signs" or "wonders" over "blows" or "strikes" in S. R. Driver, *The Book of Exodus*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1929), xii. Furthermore, Meyers has argued in favour of using terminology which does not primarily hold connotations of loss of life in Meyers, *Exodus*, 77. In addition, demonstrations of power, such as the Staff turning into a Snake are included alongside other Acts throughout the narrative (see: Philip J. Hyatt, *Exodus. The New Century Bible Commentary*, (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott Ltd., 1980), 99). In this essay, the sequence of events in Ex. 7:8-11:10 will be called the "Mighty Acts Narrative" so as to incorporate all events recorded by each strata of tradition as well as to avoid the overtly "terrible" connotation of the word plague.
[6] David M. Gunn, "The "Hardening of Pharaoh's Heart": Plot, Character and Theology in Exodus 1-14," in *Art and Meaning: Rhetoric in Biblical Literature*, *JSOTSup*19, ed. D. Clines, D. Gunn & A. Hauser (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1982):72-96, 79.

him to take. Gunn states, "as the narrative develops it becomes clear that God is ultimately the only agent of heart-hardening who matters (the P legacy)."[7] Such an interpretation, that even Pharaoh's own hardness of heart at the beginning of the Mighty Acts narrative is the result of the Lord's actions and not his own, does away with human responsibility and reduces Pharaoh to a puppet being cruelly played with, rather than a despot holding Israel captive.

The reader must either find an alternative explanation to God's apparent unjustness or accept that the presentation of God in the Exodus narrative is one who withholds from Pharaoh the ability to rightly respond to the message of Moses: Let my people go. If the Lord hardens Pharaoh's heart so as to prevent the efficacy of this message, then the negotiations with Pharaoh are a sham wherein the Lord blinds Pharaoh and asks him to see, before cruelly punishing him for his blindness. Naturally, such an interpretation is incredibly uncomfortable. Concerned to show that the Acts narrative is not a sham and that Pharaoh does have agency, Coover-Cox discusses the implications of Moses' "hot anger" at the end of the Mighty Acts (11:8),[8] saying: "since Moses knew about the hardening, his anger, to be rational, must be built on the belief that Pharaoh was still accountable for his attitudes and actions."[9] For Moses to blame Pharaoh means to hold him responsible for his refusal and his obstinacy. It is the aim of this essay to present an understanding of the hardened heart motif that likewise shows Pharaoh to be responsible for his stubborn rejection of God.

Firstly, I will seek to establish three patterns of traditions underlying the Mighty Acts narrative based on recurrence of introductory phrases and other repeated literary motifs. Source-criticism will separate the text into three patterns without reliance on the particular vocabulary of the hardened heart motif. Then, the particular theological understanding of the

[7] Gunn, "Hardening," 79.
[8] Given the number of references to Exodus passages throughout this essay, references will be made without the prefix "Ex." Except when listed alongside other biblical references.
[9] Coover-Cox, "Hardening," 300.

Mighty Acts will be discussed for each pattern: the role of the Lord, Moses and Aaron; the nature of the Mighty Acts as wonders, signs, or plagues; the effectuality of the Acts and the Acts' relation to the state of Pharaoh's heart. To better understand that relationship in each pattern, word studies on the word חזק and כבד (the two principle roots used to describe Pharaoh's heart) will be conducted to argue that a) the two terms are not used synonymously in the Mighty Acts narrative and b) that חזק is used differently in two of the traditions which make up Exodus (to denote confidence/courage in one and a strengthening in the other). Finally, I shall outline the reading of the text which follows from the combination of these three traditions into the Mighty Acts narrative as we have it today, in which Pharaoh makes his heart heavy and dull, and where the Lord acts to both soften Pharaoh's obstinacy and strengthen his heart.

Source-Critical Study of the Mighty Acts Narrative

Römer states that it is difficult "to explain the linguistic deviations, tensions, and contradictions found in the HB without postulating literary growth and a plurality of authors."[10] The Mighty Acts narrative certainly contains those criteria which Boorer identifies as helpful in determining separate sources: "repetitions and doublets;[11] discrepancies or inconsistencies;[12] differences in style, terminology, and/or theological

[10] Thomas Römer, "From the Call of Moses to the Parting of the Sea: Reflections on the Priestly Version of the Exodus Narrative," in *The Book of Exodus: Composition, Reception and Interpretation*, (ed. T. Dozeman et al.; Leiden: Brill, 2014), 121-150, 123.
[11] E.g. the doublet of Mighty Acts involving insects (Gnats, Flies); and possibly of disease (Livestock/Pestilence, Boils).
[12] E.g. whether or not the Nile is turned to blood or all of the water in Egypt; that the livestock are killed by Pestilence and yet some are still alive to be killed by Hail.

perspective;[13] coherence/incoherence within the passage; and coherence or not with the wider context."[14]

Exodus is seen as an exemplar for observing the sophistication and artistry of redaction work[15] and commentators have long highlighted the importance of seeing the Mighty Acts narrative as a strata of traditions in which each layer of development, built upon the former, should be examined by itself, as part of its particular stratum, before being seen as part of its presently existing whole.[16] Noth presents the following analogy: "the only satisfying way of analysing a fabric is to keep firmly in sight the threads of which it is made up and the material of which the threads themselves are composed."[17] Though exegetes have argued over how the threads of Exodus can be separated and in what manner they were interwoven, the fact remains that Exodus is not a homogenous text and that there is value in unpicking the lines of narrative from one another to better understand the theological concerns of each author.

Coats divides the Mighty Acts narrative into two different sources: J and P.[18] Largely following Noth, he identifies the P source as one in which the Acts function as signs which the Egyptian magicians are able to match Moses' actions point for point (rod to snake, water to blood, frogs) then they try but fail (gnats) recognising the superior powers displayed before them as "the finger of God!" (8:19) and finally being so defeated that they are unable to even stand before Moses (boils). Thus the escalation of the Acts results in the magicians'

[13] E.g. the different vocabulary used for the "hardened heart" motif; differing reasons for the Mighty Acts themselves.
[14] Suzanne Boorer, "Source and Redaction Criticism," in *Methods for Exodus* (ed. Thomas B. Dozeman; vol. 1 of *Methods in Biblical Interpretation*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 95-130, 96.
[15] Candida R. Moss & Jeffrey Stackert, "The Devastation of Darkness: Disability in Exodus 10:21-23, 27 and Intensification in the Plagues," *JR* 92 (2012): 362-372, 364.
[16] Driver, *Exodus*, xii.
[17] Martin Noth, *Exodus*,(trans. J. Bowden; London: SCM Press, 1962), 18.
[18] Coats is by no means the only proponent of the separation of the Pentateuch into sources. Baden has compiled a succinct history of the origins of the proposed J and E sources and the Documentary Hypothesis, citing Hupfeld, Wellhausen, Noth, Childs and others as key exponents of various source hypotheses. See: Joel S. Baden, *J, E, and the Redaction of the Pentateuch*, (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 2009), 1-9. Coats follows Noth's designation into P and non-P and agrees that J and E cannot be separated. Childs, Houtman and others maintain that E can be effectively singled out from J and P as a definite source, albeit a fragmented and incomplete one.

recognition of the Lord as God, yet "all but the third [Frogs] note that his [Pharaoh's] heart is hard *(ḥzq)*."[19] Coats' J source, on the other hand, consists of "negotiations or a confession of guilt and plea for intercession,"[20] and the purpose of the Acts is to bring about the release of Israel from Egypt. Where Coats diverges from the Patterns established in this essay is that Pattern 3 is, for him, part of P (Pattern 2).[21]

Levin, on the other hand, splits J from P differently; though he does not recognise the controversial "E" source, he notes that the author of J is an editor or redactor, who supplemented older material and elaborated upon it,[22] rather than combined completed written sources together. He writes: "the combination of formerly independent sources has been an absolute exception within the literary history of the Bible […] if it is applied several times or to more than two sources, the Documentary Hypothesis becomes absurd."[23] It is true that any attempt to be specific about the division of underlying sources will lead one into difficulties and that it is generally best to simply talk about P and non-P sources. However, it is equally important to recognise, as Levin does, that the non-P material is far from homogenous and is in fact made up of different voices, two of which can be identified within the Mighty Acts narrative. Although I will speak of these two distinct Patterns within Levin's "J" source, it is done with caution not to make claims about the nature of these traditions outside of the Mighty Acts narrative itself. To do so presumes more about the supposed "texts" behind the present narrative than can be adequately justified in this paper.

As well as structural and narrative grounds, Coats uses the hardening motif to divide the two sources, with P using חזק to denote the effect on Pharaoh's heart and J using כבד. Coats

[19] George Coats, *Exodus 1*-18, (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 1999), 71.
[20] Coats, *Exodus,* 75.
[21] For Coats, P is found in 7:7, 8-13, 19-20a, 21b-22; 8:1-3, 11aβ-b, 12-15; 9:8-12, 22-23a, 35; 10:12-13a, 20, 21-23, 27; 11:9-10, see: Coats, *Exodus,* 68.
[22] Christoph Levin, "The Pentateuch: A Compilation by Redactors," in *The Formation of the Pentateuch: Bridging the Academic Cultures of Europe, Israel, and North America,* (ed. J. Gertz et al.; vol. 111 of *Forschungen zum Alten Testament* ed. K. Schmid et al.; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 2016): 579-587, 582.
[23] Levin, "Pentateuch," in *Formation of the Pentateuch* (ed. J. Gertz et al.), 584.

makes little of the linguistic distinction, referring to each as simply "hard/hardening,"[24] but where Coats has identified very different literary functions for the Acts it may be worth considering that the hardening motif has differing functions also. As the focus of this essay concerns the nature of the hardening motif within various strata of tradition in the Mighty Acts, I will not separate the Acts based on this particular motif as Coats has done, as this would presume that the motif is best understood by separating it out his way. Instead, in this section, I follow McCarthy in arguing for distinct underlying sources based on "literary criteria which show connections among certain subordinate parts of the present whole and set them off from other parts marked by divergent vocabulary."[25] I shall identify distinct patterns of language, structure and theological considerations present in the Mighty Acts, apart from the hardening motif, in order to later investigate how each of these established patterns discuss Pharaoh's heart. These patterns will be presented by first demonstrating the patterns in introductory phrases to individual scenes in the narrative, and then defending the separation of these patterns from one another by showing how other literary criteria (dialogue, demands, negotiation, the role of Aaron, the Egyptian magicians, designation of Acts as wonders or plagues) also map neatly onto these patterns. Only after these patterns have been established in this way, will the "hardened heart" motif be analysed in relation to those patterns.

Identifying the Patterns by means of Introductory Phrases

There exist a number of ways in which the Lord speaks in order to instigate a new stage of the Mighty Acts narrative, usually with the phrase "The Lord said to Moses," though twice the Lord also includes Aaron in this address (7:8; 9:8). On four occasions, Moses is instructed to "Go to Pharaoh," (7:15; 8:1; 9:1; 10:1) and twice to "Rise early in the morning," (8:20,

[24] Coats, *Exodus*, 71, 75.
[25] Dennis McCarthy, "Plagues and Sea of Reeds: Exodus 5-14." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 85 (1966): 137-158, 138.

9:13). In the later Mighty Acts, Moses is instructed, “Stretch out your hand,” (9:22; 10:12, 21). I identify three patterns of introduction:

Mighty Act	Pattern 1	Pattern 2	Pattern 3
Staff into Snake		The Lord said to Moses and Aaron, “When Pharaoh says to you, “Perform a wonder,” then you shall say to Aaron, “Take your staff and throw it down…”” (7:8-9)	
Water into Blood	The Lord said to Moses, “Pharaoh’s heart is כָּבֵד […] Go to Pharaoh in the morning…” (7:14-15)	The Lord said to Moses, “Say to Aaron, “Take your staff and stretch out your hand…”” (7:19)	
Frogs	The Lord said to Moses, “Go to Pharaoh…” (8:1)	The Lord said to Moses, “Say to Aaron, “Stretch out your hand with your staff…” (8:5)	
Dust into Gnats		The Lord said to Moses, “Say to Aaron, “Stretch out your staff and strike…” (8:16)	
Flies	The Lord said to Moses, “Rise early in the morning and present yourself before Pharaoh …” (8:20)		
Disease on Livestock	The Lord said to Moses, “Go to Pharaoh…” (9:1)		
Soot into Boils		The Lord said to Moses and Aaron, “Take handfuls of soot from the kiln, and let Moses throw it in the air…” (9:8)	
Hail	The Lord said to Moses, “Rise early in the morning and present yourself before Pharaoh…” (9:13)		The Lord said to Moses, “Stretch out your hand towards heaven…” (9:22)
Locusts	The Lord said to Moses, “Go to Pharaoh; for I have הִכְבַּדְתִּי his heart…” (10:1)		The Lord said to Moses, “Stretch out your hand over the land of Egypt…” (10:12)
Darkness			The Lord said to Moses, “Stretch out your hand towards heaven …” (10:21)

In Pattern 1, the Lord always speaks singularly to Moses, with no mention of Aaron at all. The pattern possesses an inclusio in which the heart of Pharaoh is described as already being כָּבֵד in 7:14 and 10:1. Between these two, an alternating pattern is clear between "Go to Pharaoh," (Frogs, Livestock, Locusts) and "Rise early in the morning and present yourself before Pharaoh," (Flies, Hail) with the first Act introducing both motifs with the phrase "Go to Pharaoh in the morning," (Blood). The repetition of these phrases, their regular alternating arrangement and the inclusio structure point towards the six Acts which they correspond to existing as an independent tradition at some point.

A second inclusio can be found in Pattern 2: the Lord speaks to Moses and Aaron in the first and last scenes (7:8; 9:8) and, in every instance in between, we read "The Lord said to Moses, "Say to Aaron…"" (7:19; 8:5; 8:16). Each of these scenes, other than the final episode (Boils), features Aaron performing the Act through the wielding of a staff: a motif not found elsewhere. In Boils, Aaron takes a back seat and Moses steps forward to perform in front of Pharaoh. An analysis of this series of Acts (Snake, Blood, Frogs, Gnats, Boils) reveals a number of other striking similarities which shall be examined in depth later and they are generally identified as belonging to a Priestly source.[26]

Finally in Pattern 3, a miniature inclusio pattern of just three Mighty Acts can be found, where the Lord instructs Moses to stretch out his hand "towards heaven" (9:22), "over the land of Egypt" (10:12) and then "towards heaven" once more (10:21). Despite the relative brevity of the sequence, these three Acts display a continuity between scenes not present in other patterns: the Hail is referenced in the account of the Locusts (10:15) and the same root חשׁך is used to link the effect of the Locusts, which "covered the surface of the whole land, so that the land was *dark*," with the plague of Darkness (10:15, 21-22). Though it must be noted

[26] Brevard S. Childs, *Exodus,* (London: SCM Press, 1974), 131; Römer, "From the Call," 139; John Van Seters, "A Contest of Magicians? The Plague Stories in P," in *Pomegranates and Golden Bells, Studies in Biblical, Jewish and Near Eastern Ritual, Law and Literature in Honour of Jacob Milgrom* (ed. D. Wright et al.; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1995): 567-580, 572. See also: Driver, *Exodus,* xxiii; Hyatt, *Exodus*, 98, which do not mention the transformation of the Staff into a Snake and includes the plague of Darkness within P's narrative.

that this pattern is the most fragmented of the traditions, the plague of Darkness seems the most "whole" depiction of a Pattern 3 Act and contains few hallmarks of the other patterns (the "going to Pharaoh" motif of Pattern 1 or the staff performance of Pattern 2).

