**From Cessation to Anticipation** – The Semantic Shift of the Root כל"ה in Light of the Phrases 'כלתה עין' and 'כלתה נפש' [[1]](#footnote-1)

The basic sense of the root כל"ה is to cease, to bring to completion, to finish.[[2]](#footnote-2) This is the sense used in most of its appearances in its verb form in the Bible,[[3]](#footnote-3) and is the source of the noun form of this word – 'כלה' – meaning complete destruction.[[4]](#footnote-4) In Ugaritic, the cognate root *kly* has a related meaning, ‘comes to the end,’ or ‘causing the end,’ ‘to empty,’ ‘to consume.’[[5]](#footnote-5)

One of the subsenses of the root כל"ה in Hebrew indicates expectation, hope, yearning,[[6]](#footnote-6) especially in the phrases 'כלתה עין' and 'כלתה נפש'*.*[[7]](#footnote-7) What is the exact relationship between the two senses, if such a relationship exists? How did the root shift from its original sense to its secondary sense?

In this paper I will describe the semantic shift of the verb כל"ה through an examination of the two phrases 'כלתה עין' and 'כלתה נפש'. I will relate the ancients’ concept of the eye’s anatomy and reopen the discussion about the meaning of these two phrases, which will shed light upon the holistic perception of body and mind in the Bible.

In the early 80s of the previous century, Meir Gruber, in a study on nonverbal gestures, claimed that כלו עיניים means ‘the eyes are emptied,’ or ‘eyes whose tears have dried up.’[[8]](#footnote-8) As part of the discussion about weeping, he defines the phrase as an idiom that describes continual weeping and the state of depression that follows it, similar to the English phrase to ‘cry one’s eyes out.’ He noted the thirteen appearances of the phrase and translated each of the verses into English.

Gruber’s foundational work influenced the scholarship that followed, although there are still interpretations and translations where the phrase is misunderstood. For example, we find a wide range of exegetes who understand the phrase 'כלה עין' to imply an eye that was damaged in various ways – fatigue, visual deterioration, or blindness.[[9]](#footnote-9) Indeed, the literal sense of the phrase 'כלה עין' is that the eye is ‘finished,’ which logically leads to an interpretation of damaged eyes as blindness.[[10]](#footnote-10) ‘Eye’ in this phrase is metonymic for its central function, to see, and so the phrase means that the ability to see was terminated. However, a deeper examination of the text shows that the phrase relates to a different one of the eye’s functions – its ability to shed tears, and not its ability to see. This accords with the ancients’ concept of the eye’s anatomy.

In this paper, I wish to add another layer to Gruber’s study by laying out a wider picture and delving deeper into the semantic development of the phrase. I start with the ancients’ understanding of the eye’s anatomy, then survey the development of the combination formed by כל"ה with the noun ‘eye,’ and end with an understanding of the source of the phrases which have come to mean ‘anticipation’ and ‘hope.’

**The Ancients’ Concept of the Eye’s Anatomy**

The appearances of ‘eye’ in the Bible show that the ancients perceived the eye as a vessel that contains tears. In Jeremiah, the speaker asks "מִי-יִתֵּן רֹאשִׁי מַיִם וְעֵינִי מְקוֹר דִּמְעָה" (‘Oh, that my head were a spring of water and my eyes a fountain of tears,’ Jer 8:23).[[11]](#footnote-11) His hidden wish was to have his eyes fill with water, so he would have a continual source of water for his tears[[12]](#footnote-12) and could weep without stop, day and night, over the destruction of his people. This fantastical metaphor is, of course, unrealizable, as is apparent from the opening exclamation "מי יתן", literally ‘who will grant.’[[13]](#footnote-13)

The concept of the eye as the source of tears and a water reservoir is reflected in the many mentions of tears which flow from the eyes (Jer 9:17, 13:17, 14:17, 31:16; Ps 115:8; Lam 2:11), and in metaphors of tears as water. For example, "פַּלְגֵי-מַיִם תֵּרַד עֵינִי... עֵינִי נִגְּרָה וְלֹא תִדְמֶה מֵאֵין הֲפֻגוֹת" (‘Streams of tears flow from my eyes… My eyes will flow unceasingly,’ Lam 3:48-49);[[14]](#footnote-14) "פַּלְגֵי-מַיִם יָרְדוּ עֵינָי"  (‘Mine eyes run down with streams of water,’ Ps 119:136), and in the speaker in Lamentations’ command to Jerusalem, "חוֹמַת בַּת-צִיּוֹן הוֹרִידִי כַנַּחַל דִּמְעָה יוֹמָם וָלַיְלָה אַל-תִּתְּנִי פוּגַת לָךְ אַל-תִּדֹּם בַּת-עֵינֵךְ" (‘You walls of Daughter Zion, let your tears flow like a river day and night; give yourself no relief, your eyes no rest,’ Lam 2:18). Alongside the command to act – to cry day and night – the speaker also tells Jerusalem what not to do, to not let her eye rest or relieve her eye from crying,[[15]](#footnote-15) usually explained as the command to not stop the tears. However, the wording of the verse lends itself to an additional level of meaning. This meaning is based on the author’s deliberate choice of the term 'בת עין',[[16]](#footnote-16) and the additional meanings of the root דמ"מ. The metaphor 'בת עין' anthropomorphizes the eye and treats it as a mother who has a daughter – the pupil, or her tear. This anthropomorphism enables a reading of the root דמ"מ also in the sense of ‘to be silent,’ such that the command is to not be silent – the eye’s ‘daughter’ should not be stilled. This anthropomorphizing metaphor combines the different senses involved in the process of crying: the silent tears and the audible sound of weeping,[[17]](#footnote-17) where the sound created by weeping is metonymically attributed to the eye, whose actions are silent. The speaker uses this combination of senses to imply the entire process of weeping in only four words: "אַל-תִּדֹּם בַּת-עֵינֵךְ".

The metaphor of tears as water is also found in the description of eyes that trickle, or pour, "אֶל-אֱלוֹהַּ דָּלְפָה עֵינִי" (‘my eye pours out tears to God,’ Job 16:20). This will be discussed further below.[[18]](#footnote-18)

Mesopotamian and Ugaritic literatures exhibit a similar conception of the eye. The ailing Keret describes the eye as the source of tears when speaking to his son:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Spend not the flow of your eyes, | *ᵓal tkl bn // qr cnk* |
| Nor the wellsprings of your tears![[19]](#footnote-19) | *mḫ rišk // udmct* |

Keret commands his son to preserve his tears and not dry up their source.[[20]](#footnote-20) This command is contrary to the words of the speaker in Jer 8, who can only dream of the ability to cry ceaselessly. Keret’s demand that his son hold back and control his emotions better accords with the command directed at the female figure of Rachel, in Jer 31:16.[[21]](#footnote-21)

The eyes are described with a simile from the watery world, in אהללה אדון החכמה Tablet 2 line 60. The speaker describes his body:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| My facial appearance (lit.: forehead) became dark  and my eyes were flooded (with tears)[[22]](#footnote-22) | *cpu-ú*ᵓ*-tu i-ki-lu-û*  *i-na-i-lu īnā (IGI.MIN)-ia* |

The description of the eyes, using the verb *naᵓālu*, *i-na-i-lu* in the sense of ‘to be water, to get wet’ ascribes water to the eyes, and thus compares the tears to water. In addition, choosing to translate the Akkadian verb *na*ᵓ*ālu* in the sense of ‘flooding’ emphasizes the water’s force, thus expressing the force of the speaker’s tears and weeping.[[23]](#footnote-23)

The effect of the tears on the body is mentioned as well, concerning the cheeks. In Tablet 1 lines 109-110 the speaker describes his suffering through a description of his physical state:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| I looked through tears  (lit.: the eyes were made see in tears) | *i-na bi-tak-ki-i šub-ra-a i-na-a-a* |
| up to fifty times (i.e. endlessly?), my cheeks were burning with the tears[[24]](#footnote-24) | *haš-šiš i-na di-ma-ti ṣur-ru-pu ú-suk-ka-a-a* |

The many tears flooded the speaker’s eyes and he was required to see through them, and in addition, they burned his skin. The sensation of burning after incessant tearful weeping is familiar, as the wet skin of the cheeks stings from the salty tears. Describing the sensation caused by the tears demonstrates and vivifies the plenitude of the tears and their effect on the body.[[25]](#footnote-25) Tears flowing down the cheeks is also mentioned in Lam 1:2,"בָּכוֹ תִבְכֶּה בַּלַּיְלָה וְדִמְעָתָהּ עַל לֶחֱיָהּ" . There, too, the tears flow from the cruelty of the evil ones.

**‘Eye’ + 'כלה' – The Literal Sense**

Attributing the verb כל"ה to the eye clearly indicates the depletion of a certain substance, namely, its tears, as is appropriate to the anatomic concept of the eye as a vessel that contains a finite, depletable quantity of tears. In the Bible, the verb כל"ה is used to describe a change in the quantity of a substance, for example, water (Gen 21:15), grass (Isa 15:6), and grape harvest (Isa 32:10). In Ugaritic, the substances which lend themselves to the use of the verb *kly* are bread, wine, oil, and money.[[26]](#footnote-26) Given the metonymic attribution of a substance to the vessel which contains it, the Bible treats as subject also the vessel which contains the depleting substance. For example, the Bible describes the miracle done for the widow: "כַּד הַקֶּמַח לֹא תִכְלָה..." (‘The jar of meal [flour] shall not be spent,’ 1Kgs 17:14, 16). The subject of the verb is כד הקמח, the jar of flour, however clearly it is not the jar itself that did not diminish, but the flour it contained. The metonymic phrasing attributes the essence of the substance to the vessel which holds it, thus ensuring that the flour within the jug will not finish, לֹא תִכְלָה. This is exactly how the phrase 'עין כלה' should be understood. The eye appears in the metonymic sense of the tears it contains, and the tears within the eye are those which finish and dry up. This description may express the ancients’ concept of the eye as the source of tears, and their belief that the tears could not be endless; therefore, when the tears are all used up, the eyes become dry, a physiological phenomenon that they doubtlessly experienced themselves.[[27]](#footnote-27) Either way, the various speakers describe the physical aspect of the eye to illustrate different emotional states, usually accompanied by other physical symptoms.

This insight clearly emerges from Lam 2:11: "כָּלוּ בַדְּמָעוֹת עֵינַי חֳמַרְמְרוּ מֵעַי נִשְׁפַּךְ לָאָרֶץ כְּבֵדִי עַל-שֶׁבֶר בַּת-עַמִּי", ‘My eyes are spent with weeping; my stomach churns; my bile is poured out on the ground because of the destruction of my people.’ This is the only place where tears are mentioned as an explicit reason for the eye being ‘spent.’ In the phrase 'כלו בדמעות עיני', ‘My eyes are spent with weeping,’ the word עיני, ‘my eyes,’ is the subject of the verb כלו, ‘spent.’ Given the concept of the eye’s anatomy, the noun ‘eye’ clearly functions as a term which includes the eye’s tear reservoir as well. The word בדמעות, ‘with weeping,’ describes the action: the prepositional ב' implies the cause, in the sense of ‘because of,’[[28]](#footnote-28) while the noun דמעות, ‘tears,’ is metonymic for the action of their being shed. The noun דמעה, ‘tear,’ usually functions literally in the limited sense of the noun,[[29]](#footnote-29) however, in a number of cases it also includes the action of being shed. So, for example, "הַזֹּרְעִים בְּדִמְעָה" (‘those who sow in tears,’ Ps 126:5); "מִנְעִי קוֹלֵךְ מִבֶּכִי וְעֵינַיִךְ מִדִּמְעָה" (‘Keep your voice from weeping, and your eyes from tears,’ Jer 31:15): Those who sow are described as sowing with tears flowing (here the prepositional ב' indicates a description of time, ‘while’), and Rachel is commanded to prevent her eyes from tearing.[[30]](#footnote-30) So, too, in Lam 2:11, the noun דמעות (‘tears’) is used in the sense which includes their shedding.

A similar syntactical structure that uses the prepositional ב' in the sense of causation+noun which includes its own action is found in Jer 31:29: "כִּי אִם-אִישׁ בַּעֲו‍ֹנוֹ יָמוּת" (‘But all shall die for their own sins’). Each man shall dieבַּעֲו‍ֹנוֹ – for the sins that he had committed. The prepositional ב' serves in the sense of causation, and the noun עונו, his sins, includes both the meaning of the noun as well as the act of sinning. So, too, in Num 16:26: "פֶּן-תִּסָּפוּ בְּכָל-חַטֹּאתָם" (‘lest you will be swept away for all their sins’). 'בְּכָל חַטֹּאתָם', for all their sins, describes the reason for being ‘swept away,’ or ‘destroyed,’ where the noun 'חטאתם' also includes the act of sinning in addition to its literal sense, ‘their sin.’

Therefore, the meaning of the phrase 'כָּלוּ בַדְּמָעוֹת עֵינַי' is ‘my eyes have been finished through tears,’ or, ‘[*the reservoirs*] of my eye have been depleted due to the [*shedding of*] tears.’ From ancient exegesis to modern scholarship, this sequence has been interpreted as damage inflicted on the eye by the tears, given the prepositional ב', though how the tears damage the eye is usually not explained in detail.[[31]](#footnote-31) The syntactical and semantic understanding that it is not the tears themselves that harm the eye, but rather their absence or flow, is crucial for understanding the description. The ancients’ concept of the tears’ immense effect on the state of the eyes is bolstered by the speaker in Ps 116:8: "כִּי חִלַּצְתָּ נַפְשִׁי מִמָּוֶת אֶת-עֵינִי מִן-דִּמְעָה", ‘For you have delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears.’ The speaker compares the experience of delivery from death to the cessation of tears flowing from the eyes. Paralleling the tears to death reflects the speaker’s belief that the tears have an enormous impact on the eyes – just as death is the end of the soul, so tears are the end of the eyes. The comparison of the eye to the soul is discussed further below.

The phrase 'כלה עין' which appears with other physical phenomena expresses the body’s response to the difficult reality of the Destruction. The Bible views the intestines and the liver as the seat of emotions.[[32]](#footnote-32) The intestines are described as vibrating and turning over,[[33]](#footnote-33) a description which can be understood as the involuntary movements of the stomach, while the ‘flowing’ liver metaphorically depicts this organ as a liquid. These two, together with the eyes whose tears have dried up, match the physical sensations after a bout of continual, forceful, and jolting weeping – the sensation of nausea, the stomach overturning, and the shortness of breath that accompanies sobbing. Understanding that this is a description of crying coheres with the connection between the tidings of destruction and the description of the mourning rites practices by the elderly and the women: "יֵשְׁבוּ לָאָרֶץ... הֶעֱלוּ עָפָר עַל-רֹאשָׁם, חָגְרוּ שַׂקִּים; הוֹרִידוּ לָאָרֶץ רֹאשָׁן..." (‘The elders of daughter Zion sit on the ground… they have thrown dust on their heads and put on sackcloth; the young girls of Jerusalem have bowed their heads to the ground,’ Lam 2:10).[[34]](#footnote-34) As part of the collective mourning, the speaker also shares his own bodily experiences, caused by the intense sobbing and subsequent dry eyes, which reflect his painful emotional state.