To a certain degree, these three patterns align neatly with traditional separations of the Mighty Acts narrative into J, E and P sources.[27] However, I am reluctant to label these patterns J, E or P given the ongoing debate and lack of consensus surrounding the nature of the sources which constitute the Pentateuch and the manner of redaction, combination or supplementation of such proposed sources. This essay does not seek to suggest anything of each of the patterns identified beyond the Mighty Acts narrative. Instead, I simply intend to identify and provide evidence for these three patterns, representative of separate traditions of the Mighty Acts narrative with fundamentally different conceptions of the function of the Acts and the motif of the "hardened" heart. To do so is vital to our understanding of the motif and to the view of the Lord's actions in each strata within both the individual traditions and the combined whole.

Evidence for the Three Patterns

In order to demonstrate that these patterns really do hold up beyond peculiarities of introductory language, several threads or motifs of the Mighty Acts narrative will be examined in relation to the patterns proposed above. The motifs to be surveyed are: dialogue and negotiation with Pharaoh; the presence of the magicians of Egypt and the prominence of Aaron; and therefore the nature and function of the Mighty Act in question (as a sign/wonder or plague).

Afterwards, these patterns will be discussed with regards to two aspects of the "hardened" heart motif: the vocabulary used to describe the status of Pharaoh's heart (כבד/חזק) and the agent of change in Pharaoh's heart (himself, the Lord, or simply "the heart"). The separation

[27] Childs, *Exodus*, 137.

of the narrative into these patterns will provide the grounds for deeper insight into the various forms of this motif.

Dialogue and Negotiation in the Mighty Acts

The first aspect to be analysed against the three proposed patterns of tradition is the "abundance of dialogue" in some of the Acts historically attributed to J.[28] Childs recognises in his J source a motif of demands, threats and concessions/negotiations.[29] A similar theme of constant entreating and negotiation is identified by Noth,[30] who again attributes this motif to J. Albertz, who simply talks of P and non-P sources (and identifies Patterns 1 and 3 as both non-P) recognises that the non-Priestly narrative is concerned with "increasing divine sanctions against Pharaoh accompanied by Moses' more and more dramatic negotiations with him."[31] In these scenes, Bacon labels Moses as an "ambassador" to Pharaoh[32] and Noth refers to him as "spokesman of his God."[33] It is clear to see why: the emphasis in these scenes is not on Moses as a miracle worker or a bringer of plagues, but as an intermediary between Pharaoh and God: the Lord imposes "sanctions" or "judgements" and Moses intercedes. Conversely, in regards to P, Van Seters says Moses and Aaron "may hardly be described as spokesmen of the deity, because they merely perform the prescribed action but do not speak to Pharaoh."[34] Instances of negotiation are expressed in the following table.

[28] Driver, *Exodus*, 56.
[29] Childs, *Exodus*, 133.
[30] Noth, *Exodus*, 69.
[31] Rainer Albertz, "Noncontinuous Literary Sources Taken Up in the Book of Exodus," in *The Formation of the Pentateuch: Bridging the Academic Cultures of Europe, Israel, and North America*, (ed. J. Gertz et al.; vol. 111 of *Forschungen zum Alten Testament* ed. K. Schmid et al.; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 2016): 609-617, 612.
[32] Benjamin Wisner Bacon, "J E in the Middle Books of the Pentateuch. Analysis of Exodus VII-XII," *JBL* 9 (1890): 161-200, 163.
[33] Noth, *Exodus*, 69.
[34] Van Seters, "Contest of Magicians," 573-4.

Mighty Act	**Demand** *"Let my people go, so that they may worship me"*	**Threat** *"If you refuse to let them go…"*	**Concession made for Israelites to leave**
Staff into Snake			
Water into Blood	7:16		
Frogs	8:1	8:2	
Dust into Gnats			
Flies	8:21		Israelites may sacrifice in Egypt (8:25)
Disease on Livestock	9:1	9:2	
Soot into Boils			
Hail	9:13		The Israelites may go (9:28)
Locusts	10:3	10:4	No children allowed to leave (10:10)
Darkness			No livestock allowed to leave (10:24)

The demands and threats follow a regular alternating pattern: demand – demand and threat – demand – demand and threat. In addition, a gradual progression of concessions are made in the latter three Acts: first, an insincere promise to release the Israelites is made in 9:28 (which Moses sees through in 9:30 and is reneged on in 9:35); next, Pharaoh allows for the adult men to leave as long as the children stay behind as hostages against what Pharaoh

calls an “evil purpose” (10:10); finally, only the livestock of the Israelites are to be kept as hostage and the children permitted to leave (10:24). At each stage, this concession and compromise is unsatisfactory for Moses, as only the full release of the Lord’s people is acceptable. Several Acts omit this motif of negotiation entirely, namely the Snake, Gnats and Boils. The full significance of this is made clear when these passages are transposed onto the patterns mentioned above:

Mighty Act	**Pattern 1**	**Pattern 2**	**Pattern 3**
Staff into Snake			
Water into Blood	7:16		
Frogs	8:1, 2		
Dust into Gnats			
Flies	8:21 Israelites may sacrifice in Egypt (8:25)		
Disease on Livestock	9:1, 2		
Soot into Boils			
Hail	9:13		The Israelites may go (9:28)
Locusts	10:3, 4		No children allowed to leave (10:10)
Darkness			No livestock allowed to leave (10:24)

The demands/threats motif follows the first pattern without deviation. In addition, the alternating pattern between “Go to Pharaoh” and “Rise early in the morning” is found again with the threats accompanying only those scenes where no mention is made of the time of day. That no example of dialogue is found in Pattern 2 and the stark adherence to the

interchanging sequence in Pattern 1 offer further evidence for seeing these two patterns as distinct traditions. Furthermore, the theme of concessions is found predominantly in Pattern 3, though makes appearances in Pattern 1 as well,[35] perhaps suggesting a degree of overlap in the theological considerations between the two traditions: the Mighty Acts are conceived of in both as dialogue, which is completely absent in Pattern 2. Van Seters makes the observation that "in none of P's stories [Van Seters ascribes Pattern 2 to the P] is any demand made of Pharaoh, and after the first one Moses and Aaron do not even encounter him, except rather vaguely in 9:10."[36]

The "concession motif" is of particular interest, given that there are two recognisable schema. In the first (8:28; 9:28) Pharaoh makes acceptable but insincere concessions to Moses, which he later reneges on; and in the second (10:10; 10:24) Pharaoh's concessions are inadequate. A clear progression of negotiation is present in these examples, where Pharaoh piece by piece gives ground to Moses' demands, leading Childs to state "by the skilful use of the concession motif the author built up gradual suspense."[37] Patterns 1 and 3 are both concerned with the potential jeopardy of whether or not Pharaoh will eventually concede and deliberately build tension into the narrative. They are troubled by the apparent ineffectiveness of the negotiation and the outcome of whether the Mighty Acts will result in the liberation of the people in a way which Pattern 2 is demonstrably unconcerned.

Also lacking in Pattern 2, but present in both of the other patterns is an interest in the character of Pharaoh. Childs identifies him as a proud despot who "slyly spars with Moses"[38] and confesses his sinful nature only to relent when pressure is relieved. He bucks any

[35] Given the overlapping nature of Hail and Locusts between Patterns 1 and 3, it is uncertain as to which of the traditions each instance of the concession motif responds. Here, I have assigned each instance of compromise to the Pattern for which the verse appears closest to the introductory statements which were used to define the patterns. Furthermore, the final Act of Darkness, displaying no signs of Pattern 1 influence, contains a natural intensification of the concessions motif from the previous two Acts, suggesting that this motif originated from Pattern 3.
[36] Van Seters, "Contest of Magicians," 573.
[37] Childs, *Exodus*, 135.
[38] Childs, *Exodus*, 136.

conceivable stereotype of an immovable, divine, tyrannical oppressor and has his personality revealed to the reader through his dialogue and actions. Even Davies, who claims a constancy in Pharaoh's stubbornness, notes: "a certain variety and even progress within the appointed limits, is observable in Pharaoh's attitude."[39] Such a narrative arc for the character of Pharaoh is completely lacking in Pattern 2, where Noth states there is "little tension"[40] and no impression is made upon Pharaoh's character.[41] Whether or not Pharaoh will come to know the Lord and accept his power is an open question for Patterns 1 and 3: the negotiations show him not as a firm and steadfast foe to be vanquished, but a man who can ultimately, hopefully be persuaded to act rightly.

An important distinction to be made between Patterns 1 and 3, however, is that in the conversational motifs found in Pattern 1 the negotiation happens prior to the Act and in Pattern 3, they occur afterwards. Hence, Pattern 1 contains threats: "If you refuse to let them go and still hold them, the hand of the Lord will strike with a deadly pestilence your livestock…"[42] (9:2-3); whereas Pattern 3 contains negotiations to remove an Act currently plaguing Egypt: ""Do forgive my sin just this once, and pray to the Lord your God that at the least he remove this deadly thing from me," (10:16). The implications of this distinction will be made clear in the discussion of the nature and purpose of each Act.

The Prominence of Aaron and the Presence of the Egyptian Magicians

The next motif to be investigated is that of the "contest of magicians" discussed by Van Seters as the "one element in the P plague narratives above all others that has persuaded some scholars of the existence of an independent P tradition."[43] However, aspects of the motif (in particular, the relatively common mentions of Aaron throughout the Mighty Acts narrative)

[39] Davies, *Exodus*, 89.
[40] Noth, *Exodus*, 16.
[41] Noth, *Exodus*, 69.
[42] Here and in the following, unless stated otherwise all biblical quotations are taken from the NRSV.
[43] Van Seters, "Contest of Magicians," 577

have called into question whether or not a separate written source can be clearly identified. Zevit, instead, sees the aspects which constitute Pattern 2 as the work of a priestly redactor-compiler, rather than as a single tradition.[44]

Mighty Act	**Aaron mentioned**	**Prominence of Aaron[45]**	**Aaron performs Act**	**Magicians mentioned**
Staff into Snake	5 (7:8, 9, 10a, 10b, 12)	5/7 (71%)	7:10	7:11
Water into Blood	2 (7:19, 20)	2/5 (40%)	7:20?[46]	7:22
Frogs	4 (8:5, 6, 8, 12)	4/8 (50%)	8:6	8:7
Dust into Gnats	2 (8:16, 17)	1/2 (50%)	8:17	8:18, 19
Flies	1 (8:25)	1/7 (14%)		
Disease on Livestock	0	0/1 (0%)		
Soot into Boils	1 (9:8)	1/6 (17%)		9:11a, 11b
Hail	1 (9:27)	1/8 (13%)		
Locusts	3 (10:3, 8, 16)	3/10 (30%)		
Darkness	0	0/5 (0%)		

Important to note from this table are two things: firstly, the concentrated nature of Aaron's mentions in the early Acts and his high levels of prominence in comparison to mentions of Moses; and secondly the parallelism between scenes in which Aaron is the enactor of the Mighty Act and those scenes in which the magicians appear. In only one instance do the magicians appear, where Aaron does not perform the Act, and Aaron is only

[44] Ziony Zevit, "The Priestly Redaction and Interpretation of the Plague Narrative in Exodus," *JQR* 66 (1976): 193-211, 193.

[45] These percentages are calculated by taking the number of times that Aaron is mentioned in a particular Act and dividing it by the total number of times that Aaron and Moses are mentioned in that Act. Whilst the percentages themselves are not particularly important, they are useful in indicating the drop-off in Aaron's prominence after Dust into Gnats, before which he never dips below 40% and after which he never breaches 30%.

[46] Van Seters observes that there is no explicit mention of Aaron performing the Act. Van Seters, "Contest of Magicians," 574-5. Instead, Aaron is instructed to strike the Nile in 7:19 and "Moses and Aaron did just as the Lord commanded," in 7:20. The issue is complicated by the introduction in 7:14-17 which implies that it shall be Moses who strikes the Nile.

active in scenes in which the magicians are present.[47] When the percentages and agents are overlaid with the proposed patterns, we find the following:

Mighty Act	Pattern 1	Pattern 2	Pattern 3
Staff into Snake		71% Aaron performs Magicians present	
Water into Blood	40% Aaron performs Magicians present	40% Aaron performs Magicians present	
Frogs	50% Aaron performs Magicians present	50% Aaron performs Magicians present	
Dust into Gnats		50% Aaron performs Magicians present	
Flies	14%		
Disease on Livestock	0%		
Soot into Boils		17% Magicians present	
Hail	13%		13%
Locusts	30%		30%
Darkness			0%

In Pattern 1, Aaron's prominence follows no particular pattern, rising and falling and, at times, completely absent. If such a pattern is indicative of a separate source, then the unstructured and seemingly random appearance of Aaron demands an explanation. Houtman suggests that many of the mentions of Aaron are Priestly additions to the text, in particular noting the inconsequential appearance of Aaron in the Flies Act as signs of redaction to an existing text.[48] Noth agrees, seeing these Priestly additions as little more than the insertion of

[47] Sarna, *Exploring Exodus*, 67.
[48] Cornelis Houtman, *Exodus*, (trans. S. Woudstra; Leuvren: Peeters, 1996), 58.

Aaron's name.[49] In the account of the Flies, Aaron is unmentioned when the Lord commands Moses what to do, nor is he mentioned when the Act is performed, only afterwards does the text say "Then Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron," (8:25) after which, he is not discussed for the rest of the scene. It seems plausible that this sentence[50] could originally have said "Then Pharaoh summoned Moses," without mentioning the largely redundant Aaron in the scene, just as the magicians go unmentioned as they have no role to play. Childs suggests that Pattern 1 (his J source) had a pattern involving the summoning of Moses alone, who intercedes for Pharaoh.[51] Aaron's role throughout the Mighty Acts is never negotiator, but always performer, and Pattern 1 possesses little need for such a character as it has as its central theme the negotiation between Pharaoh and Moses.

Pattern 2 is where we see the clearest alignment of the magicians' and Aaron's presence. Other than the Acts of Water into Blood and Frogs (which overlap the first and second patterns) the magicians only appear in Pattern 2 and Aaron only performs the Acts in Pattern 2 as well. As a result, many commenters have identified these scenes as priestly in nature, with general scholarly consensus concerning these five Acts. Aaron's role as performer is front and centre in this pattern and his position in relation to the magicians of Egypt "tacitly asserts [Moses'] equality of status with the Egyptian king."[52] Römer similarly notes: "YHWH appoints Moses as "Elohim," in contradistinction to the "divine" pharaoh, and Aaron as his prophet, who therefore equals the Egyptian magical-priests."[53] This matching of the roles each character plays in Pattern 2 (also identified as P by Römer) helps explain Aaron's suddenly diminished role in Soot into Boils: here, the magicians are completely unable to stand before Moses (9:11) and so Aaron's role as magician is unnecessary.

[49] Noth, *Exodus*, 75.
[50] And the similarly worded 9:26; 10:16. Compare with "Then Pharaoh summoned Moses," in 10:24, the Plague of Darkness, where Aaron makes no appearance whatsoever.
[51] Childs, *Exodus*, 133.
[52] Sarna, *Exploring Exodus*, 67.
[53] Römer, "From the Call," 143.

What this table demonstrates is the fundamentally different characterisations of Moses and Pharaoh between Patterns 1 and 2: Aaron's prominence elevates Moses to a position of equality with Pharaoh which he elsewhere does not have. Conversely, Moses' role is merely as negotiator between Pharaoh and the Lord in Patterns 1 and 3. Pharaoh is barely characterised in Pattern 2 and functions as an immovable opposition in stark contrast to the relenting and confessing Pharaoh of Pattern 1.