Using a physical description of the eyes to reflect a mental or emotional state is also found in the curse texts of Leviticus and Deuteronomy, where 'כליון עיניים' appears alongside a corresponding phrase – 'דאבון נפש'. In Deut 28:65 the speaker assures those who break God’s covenant: "ובגוים ההם לא תרגיע ולא יהיה מנוח לכף רגלך ונתן יהוה לך שם לב רגז וכליון עינים ודאבון נפש" (‘Among those nations you shall find no ease, no resting place for the sole of your foot. There the Lord will give you a trembling heart, failing eyes, and a languishing spirit’). The meaning of דאבון נפש is a ‘languishing spirit’[[35]](#footnote-35) which, like 'כליון עיניים', appears during emotional distress. It describes the tears which flowed unceasingly and the sobbing which led to dryness in both eyes and throat. In addition to these two phenomena, the text also describes a 'לב רגז' – a heart that is felt to be constantly trembling,[[36]](#footnote-36) perhaps reflecting the sensations of a rapid pulse and elevated blood pressure. The descriptions of the physiological sensations of the heart, eyes, and throat join the restlessness of the feet and illustrate the anxiety and pressure inherent in the curse. In Leviticus, the descriptions of the dry eyes and throat express the consequence of the curses – "אף אני אעשה זאת לכם והפקדתי עליכם בהלה את השחפת ואת הקדחת מכלות עינים ומדיבת נפש" (‘I in turn will do this to you: I will bring terror on you; consumption and fever that waste the eyes and cause life to pine away,’ Lev 26:16). The terror, consumption, and fever,[[37]](#footnote-37) the terrible afflictions that God will impose upon those who break His covenant, will also affect the eyes and throat as expressions of the mental distress those afflictions will cause.

This pair of phenomena can also be found in God’s words to Eli in 1Sam 2:33 – "לְכַלּוֹת אֶת-עֵינֶיךָ וְלַאֲדִיב אֶת-נַפְשֶׁךָ", ‘to weep out his eyes and grieve his heart.’ The verb לַאֲדִיב is probably a metathesis of the verb דא"ב,[[38]](#footnote-38) in its sense as dryness of the throat, which coheres with the phenomenon of dryness of the eyes. However, it is difficult to posit this within the context of prophecy. Syntactically, this expression is a consequential clause of the verb in the primary sentence – "וְאִישׁ לֹא-אַכְרִית לְךָ מֵעִם מִזְבְּחִי" (‘The only one of you whom I shall not cut off from my altar shall be spared’). Negating the main verb, 'אַכְרִית' (‘I shall cut off’), is then projected upon the clause and negates its consequence. Thus, God promises Eli that he will be spared the heartache – his eye will not dry of tears, and his throat will not dry from crying, as none of his household will be ‘cut off.’ The prophetic language 'לא אכרית איש' uses the usual formulation (1Kgs 2:4, 8:25, 9:5; Jer 33:16, and others) for the promise of dynasty and bolsters the positive tone of these words. However, this reading does not match the rest of the prophecy to Eli, which assures the disconnection of his line.[[39]](#footnote-39) Therefore, some scholars view this clause as a description of the goal of the previous verse, וְלֹא-יִהְיֶה זָקֵן בְּבֵיתְךָ כָּל-הַיָּמִים (‘and no one in your family shall ever live to old age,’ v.32), and as the continuation of the promise of discontinuing his dynasty, he is also ensured that his eyes and throat will be affected.[[40]](#footnote-40) Given this, the promise וְאִישׁ לֹא-אַכְרִית – and no man shall be cut off –refers to only one person, Ebiathar, the dynasty’s single surviving member.[[41]](#footnote-41)

The phenomena of dryness in the eyes and throat appear in tandem also in Ps 69:4: "יָגַעְתִּי בְקָרְאִי נִחַר גְּרוֹנִי כָּלוּ עֵינַי מְיַחֵל לֵאלֹהָי" (‘I am weary with my crying; my throat is parched. My eyes grow dim with waiting for my God.’) The verb 'נִחַר' means scorched, hoarse.[[42]](#footnote-42) The dryness of the throat and the weariness result from the speaker’s repeated calls or crying, and the eyes dim whilst he awaits his God.[[43]](#footnote-43) We can conclude from this that the damage to the eyes was caused by the weeping – they dried out due to the unceasing flow of tears which was accompanied by his calling out to God and endless waiting.[[44]](#footnote-44) The dryness of the eyes, as part of calling out to God, is also described in Ps 88:10: "עֵינִי דָאֲבָה מִנִּי-עֹנִי קְרָאתִיךָ יְהוָה בְּכָל-יוֹם שִׁטַּחְתִּי אֵלֶיךָ כַפָּי" (‘my eye grows dim through sorrow; every day I call on you, O Lord; I spread out my hands to you’). Here the dryness of the eye is exchanged with the phrase 'נפש דאבה', and is described through the use of the verb דא"ב and not with the verb כל"ה.[[45]](#footnote-45)

**'עיניים כלות' – The Idiom**

The phrase 'עיניים כלות' is not limited to its literal-physiological sense. Use of the physical state, as an expression of a difficult mental state, was absorbed into a metonymic sense and evolved into an independent idiom, where 'עיניים כלות' has come to mean ‘longing and hoping with no prospect of realization.’[[46]](#footnote-46) The appearances of the phrase 'עיניים כלות' that function as idioms were mostly explained, based on context, as an emotional expression of the eyes which hope and yearn, and by reference to the sense of this phrase within the narrow context of each verse. However, there is no discussion of the source of this idiom within the physiological phenomenon of the reservoir of tears drying up. An awareness of the ancients’ concept of the eye as a vessel that contains tears, and an understanding of the different contexts within which the phenomenon of eyes physically failing appear, can shed light on the development of the phrase as an idiom.

Jeremiah describes the animals’ suffering: "וּפְרָאִים עָמְדוּ עַל-שְׁפָיִם שָׁאֲפוּ רוּחַ כַּתַּנִּים כָּלוּ עֵינֵיהֶם כִּי-אֵין עֵשֶׂב", (‘The wild asses stand on the bare heights, they pant for air like jackals; their eyes fail because there is no herbage,’ 14:6). The animals’ eyes fail, not from hunger or lack of Vitamin A or keratin,[[47]](#footnote-47) nor because they are “waning from the moot effort to see what they wish.”[[48]](#footnote-48) Their eyes fail because they wept, out of frustration and despair, while hopelessly awaiting food, until their reservoir of tears was depleted and their eyes dried up. This clarifies the descriptions of the wicked in the words of Zophar,"וְעֵינֵי רְשָׁעִים תִּכְלֶינָה וּמָנוֹס אָבַד מִנְּהֶם וְתִקְוָתָם מַפַּח-נָפֶשׁ" (‘But the eyes of the wicked will fail; all way of escape will be lost to them, and their hope is to breathe their last,’ Job 11:20); and in Job’s words Job, "לְחֵלֶק יַגִּיד רֵעִים וְעֵינֵי בָנָיו תִּכְלֶנָה" (‘Those who denounce friends for reward - the eyes of their children will fail,’ Job 17:5). The failure of the wicked ones’ eyes, or the eyes of their sons, is the result of shedding endless tears, causing the eyes to dry up. In both appearances the physical act expresses the mental state of disappointment from the interminable waiting – the wicked who hope for good will be proven false by their death,[[49]](#footnote-49) and their sons who yearn for food will watch it be eaten by others.[[50]](#footnote-50) This is found also in Job’s statement "אִם-אֶמְנַע מֵחֵפֶץ דַּלִּים וְעֵינֵי אַלְמָנָה אֲכַלֶּה" (‘If I have withheld anything that the poor desired, or have caused the eyes of the widow to fail,’ Job 31:16). The claim that he did not cause the eyes of the widow to fail shows that they did not cry while endlessly waiting for their needs to be met, because Job took care of their every need.[[51]](#footnote-51) Therefore, the damage to their eyes was not a lack of sheen and vitality and was not caused by hunger and suffering, or fainting.[[52]](#footnote-52) This is supported by a comparison to the first hemistich, "אִם-אֶמְנַע מֵחֵפֶץ דַּלִּים" (‘if I have withheld anything that the poor desired), which directly states that which is expressed by the physiological idiom.

**'עין כל"ה אל', 'עין כל"ה ל-'**

The causes leading to the physiological phenomenon of the 'עין כלה' emerge in the phrases 'עין כל"ה אל' and 'עין כל"ה ל-'. These two phrases are usually understood in the sense of anticipation and hope, where the direct object which accompanies the verb defines the focus of the dashed hope. In the phrase 'עין כלה אל' the preposition 'אל' can be understood in the sense of direction (towards).[[53]](#footnote-53) When the preposition 'אל' is used to define the direction of the verb כל"ה in relation to the object, a sense of anticipation is derived for that object. This helps clarify Deut 28:32: "בָּנֶיךָ וּבְנֹתֶיךָ נְתֻנִים לְעַם אַחֵר וְעֵינֶיךָ רֹאוֹת וְכָלוֹת אֲלֵיהֶם כָּל-הַיּוֹם וְאֵין לְאֵל יָדֶךָ", ‘Your sons and daughters shall be given to another people, while you look on; you will strain your eyes looking for them all day but be powerless to do anything.’ The description of eyes straining represents the fierce sense of pain caused by seeing one’s sons and daughters enslaved to others. This follows the weeping and sense of hopelessness that accompany that sight.[[54]](#footnote-54) Similarly, the mourner in Lamentations says"עודינה (עוֹדֵינוּ) תִּכְלֶינָה עֵינֵינוּ אֶל-עֶזְרָתֵנוּ הָבֶל" , ‘Our eyes failed, ever watching vainly for help.’ Here, too, many explain the phrase in the sense of anticipation and yearning, where the eyes fail from the process of crying and despair over the help that never came.[[55]](#footnote-55)

The preposition 'אל' may also be understood in the sense of causation (due to, because of).[[56]](#footnote-56) Therefore, the objects 'אֲלֵיהֶם' – the children who are given to strangers, and 'עֶזְרָתֵנוּ הָבֶל' – the absence of any help – are the reasons why the tears flow and their reservoir depleted. Alongside the explanation of why the eyes fail, the texts in both these cases also explicitly state that there is no hope, thus intensifying the feeling of reckoning - "וְאֵין לְאֵל יָדֶךָ" (‘[you will] be powerless to do anything,’ Deut 28:32); "הָבֶל" ('vainly,’ Lam 4:17).

In contrast, the phrase 'עין כלה ל-' lacks the negative tone raised by an awareness of the hopelessness of the situation. In this phrase, the 'ל-' indicates an additional degree of separation from the literal-physiological sense of the phrase, leading toward its metonymic sense of anticipation and hope. Two examples of this phrase can help illustrate this point: "כָּלוּ עֵינַי לְאִמְרָתֶךָ" (‘My eyes fail with watching for your promise,’ Ps 119:82) and "עֵינַי כָּלוּ לִישׁוּעָתֶךָ וּלְאִמְרַת צִדְקֶךָ" (‘My eyes fail from watching for your salvation, and for the fulfillment of your righteous promise,’ Ps 119:123). If God’s promise and salvation were presented as false, we could claim that that is what caused the eyes to fail. This, by filling in a stage wherein the disappointment would lead to a shedding of tears, and consequently to the drying up of the eyes’ reservoir.[[57]](#footnote-57) However, as long as there is hope, it is difficult to claim that the eyes failed because of a promise of salvation. Therefore, the prepositional ל' clearly indicates direction, thus defining the speaker’s object of desire and yearning.[[58]](#footnote-58) This distances the verb 'כלה' from its primary, physiological sense, ‘finish’ or ‘fail,’ where it now serves exclusively in the sense of anticipation and hope.

Furthermore, in Ps 119 the subject of the verb 'כלה' deviates from the form of the phrase, where it is attributed to the 'נפש', and is paralleled to the eye which is 'כלה' in v. 82: כָּלוּ עֵינַי לְאִמְרָתֶךָ לֵאמֹר מָתַי תְּנַחֲמֵנִי" || "כָּלְתָה לִתְשׁוּעָתְךָ נַפְשִׁי לִדְבָרְךָ יִחָלְתִּי (‘My soul languishes for your salvation; I hope in your word || My eyes fail with watching for your promise; I ask, “When will you comfort me?”’). The parallel between 'נפש' and 'עיני' creates a complete structure. Both versions of the phrase express hope and anticipation, as articulated in the second hemistich ("לִדְבָרְךָ יִחָלְתִּי", ‘I hope in your word’), and in the fourth hemistich exposes the speaker’s main intention – "לֵאמֹר מָתַי תְּנַחֲמֵנִי", ‘When will you comfort me.’ Though the expression 'כלתה נפשי' indicates only anticipation and hope, the expression 'כלי עיני' preserves the original meaning of the phrase and hints at the phenomena that accompanied that anticipation – the weeping and the tears, for which he requires comfort.

A parallel between 'עין' and 'נפש' is also found when paired with the verb דל"פ. Job describes his plea to God – "אֶל-אֱלוֹהַּ דָּלְפָה עֵינִי", ‘my eye pours out tears to God’ (Job 16:20). Context dictates an understanding of the verb in the sense of ‘pouring,’ where the speaker attests to his eyes pouring out tears while he waits for God’s word. This is part of the weeping process which started in v. 16: "פָּנַי חמרמרה (חֳמַרְמְרוּ) מִנִּי-בֶכִי", ‘My face is red with weeping.’[[59]](#footnote-59)

This verb is also used to describe rainwater that penetrates the house, "דֶּלֶף טוֹרֵד בְּיוֹם סַגְרִיר" (‘A continual dripping on a rainy day,’ Prov 27:15, 19:13). Therefore, when the verb is used on the eye, it evokes the imagery of tears flowing from the eye. Attributing the object "אֶל-אֱלוֹהַּ" (‘to God’) to the verb is unique in this case, implying the reason behind the flowing eyes – the plea and hope for God.

The Psalmist uses similar language to describe his situation: "דָּלְפָה נַפְשִׁי מִתּוּגָה" (‘My soul melts away [pours] for sorrow,’ 119:28). Given the similarity between these two phrases, some scholars posit the textual emendation 'נפשי' – 'עיני'.[[60]](#footnote-60) This is unnecessary. Traditional exegetes understood the phrase 'דָּלְפָה נַפְשִׁי' based on the sense of דל"פ as ‘to pour,’ ‘to trickle.’ Metaphorically, this depicts the soul as weeping and shedding tears in her sorrow, "בְּמִסְתָּרִים תִּבְכֶּה-נַפְשִׁי", ‘my soul will weep in secret’ (Jer 13:17).[[61]](#footnote-61) In contrast, modern scholars tend to explain the phrase based on the sense of דל"פ as ‘to fall apart,’ ‘to collapse,’ based on the parallel in Ecc 10:18: "יִמַּךְ הַמְּקָרֶה || יִדְלֹף הַבָּיִת" (‘the roof sinks in || the house leaks’), and on the cognate *dlp* in Ugaritic.[[62]](#footnote-62) The soul is perceived to be metonymic for the whole person, and the speaker testifies to his personal collapse from the enormity of his grief.

Modern dictionaries distinguish between the different senses of the verb דל"פ according to its appearances in the Bible: to collapse, to pour or trickle, and to lack sleep because of depression.[[63]](#footnote-63) However, as Speiser suggested, these meanings all came from the same semantic field, in the sense of ‘an involuntary spasm.’[[64]](#footnote-64) According to Speiser’s approach, a comparison between usage of the Akkadian *dalāpu*, the Arabic *dalafa*, the Ugaritic *dlp*, and the root דל"פ in Hebrew and Aramaic testify to a common semantic base from which the secondary meanings of the house shaking and collapsing were derived, the frantic motion which is interpreted as restlessness and an inability to sleep, as well as the uncontrollable flow of water – from either the cracks in the house or the tearing eye.

An awareness of the strata of the verb דל"פ helps clarify the phrase 'דלפה נפשי' in Ps 119. This phrase contains an abundance of meanings which enable the wordplay with 'עין' and 'נפש'. The Psalmist interchange the two in v. 28 just as he does in vv. 81-82. He plays with the various senses and connotations contained in the word 'נפש', together with the verb 'דל"פ', creating a polysemic phrase that depicts the experience of weeping as multidimensional, presenting the imagery of both tears flowing from the eye and the body collapsing from grief.

Interchanging the bodily organs of 'עין' and 'נפש' in these phrases is similar to a combination of, and exchange between, the bodily senses. The inclusion of several senses within a written description tends to express a more complete experience, which subsequently reaches the reader’s different levels of awareness; this is also true regarding the involvement of the various bodily organs responsible for the various sensations. The mind and the eye, both physical organs, are also both capable of containment. This ability explains the choice of the verbs כל"ה and דא"ב in the curse texts (Lev 26:16, Deut 28:65, 1Sam 2:33). However, while the eye is immanently full of tears, the empty mind constantly seeks to be filled.[[65]](#footnote-65) Through the interplay of the words עין and נפש, the authors shed new light on the descriptions which adds depth and additional meanings to their words. Thus, in Ps 119, the linguistic parallel which initially came from a similar bodily phenomenon was released from its physiological context and received a new independent meaning as an idiom – 'כלתה נפשי' - to an object, as an expression of anticipation and yearning.