The Nature and Function of the Mighty Acts as Signs/Wonders or Plagues

Coats recognised the overall function of the Mighty Acts as the self-revelation of the Lord but he draws attention to other functions that they serve: "the signs function as weapons to convince Pharaoh that he should release Israel," and "an expressed purpose in addition is ridicule for Egypt."[54] The purpose of convincing Pharaoh to release Israel could be seen as related to the overall motivation of getting Pharaoh to know and acknowledge the Lord as sovereign, but the ridiculing of the Egyptians (10:2) runs counter to a desire that Egypt, like Israel, might "know" the Lord.

He also notes an escalation in the severity of the Acts themselves from "petty annoyances" to "signs effecting physical discomfort, loss of property."[55] Moss and Stackert also note a distinction,[56] identifying two different designations of the Acts: as "signs and wonders" (7:3) and "great chastisements" (7:4). This suggests a further purpose of the Acts as punishments or judgements upon Egypt. The escalatory nature of the Acts and their designation as "chastisements" lead to further questions concerning the unclear motivation for the Acts as a whole.

[54] Coats, *Exodus,* 68.
[55] In claiming that there exists such an escalation, Coats gives an explanation for the ninth Act (darkness) as a "defeat of the sun god." Moss and Stackert offer an alternative explanation for how the Act could be considered the most impactful so far by suggesting that the Act effects a three day blindness upon the Egyptians which renders them lame, Moss & Stackert, "Devastation of Darkness," 369.
[56] Moss & Stackert, "Devastation of Darkness," 365.

A number of motifs are instrumental in identifying whether or not a particular Act is thought of as one or the other. For example: if the devastating nature of an Act is emphasised, if Israelites are said to be spared those effects, or if stress is placed on the fact that an Act is effecting Pharaoh and his people, then the Act can be considered a plague. Where these motifs are not present, or where we see the magicians attempting to replicate the Act, we can assume that the Act is not to be thought of as ruinous, but instead wondrous.[57]

At times, a distinction is made between the Egyptians and the Israelites, or the land of Goshen (where the Israelites live) is set apart. The reason for this distinction is implicitly that these Acts are plagues or blows to the Egyptians, from which the Israelites must be spared.

Mighty Act	**Pattern 1**	**Pattern 2**	**Pattern 3**
Staff into Snake			
Water into Blood			
Frogs			
Dust into Gnats			
Flies	8:22 "Set apart Goshen" 8:23 "distinction"		
Disease on Livestock	9:4 "distinction"		
Soot into Boils			
Hail	9:26 "Only in Goshen"		
Locusts			
Darkness			10:23 "The Israelites had light where they lived"

Furthermore, lists which emphasise the destructive nature of a particular Act are found in the following table. Notable is the repetition of the "your" ending in these lists:

[57] Consider, for example, the illogical actions of the Egyptian magicians if the transformation of Water into Blood is to be considered ruinous to Egypt in Pattern 2: they worsen the effects of the "plague" by turning yet more water, now a scarce resource, into blood.

"If you refuse to let them go, I will plague your whole country with frogs. The river shall swarm with frogs; they shall come up into your palace, into your bedchamber and your bed, and into the houses of your officials and of your people, and into your ovens and your kneading bowls. The frogs shall come up on you and on your people and on all your officials." (8:3-4).

Mighty Act	**Pattern 1**	**Pattern 2**	**Pattern 3**
Staff into Snake			
Water into Blood			
Frogs	8:3-4		
Dust into Gnats			
Flies	8:21		
Disease on Livestock	9:3		
Soot into Boils			
Hail	9:14		
Locusts	10:4-6		
Darkness			

This repetition suggests the Israelites were spared the effects of these Acts,[58] indicating that these at least were thought of as plagues from which the Lord shielded his people. Notable is that Pattern 2 is devoid of this understanding of the Mighty Acts. Separating the Patterns in this way demonstrates key differences in understanding regarding the function of the Mighty Acts. Whilst in Pattern 1, the Acts are devastating in nature, strike Pharaoh and his people, and are kept away from the people of Israel, the Acts are not ruinous in Pattern 2.

The scenes exclusively found in Pattern 1 go to great lengths to describe the incredible pressure put on Pharaoh because of the intensity of the Acts. Compare the effects of the Flies to that of the Gnats: "Great [כָּבֵד] swarms of flies came into the house of Pharaoh and into his officials' houses; in all of Egypt the land was ruined because of the flies," (8:24). Not only is the devastating, "ruinous" effect of the flies made clear, but the introduction to the plague

[58] Houtman, *Exodus*, 43.

contains a threat or warning of what is to come: “For if you will not let my people go, I will send swarms of flies on you, your officials, and your people, and into your houses; and the houses of the Egyptians shall be filled with swarms of flies; so also the land where they live,” (8:21). The swarms of flies are not a wonder or a sign, but a threat and a plague which are intended to scare Pharaoh or make him suffer. Likewise, though the Soot into Boils says “the boils afflicted the magicians as well as all the Egyptians,” (9:12) clearly indicating plague-like qualities in this Act, it is nothing compared with the effect of the disease which strikes the list of Egyptian livestock: “the hand of the Lord will strike with deadly [כָּבֵד] pestilence your livestock in the field: the horses, the donkeys, the camels, the herds, and the flocks,” (9:3). The author in Pattern 1 uses lists and descriptions of the Acts as “כבד” to indicate them as devastating and ruinous: as “plagues.” Also important to note is that the inflictor of these plagues is the Lord or the hand of the Lord, rather than Moses or Aaron.

Conversely, the Acts of Pattern 2 are largely transformation miracles (Staff into Snake, Water into Blood, Dust into Gnats, Soot into Boils) with the one exception being the Frogs which are simply brought up out of the water. They are part of expected demonstrations of divine power; Pharaoh is predicted to ask Moses and Aaron to perform wonders before him (7:8). God does not act in these scenes, he merely commands action of Aaron and eventually Moses. Compared with 9:3, which says “the hand of the Lord will strike with a deadly pestilence your livestock in the field,” and 9:23, where “the Lord sent thunder and hail, and fire came down on the earth. And the Lord rained hail on the land of Egypt,” the significant lack of the Lord’s involvement in the scenes involving the magicians is notable. Setting aside for a moment the Water into Blood and the Frogs, which we have already seen possess elements outside of Pattern 2 and which are accepted as composite texts, we see relatively little harm befalling Egypt in these scenes where Aaron performs: the staff becomes a snake but does not bring devastation upon Egypt, nor do the gnats do any more than land on “both

humans and animals" (8:18). The author of these scenes had no interest in describing pressure being put on Pharaoh – the gnats are simply a display of power, designed to accredit Moses and Aaron as representatives of the divine,[59] which finally convince the magicians to declare, "This is the finger of God!" (8:19).

Considering the Mighty Act of Water into Blood, we see elements of both of these concepts of the Acts as divinely inflicted plagues and powerful performances. In 7:20 it is Aaron who performs the Act: "Moses and Aaron did just as the Lord commanded. In the sight of Pharaoh and of his officials he lifted up the staff and struck the water in the river, and all the water in the river was turned into blood," and yet in 7:25, the conclusion to the scene, it is said "Seven days passed after the Lord had struck the Nile." Similarly, though the Act partly functions as a contest between Aaron and the magicians, it includes the listing motif found in Pattern 1: "[stretch out your hand] over its rivers, its canals, and its ponds, and all its pools of water," to emphasise the extent of the effect as well as specifying that "the river stank so the Egyptians could not drink its water, and there was blood throughout the whole land of Egypt," (8:22). The Frogs Act contains similarly the performance by Aaron (8:6) and yet also the threat that the Lord will "plague" him (8:2) the emphasising list (8:3) and a statement that "the land stank" (8:14). Both of these early Acts, which straddle both Patterns 1 and 2, combine elements suggestive of the Acts as plagues and as transformation wonders. In addition, the inconsistencies present in these scenes (is it Aaron who performs or the Lord? does all the water in Egypt become blood, or just the river?) support the idea of two pre-existing traditions of these Acts which were combined and harmonised.[60]

[59] Driver, *Exodus,* xxiv.
[60] Noth argues that Gnats and Flies are also parallel accounts of the same Act, though they have not been combined as the two traditions of Water into Blood and Frogs. Noth, *Exodus,* 76.

The "Hardened" Heart Motif

Vocabulary used to Describe the Status of Pharaoh's Heart

The two most commonly used words to describe the change in Pharaoh's heart are חזק and כבד.[61] They form a motif that runs through every scene in the Mighty Acts narrative and appear as follows:

Mighty Act	Pharaoh's Heart at beginning of passage	Pharaoh's heart at the end of passage (כבד)	Pharaoh's heart at the end of passage (חזק)
Staff into Snake			וַיֶּחֱזַק
Water into Blood	כָּבֵד		וַיֶּחֱזַק
Frogs		וַהַכְבֵּד	
Dust into Gnats			וַיֶּחֱזַק
Flies		וַיַּכְבֵּד	
Disease on Livestock		וַיִּכְבַּד	
Soot into Boils			וַיֶּחֱזַק
Hail		וַיַּכְבֵּד	וַיֶּחֱזַק
Locusts	הִכְבַּדְתִּי		וַיֶּחֱזַק
Darkness			וַיֶּחֱזַק

The sequence forms an almost perfectly symmetric pattern, with the immediate repetition of the motif in the Hail act being the one exception. Exodus 9:34-5 reads: "But when Pharaoh saw that the rain and the hail and the thunder had ceased, he sinned once more and וַיַּכְבֵּד his heart, he and his officials. So the heart of Pharaoh was וַיֶּחֱזַק, and he would not let the Israelites go." This appears to be an attempt by a later redactor to cement two separate accounts together by directly juxtaposing the two different versions of the motif.

This variance in the vocabulary has been used by commenters to help separate the text into different sources: Childs writes, "The Yahwist always uses *kāḇēḏ*. The Priestly writer

[61] Outside of the Mighty Acts pericope, the root קשׁה is also used.

normally uses *ḥāzaq*, but once *hiqšāh*. The E source choice is parallel to P,"[62] and the same suggestion is made by Hyatt[63] and others. Overlaying its use onto the three patterns suggests that there may be merit to this approach:[64]

Mighty Act	Pattern 1	Pattern 2	Pattern 3
Staff into Snake		וַיֶּחֱזַק	
Water into Blood	כָּבֵד	וַיֶּחֱזַק	
Frogs	וַהַכְבֵּד		
Dust into Gnats		וַיֶּחֱזַק	
Flies	וַיַּכְבֵּד*[65]		
Disease on Livestock	וַיַּכְבַּד*		
Soot into Boils		וַיְחַזֵּק	
Hail	וַיַּכְבֵּד*		וַיֶּחֱזַק
Locusts	הִכְבַּדְתִּי*		וַיְחַזֵּק
Darkness			וַיְחַזֵּק

By separating the uses of חזק and כבד between the three patterns, a further inclusio is found in Pattern 1, where the first and final uses of כבד occur before the Act and the middle uses follow the Act's conclusion and removal. Furthermore, in each Act that does not overlap with Pattern 2, the author of Pattern 1 also describes the Act which strikes Egypt as כבד.

The Agent of "Hardening" in Pharaoh's Heart

In the Mighty Acts, Pharaoh is said to make his own heart hard in Frogs (8:15), Flies (8:32) and Hail (9:34). The Lord is the agent of hardening in Boils (9:12), Locusts (10:1, 20) and Darkness (10:27). In the remaining examples, Staff into Snake (7:13), Water into Blood (7:14, 22), Dust into Gnats (8:19), Livestock (9:7), Hail (9:35) the heart of Pharaoh is simply said to become or remain hard.

[62] Childs, *Exodus*, 171.
[63] Hyatt, *Exodus*, 102.
[64] Despite the choice by many authors, I refrain from using the labels J, E and P here to avoid some of the problems encountered by making claims about the sources beyond the scope of the Mighty Acts material.
[65] Instances marked with an * denote Acts in which the plague is also described as כָּבֵד.

Mighty Act	Before Act	After Act
Staff into Snake		Heart
Water into Blood	Heart	Heart
Frogs		Pharaoh
Dust into Gnats		Heart
Flies		Pharaoh
Disease on Livestock		Heart
Soot into Boils		The Lord
Hail		Pharaoh, Heart
Locusts	The Lord	The Lord
Darkness		The Lord

The distribution of these agents throughout the narrative does not display any particular pattern. Fretheim suggests that there is an even split, with the Lord hardening 10 times and Pharaoh/Pharaoh's heart hardening ten times;[66] however, a division of this kind involves grouping the Lord's promises to harden with the statements that he did, as well as presuming some commonality between the times that Pharaoh hardens and the times that his heart is said to become hard without an agent. Neither of these are particularly justified. Generally, we can see that the Lord acts more directly in the later scenes but not rigidly – the Hail interrupts this pattern. Likewise, though there is some degree of alternation between Pharaoh and the Heart in the early stages, it is not constant. Systematic arrangements only come to light when transposed onto the three Patterns of tradition:

[66] Terence E. Fretheim, "Issues of Agency in Exodus," in *The Book of Exodus: Composition, Reception and Interpretaton,"* (ed. T. Dozeman et al.; vol. 164 of *Supplements to Vetus Testamentum*, ed. C. Maier et al.; Leiden: Brill, 2014),591-609, 601.

Mighty Act	Pattern 1	Pattern 2	Pattern 3
Staff into Snake		Heart	
Water into Blood	Heart (before)	Heart	
Frogs	Pharaoh	[ ][67]	
Dust into Gnats		Heart	
Flies	Pharaoh		
Disease on Livestock	Heart[68]		
Soot into Boils		The Lord	
Hail	Pharaoh		Heart
Locusts	The Lord (before)		The Lord
Darkness			The Lord

Here, we can see that Pattern 1 almost unanimously refers to Pharaoh as the agent of change in his heart. The first and final use of the motif make use of different agents, but both of these occur before the Act itself and do not indicate a change in Pharaoh's heart, but its status prior to that Act. Other than these, Livestock is the Act which stands out as different. The "heaviness" (כבד) of Pharaoh's heart is predominantly linked with himself as agent and it is possible that, as with the mentions of Aaron throughout non-Pattern 2, the example of the heart as agent in the Livestock is a change that occurred when the sources were combined. Even if this is not the case, the Lord does not change Pharaoh's heart after an Act is inflicted on Pharaoh, though he does seem, in the plague of Locusts, to claim influence for what has occurred beforehand.

Pattern 2 unanimously uses the Heart as the agent of change until the final scene, in which the Lord finally takes on the active role. This change during the Boils parallels Aaron's lesser role in the Act and Moses finally coming to the forefront, as mentioned above. There is a gap

[67] Absence is likely filled by Heart, removed when it became redundant with Pharaoh with Pattern 1
[68] Odd one out…

in this pattern during the Frogs scene, likely due to the combination of two sources, where only one version of the motif was necessary to conclude the account of the Act. By simply saying "Pharaoh's heart was וַיֶּחֱזַק" (7:13) Pattern 2 is either unconcerned with who alters Pharaoh's heart or, perhaps, the implication is that the situation which causes Pharaoh's heart to change. The NRSV translates the ו in each case to suggest this kind of causal relationship between the circumstances in which Pharaoh finds himself and the heart becoming חזק: "But the magicians of Egypt did the same by their secret arts; *so* Pharaoh's heart remained hardened…" (7:22).[69]

Finally, Pattern 3 begins with the Heart and is followed by two instances of the Lord as agent. However, this first instance is potentially problematic, as mentioned above, in that it occurs in the one instance of two versions of the motif directly following on from one another. This example appears to function as a combining of the two motifs: making the heart כבד and making it חזק, as it is the only example of the two terms being used so close together. Its function, then, is uncertain and may have been inserted when the two sources were joined.[70] Whether the heart becoming חזק in the Hail Act was originally part of Pattern 3 is questionable. However, what is evident is that this third pattern considers the effect on Pharaoh's heart to have been caused by the Lord in at least two of its three scenes. Pattern 3 does not consider the Lord's involvement as simply a sweeping-in at the end once Pharaoh or circumstances have already driven Pharaoh to a point of no return: instead, the Lord is closely tied to the making of Pharaoh's heart חזק.

[69] Emphasis my own.
[70] This kind of literary device is identified by Boorer as a sign of the "redactor's hand" – short linking passages are used to integrate separate sources into a more coherent narrative. The shift in vocabulary from one source to another is made less jarring for the reader by juxtaposing them, thereby linking one with the other. Boorer, "Source and Redaction Criticism," in *Methods for Exodus,* (ed. Dozeman), 99.

Redaction Criticism: Analysis of the Theology of Each Pattern

As discussed above, Pattern 3 is often identified as E (as by Childs, Houtman) or subsumed under P (as by Coats, Noth). Through analysis of the theological understandings of each pattern, it will be demonstrated that the theology of Pattern 3 is closest to that of Pattern 1. Hence, subsuming Pattern 3 under Pattern 2 leads to an inconsistent narrative compared to the combination of Patterns 1 and 3. Despite the uniform separation between כבד and חזק that would be achieved in the approach of Coats and Noth, this conflates the meaning of the חזק heart in these two distinct Patterns.

Theology of Pattern 1

The Acts in Pattern 1 are indeed plagues, the severity of which is made abundantly clear each time.[71] These plagues are apparently avoidable: a demand is made of Pharaoh, followed by the threat of a plague if he does not comply. The expressed reason for this noncompliance is the כבד state of Pharaoh's heart. Pharaoh is said to begin the events with a heart which is already כבד (7:14) and he makes his heart כבד after any given plague is removed (8:15; 8:32; 9:34). Further, his heart becomes כבד by itself only after he realises that the pestilence on his livestock has concluded.[72]

The plagues act in such a way as to make lighter the heavy heart of Pharaoh: to soften it and to humble him. Pharaoh begins the Pattern 1 form of the pericope with a heart which is impairing his reason: a heart which is broken and self-glorifying. What the plagues do is shatter this perception that Pharaoh has of himself by proving the ultimate כבוד (glory) of God. As a result, Pharaoh does negotiate with Moses, he pleads for forgiveness. Any brokenness or impairment of his reason is broken through at these times of crisis and Pharaoh

[71] The fish die, the Nile stinks and the Egyptians cannot drink in 7:17-18; the frogs invade the houses of the Egyptians, even their beds and ovens and kneading bowls in 8:3; the flies form a כָּבֵד swarm which ruins the land of Egypt in 8:24; a כָּבֵד pestilence strikes the all the Egyptian livestock in 9:3; the hail is the most כָּבֵד hail to have ever struck Egypt and strikes down both animals and humans in 9:24-25; the locusts devour everything in Egypt and are like nothing the Egyptians have ever seen in 10:5-6 and are also described as כָּבֵד in 10:14.
[72] The livestock being dead, this plague is not able to be reversed as the others are.

acknowledges his need for repentance and prayer (8:8, 28; 9:27-28; 10:16-17). However, once the plague is over, Pharaoh makes his heart כבד once more. Each plague is successful in getting through to Pharaoh and nullifying the heaviness of his heart, if only temporarily.

The Lord takes an incredibly active role in the plagues in Pattern 1.[73] Despite this, he takes almost no role in the heaviness of Pharaoh's heart.[74] In fact, the Lord's only effect on the heart is that he strikes it with plagues: "For this time I will send all my plagues upon your heart [לִבְּךָ]" (9:14). In other words, his only actions on Pharaoh's heart are to strike the כבד heart with כבד plagues which have the effect of softening Pharaoh into negotiations.

As in all the Patterns, the purpose of the hardening motif is to answer the question of how it is that the Mighty Acts were ineffective for so long. Pattern 1's answer to this dilemma is that they were not ineffective as such, but that Pharaoh's self-heavying once crisis had subsided meant that he refused to humble himself (10:3) and instead made his heart כבד. A כבד heart is not possible in times of crisis.

Theology of Pattern 2

Conversely, the Acts in Pattern 2 are not thought of as plagues and they do not "strike" the Egyptians or the land. The closest description of a Pattern 2 Act to that of a plague is when the boils were on the magicians and Egyptians in 9:11. All that is said of the boils is that they were upon everyone in Egypt: their scale is described, but not their severity. In an almost identical manner, the gnats "came upon humans and animals alike" (8:17) but are not said to cause the devastation that the flies do in 8:24. Likewise, it is the *scale* of the transformation of water into blood (the rivers, canals, ponds and pools of water all transform in 7:19) rather than the severe repercussions on wildlife and access to drinking water, which

[73] He strikes (הַכּוֹת־) the Nile in 7:25; he strikes (נֹגֵף) the land with frogs in 8:2; he sends the swarm of flies in 8:21; his hand is upon the livestock when they are hit with pestilence in 9:3; he sends all his plagues (מַגֵּפֹתַי) upon Pharaoh's heart in 9:14; he rains down hail on the land of Egypt in 9:25; and brings an east wind to cover the land in locusts in 10:13-14.
[74] Besides the instance in 10:1, the Lord takes no part in the changes in Pharaoh's heart.

concern the author of Pattern 2. No death, no devastation and no punishment is to be found in Pattern 2: the Acts are not judgements or reciprocations for Pharaoh's actions, they are just marvellous performances which the magicians find increasingly impossible to match. This focus upon the grand display of power, rather than on a harsh experience, illustrates the purpose of these Acts as wonders and signs for Pharaoh, which he is predicted to demand in 7:9. The relatively minor affliction of the boils is not intended to describe a plague of disease as such, but is the natural conclusion to a contest between Aaron and the magicians of Egypt: they are finally so defeated that they cannot even stand. Moreover in Pattern 2, the change in Pharaoh's heart is followed by variants of "and he would not listen to them…" (7:13, 23; 8:15, 19; 9:12) rather than "he would not let the people go…" (8:32; 9:7, 35; 10:20, 27): the emphasis is on whether or not the miracles result in the power of Aaron and Moses being recognised, rather than the release of the Israelites.

Pharaoh's heart responds to the Acts directly in Pattern 2, rather than to their removal. Pharaoh's heart becomes חזק after Aaron's serpent swallows the magicians' (7:13); as soon as the magicians have managed to replicate Aaron's performances (7:22; 8:15)[75] and after the magicians are incapable of replicating the gnats (8:19). Finally, the Lord acts to make Pharaoh's heart חזק in the Boils scene (9:12). The becoming חזק of Pharaoh's heart is at first explainable as a becoming confident at the magicians' abilities: Pharaoh need not worry about Aaron's early displays of power because his own magicians are able to match them. He remains confident and bold in his defiance. As the magicians' abilities start to waver, so should this confidence but we are told "Pharaoh's heart וַיֶּחֱזַק" – in contrast to the people around him, who slowly come to see the signs for what they are, Pharaoh's change of heart has stuck. However, it would be strange to understand this response as stubbornness, as for Pattern 2 it has grown out of Pharaoh's witnessing of his magicians' power – to translate 7:22

[75] The inclusion of 8:15 here assumes that in the original form of Pattern 2, the verb used in this instance was חזק, in uniformity with every other Pattern 2 use of the hardened heart motif.

as “But the magicians of Egypt did the same by their secret arts; and Pharaoh became stubborn and he would not listen to them…” is unnatural: the demonstration of his own power more obviously results in boldness than it does obstinacy. By the later scenes, where the magicians are unable to replicate the wonders, Pharaoh’s heart “remains bold” despite this, which may appear to us as stubbornness but only insofar as it is misplaced or undeserved confidence in his own power.

In the conclusion to Pattern 2’s series of wonders, the Lord brings about a final חזק in Pharaoh’s heart. Theological problems arise only by treating this change of heart as a stubbornness or a heaviness, as the Lord is negatively impacting Pharaoh’s ability to choose rationally. If the Lord’s act on Pharaoh’s heart is original to this tradition, it does not present us with the problem of the Lord acting contrary to his purposes in his interference with Pharaoh’s heart: he gives confidence and boldness to Pharaoh.

Theology of Pattern 3

The three Acts in Pattern 3 are undoubtedly plagues: Hail, Locusts and Darkness. The first two, especially are incredibly destructive and all three result in concessions from Pharaoh indicating how harshly they are felt. However, after each of these plagues, Pharaoh’s heart becomes חזק. The agent of that hardening is once the heart (9:35) and twice the Lord (10:20, 27). More so than the other patterns, where the Lord acts once at the conclusion to the narrative, the Lord seems to act predominantly in Pattern 3, making Pharaoh’s heart חזק following the rescinding of the locusts and after the three days of darkness. Furthermore, Moses plays a principal role in bringing about the Acts, which are all plagues: he stretches out his hand towards heaven or across the land to bring about the destruction (9:22; 10:12, 21). Whether or not the Lord is also active in the bringing about of the plagues is unclear, given the large amount of overlap of material between Patterns 1 and 3; however, it is

noteworthy that the one scene (darkness) which is purely Pattern 3 makes no mention of the Lord causing the act.

Combining Theologies of Patterns 2 and 3

If Patterns 2 and 3 are to be considered part of the same underlying source (P) then we must recognise a fundamental shift in understanding during the Mighty Act of the Boils. Not only does Aaron step back from the action, but the Lord steps in as both the agent of חזק and the agent of the Acts.

Mighty Act	Agent of חזק	Agent of Act
Staff into Snake	Heart	Aaron
Water into Blood	Heart	Aaron
Frogs	[76]	Aaron
Dust into Gnats	Heart	Aaron
Soot into Boils	The Lord	Moses
Hail	Heart	Moses/The Lord
Locusts	The Lord	Moses/The Lord
Darkness	The Lord	Moses/The Lord

One aspect of this table that begs questioning is the sequence in the חזק column, where one might expect to see five references to the heart becoming חזק, at which point the Lord takes over. This would mirror the seemingly straightforward shift from Aaron as performer to Moses. However, we instead see an interlocking structure (H-H-H-L-H-L-L-L). It is unclear whether this is indicative of two sources having been combined and then having the motifs tweaked so as to cement narratively together, or if it is a coincidence. However, if this sequence of Acts was combined into one source, we might expect more interlocking patterns than simply the agent of hardening.

The use of the חזק heart motif is constant in this Pattern, suggesting that were this to be a single source, חזק should be considered to mean the same thing each time (in this case, confidence or courage) and so the narrative of the Might Acts is as follows: a) Pharaoh is

[76] Given the overlap with Pattern 1, no existing reference to Pharaoh's heart becoming חזק occurs in Pattern 2's Frog scene.

initially confident because of his magicians' abilities, b) but as their power is shown to be inferior to Aaron's and they declare the power of the Lord, Pharaoh's confidence does not wane, c) at which point Moses steps forward and begins to pray for plagues to afflict Pharaoh which do have the effect of making Pharaoh concede some ground, d) but the Lord then makes Pharaoh confident so that he ultimately reneges on any ground given and refuses to let the people go.

There are significant problems with this proposed source. Firstly, the demand to let the people go (which, even if it is part of Pattern 1, rather than 3, is implicit in Pattern 3 given the concession motif) does not appear until Moses begins stretching out his hand to bring about plagues. Pharaoh makes concessions to Moses in Hail that he has not asked for: in this sequence of events, Moses has not made any demands whatsoever and yet Pharaoh summons Moses and Aaron to give him respite from the Hail, something he never did for the Boils. The conclusion to the Boils should be a climax of the narrative, but assuming Pattern 3 is a continuation of Pattern 2 completely robs this moment of that climactic nature: the magicians are defeated, Aaron has fulfilled his purpose as performer of miracles but for some reason the show must go on and Moses must now perform alone.

Furthermore, the opposition between Moses and Pharaoh, each with their performers (Aaron, magicians) is lost in this proposed P source. Working on the assumption of a combined Patterns 2 and 3, Smith writes, "Both the plagues and the language of holy war change the encounter from a conflict between Moses and Pharaoh […] to a conflict between Yahweh and Pharaoh, paralleled by the contests of Moses and Aaron on the one hand, and Pharaoh's magicians on the other."[77] Moses shifts from being "as a god" to Pharaoh to a mere performer in this combined source. Far from a climax, Moses' performance of the Boils becomes a step down from his former role before Pharaoh. Smith does, therefore, recognise

[77] Mark S. Smith, with contributions by Elizabeth M. Bloch-Smith, *The Pilgrimage Pattern in Exodus*, *JSOTSup* 239 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 204.

two sections in this "P" source (labelled B i and B i') but for the literary and theological reasons above, I believe this second section (Pattern 3) makes more sense when joined with Pattern 1.

Combining Theologies of Patterns 1 and 3

If we combine Patterns 1 and 3, the nature of the Acts as plagues remains constant, Moses' role as mediator and negotiator stays constant, and the characterisation of Pharaoh is developed throughout the whole narrative, rather than in the last few scenes. As the plagues intensify and Egypt is decisively ruined, Pharaoh's resolve weakens: he acknowledges his sin and makes concessions to Moses throughout. Pharaoh is the strong leader who crumbles before the power of the Lord.

However, we have to answer the question of why it is the author or the combiner of these two sources chooses to use two different words for the hardening motif. I would argue that the best explanation for this comes in the plague of Locusts, an Act which overlaps the two Patterns and contains the following passage:

"And Moses stretched out his staff over the land of Egypt, and the Lord brought an east wind upon the land all day and all night; when it was morning, the east wind had brought the locusts. The locusts came upon all the land of Egypt and settled on the whole country of Egypt, never before had there been such a כָּבֵד swarm of locusts, nor would there ever be again. They covered the face of the whole land, so that the land was dark; and they ate every plant in the land and all the fruit of the trees that the hail had left; nothing green remained on the trees or the plants in the field in all the land of Egypt. In haste, Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron and said, "I have sinned against the Lord your God, and against you. So now forgive my sin just this once, and pray to the Lord your God only that he remove this death from me." So he went out from Pharaoh and prayed to the Lord. The Lord turned the wind into a very חָזָק west wind, which took the locusts and cast them into the Red Sea; not one locust remained in all the country of Egypt. And the Lord וַיְחַזֵּק the heart of Pharaoh, but he would not let the Israelites go." (10:13-20)[78]

This is the final plague which is described as כבד, mirroring the state of Pharaoh's heart. The Locusts are described in such a severe and grievous way, destroying all that is left of Egypt and rendering it desolate and bare, that Pharaoh pleads that this death be removed from

[78] Translation my own.

him: not from the land, but from himself. The Lord responds by using a חזק wind to remove the כבד locusts and then immediately he makes Pharaoh's heart חזק for the first time, last described as being made כבד by the Lord in 10:1. Just as the Lord brings an eastern wind with כבד locusts and a חזק western wind which removes them, in this scene, the Lord is said to have brought about the כבד nature of Pharaoh's heart and then makes it חזק when Pharaoh asks that "this death" be removed from him. It seems important that he decides to describe the removal of a plague in this manner, just as he describes the Lord's first involvement in Pharaoh's heart.