Testimony for this semantic process appears in Ps 84: "נִכְסְפָה וְגַם-כָּלְתָה נַפְשִׁי לְחַצְרוֹת יְהוָה" (‘My soul longs [blanches], indeed it faints for the courts of the Lord’). The verbנִכְסְפָה (from the root כס"פ in the *nif‘al*) in the sense of ‘to be pale’ as the color of the metal (כסף, silver), describes man’s physical state and expresses his feelings of desire or shame. In addition, the use of the passive voice expresses the powerful force of the emotion.[[66]](#footnote-66) The paired use of both verbs, נִכְסְפָה and כָּלְתָה, attests to the semantic meaning that the speaker found in the verb כלה, and in fact serves as a rhetorical tool for intensifying the sense of yearning for God’s closeness.

**Conclusion**

The different semantic senses of the verb כל"ה stem from its various uses. The primary sense indicated ‘finishing,’ or ‘failing.’ This led to the phrase 'כלה עין', in its literal sense, as the description of the eye whose reservoir of tears finished, or failed. This phenomenon was mentioned concerning cases of continual weeping, for different reasons – weeping as the result of pain, disease, or general troubles, as a phenomenon that accompanies repeated pleas or waiting, and perhaps also as a consequence of the frustration and disappointment that follow. From this variety of contexts, the one which took root in the phrase was the never-ending waiting and disappointed anticipation for the object of desire. The phrase 'עיניים כלות' was joined by the preposition 'אל' plus an object which defined the eye’s hope. Thus, the meaning of the phrase was changed to focus more upon the object of desire and the emotion it evoked, and less on the physical phenomenon that the accompanying crying causes the eye or on the dryness of the eyes. From here, the focus swiftly moved exclusively to the emotion, and the phrase 'עיניים כלות' became an idiom that indicates anticipation and hope, where even the negative connotation of the dashed hope was removed. All that was left were the feelings of anticipation, which were also filled with the positive connotation of future hope.

Alongside the development of the various meanings of the phrase 'עיניים כלות', we also examined the parallel phrase 'נפש דאבה'. These two phrases appear in the similar sense of a bodily organ that dries up, and they both express pain and troubles. Further, we noted that the eye and the mind serve as a word pair that are interchangeable, and appear alongside the verbs כל"ה and דל"פ. The primary parallel between 'עין' and 'נפש' is based on their similar characteristic of being physical organs capable of containing liquid and food. When combined with the form 'כלתה נפשי אל-' the meaning of the noun 'נפש' as a physical organ is undermined, and it tends more toward a sense of the person in his entirety. This mirrors the journey of the verb כל"ה from its original, physical sense, to its secondary sense as an expression of anticipation and hope. Thus, the phrase 'כלתה נפשי אל-' expresses an advanced stage of the development of these two words, and holds a new meaning in the sense of anticipation borne out of complete faith in the realization of the yearning for the desired object.

Following the semantic development of the verb revealed to us the ancients’ concept of the eye’s physiology. Moreover, we were given proof of the language’s process of development in the terms’ transition from referring to bodily sensations to expressing abstract emotions.

1. I thank Prof. Ed Greenstein and Prof. Sammy Chavel for reading and commenting on an earlier draft of this paper. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. HALOT: 476-477. This includes the subsenses: 1. To stop, to bring to and end; 2. To finish, to complete; 3. To conceal; 4. To perish, to die; 5. To be permanent; 6. To fail; 7. To yearn, to pine. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. For example, in relation to substances, such as water (Gen 21:15), flour (1Kgs 17:14), grass (Isa 15:6), or in relation to actions, such as speaking (Gen 17:22), blessing (Gen 27:30), eating (Gen 44:3), and more. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Such as: "וְלֹא-עָשִׂיתִי אוֹתָם כָּלָה בַּמִּדְבָּר" (‘neither did I make a full end of them in the wilderness,’ Ezek 20:17). See also Jer 5:10, 18; Ezek 11:13, 13:13; Nah 1:8; Deut 9:27, 11:16; Neh 9:31; 2Chr 12:12. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Fensham’s approach adds an additional sense, ‘is preserved.’ See footnote 25. Fensham, The Semantic Field of kly in Ugaritic, *JNSL* 7 (1979) 27-30 . G. del Olmo, Lete and J. Sanmartín, *A Dictionary of the Ugaritic Language in the Alphabetic Tradition*, 3rd Edition. Translated by W. G. E. Watson, HdO 112 (Leiden: Brill, 2015). Also compare to the Accadian root *kalȗ*, akin to the Hebrew root כל"א. For a discussion of the relationship between the roots *kālâ*-*kl’,kālā* -*klh*, see: F.J. Helfmeyer, ' כָּלָה *kālâ* ', *TDOT VI*I, 1995 Michigan, 157- 164. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Above, footnote 1 (HALOT: 7). [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. The singular phrase "כָּלוּ כִלְיֹתַי" (Job 19:27) is similarly understood. Helfmeier, *klh*, 163; E.L. Greenstein, *Job: A New Translation*, New Haven, 2019, 87. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. M.I. Gruber, *Aspects of Nonverbal Communication in the Ancient Near East*, Rome, 1980, 386-400. Quotes are from p. 390. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. See, for example, Levine, *Leviticus* (JPS) 1989, 185: “*Mekhallot 'einayim* literally means ‘which exhaust the eyes’ so that the eyes can no longer see”; Klein, *1Samuel*, (WBC), 2008, 22; Tsumura, *The First Book of Samuel* (NICOT), 2007, 164 - "wear out his eyes"; Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1-20*, (AB), 1999, 697-698; ‘to be languishing’; G.H. Wilson, *Job*, NIBC, Peabody 2007; Hoffman, (מקרא לישראל) ירמיה א-כה , 2001, 358: ‘Waiting without hope, as if the eyes are finished from futile hope’ Klein, (איכה (מקרא לישראל, 244: ‘Our eyes have been weakened from yearning.’ HALOT 477: ‘to finish > to consume... to cause to fail (the eyes) Lv 26, 16; 1S 2, 33; Jb 31,16.’ [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. See for example the interpretation as opposed to the translation: ‘…daughter Jerusalem’s eyes no longer function because of her many tears,’ which Renkema translates as ‘blinded with tears.’ Renkema, *Lamentations*, 1998, 268-269. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. All translations of biblical verses in this paper are taken from the NRSV, unless stated otherwise, and follow the numbering of the Masoretic text. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Treating the eye as a source of tears is based on the pair (מ)עין – (מ)קור [spring/eye; source], common in the Bible and Ugaritic literature. For example:"וְיֵבוֹשׁ מְקוֹרוֹ וְיֶחֱרַב מַעְיָנוֹ"  (‘his spring will fail and his well dry up,’ Hos 13:15), "מַעְיָן נִרְפָּשׂ וּמָקוֹר מָשְׁחָת" (‘a muddied spring or a polluted well,’ Prov 25:26), CTA 12 [75] II: 60-61. See Y. Avishur, *Stylistic Studies of Word-Pairs in Biblical and Ancient Semitic Literatures*, Neukirchen-Vluyn (AOAT 210) 1984, 385, 703. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. The request formula 'מי יתן' always appears as opposition to reality (Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1*, 537). Here it refers only to the metaphor of water – ‘my head were a spring of water and my eyes a fountain of tears,’ and not to the rest of Jeremiah’s words as in Holliday’s approach, *Jeremiah 1*, 249. See Marili, גוף, לשון, ומגדר, note 278. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. The speaker in Lamentations 3:48-51 may be identified as a woman, if we accept the arguments put forth by E. Greenstein, “קול האשה באיכה פרק ג',” שנתון לחקר המקרא והמזרח הקדום 24 (2016), 167-176. Identifying the speaker as a woman in 3:48 creates a fitting parallel between the words of the lamenting widow in 1:16, which use the water metaphor to describe tears, "עֵינִי עֵינִי יֹרְדָה מַּיִם"(‘mine eye, mine eye runneth down with water’) and the metaphoric language in 3:48 "פַּלְגֵי-מַיִם תֵּרַד עֵינִי"(‘Mine eye runneth down with streams of water’). [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Understanding the command is dependent upon an analysis of the type פוגת (פו"ג), from the verb sense לפוג and the noun הפוגה (BDB, 806; Provan, *Lamentations*, 74; H.L.Bussman, *pwg*, *NIDOTTE* III, in: W.A. Van Gemeren (ed.), Grand Rapids, 1997, 584-585. The verb תדום (דמ"מ) in the sense of rest, cessation, is found in E. Robertson, “The Apple of the Eye in the Masoretic Text,” *JTS* 38 (1937), 59. See also BDB, 198-199; Provan, *Lamentations*, 76; Renkema, *Lamentations*, 313-314; B.A. Levine, “Sound, Silence, and the Phenomenology of Mourning in Biblical Israel,” *JANES* 22(1993), 89-16. בת עין, the ‘apple of the eye,’ is an epithet for the pupil, some say as a result of error. See footnote 15, below. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Some scholars claim that the phrase 'בת עין' ensued from a copyist error of the phrase 'בבת עין'. BDB, 123; Provan, *Lamentations*, 76; Renkema, *Lamentations*, 313-314. Robertson, *bavat ha-‘ayin*, 58-59. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. See also Ps 39:13: "הַאֲזִינָה אֶל-דִּמְעָתִי", ‘and give ear to [hear] my cry.’ The sound of weeping and the teary eyes are only explicitly mentioned together one other time in the Bible, in Jer 31:15:"מִנְעִי קוֹלֵךְ מִבֶּכִי וְעֵינַיִךְ מִדִּמְעָה", ‘Keep your voice from weeping, and your eyes from tears.’ For the sounds made by crying see Gen 45:2, Jud 21:2, Isa 65:19, Jer 3:21. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Page 11 and onwards. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. CTA = cat 1.16 and 26-28. Translation by E.L. Greenstein, “Kirta,”, *Ugaritic Narrative Poetry* (Writings from the Ancient World 9), S.B. Parker (ed.), Atlanta 1997, 9-48, excerpt from 31-32. Reading the morphemes *bn // qr* is contested. Ginsburg reads *bnqr* as one word which is constructed from the prepositional ב' + *nqr*, in its sense as a source of water. H.L Ginsberg, "The Legend of King Keret" *BASOR* SS 2-3 (1946), 1-50. 26. His deliberations are detailed in the footnotes as well, 44-45. Greenstein translates accordingly. As opposed to this, Pope claims that the direct object can appear even without a preposition. Therefore, he reads *bnqr* as two separate words – *bn // qr*, in the sense of “*bn*” as vocative, and *“qr*” in the sense of flowing, where *qr* is the object of the verb *tql*. M. Pope, “Ugaritic Enclitic -m,” *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 5/4 (1951), 123-128. The meaning of the word '*mḫ*' is unclear as well. Is its appearance within this context authentic, in which case we need to understand its meaning, or should the text be emended to *‘my’* – in the sense of water, and be read מי ראשך in light of the biblical expression 'מי ראש' (Jer 8:23). The emendations is suggested in S. Gevirtz, “The Ugaritic Parallel to Jeremiah 8:23,” *JNES* 20 (1961), 41-46, esp. 42; S. Gevirtz, “Should a Ugaritic Text be Corrected on the Basis of Biblical Text? – A Response, *VT* 33 (1983), 330-334. However, there are those disagree with emending the Ugaritic text based on biblical Hebew. See Gruber, *Aspects*, 394; Y. Avishur, “Should a Ugaritic Text be Corrected on the Basis of Biblical Text?,” *VT* 31 (1981), 218-220; Greenstein, “Kirta” 46, note 117. These all propose other ways of understanding the word '*mḫ*'. Gruber claims that it indicates a liquid, based on its appearance in Job 21:24. Avishur and Greenstein claim that '*mḫ*' simply refers to the brain, מח, where the 'מח' is perceived to be the source of tears and not the essence of the tears themselves, namely water. As an aside, we should note that the signs *y - ḫ* are similar in cuneiform script. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. As opposed to this, in the prayer to Ishtar the heart is considered the source of tears, as it the source of emotions –