In terms of the plague of Locusts, כבד and חזק are used as opposites. The author even uses opposing ordinal directions (קָדִים, יָם) to describe the two actions: an *east* wind brings כבד locusts and a חזק *west* wind removes them. I suggest that the author of Pattern 1 understood both the חזק heart and the Lord's involvement in Pharaoh's heart in this way as well: in direct opposition to Pharaoh making his heart כבד. In order to demonstrate that כבד and חזק can be viewed in this way, the next two sections of this essay will focus on explaining the semantic range of each word broadly and also specifically with regard to the Mighty Acts narrative.

Word Study: כבד

The verb כָּבַד has the literal meaning "be heavy" and is used figuratively to mean "be important,"[79] senses which are present in the root across all Semitic languages. Used as a verbal adjective, כָּבֵד is translated "be weighty, be numerous, be burdensome, be honoured,"[80] depending on context. In addition, Exodus contains numerous special cases where the root כבד takes on a specific meaning, such as the כָּבוֹד (glory) of the Lord, the כָּבֵד (grievous, deadly) plagues or Pharaoh's כָּבֵד heart.

Glory

The noun כָּבוֹד denotes heaviness in terms of importance, honour and glory.[81] Fifteen of the thirty six uses of כבד in Exodus relate to honour or glory, making it the most prominent meaning in the book. In the niphal form, the verb can hold the meaning "to be honoured" and does so in 14:4, 17, 18.[82] Here, the Lord says he will be honoured (וְאִכָּבְדָה) when he has hardened (וְחִזַּקְתִּי) the heart of Pharaoh to pursue the Israelites. Being כבד is a sign of great power: the כָּבוֹד of the Lord appears to the Israelites in a cloud in 16:10 and when the Lord let his glory (כְּבֹדִי) pass by Moses, who must be shielded from it in a cleft in the rock (33:22).

Dozeman writes that by gaining כבוד over the Egyptians, the Lord creates "the possibility of knowledge for the Egyptians."[83] כבוד is a symbol of divine power and through defeating Pharaoh and his army, the Lord demonstrates his glory: the didactic function of the plagues, the victory at the Red Sea and the Exodus in general are to bring about proper knowledge of God as the one to whom כבוד belongs. When Pharaoh makes his heart (all aspects of the human person)[84] כבד, we must recognise that the word was chosen in the context of a

[79] C. Dohmen, "כָּבֵד *kāḇēḏ* I; כָּבֵד *kāḇēḏ* II; כֹּבֶד *kōḇēḏ*; כְּבוּדָּה *kᵉḇûddâ*; כְּבֵדֻת *kᵉḇēḏuṯ*," *TDOT* 7:13-17, 13.
[80] D. Clines, "כבד," *DCH* 4: 349.
[81] M. Weinfeld, "כָּבוֹד *kāḇôḏ*," *TDOT* 7: 22-38, 24.
[82] "כבד," *BDB*, 457.
[83] Dozeman, *God at War*, 127.
[84] H. Fabry, "לֵב *lēḇ*; לֵבָב *lēḇāḇ*," *TDOT* 7: 399-437, 412.

narrative for which the ultimate aim is that the Lord gain כבוד. Pharaoh usurps the כבוד due to God: he honours and exalts himself (מִסְתּוֹלֵל, 9:17), when he should be humble (לֵעָנֹת, 10:3).

כבד is used once to describe the heart outside of the Mighty Acts narrative in 1 Sam. 6:5-6: "So you must make images of your tumours and images of your mice that ravage the land, and give כָּבוֹד to the God of Israel; perhaps he will lighten his hand on you and your gods and your land. Why should you תְּכַבְּדוּ your hearts as the Egyptians and Pharaoh כִּבְּדוּ their hearts?" The Philistines are warned against making their hearts כבד and are told to give כבוד to the Lord, to whom it belongs. The refusal of giving God כבוד is in direct contrast with having a heart which is כבד.

Severity

כבד also appears with the sense "oppressive, grievous"[85] especially with regards to famine[86] and other disasters. Stenmans refers to this as the "vexatious aspect of quantity"[87] and notes its prevalence within Exodus: the flies (8:24), plague on livestock (9:3), hail (9:18, 24) and locusts (10:14) are each described as כבד to indicate their severity: כבד indicates "numerous"[88] insects or a "swarm."[89] Each of these Mighty Acts are considered as plagues which harshly strike Egypt and each Act contains mention of Pharaoh's כבד heart. It is interesting to note that the Acts of Water into Blood and of Frogs each refer to Pharaoh's heart as כבד and, though they do not use the adjective to describe the Act, they do dedicate time to relating the severity of them both: "The fish in the river shall die, the river itself shall stink, and the Egyptians shall be unable to drink water from the Nile," (7:18); "The river shall swarm with frogs; they shall come up into your palace, into your bedchamber and your bed,

[85] W. L. Holladay, "כבד," *CHALOT*, 150.
[86] Gen. 12:10; 47:4, 13. Compare with Gen 47:20, where חזק is used to describe the same famine. Both כבד and חזק are used to describe a strong/heavy famine.
[87] P. Stenmans, "כָּבֵד *kāḇēḏ* I; כָּבֵד *kāḇēḏ* II; כֹּבֶד *kōḇēḏ*; כְּבוּדָּה *kᵉḇûddâ*; כְּבֵדֻת *kᵉḇēḏuṯ*," *TDOT* 7:17-22, 18.
[88] Clines, "כבד," *DCH*, 352.
[89] Clines, "כבד," *DCH*, 352.

and into the houses of your officials and of your people, and into your ovens and your kneading bowls," (8:3).

The author of Exodus makes deliberate use of the root כבד to describe some of the Acts which may be properly thought of as plagues and, when they do so, usually describe Pharaoh's heart in the same way. The exceptions to this rule are in the two Acts which have already been discussed to be suspected as heterogeneous texts. When Pharaoh's heart is described as חזק, no such description of the Acts is found, despite the use of חזק in this way elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible (see: Gen. 47:20, a חזק famine). A deliberate choice was made to use כבד in the Mighty Acts to denote the grievous nature of particular Acts alongside the action Pharaoh does to his own heart.

Shamesh suggests this choice is to indicate a figurative measure-for-measure punishment, given that the כבד plagues strike his כבד heart, "the organ which perpetuates his transgression,"[90] at the opening of the plague of Hail in 9:14: "For this time I will send all my plagues upon your heart…" Pharaoh, in this line of thinking, is a sinner being justly punished. However, the conclusion of the Hail plague makes it obvious which interpretation the author had in mind: "But when Pharaoh saw that the rain and the hail and the thunder had ceased, he sinned once more and hardened his heart, he and his officials," (9:34). Shamesh identifies the plagues mentioned in Exodus 9 as a response to the state of Pharaoh's heart,[91] in contrast to the wonders which were performed before the magicians, which preceded the change of heart in Pharaoh to חזק. As such, כבד notes more than simple severity in Exodus, but represents in these cases a hard, heavy response to sin. Pharaoh's making his heart כבד is punishable and that punishment is כבד in order to match the crime.

[90] Yael Shamesh, "Punishment of the Offending Organ in Biblical Literature," *VT* 55 (2005): 343-365, 346.
[91] Shamesh, "Punishment," 346.

Organs of the Body

Throughout the Hebrew Bible, כבד as an adjective is used to describe "weary" hands, "insensitive" ears and hearts, "dull" eyes,[92] as well as someone who is "slow of speech, heavy of tongue."[93] Organs described as כבד are "unresponsive, heavy, thick,"[94] and the word is used to denote what Stenmans calls "Physical and Mental Disability,"[95] where the normal function of the body is prevented. It can also describe the "general debility of someone who is old and sick."[96] Moses' ineloquence is described as a "heaviness" of speech and tongue, perhaps indicating a stutter or other impediment,[97] in 4:10, as are his hands "heavy" in 17:12.

The episode in chapter 4, where Moses' heavy tongue is described is especially interesting as, though it is clearly understood to be an impediment to eloquent speech, the Lord responds: "Who gives speech to mortals? Who makes them mute or deaf, seeing or blind? Is it not I, the Lord? Now go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you are to speak," (4:11-12). A כבד tongue is certainly not able to function normally or well, but it is something which does not preclude Moses from being expected to speak. Likewise, the Lord says he has made כבד the hearts of Pharaoh and his officials in 10:1 and those same officials plead with Pharaoh to "let the people go" in 10:7 – their כבד heart does not leave them utterly unable to recognise the truth of God's message or the meaning of the signs performed before them. In both the case of the tongue of Moses and the heart of Pharaoh's officials, כבד is something which can be (and is expected to be) overcome. The effect of their

[92] Holladay, "כבד," *CHALOT*, 150.
[93] Clines, "כבד," *DCH*, 352.
[94] L. Koehler, W. Baumgartner, & J. Stamm, "כבד," *HALOT* 1: 454-457, 456.
[95] Stenmans, *TDOT* 7: 18.
[96] Stenmans, *TDOT* 7: 19.
[97] Jeffry H. Tigay, ""Heavy of Mouth" and "Heavy of Tongue" on Moses' Speech Difficulty," *BASOR* 231 (1978): 57-67, 58. Tigay also suggests that the implication might be that Moses is a "speaker of a foreign tongue" though he favours an interpretation based on physical impediment given God's reply to Moses in 4:11 which is clearly discussing dumbness/muteness.

כבד heart seems to be that they have been made fools (10:2) and so Stenmans notes, "Sir. 3:26, 27, for example, describes a fool as having a *lēḇ kāḇēḏ*…"[98]

Elsewhere, כָּבֵד also denotes the liver,[99] derived from its status as the "heaviest" organ. Because of this connotation, the sense of anger and impulsiveness can be derived because "the liver was regarded as seat of emotions."[100] Read in this way, when Pharaoh makes his heart כבד, he could be changing his heart, "the locus of the emotions that are subject to the will,"[101] into a kind of liver, "the seat of the blind passions."[102] This fits with the idea of an organ not functioning properly in that the proper purpose of the heart has been undermined by Pharaoh's change of לֵב into כבד.

Fundamentally, a כבד heart is one which is broken or not functioning properly. Fabry points out that, as has been mentioned above, "because the cause can be apostasy, sin, or misfortune, sickness of the *lēḇ* can have ethical overtones."[103] Yes, Pharaoh's heart is broken and he has become an insensible fool but he is still held to ethical standards, just as, though Moses' tongue is כבד, he is still expected to speak the words of the Lord.

Summary

Pharaoh's heart is said to become כבד just four times in the Mighty Acts narrative (8:15, 32; 9:7, 34). These four instances, all found in Pattern 1, are bracketed by the declaration that Pharaoh's heart is already כָּבֵד in 7:14 and that the Lord has already made the heart of Pharaoh הִכְבַּדְתִּי in 10:01. The meaning is generally taken to be "make dull, insensitive,"[104] or to describe a state of stubbornness.[105] However, these do not do justice to the wide semantic

[98] Stenmans, *TDOT* 7: 18.
[99] Holladay, "כבד," *CHALOT*, 150.
[100] "כבד," *BDB*, 458.
[101] Fabry, *TDOT* 7: 403.
[102] Fabry, *TDOT* 7: 403.
[103] Fabry, *TDOT* 7: 413
[104] Clines, "כבד," *DCH*, 351.
[105] Stenmans, *TDOT* 7: 21.

range of כבד that exists within Exodus and which the author of Pattern 1 is certainly playing with.

The root כבד can mean "be insensible" and "be honoured" in the Qal, make heavy or make honourable in the Piel, make unresponsive and cause to be honoured in the Hiphil;[106] in every stem which we find a dullness of heart, we also find honour and glory. Similarly, this usurpation of כבוד by Pharaoh is met reciprocally with heavy, severe, כבד plagues establishing the reason for the plagues as a reaction to the state of Pharaoh's stubborn, insensible and self-honouring heart. The heart, which should be the seat of intellect and good judgement and, especially in an Egyptian context, "where God can be known and God's will recognised,"[107] has become instead heavy, broken and incapable of knowing God. However, this does not prevent Pharaoh from being able to recognise God completely: the state of being כבד can be overcome, especially with the Lord's help (as with Moses' ineloquence). Wordplay and multiple meanings abound in Exodus' use of כבד: Pharaoh must come to know God by giving him כבוד, humble himself, rather than making his heart כבד if he is to prevent the Lord's כבד plagues from continuing to strike his heart.

[106] "כבד," *BDB*, 457-458.
[107] Fabry, *TDOT* 7: 402.

Word Study: חזק

חזק in the Hebrew Bible

To understand the meaning of the חזק heart in the Mighty Acts, we must look at the use of חזק throughout the entirety of the Hebrew Bible. This word study begins with a broad investigation of חזק's most frequently occurring connotations and then tightens through narrower and narrower lenses: first, through its appearances in the Hexateuch, then the Book of Exodus and, finally, in the Mighty Acts narrative itself. The aim is to first see the full semantic range which חזק possesses before focusing on which of those meanings were most commonly applied by the authors/redactors who gave us the text we have today.

Strength

Hesse writes, "We take as our starting-point the basic meaning "be/become strong," from which all other meanings that are found can be derived."[108] The verb covers translations such as "be strong, be firm, be powerful, be courageous, be confident"[109] as well as "be fast […] be established."[110] With regards to famine, illness and battle, it can be translated "be violent, severe,"[111] "sharp, hot."[112] Exact translations in each case are determined by what is growing in strength: stronger bonds are "tighter,"[113] whereas strong trumpets grow "louder and louder."[114] When something becomes חָזָק its defining characteristic is intensified; an object becomes stronger in that its power becomes enhanced.

חָזָק commonly relates to physical strength,[115] the strength of armies[116] and royal power.[117] It is used also to describe the divine power of God, with numerous examples of God's

[108] Hesse, "חָזַק *chāzaq*; חָזָק *chāzāq*; חָזַק *chāzēq*; חָזֶק *chezeq*; חֹזֶק *chōzeq*; חֲזָקָה *chezqāh*; חָזְקָה *chozqāh*," *TDOT* 4: 301-308, 301.
[109] Clines, "חזק," *DCH* 3: 184.
[110] B. Davidson, "חָזָק," *AHCL*, 253.
[111] Holladay, "חזק," *CHALOT*, 100.
[112] "חזק," *BDB*, 305.
[113] Hesse, *TDOT* 4: 303.
[114] Clines, "חזק," *DCH*, 185.
[115] Judg. 7:11; 2 Sam. 2:7; 16:21; Ezek. 22:14; Zech. 8:9.
[116] Deut. 11:8; Jos. 17:13.

"strong" or "mighty" hand throughout the Hebrew Bible.[118] The strong hand is a symbol of the "superiority of the personal God Yahweh"[119] which can be both oppressive (Ezekiel suffers under the "weight" of the Lord's hand in Ezek. 3:14) and liberating (it is the mighty hand of God which brought the Israelites out of Egypt in Deut. 6:21 and elsewhere). Where God shares his strength with others, such as Moses, they too can be said to have a "mighty hand" (Deut. 34:12) and are therefore capable of great power.

Prevailing

Where חזק appears in the qal, relates to people or armies and is followed by מִן,[120] then the meaning is "to prevail over/against."[121] It is not too far from the predominant understanding of חזק as strength: one army is strong over another, or achieves victory through its superior strength. This can be translated positively or negatively, depending on the context: David *prevails/triumphs/proves the victor* over the Philistine champion (1 Sam. 17:50), and yet Amnon *overpowers* and rapes his half-sister (2 Sam. 13:14).[122]

In an adjectival form, the root occurs frequently in relation to the hand (occasionally arm) of the Lord,[123] particularly in Exodus and Numbers, but also throughout the Hebrew Bible. This image is a positive one, often translated as "a mighty hand" and understood as an impressive force: a חזק hand is a hand working powerfully and well. The Lord prevails over the Egyptians and brings the Israelites out from Egypt by his חֲזָקָה hand (13:9 and others).

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[117] 2 Sam. 3:1; 2 Chr. 26:15; Dan. 11:5.
[118] Ex. 6:1; 13:9; Num. 20:20; Deut. 3:24 and 8 others; 1 Kings 17:17; 2 Chron. 6:32; Neh. 1:10; Ps. 136:12; Jer. 21:5; 32:21; Ezek. 20:33, 34; Dan. 9:15.
[119] Hesse, *TDOT* 4: 305.
[120] 1 Sam. 17:50; 2 Sam. 10:11; 13:14; 1 Chron. 19:12.
[121] "חזק," *BDB*, 304.
[122] R. Wakely, "חזק" *NIDOTTE* 2: 63-87, 65.
[123] Ex. 3:19; 6:1; 13:9; 32:11; Num. 20:20; 3:24; 4:34; 5:15; 6:21; 7:8, 19; 9:26; 11:2; 26:8; 34:12; 1 Kings 8:42; 2 Chron. 6:32; Neh. 1:10; Psalm 136:12; Jer. 21:5; 32:21; Ezek. 20:33, 34; Dan. 9:15.

Grasping

In the hiphil, חזק possesses a unique meaning of "to hold, grasp,"[124] or "to keep, retain,"[125] (e.g. וַיַּחֲזֵק, 4:4; מַחֲזִיק, 9:2). Hesse posits that this meaning developed from a ritual wherein a person in power appointed somebody into a particular office through a grasping of hands, at which time power "flows from the hand – itself a symbol of power – of the stronger into the hand of the new official."[126] Hands are frequently the object of the verb חזק in this way, as are animals,[127] and people (often indicating "seizing" and violence).[128]

Restoration

An especially prevalent theme, particularly in 2 Kings and Nehemiah is the concept of repair and rebuilding. This translation is a specific rendering of "to strengthen" [129] when applied to city walls or houses, for example, and occurs in the piel and hiphil.[130] The repair of objects such as furnishings, tent pegs and doors is referred to as "strengthening" them.[131] Connotations of restoration are found throughout the semantic range of חזק, for example it can relate to "sustaining"[132] a poor Israelite: "If any of your kin fall into difficulty and become dependent on you, you shall וְהֶחֱזַקְתָּ them; they shall live with you as though resident aliens," (Lev. 25:35) again in the hiphil. Ezekiel 16:49 states that the sin of Sodom was that she "did not הֶחֱזִיקָה the poor and needy." Examples can also be found in the piel: "to restore to strength" in Daniel 10:18, 19 and "to restore to health" in Ezekiel 34:4, 16.[133] When something is made weak, poor or sick, then the act of חזק restores it to its former and proper strength.

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[124] Clines, "חזק," *DCH*, 186.
[125] "חזק," *BDB*, 305.
[126] Hesse, *TDOT* 4: 304.
[127] Ex. 4:4; Prov. 26:17.
[128] Gen. 19:16; Ex. 9:2; Deut. 22:25; 25:11; Judg. 19:25, 29; 1 Sam. 15:27; 17:35; 2 Sam. 1:11; 2:16; 13:11; 2 Kings 2:12; Jer. 50:33; Zech. 14:13; Job 18:9; Prov. 26:17.
[129] Davidson, *AHCL*, 253.
[130] "חזק," *BDB*, 305.
[131] Hesse, *TDOT* 4: 306.
[132] L. Koehler, W. Baumgartner, & J. Stamm, "חזק," *HALOT* 1: 302-305, 303.
[133] "חזק," *BDB*, 304.

This translation is especially interesting given the converse association of כבד with an organ which no longer properly functions. To transform a heart which has become כבד into a חזק heart could feasibly be to restore it back to health, to repair it and allow it to properly function again. Like the חזק hand, a symbol of power and strength, the חזק heart could be seen as one able to perform its purpose well: to understand, to know God.

Courage

A strengthening of the self is often construed as courage, which is prominently found in the imperative: "be strong."[134] Often the order is to be courageous in battle, for example Amaziah, worried about defeat, is commanded by a man of God: "Go by yourself and act; be strong (חֲזַק) in battle, or God will fling you down before the enemy…" and so "Amaziah strengthened himself (הִתְחַזַּק), and led out his people…" (2 Chr. 25:8, 11) Hesse notes that the imperative rarely appears by itself, rather it most often forms a pair with the imperative form of אמץ,[135] which itself covers a comparable semantic field of strength, might and courage. The motif of חזק as courage is expressed through the strengthening of hands or the imperative to have "strong hands."[136] The meaning of courage is not tied to a particular stem and can be found in the qal, piel and hithpael, though it is absent in the hiphil.[137]

Severity

Finally, the verb חזק can hold negative connotations of severity, especially in the qal, with regards to famine[138] and war.[139] As stated above, חזק often acts as an intensifier which exaggerates the nature of its object. This exaggeration can be both a positive and negative

[134] Deut. 31:6, 7, 23; Josh. 1:6, 7, 9, 18; 10:25; 23:6; 1 Sam. 4:9; 2 Sam. 10:12; 13:28; 1 Kings 2:2; 1 Chron. 19:13; 22:13; 28:10, 20; 2 Chr. 15:7; 25:8; 32:7; Ezra 10:4; Ps. 27:14; 31:24; Is. 35:4; 41:6; Dan. 10:19; Hag. 2:4.
[135] Hesse, *TDOT* 4: 307.
[136] 2 Sam. 2:7; 16:21; Ezek. 22:14; Zech. 8:9, 13.
[137] "חזק," *BDB*, 304-5.
[138] Gen.41:56, 57; 47:20; 2 Kings 25:3.
[139] 2 Kings 3:26.

outcome but this is determined not by the level of intensity, but the nature of that which is made חזק.[140] Translations with negative connotations, such as "be severe, grievous" are appropriate due to the devastating consequences of a "strengthening" disaster, but would not be suitable in other contexts where the strength of an object is desirable. It is notable that this use of חזק is not used to describe any of the plagues and yet is used to describe the "strong" wind which removes the locusts.

The Heart

Outside of the Hexateuch, there exist just two passages which link the verb חזק to a change in one's heart. Psalm 27:14 reads: "Wait for the Lord; be חֲזַק, and he will וְיַאֲמֵץ your heart; wait for the Lord!" and similarly, Psalm 31:24 says: "Be חִזְקוּ, and he will וְיַאֲמֵץ your heart, all you who wait for the Lord." Not only do these psalms link the idea of חזק with the heart, but they also recall the link between חזק and אמץ, which share the connotations of strength and courage. The image is overwhelmingly positive, with the dual command for followers of the Lord to be חזק and for their hearts to take courage. It would be an unusual reading of חזק to think that if it were switched with אמץ in these psalms, clearly intended synonymously, that having a חזק heart instead of an אמץ one was somehow negative.

Summary

Overall, as Hesse points out, the spectrum of meanings which are found within חזק have "strength" as their central theme. Throughout the Hebrew Bible, the most common uses of חזק centre about not only strength but courage and restoration as well as severity and tight grasping. Most commonly found are the militaristic uses of the word: a prevailing military

[140] The more חזק a good king's power becomes, the better. The more חזק a famine grows, the worse it becomes. There is no example of a good king's power becoming "too חזק" such that his power ultimately becomes a negative thing. However, if a good king were to become a bad king then his חזק power would then become a disaster.

strength or the imperative to be courageous before battle. However, in the hiphil there exist specialised meanings for חזק in the form of repair and of holding fast.

A "חזק hand" is a notable motif which can be a symbol of military might, divine power, or courage. Though in the Psalms, the heart's connotations with חזק and אמץ are entirely positive and even commanded of the Lord's people, it is possible that the חזק heart motif may have an equally diverse range of meaning as the חזק hand does. It may be that at different times, the חזק heart may represent strength and courage, a restored/rebuilt heart, or a heart under a tight hold.

חזק in the Penta/Hexateuch

Given the early collection of the first five books of the Bible as the Pentateuch and Exodus' place in those first five books, it is worth looking at which understandings of חזק are most prominently used in these texts. The book of Joshua has also been included because of the striking similarity that its use of חזק shares with the book of Deuteronomy.

Courage

One of the most prominent use of חזק in Deuteronomy and Joshua is that of courage. The imperative "be חֲזַק/חִזְקוּ and courageous"[141] occurs three times in Deuteronomy (31:6, 7, 23) and five times in Joshua (1:6, 7, 9, 18; 10:25). In addition, Moses is told to encourage and strengthen the man Joshua in Deut. 3:28. It is notable that this understanding of חזק does not appear in Genesis, Leviticus or, unless this is how we are to understand a חזק heart, Exodus. The only use of חזק in Numbers seems to hold this meaning: "Be bold (וְהִתְחַזַּקְתֶּם), and bring some of the fruit of the land," (Num. 13:20) although Brown-Driver-Briggs states that in this instance חזק carries the meaning of using one's strength in order to bring forth fruit from the land.[142] It appears that the writers of the first four books of the Hexateuch had surprisingly little interest in the understanding of חזק as courage unless the חזק heart is a metaphor for such. By the time that the various texts of the Pentateuch were brought together, however, the understanding of חזק as linked with courage would have been front and centre.

The Heart

In one instance, we find an explicit reference to hearts made חזק by the Lord in Joshua. "For it was the Lord's doing to לְחַזֵּק their hearts so that they would come against Israel in

[141] The Hebrew חזק ואמץ forms a hendiadys, with the two words contributing to the same meaning. "Be strong and courageous" carries the meaning "be strongly courageous" and was initially used in a military context before being used in religious context (for example, a strong and courageous adherence to the Torah). See: Hartmut N. Rösel, *Joshua*, (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 33-4.
[142] "חזק," *BDB*, 305.

battle, in order that they might be utterly destroyed, and might receive no mercy, but be exterminated, just as the Lord had commanded Moses," (Josh. 11:20). Given the predominant understanding of חזק in relation to courage in Joshua, it is natural to read a similar meaning here: that the enemies of Israel were made courageous enough to risk battle against them. This instance of חזק occurs in the piel stem, as does the meaning "to encourage, help, assist"[143] and "to make bold."[144] Butler states "To protect Israel against the major sin of idolatry, God commanded her not to show mercy to the enemy. To enable her to keep his commandment, God *caused her enemies to fight her* rather than seek mercy and peace."[145] Dozeman further characterises the action of the Lord as, "the divine invasion of the enemy's will."[146] Each of these interpretations present us with a difficult question to answer: if the Lord chooses to invade the will of Israel's enemies (including Pharaoh) in order to force them into attacking, why does he not invade their will to release/accept the people of the Lord peacefully or, even, to come to accept and worship the Lord themselves? Dozeman references the transition in Exodus from a Pharaoh whose heart is already hard to one where the Lord hardens Pharaoh's heart and speaks of the transition as a "resistance".[147] Rather, I propose that the previous understanding of חזק as courage or confidence is far better: the "hardening" of the hearts of Israel's enemies is not a forceful "invasion" which sets them on a course of destruction which they otherwise would not have chosen, but instead a "strengthening" of resolve or an "emboldening" which gives the enemies of Israel the courage to pursue the destructive course of action which they were already set upon. Certainly, the example of Pharaoh in Exodus 14 demonstrates that he was already on course to attack the Israelites before his heart was made חזק, as will be discussed in the next section.

[143] Davidson, *AHCL*, 253.
[144] "חזק," *BDB*, 304.
[145] Trent C. Butler, *Joshua*, (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1983), 130. Emphasis my own.
[146] Thomas B. Dozeman, *Joshua 1-12. A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, (New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 2015), 479.
[147] Dozeman, *Joshua*, 479.

Hesse states that the meaning in Josh. 11:20 is simply "to be hard" with broader connotations of the חזק heart as "intractable, obdurate, hardened."[148] He comes to this conclusion by assuming that the חזק motif is used in the same way as כבד and by likening the חזק heart to the חזק forehead and face in Ezekiel 3:7-9. He writes "the fundamental meaning "be or become strong" is not the point of departure, but the derived meaning "be or become hard,"[149] indicating that Pharaoh's heart becomes stiffened and heavy, obdurate and insensitive. However, it seems premature to state "here is no trace of any positive significance,"[150] and to rule out an understanding of the חזק heart as courage based on one passage in the book of Ezekiel. This is especially true given that the Hebrew Bible contains numerous references to hands which are made חזק as an indication of courage and many passages within the Hexateuch (and within Joshua more specifically) link the verb חזק to strength and courage as well. There seems little semantic evidence for assuming that כבד and חזק are intended to describe the same state of someone's heart, given חזק's overwhelmingly positive connotations of courage.

Other uses

In Genesis, the verb חזק appears twice in a grasping sense (19:16; 21:18). The same meaning of seizing/grasping is found in Deut. 22:25 (where the sense appears to be "rape") and also in 25:11. In all cases, "to grasp" is found in the hiphil. None of these uses appear to possess the connotation of strength passing from a powerful figure to a weaker one, instead simply the use of strength to grasp another person.

In Gen. 41:56-57 and 47:20, the famine which drives Joseph's brothers into Egypt is described as becoming וַיֶּחֱזַק: severe. This meaning is not found elsewhere in the Hexateuch and is remarkably missing in the account of the Mighty Acts, many of which could be

[148] Hesse, *TDOT* 4: 308.
[149] Hesse, *TDOT* 4: 308.
[150] Hesse, *TDOT* 4: 308.

conceived of as “severe” plagues. Instead, the word כבד is used to describe harsh plagues as “heavy”.

חזק also appears in the hithpael with the meaning “summoned his strength” in Gen. 48:2: “When Jacob was told, “Your son Joseph has come to you,” he strengthened himself (וַיִּתְחַזֵּק) and sat on the bed.” Here, a weakened individual makes themselves חזק in order to restore their strength, stature and ability. The same form of the verb can mean “summon one’s strength, […] show oneself strong, show oneself brave, valiant, stouthearted, take courage,”[151] linking the strengthening of the body with the strengthening of resolve or the mind.

Summary

Outside of Exodus, there exists no clear use of חזק as a term for courage in the Pentateuch except in the works of the Deuteronomist. Deuteronomy and Joshua prominently use חזק to speak of encouragement and strength of resolve before battle, though the forms of חזק used to describe a physical strengthening do elsewhere hold connotations of courage and emboldening. Leviticus and Numbers each have only a single use of the word, whereas Genesis uses the term a handful of times to speak of grasping, strengthening and the severity of a disaster.

[151] Wakely, *NIDOTTE* 2, 77.

חזק in Exodus

Of the 51 uses of חזק in the Hexateuch, 26 of them appear in the Book of Exodus. Contrary to the word's sparse application in other books, here חזק forms part of a prominent theme, as did כבד, and its frequent use appears deliberate. The 10 uses within the Mighty Acts narrative (7-11) will be examined separately, but the remaining uses will be summarised here.

Mighty Hand

The mighty hand of the Lord is mentioned eight times in Exodus.[152] The Lord warns Moses that Pharaoh will not let his people go unless compelled by a חזק hand in 3:19. This image characterises Pharaoh as stubborn and obstinate, one who will not be convinced but must be forced into releasing the Israelites. He offers assurance to Moses that the effects of the Lord's חזק hand will be the freedom of his people in 6:1 and that Pharaoh's desire to hold onto the people will be so starkly changed that "he will drive them from the land." The sense here is clearly of prevailing strength and might over the Egyptian king. Following the Mighty Acts narrative, the חזק hand of the Lord is an object of praise for bringing the people out of Egypt, a symbol of divine deliverance and a defining characteristic of the Lord in Exodus. When Pharaoh asks "Who is the Lord, that I should obey him?" in 5:2, it does not seem unreasonable to reply that the Lord is the one with "great power and a תֲזָקָה hand" (32:11) just as he is the one to whom כבוד is due.

The חזק hand of the Lord does not hold the connotations of courage found in the imperative to have strong hands and, instead, is straightforwardly a symbol of the his prevailing strength as well as his role of deliverer of the Israelites: "[…] by a בְּחֹזֶק hand the Lord brought us out of Egypt" (13:16).

[152] 3:19; 6:1 (twice); 13:3, 9, 14, 16; 32:11.

Other uses

Once, וַיַּחֲזֶק is used in the hiphil to signify grasping: Moses seizes the snake by the tail in 4:4. Verses 19:16 and 19:19 refer to a וְחָזֵק trumpet, which becomes "louder." The most interesting use, however, is in 12:33: "The Egyptians were וַתֶּחֱזַק with the people to hasten their departure from the land, for they said, "We shall all be dead."" Here, the sense is of an urging: the Egyptians press the Israelites to leave them be.

The Heart

There is a secondary passage to the Mighty Acts within the book of Exodus which makes use of the hardened heart motif and it is during the crossing of the Red Sea. Three times, the Lord promises to or is said to חזק the hearts of Pharaoh or the Egyptians (14:4, 8, 17). Brown-Driver-Briggs understands the use here to mean "make rigid, hard, i.e. perverse, obstinate,"[153] and Hesse maintains that the meaning is "intractable, obdurate, hardened."[154] However, given the motif's use elsewhere in the Psalms (Ps. 27:14; 31:24)[155] in which the hearts of Israel are told to be אמץ and themselves to be חזק,[156] and given the passages in Deuteronomy and Joshua that repeatedly link the idea of חזק with a courageous (אמץ) heart, I must dispute this assertion. It seems clear that making the hearts of the Egyptians חזק is an idiom for giving them courage to chase the Israelites. It seems untenable to translate in a favourable light the examples where the Lord strengthens the hearts of his people and in a negative light those times that he strengthens the hearts of those who oppose his people.

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[153] "חזק," *BDB*, 304.
[154] Hesse, *TDOT* 4: 308.
[155] The heart is addressed "to bolster confidence" as it is the seat of fear: the Psalmist desires a strong (אמץ) heart and to be courageous. See: Konrad Schaefer, *Psalms*, (Collegeville, MN: Liturgival Press, 2001), 68-9; 79. Further, the reader of the Psalm is "encouraged to be firm and strong" with both words used in an unambiguously positive manner with the theme of encouragement. See: Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 1-59:A Commentary*, (trans. H. Oswald; Minneapolis: Augsburg Pulishing House, 1988), 337.
[156] These examples in the Psalms are recognised by Brown-Driver-Briggs as being representative of courage and confidence.

Gunn answers the question raised by McCarthy regarding the surprising readiness of Pharaoh in pursuing Israel,[157] saying: "The explanation is there in the text […] Verse 5 is framed by unambiguous declarations of divine causality (14:4, 8)."[158] However, this is resolutely false: God does not make the hearts of the Egyptians perverse and immovable so as to force them into actions that they would not otherwise have taken. Indeed, as if to counter any suggestion that Pharaoh's heart is made חזק in order to divinely cause him to pursue the Israelites, we read:

"I will [וְחִזַּקְתִּי] the heart of Pharaoh, and he will pursue them […] When the king of Egypt was told that the people had fled, the minds of Pharaoh and his officials were changed towards the people, and they said, "What have we done, letting Israel leave our service?" So he had his chariot made ready, and took his army with him; […] The Lord [וַיְחַזֵּק] *the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt and he pursued the Israelites, who were going out with high hands." (14:4-8)*

Pharaoh changes his mind before his heart is made חזק and he is already preparing his chariots to chase down the Israelites. Though the Lord says that he will make Pharaoh's heart חזק beforehand, that strengthening happens after Pharaoh has already made preparations for the daunting task of attacking a people whose God has just demonstrated incredible acts of destructive power. The same "intractable" and "obdurate" mind-set which the Lord apparently imposes upon Pharaoh and his officials would be interpreted as "courage" or "conviction" were it made fixed towards a goal which the reader found favourable. In these examples of the חזק heart in Exodus 14, the sense is truly that Pharaoh's pre-existing desires are strengthened and he is given the courage to carry them out. Far from transforming Pharaoh into a single-minded pursuant, the Lord here strengthens the heart of Pharaoh to fulfil his own desire to recapture the Israelites: a desire he formed independently of the Lord's action and which he was already making preparations for before the act of making חזק his heart. An analogous relationship could potentially exist with the Mighty Acts narrative of

[157] McCarthy, "Plagues," 153.
[158] Gunn, "Hardening," 79.

Pattern 2, where Pharaoh is already confident because of the efforts of his magicians, and the Lord makes his heart חזק at the end to strengthen an existing position.

Summary

The two prominent motifs featuring חזק in the Book of Exodus are the interplay between the חזק heart of Pharaoh and the חזק hand of the Lord. As demonstrated previously, the חזק hand can possess a variety of meanings from courage to might, but here carries simply the meaning of divine power over Pharaoh. The motif of the חזק heart appears to indicate the courage required in order to pursue the Israelites, but whether this meaning is uniformly applied throughout the Mighty Acts narrative is yet to be proven. It certainly seems consistent with the use in Pattern 2, which has already been shown to see Pharaoh as unwaveringly confident in his own position and in which the Lord does not directly become involved until the climax of the narrative: likewise, the influence of the Lord in making the Egyptians courageous is not felt until the moments before they pursue the Israelites.

חזק in the Mighty Acts

In the Mighty Acts, חזק is only used twice without relation to the heart. In one case, Pharaoh "tightly holds" the Israelites (9:2). The other example is of the "strong" west wind (10:19) which takes away the locusts.

That this wind is described as חזק is interesting in that the Lord uses the wind to remove a כבד swarm of locusts. As mentioned above, none of the Mighty Acts are ever described as חזק, but many of the most severe are described as כבד. That the instrument of removing the כבד plague of locusts is termed חזק is noteworthy, given the alternative words available to the author: Jer. 4:12 speaks of a "full" (מָלֵא) wind and even Exodus contains a "strong" east wind in 14:21, where the root עזה is used. The use of חזק in the Mighty Acts narrative to describe

that which removes a כבד plague seems to be deliberate wordplay which brings to mind both the act of Pharaoh upon his heart (כבד) and the act of the Lord upon that same heart (חזק). If not, then there is no reason that the author of Exodus would not have used the same word to describe the strong wind in 14:21 as the one in 10:19. In the Mighty Acts, which holds the highest concentration anywhere in the Hebrew Bible for the uses of חזק and כבד in parallel and in relation to the heart of Pharaoh, the author made a deliberate choice to label a plague as כבד and the instrument of its removal as חזק.

Pharaoh's Heart

Every other use of חזק relates to the heart of Pharaoh. Wakely says that the piel forms of the verb are references to obduracy, and that "Yahweh hardened Pharaoh's heart so that he would not release the Israelites from Egypt."[159] However, whether or not this understanding of obduracy makes sense of the various uses of חזק in reference to Pharaoh's heart is doubtful.

The eight instances of חזק which relate to the heart of Pharaoh are as follows:

a) Following Moses' serpent eating the serpents of the magicians (7:13)
b) Following the replication of the blood miracle by the magicians (7:22)
c) Despite the magicians' warning that the gnats demonstrate "the finger of God" (8:19)
d) Following the magicians' failure to repeat the boils (9:12)
e) Following the rescinding of the plague of hail (9:35)
f) Following the rescinding of the plague of locusts (10:20)
g) During the plague of darkness (10:27)
h) In the conclusion to the final confrontation between Moses and Pharaoh (11:10)

The prominence of the magicians in the first four uses and their complete absence in the latter is especially notable; the magicians only appear in one Mighty Act in which Pharaoh's heart is not said to become חזק [160] and seem closely linked to the change in Pharaoh's heart where the Lord is not involved. This section will intend to show that the word is used differently in the first four examples than it is in the second set of four, in keeping with the

[159] Wakely, *NIDOTTE* 2, 71.
[160] The Mighty Act of Frogs, as has been discussed before, mentions that Pharaoh made his own heart כבד.

separation of these plagues into Pattern 2 and Patterns 1+3 (or P and non-P). Importantly, the theme of obduracy will be shown to be absent, not simply from those scenes involving the magicians, but also those where the Lord acts in the piel.

The situation in a) is that Moses and Aaron jointly perform a sign before Pharaoh which is intended to prove that they have been sent by the Lord; it is expected that Pharaoh will demand such a wonder (7:8) and so Moses and Aaron demonstrate their authority. However, the magicians of Egypt respond in a way which should reassure Pharaoh that his own authority has not been outdone: they are able to replicate the miracle exactly "throwing down" their staffs as Aaron did (7:10 and 7:12) and reproducing the same result of transformation. Following this, Pharaoh's heart is said to become חזק and it is said that "he would not listen" (7:13). The clear inference appears to be, contrary to Hesse's claim that the חזק heart never appears in relation to encouragement,[161] that Pharaoh is emboldened by the actions of his own magicians and made confident in his own authority and ability.

The second occurrence follows the actions of Moses and Aaron at the banks of the Nile. Again, a transformation sign is performed by the pair (this time, water is transformed into blood) by the use of a staff (7:17, 19, 20) and the magicians successfully repeat the sign. In b), however, there are also elements which would fit the category of plague, rather than sign: the river stinks and the Egyptians cannot drink (7:18, 21, 24). We might expect these plague-like effects to have a weakening or softening effect upon Pharaoh (as they do in the Act of Frogs) but this is not the case. When the magicians "did the same by their secret arts", Pharaoh's heart remains חזק, again indicating an encouraged Pharaoh who has his own power confirmed by his agents. So, Pharaoh again does not listen to Moses' demands.

c) is an altogether different situation. Here, the magicians fail to reproduce the sign. Though many of the other elements remain constant (this is a transformation miracle of dust

[161] Hesse, *TDOT* 4: 307.

into gnats, through the use of a staff, with the presence of Aaron) this time the magicians are unable to produce gnats. Instead, they issue a warning to Pharaoh that this is a power that identifies Moses and Aaron as representatives of the divine: "This is the finger of God!" (8:19). Despite this, Pharaoh's heart is strong (וַיֶּחֱזַק) and still, he refuses to listen. Encouragement seems unsustainable as an understanding of Pharaoh's state at this stage in the narrative is we are to understand this as a "becoming" חזק. Nevertheless, if we are to translate this instance of the verb חזק as "remained strong" or simply "was strong" then it is possible to understand this as Pharaoh remaining confident despite rational reasons to have become disheartened. What Pharaoh has witnessed is a performance which his magicians cannot imitate; however, no negative or painful impact has been felt and so Pharaoh has no reason to feel any less confident in his position.

By the time of d), "the magicians could not even stand before Moses because of the boils" (9:11) and their power has been shown to be so far below the powers of the Lord and his agents that it would seem natural for Pharaoh to back down and listen to the demands of Moses. It is at this point, when the magicians make their final appearance, failing to transform soot into boils, that the Lord first makes חזק Pharaoh's heart. It makes sense, given that the loss of Pharaoh's only demonstrators of his own divine authority and that they have become "afflicted" (9:12) that this could be the point where Pharaoh finally relented and gave in to Moses' demands. At this moment, the Lord intervenes for the first time in Pharaoh's heart and makes it חזק. How we understand the חזק heart determines our understanding of what the Lord is trying to achieve in doing so. Given that this instance and the preceding ones have all occurred in Pattern 2, where no demand has been made of Pharaoh, it seems that the Lord encourages Pharaoh to keep fighting (in keeping with the previous uses of חזק so far in the Mighty Acts).

Instance e) forms an apparent cementing together of the two motifs of the כבד and חזק heart: "[...] he sinned once more and וַיַּכְבֵּד his heart, he and his officials. So the heart of Pharaoh וַיֶּחֱזַק, and he would not let the Israelites go…" (9:34-35). This is the only time that the two words are used to describe the heart's reaction to the same plague and appears to function as a device linking the two (at once separate) ideas. The fact that Pharaoh's heart becomes חזק here, following the rescinding of the rain, hail and thunder, could feasibly be understood as confidence in a positive change of Pharaoh's position: he is no longer suffering under the effects of a definitive plague (as opposed to a sign) and so, despite no show of strength from his magicians, he does experience a change of fortune which could encourage Pharaoh's heart. However, the change in Pharaoh's heart which is specifically said to be a result of the change of circumstances is that it becomes כבד: "But when Pharaoh saw that the rain and the hail and the thunder had ceased, he sinned once more and וַיַּכְבֵּד his heart, he and his officials," (9:34). After this it is said "So the heart of Pharaoh was וַיֶּחֱזַק…" (9:35). This is the same form of the verb found in Is. 39:1: "[…] he heard that he had been sick and had recovered [וַיֶּחֱזַק]" and so it would be entirely possible to interpret חזק as denoting a renewal, a healing and the opposite of כבד in this instance.

A similar situation is found in f), where Pharaoh's heart is changed after the rescinding of the plague of locusts. However, here it is said to be the Lord who affects this change (10:20). This follows the "חָזָק wind" in verse 10:19, mentioned above. Instead of encouragement, I propose the second understanding is meant (that, like the חזק wind removing the כבד locusts, the meaning here is that the Lord makes Pharaoh's heart חזק to remove its כבד nature, its "heaviness"). The Lord performs two actions in quick succession in this passage, both relating to the verb חזק; I therefore suggest that the Lord changes the wind from easterly to westerly just as he changes Pharaoh's heart from dull and insensitive to strong and able. The purpose of חזק in these latter passages seems to be to directly contrast with כבד and result in

the opposite outcome: that he will indeed let the people go. By contrast, the confidently חזק heart of Pharaoh in the Pattern 2 account do not have this in mind.

The circumstances of g) can similarly share the meaning of strengthening. Moses enacts a plague upon Egypt which causes Pharaoh to relent somewhat with a compromised offer, at which point Moses makes clear his full demands and the Lord makes Pharaoh's heart חזק. Following this, Pharaoh takes his offer off the table in anger. Confidence/courage could plausibly be meant here but there is no change in Pharaoh's situation that could account for such a confidence boost. Pharaoh becomes more obstinate and refuses to let them go but it is Moses' further demands which best explain this behaviour, rather than the Lord's interference: Pharaoh relents on his offer because his compromise is not accepted. The Lord interfering in such a way as to alter Pharaoh's decision making is an unnecessary explanation for Pharaoh's change of heart and is better understood as a further empowering of Pharaoh's heart to make the correct decision: an empowering which is nevertheless unsuccessful in achieving Moses and the Lord's desired outcome.

The final instance h) will be discussed more fully in the next section of this essay in order to demonstrate how theological assumptions shape our rendering of ו. Briefly, however, I believe that the Lord and his agents, Moses and Aaron, are acting towards the same goal of convincing Pharaoh to change his mind and release the Israelites. Therefore, when the Lord makes the heart of Pharaoh חזק, he is working in conjunction with, not in opposition to, the various Mighty Acts performed on his behalf, whose aim is to bring about the release of his people. The empowering of Pharaoh's decision-making centre, the heart, seems the most plausible interpretation of this instance of חזק.

Summary

חזק is used in two distinct ways in the Mighty Acts narrative and is so used because of the two underlying sources which use חזק. In one of these accounts, the motif of the חזק heart functioned to explain Pharaoh's continued reluctance to listen to Moses as an overconfident and encouraged heart which led Pharaoh to believe he had no reason to back down. At first this was because his magicians were able to reproduce the same effects and later, this confidence persisted despite their ever intensifying failings, being finally cemented by the Lord as a courage to see his desires through against the odds. In the second account, however, it was primarily the Lord who made Pharaoh's heart חזק and he did so in order to remove the state of heaviness (כבד) in Pharaoh's heart which was self-imposed, this use of the verb is similar to a "recovery" like that in Is. 39:1.

Theological preconceptions on glossing ו

The one impediment to this reading is the apparent causal link between the Lord making Pharaoh's heart חזק and Pharaoh then not letting the people go. For example in the NRSV, 11:10 reads: "Moses and Aaron performed all these wonders before Pharaoh; but [ו] the Lord hardened [חזק] Pharaoh's heart, and [ו] he did not let the people of Israel go out of his land."

The conjunction ו serves to connect two sentences, clauses or words. It can be equally used to join comparative, causal and even antithetical clauses and is therefore translated variably as and/so/but amongst a host of other English conjunctions.[162] The decision of how exactly to translate each instance of ו is largely determined by context, with co-ordinated uses translated frequently as "and", whereas opposing or comparative examples more often translated "but". Where context is ambiguous, it is the theological assumptions of the interpreter that play an important role in translation..

In the Mighty Acts narrative, there are a number of verses where the decision to translate a given instance of ו in a certain way has profound theological implications but for this investigation we will take 11:10 for our example. The implication of 11:10 in the NRSV is that Moses and Aaron, agents of the Lord, performed wonders to Pharaoh in order to achieve the Lord's ultimate goal: the release of the people of Israel. *But* the Lord intervened and introduced a new influencing clause, working "in express antithesis"[163] to the previous one, by making Pharaoh's heart חזק. Because of this clause (hence the "*and*") Pharaoh did not cede to the demands of Moses and Aaron.

However, it is equally plausible to translate 11:10 thusly: "Moses and Aaron performed all these wonders before Pharaoh, *and* the Lord וַיְחַזֵּק Pharaoh's heart; *but* he did not let the people of Israel go out of his land." Now the verse reads incredibly differently. Moses and Aaron, agents of the Lord, perform the wonders in furtherance of the Lord's goal of

[162] Gesenius, 154.a.
[163] Gesenius, 142.d.

liberation. *And,* furthermore, the Lord makes חזק the heart of Pharaoh in pursuit of his own stated goal. *But* the combined effort of the Lord and his miracle workers proves in vain because Pharaoh still holds on to the people of Israel.

There are three main clauses in this passage: a) Moses and Aaron performed wonders before Pharaoh; b) the Lord made Pharaoh's heart חזק*;* c) Pharaoh did not let the people of Israel go. This three-clause distinction is borne out in the Masoretic notation which places disjunctive accents after each clause in order to indicate that they understood each as a distinct idea.

Clauses A and C are clearly in direct antithesis: on multiple occasions the expressly stated mission of Moses and Aaron is to command that Pharaoh release the Lord's people[164] and yet clause C clearly states that this mission is unsuccessful. Were clause B not present, it would be obvious to translate the ו that begins clause C as "but": "Moses and Aaron performed all these wonders before Pharaoh, *but* he did not let the people of Israel go out of his land."

The introduction of clause B is the complicating factor as it means the verse has two influencing clauses and one resulting clause but it is not clear whether the two influential actions are working in cooperation or competition. I would argue that the natural reading is that the Lord and his agents are working in cooperation but that their coordinated efforts regrettably result in failure. However, the Masoretic notation appears to disagree, seeing as the *'athnach* (^), which marks the logical midpoint of the sentence, occurs after clause A, splitting the verse like so: "Moses and Aaron performed all these wonders before Pharaoh *(^)* but the Lord וַיְחַזֵּק Pharaoh's heart; and he did not let the people of Israel go out of his land."

This implies that the sentence is split into the following logical halves: firstly that Moses and Aaron perform wonders; and secondly that the Lord makes Pharaoh's heart חזק and Pharaoh does not let the people go. Were the midpoint placed after clause B, the shift in

[164] 7:16; 8:1, 20; 9:1, 13; 10:3.

emphasis would be such as was shown above by switching the translations of ו. Bible translations have largely followed the Masoretic logical separations with no English version rendering the ו which begins clause C as anything besides "and". Many, including the NIV and NRSV, also translate the ו beginning clause B as "but" to further the interpretation that the Lord is acting antithetically in clause B to the aims of Moses and Aaron in clause A. I suggest that this only appears as the more natural translation given a presumption that a heart made חזק is an undesirable situation. Hence, given that clause C is an undesirable situation as well, clause B must act by means of an explanation for the unwanted result: Pharaoh does not release Israel *because* God has made his heart חזק. However, if possessing a חזק heart was considered a correct state of being, then our assumptions would be reversed: Pharaoh did not release Israel *despite* God making his heart חזק.

Ultimately, to determine the context in which we translate the two important וs in this verse (and many others throughout the Mighty Acts narrative), one must first decide whether having a חזק heart is an admirable or an undesired situation. Given the word study on חזק and the theological focus of Pattern 1 combined with Pattern 3, it seems entirely appropriate to translate the וs in 11:10 and similar passages to reflect that the Lord was acting in conjunction with Moses and Aaron and that nevertheless his healing and strengthening of Pharaoh's heart,[165] that he might know God and release his people, was unsuccessful in bringing about a lasting change in Pharaoh.

[165] Another argument to consider is the influence of Egyptian idioms concerning a "hard heart". Though this area of study has not been possible for this dissertation, a brief Afterword summarises some of these idioms and their potential fruitfulness for further study in this field.

Conclusion

This essay has sought to show that behind the current text of Exodus there exist three distinct patterns of tradition. However, it is difficult to talk about each as its own source and scholarly opinion remains divided. The safest way to think of these sources are as P (Pattern 2) and non-P, each with its own theological focus and divergent views on the function and efficacy of the Mighty Acts. In recognising these distinct traditions, their understandings of the "hardened heart" motif are shown to be distinct and that it is only their blurring which causes the theological discomfort regarding the Lord's actions in the heart of Pharaoh.

For P, the Acts are signs performed before Pharaoh without demands or negotiations and they are unfortunately and repeatedly unsuccessful: Pharaoh remains confident (חזק) throughout because of the early successes of his magicians. He does not know God and shows no sign of weakening his courage. When those around him recognise these signs as the work of the divine, his confidence endures organically until the moment that Aaron steps back and Moses performs a final sign after which the Lord makes Pharaoh's heart חזק as well, bolstering Pharaoh's pre-existing confidence before a final confrontation. The חזק heart motif is an explanation for how Pharaoh could stand up to God given the displays of divine power before him and its answer is that Pharaoh did not have reason to see these signs as a threat to his power: they may have displayed the "finger of God" but Pharaoh was not in danger and he had no cause to stop being confident. When that moment came, however, the Lord gave him the courage required for him to continue on the path he had already set himself down. That Pharaoh release the Israelites of his own accord is not an expressed goal: they will be liberated by the Lord one way or another.

In the non-P material, the motif of the חזק/כבד heart is more complicated and involves far longer scenes and far more wordplay. The extensive conversations with Pharaoh, demanding, threatening and negotiating display a concern with the character of Pharaoh and the desire

that he will freely let the people go, hence the repeated phrase throughout the combined narrative of Patterns 1 and 3. Pharaoh's stubborn refusal to do so is not explained by confidence, but by a complex notion of his own כבד heart. Pharaoh refuses to understand, he makes himself the fool, he denies glory to God but makes his own heart heavy with self-importance. Pharaoh sins and he recognises this. When a כבד plague is sent upon Pharaoh's heart, he relents and admits his desperation. However, the Lord is not content with this: the Lord wants Pharaoh to release the people freely and so it is the action of Pharaoh once the plagues are lifted that is of importance. Each time the כבד plague is taken away, Pharaoh returns to his sinful ways and makes his heart כבד, heavy and stubborn once more. By the plague of Hail, Pharaoh appears to reach rock bottom and asks Moses in desperation that this death be removed from him (10:17). At this point, the Lord begins to strengthen (חזק) Pharaoh's heart to further empower him to make the right decision. When the next and most devastatingly כבד plague hits Egypt, the Lord removes it with a חזק wind and makes חזק the heart of Pharaoh, only for this to be completely unsuccessful as well.

Far from a despotic hold over Pharaoh's decisions, each stratum of tradition clearly places the blame for Pharaoh's obstinacy squarely with him. He is overconfident and unyielding, he is self-honouring and foolish, but he is so because of his own actions and the circumstances in which he finds himself in. The people around him (magicians, officials) come to recognise the truth of Moses' message whilst he does not. But this obduracy is not caused by the Lord, who either acts to enable Pharaoh to act upon his own desires, or tries actively to heal and strengthen Pharaoh's heart in order to allow him to release the people of his own volition. Ultimately, as the Lord predicts, Pharaoh is too stubborn and must be compelled by a mighty hand, but even in using force to destroy Pharaoh and his army, the Lord's purpose is didactic: "And I will strengthen/encourage (וְחִזַּקְתִּי) Pharaoh's heart and he will pursue them. But I will gain glory *(*וְאִכָּבְדָה*)* for myself through Pharaoh and all of his army, and the Egyptians will

know that I am the Lord," (14:4). The act of making Pharaoh's heart חזק will ultimately lead to כבוד being returned to the Lord in the sight of the Egyptians.

The uncomfortable theological issues present in the Mighty Acts narrative are only present when the acts of Pharaoh upon his own heart (a dulling, disabling act of self-honour) are conflated with the acts that the Lord has on his heart. Pharaoh is said to be sinning when he makes his heart כבד and so if the Lord is acting in the same way when he makes Pharaoh's heart חזק then naturally we beg the question of the Lord's justness in doing so. Likewise, a simple division between כבד and חזק is insufficient to make sense of the Lord's actions, else we still must deal with the following problem: the חזק nature of Pharaoh's heart in the scenes with magicians clearly prevents the Lord's message from being effective, for the Lord to be acting in the same way would mean he deliberately obstructs his own purposes in dealing with Pharaoh and the Egyptians.

The only way to solve this issue has been shown to be a recognition of the different strata of tradition underlying the present text. We have a P text (Pattern 2) in which the חזק heart was used to denote the confidence that Pharaoh had in his own power and authority: his heart was first confident and then became bold and courageous as the grounds for confidence were slowly stripped away. In the non-P material, however, חזק takes on a very different purpose as the antithesis to כבד: this stratum of tradition deals with far more wordplay, setting the heavy heart of Pharaoh against the strengthening and restoring of the heart by the Lord: the Lord's actions are best understood as "how YHWH took over the struggle with Pharaoh after the efforts on a human level had failed."[166] A separation of the sources demonstrates their direct opposition and three separate uses of the "hardened heart motif" as we currently have it in English translations: the heart made heavy (כבד), the heart made bold (חזק) and the heart made strong (חזק).

[166] Albertz, "Noncontinuous Literary Sources," in *Formation of the Pentateuch* (ed. J. Gertz et al.), 612.

Afterword: Egyptian Idioms Regarding the "Hardness of Heart"

Shupak writes that the uses of the hardened heart motif in the Mighty Acts show "a clear Egyptian background."[167] As I have done above with the Hebrew, she identifies two separate forms of the Egyptian "hardened heart" idiom with distinct vocabulary (*dns ib*; *shm ib*). Though there has not been time or space to devote to this area in this dissertation, there are some key parallels to be highlighted which echo what I have been working towards in this present study and which warrant further investigation.

To have a "firm heart," denoted by *dns ib*, refers to "a man who is restrained and in control of his senses."[168] This is in direct antithesis to the כבד heart which, among the many connotations discussed above, refers to a fool, one whose rationality has become dull and whose emotions are blind passions. Shupak notes the imperative "Keep firm your heart, steady your heart," as a command to be in control and not reveal one's intentions. On the other hand, *shm ib* can have two meanings. Literally meaning "hard of heart," it can refer either to "the opposite of weakness and cowardice," or to "violence and insolence." A hard heart can be something of which to be proud in an Egyptian context as it relates to strength of character and of resolve. Likewise, the Hebrew חזק appears to hold this meaning in relation to the heart: a strength and a boldness. Rather than an understanding along the lines of obduracy and callousness, a "firm hearted" person may be someone who simply knows their own mind and has the conviction to see it through.

None of the Egyptian idioms about a "hardened heart" refer to something which we could identify as a parallel in meaning with the כבד heart in the Mighty Acts narrative. Neither can the כבד/חזק heart motif be found in any section of the Hebrew Bible which lack an Egyptian background or context, whereas the קשׁה heart, which straightforwardly denotes stubbornness, can (Prov. 28:14; Ps.45:8; Ezek. 2:4). It appears that the purpose of this metaphor in Exodus

[167] N. Shupak, "Some Idioms Connected With the Concept of "Heart" in Egypt and the Bible," in *Pharaonic Egypt: The Bible and Christianity*, ed. Sarah Israelit-Groll. (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1985): 202-212, 207.
[168] Shupak, "Idioms," 206.

is to play with the concept of the "heavy heart" in relation to the heart's role in the Egyptian judgement of the dead.[169] Pharaoh makes his own heart "heavy" by his stubborn refusal: whereas the Egyptian concept of hardening one's heart was positive, where the Hebrew Bible uses כבד, it reverses this and connects a hardness with the idea of weight. Whilst "the expression *shm ib* […] means precision and honesty in conjunction with the image of the scales,"[170] the כבד heart is one for which Pharaoh will be negatively judged.

Shupak believes that all uses of the "hardened heart" motif in Exodus follow this pattern, in that they make the positive association of a firm heart in the Egyptian idiom into a negative. I am unconvinced and see many parallels with the positive connotations of the stalwart *shm ib* in the Priestly account of the Mighty Acts narrative; Pharaoh remains resolute and determined in a way which would be positive were he working towards a righteous goal. It is not his חזק heart which is the problem: it is that he refuses to let the people go. Also, I see elements of the *dns ib* idiom in Pattern 3's use of חזק, where (when combined with Pattern 1) the חזק heart appears to be in direct opposition to the כבד heart. I see no reason why we must reject all of the positive connotations original to these idioms when examining their application in the Hebrew Bible.

Whilst it is wise not to overstate the importance of these Egyptian idioms' potential relationship to the "hardened heart" motif in Exodus (after all, the roots do not seem to be cognates and it is far from clear how the Egyptian versions came to be adopted by Hebrew writers) it is worth considering. Especially given the word study on חזק which has demonstrated the overwhelmingly positive connotations of the root elsewhere, and given its tight association with both courage and strength, I see good grounds for assuming that the root was chosen to reflect positively those connotations that the "hardened heart" Egyptian idiom possessed.

[169] Shupak, "Idioms," 207.
[170] Shupak, "Idioms," 206-207.

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