    *a-ḫu-lap lìb-bi-ia šum-ru-ṣu*  *aḫulap* for my suffering heart,

    *šá ma-lu-ú dím-tu u ta-né-ḫi* which is full of tears and sights.

    D.A. Bosworth, *House of Weeping: The Motif of Tears in Akkadian and Hebrew Prayers*, 2019, 44. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. See Ginsburg’s translation, *Keret*, 45, who noted the connection between the two texts. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. *Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi*, II: 60. In: T. Oshima, *Babylonian Poems of Pious Sufferers: Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi and the Babylonian Theodicy, Orientalische Religionen in der Antike, 14, 2015, 89.* [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Oshima’s translation is based on the motif of weeping which is common to the descriptions of the suffering man in Akkadian prayers. See also the Prayer of Mordoch I: 130-132. Oshima, *Babylonian Poems*, 165. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. *Ludlul* *Bēl Nēmeqi*, I: 1090119, in: T. Oshima, *Babylonian Poems of Pious Sufferers: Ludlul Bēl Nēmeqi and the Babylonian Theodicy, Orientalische Religionen in der Antike, 14, 2015, 84-85. I thank Ed Greenstein and Takayoshi Oshima for referring me to this source.* [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. It would be interesting to compare this to the sign *ér* (A+ ŠI) in Sumerian. The word *ér* parallels the sense of the words ‘weeping’ and ‘tear’ (*bikītu*, *dimtu)*, leading Oshima to posit that the sense of the sign *ér* (A+ ŠI) is “’water in eyes or on face,’ i.e., tears, as its radical sense.” T. Oshima,*Babylonian prayers to Marduk,* Orientalische Religionen in der Antike; 7, 2011. 139 note 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. For example, in the Legend of Keret: *kly // lḥm bmcdnhm, kly // yn bḥmthm, k[l]y šmn b [...]* cat 1.16 III 13-16 = CTA-----. According to Greenstein’s approach, the verb *kly* is used in the active sense: “"The food is all spent from its storage; The wine is all spent from its skins; The oil is all spent from its [casks]." E.L. Greenstein, 'Kirta', 36. As opposed to this, see Fensham who translates all the verbs in the passive sense, as ‘preserved’: "food is preserved in their containers(?) wine is preserved in their wine-skins, oil is preserved in ?" Fensham, The Semantic Field of kly in Ugaritic, *JNSL* 7 (1979) 27-30 (30). Fensham’s approach does not necessitate an accordance between meaning and form, active (G) or passive (N), as within the context of perishable substances (wine, flour, oil, and money) the verb *kly* in the G declension has a passive sense as inspired by the N declension. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. For support of the former option see מדרש לקח טוב on Lam 2:1: "אמר ר׳ אליעזר שיעור ניתן לעין להוריד דמעה, אם הורידה יותר מדאי, מיד נמסית..." (‘Rabbi Eliezer said: The eye was given a set quantity of tears, if it sheds too many, it immediately melts.’) This explanation is especially interesting, as it proves that even generations after the biblical period the conception of a finite quantity of tears was still prominent. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. DCHR, II:13: "of cause, on account of, becouse of, for (but distinction from #4 ב of instrument)." [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. The noun דמעה, ‘tear,’ usually serves exclusively in its literal sense as a noun. The tear itself is described, for example, as being on the face (Isa 25:8), on the cheeks (Lam 1:2), on the altar (Mal 2:13), on the bed (Ps 6:7), or in a skein (Ps 56:9); occasionally with the verb יר"ד, or the verb דמ"ע (Jer 9:17, 13:17, 14:17) and the verb בו"א (Ezek 24:16). [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. We can add another appearance to the above two: "שִׁמְעָה תְפִלָּתִי יְהוָה וְשַׁוְעָתִי הַאֲזִינָה אֶל-דִּמְעָתִי" (‘Hear my prayer, O Lord, and listen to my tear,’ Ps 39:13, translation mine). Using a synthesis of the senses, and attributing the verb ‘listen’ to ‘my ear,’ the speaker attributes the whole experience of weeping to the noun ‘tear.’ For example, with sighs and wailing: "כַּסּוֹת דִּמְעָה אֶת-מִזְבַּח יְהוָה בְּכִי וַאֲנָקָה", (‘You cover the Lord's altar with tears, with weeping and groaning,’ Mal 2:13); "יָגַעְתִּי בְּאַנְחָתִי... בְּדִמְעָתִי עַרְשִׂי אַמְסֶה" (‘I am weary with my moaning… I drench my couch with my weeping,’ Ps 6:7). Compare: "שָׁמַעְתִּי אֶת-תְּפִלָּתֶךָ רָאִיתִי אֶת-דִּמְעָתֶךָ" (‘I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears,’ 2Kgs 20:5). [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. R. Yosef Ibn Caspi ibid: “Tears – they are the reason for the damage to the eyes, and their destruction.” Gruber, *Aspects*, 399; Provan, *Lamentations*, 70; Renkema, *Lamentations*, 269. Exceptions to this rule are the commentaries of Rashi on BT *Kiddushin* 31a, and Epstein, תורה תמימה, on Lam 2:11. Both explain that the many tears cause the loss of eyelashes, which “protect and strengthen the eyes, and by falling, cause the eyes’ ruin.” (Epstein, ibid., translation mine). See also BT *Sanhedrin* 104b and מדרש איכה, Lam 2:11. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. This assumption is accepted by most scholars, and is also supported by the appearances of 'מעיים' in Jer 4:19, 13:20; Ps 22:15; Song 5:4. However, this is not as easily determined for the כבד, by its other appearances in the Bible. This sense if found in the literatures of the ancient Near East, in Akkadian and Ugaritic. For examples see Klein, 151. In Ugaritic::CAT 1.3 II 25ff: *t[[d]]ġdd. kbdh. b ṣḥq. ymlu // lbh. b šmḫt. kbd. cnt // tšyt.* Renkema, *Lamentations*, 269: “her liver swelled up with gladness…”’ and similarly in Klein, 151. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. The sense of the verb חמרמרו, from the root חמ"ר, is burning, in Arabic and Aramic as well (*ḫmr* II, HALOT: 330). However, here it most likely indicates shaking and stirring, as explained by Klein, *Lamentations*, 125. This sense also applies to Ps 46:4, where the verb חמ"ר is paralleled to the verb רע"ש, which often refers to earthquakes: "יֶהֱמוּ יֶחְמְרוּ מֵימָיו יִרְעֲשׁוּ הָרִים בְּגַאֲוָתוֹ", ‘its waters roar and foam, the mountains tremble with its tumult,’ Ps 46:4). Therefore, the speaker should be understood as saying that his intestines are overturning, or quaking. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Sitting on the ground, wearing sackcloth, putting ashes on one’s head, and stooping to the ground are mourning customs which are performed following the death of a close relative. See Y. Shemeshאבלות במקרא: דרכי התמודדות עם אובדן בספרות המקראית, Tel Aviv: HaKibbutz HaMeuhad, 2015. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. The word נפש is often used in the sense of ‘throat.’ HALOT:711; TDOT IX:504-505. 'נפש' in the Bible is the name of the bodily organ which serves as a vessel, either the throat which opens widely, or the stomach which can be full and sated or empty due to hunger. This is an organ which is described as capable of containing food and drink, which can be satiated or yearning. See, for example, Isa 5:14, 55:2; Jer 31:12, 14; Ps 107:9; Eccl 6:7; Prov 10:3, 13:25, 27:7; and others. Gruber proved that the meaning of the word 'דאבון' is ‘dryness.’ He bases his proof on comparing the verb דא"ב to the Arabic root d'b, in its sense of ‘emaciated,’ based on the other appearances of the phrase 'דאבון נפש' within their contexts, and from the oppositional pairing with the root רו"ה in Jer 31:24: "הרויתי נפש עיפה, וכל נפש דאבה מלאתי" (‘I will satisfy the weary, and all who are faint I will replenish’). M.I. Gruber, 'Hebrew DA'ĂBÔN NEPEŠ "Dryness of Throat": From Symptom to Literary Convention', VT 37 (1987), 365-369. Similarly, Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, (JPS), 1996: 265; J. Milgrom *Leviticus 23-27*, (Anchor Bible), New York 2001, 2305-6; L. D. Christensen, *Deuteronomy 21:10-34:12,* (WBC), Nashville 2002. It is interesting that Milgrom (ibid., 2306) accepts Gruber’s definition of דאבון נפש, but not his definition of כליון עיניים. In his translation he leaves the phenomenon of eye ambiguous – ‘wearing out of the eyes’ (2272). However, in his commentary he quotes Rashi and explains that the eyes are an expression of the sense of hope, and the verb כל"ה expresses the eye’s hope that the diseases will be cured (2306). [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. רג"ז implies shaking, as in 2Sam 22:8. When conjugated into the פַּעָלverbal stem and the קַטָּל form, it indicates a continual property. Y.H. Tigay, דברים (מקרא לישראל), Tel Aviv 2016, 696. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. The term 'בהלה', in the sense of confusion and anxiety, can be understood as a general name for the consumption and fever, bodily illnesses. J. Milgrom, *Leviticus*, 2305. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Tur-Sinai, פשוטו של מקרא, vol. 2: על ספרי הנביאים הראשונים, Jerusalem 1964, 123; Gruber, דאבון נפש, 369, note 16; Bar Efrat, שמואל א' (מקרא לישראל), 75; HALOT:11. Compare to D.T. Tsumura, *The First Book of Samuel* (NICOT) Grand Rapids 2007, who assumes that all three roots, אד"ב, דא"ב, and דו"ב are based on the authentic-original bi-consonantal root ד"ב. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. First, verses 31-32 promise the cutting off of Eli’s dynasty, such that his descendants will not merit the term 'זקנים' (‘elders’), either in years or in wisdom. Second, there is a distinct contradiction with v. 34. The sign given for the veracity of prophecy relating to the death of both his sons in one day contradicts both the promise that no one of Eli’s household will be cut off, and the promise that Eli will not experience sorrow (in the form of eyes and throat which are dried out from crying). Third, the continuation of v. 33 declares – "וְכָל-מַרְבִּית בֵּיתְךָ יָמוּתוּ אֲנָשִׁים" (‘the majority of the members of your household shall die’). This language is surprising, as it does not clearly explain the nature of the curse, since dying is part of the natural process. Will the death of his offspring occur prematurely (and then 'אנשים' refers to young people), or perhaps the nature of their death will be difficult (and the 'ימותו' indicates an unnatural death)? In either case, this statement, too, contradicts the promise that ‘no one of Eli’s household will be cut off.’ From the ancient time to the modern one, exegetes found different ways of dealing with this issue. The 4QSama version of Samuel and the Septuagint record: πεσοῦνται ἐν ῥομφαίᾳ ἀνδρῶν(‘people shall die by the sword’), according to the Vaticanus MS which adopts this version. Scholars who base their interpretation on this include McCarter, *1 Samuel*, 89; Driver, *Samuel*, 40; Tsumura, *1 Samuel*, 170. The translation attributed to Jonathan reads "אנשים כעלומים, שמתו בטרם עת" (‘people who died in their youth, prematurely’). Erlich, מקרא כפשוטו, 107, claims that the definition of 'אנשים' does not indicate time or age, but rather status. According to his approach, they died as אנשים and not as זקנים – as ‘people,’ not ‘elders’ of high stature. See Bar Efrat, שמואל א', 75. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. R.P. Gordon, *1&2 Samuel*, 1986, 87; Tsumura, *Samuel*, 169. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. McCarter, *1 Samuel*, 89, 91; Driver, *Samuel*, 39-40. Compare to the Septuagint’s version of the words 'עיניך' and 'נפשך', in the first person concealed form, for the 'איש' identified as Ebiathar. However, if we understand 'איש' to imply a particular person, and not a general term, the syntactical flow of this verse is still difficult. Perhaps the prophecy "וְאִישׁ לֹא-אַכְרִית לְךָ מֵעִם מִזְבְּחִי לְכַלּוֹת אֶת-עֵינֶיךָ וְלַאֲדִיב אֶת-נַפְשֶׁךָ" is an early relic of a prophecy inserted into the destruction prophecy of Eli’s house. In order to bridge the gap between the positive tone of this early prophecy and the prophecy given in vv. 30-35, a later editor added the reservation "וְכָל-מַרְבִּית בֵּיתְךָ יָמוּתוּ אֲנָשִׁים". This addition reduces the absoluteness of either extreme – ‘I will cut off your dynasty’ as opposed to ‘I will not cut off any man,’ where 'מרבית', the majority but not all, will die. The word 'מרבית' in this sense and in this form appears only in Chronicles (1Chr 12:30, 2Chr 9:6, 30:18), which supports the suspicion that this gloss was supplied by a later hand. He repeated the word בית to connect to the general context, and toned down the promise ‘no one in your family shall ever live to old age’ through the rewriting ‘the majority of members of your household shall die אנשים.’ Respectively, there is an additional reservation in v. 36, in the declaration that not all of his descendants will die: "כָּל-הַנּוֹתָר בְּבֵיתְךָ..." (‘everyone who is left in your family…’). [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. The verb נח"ר appears in the sense of dryness and desolation in Ugaritic, *ḥrr*. Dahood, *Psalms 2*, 156. HALOT: 357. Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 177, understand the dry throat as an inflamed scorched throat. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2*, 177. The word 'מְיַחֵל' is vocalized as in the Masoretic text. The participle form of *piel*, which allows it to stand independent and define its time of action. As opposed to this, the Septuagint has is as an infinitive of *piel*, vocalized as 'מִיַּחֵל'. This refers to an action which is a consequence of the previous action, 'כלה'. According to this version, the eyes are dimmed because of the waiting (...ἐξέλιπον οἱ ὀφθαλμοί μου ἀπὸ τοῦ ἐλπίζειν ἐπὶ τὸν…). Dahood, *Psalms 2*, 156. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. On the appearance of tears during prayer or calling out, see 2Kgs 20:5:  "שָׁמַעְתִּי אֶת-תְּפִלָּתֶךָ רָאִיתִי אֶת-דִּמְעָתֶךָ" (‘I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears’); Ps 6:7:"יָגַעְתִּי בְּאַנְחָתִי אַשְׂחֶה בְכָל-לַיְלָה מִטָּתִי" "בְּדִמְעָתִי עַרְשִׂי אַמְסֶה" (‘I am weary with my moaning; every night I flood my bed with tears; I drench my couch with my weeping’); and Ps 39:13:"שִׁמְעָה תְפִלָּתִי יְהוָה וְשַׁוְעָתִי הַאֲזִינָה אֶל-דִּמְעָתִי"  (‘Hear my prayer, O Lord, and give ear to my cry’). [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. Interestingly, the phenomenon of dryness appears in other places next to a call for help; however, it appears as the cause of the call and not its consequence. See Ps 102:2-12; Job 19:16-20. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. Gray, *The Book of Job*, Sheffield 2010, 385: “The failing (kalah) of the eyes describes disappointed expectation.” C.L. Seow, *Job 1-21*, Grand Rapids 2013, 607: “The failing of eyes is an idiom for longing disappointedly.” [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. J.K. Wilson, “Medicine in the Land and Times of the Old Testament,” *Studies in the Period of David and Solomon and Other Essays*, ed. T. Ishida, Tokyo 1982, 337-365. J.R. Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1-20*, Anchor Bible, New York 1999, 697-698. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. Hoffman, ירמיה א-כה (מקרא לישראל), Tel Aviv 2001, 358. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. T. Longman III, *Job* (Baker Commentary on the Old Testament), Grand Rapids 2012, 189-190; C.L. Seow, *Job 1-21,* Grand Rapids 2013, 607; E.L Greenstein, *Job: A New Translation*, New Haven 2019, 50. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. Understanding 'לחלק' in the sense of giving out food is found in Durham, *Job*, 246; Pope, *Job*, 129; Greenstein, *Job*, 74-75. According to this reading, the wicked invite their friends to dine with them, while the sons of the wicked watch with eyes filled with longing for the food they do not receive. Longman understands 'חלק' as dividing up property (*Job*, 241). However, the claim then is weaker, as the sons’ yearning for food is more powerful than a longing for property. See also Greenstein, “While the eyes of one’s children languish.” In any case, the injury is not due to the hunger (see ibid., note 38). [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. Tur-Sinai, *The Book of Job*, Jerusalem 1957, 441, and Greenstein, *Job*, 130, both use the idiom to explain 'עיניהן לא נותרו כמהות' as not having withheld anything they desired. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. “Lackluster eyes can also be the result of suffering and hunger…” G.H. Wilson, *Job*, NIBC, Peabody 2007, 343; “the ‘wasting of the eyes,’ that is, fainting…” Gray, *The Book of Job*, Sheffield 2010, 259. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. The preposition 'אל' as defining the direction towards something: HALOT: 50. This preposition in this sense is catalogued in Deut 28: 32, DCHR I: 369. And see HALOT: 477 which defines 'כלה+אל' as ‘longing for.’ [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. P.C. Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, Eerdmans 1976, 344; L. Duane Christensen, *Deuteronomy 21:10-34:12*, WBC, Nashville 2002, 685. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. Renkema, *Lamentations*, 546; Provan, *Lamentations*, 121; Klein, מקרא לישראל, 244. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. DCHR I: 372; HALOT: 50. See, for example, וַיִּנָּחֶם יְהוָה אֶל-הָרָעָה"”, ‘the Lord relented concerning the evil’ (2Sam 24:16); "וַיָּקָם וַיֵּלֶךְ אֶל-נַפְשׁוֹ", ‘he got up and fled for his life’ (1Kgs 19:3); "אֶל-שָׁאוּל וְאֶל-בֵּית הַדָּמִים", ‘on [because of] Saul and on his house’ (2Sam 21:1). [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. This is based on an understanding of the prepositional ל' as indicating causation (due to, because of), IV DCH: 484. So, for example: לִבִּי לְמוֹאָב יִזְעָק (‘My heart cries out for Moab,’ Isa 15:5); "לַאֲשִׁישֵׁי קִיר-חֲרֶשֶׂת תֶּהְגּוּ" (‘Mourn, utterly stricken, for the raisin cakes of Kir-hareseth,’ Isa 16:7); "מֵעַי לְמוֹאָב כַּכִּנּוֹר יֶהֱמוּ" (‘my heart throbs like a harp for Moab,’ Isa 16:11); "אַל-תִּבְכּוּ לְמֵת" (‘Do not weep for him who is dead,’ Jer 22:10); "נָסוּ לְקֹלָם" (‘fled at their outcry,’ Num 16:34). [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. HALOT: 508. For a discussion of a verb which expresses an emotion aimed at an object through the use of the prepositional ל', see, for example, "וְהָעָם נִחָם לְבִנְיָמִן" (‘The people had compassion on Benjamin,’ Jud 21:15); "לְשִׁמְךָ וּלְזִכְרְךָ תַּאֲוַת-נָפֶשׁ" (‘Your name and Your renown are the soul's desire,’ Isa 26:8);"אוֹחִילָה לֵאלֹהֵי יִשְׁעִי" (‘I will wait for the God of my salvation,’ Mic 7:7). [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. BDB: 196. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. See BHS remarks on the verse, and in David A. Bosworth, *House of Weeping: The Motif of Tears in Akkadian and Hebrew Prayers*, Atlanta: SBL Press, 2019, 2-131. Bosworth is the only scholar who mentions the possibility of textual emendation. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. Jonah ibn Janah, ספר השורשים, Berlin, Mekitzei Nirdamim, 1896, 110. See also traditional exegesis: Metzudat David, Ibn Ezra, and Kimchi on the verse. Similarly, see A.A. Anderson, *The Book of Psalms* II, NCBC, London 1992. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. See, for example, CAT 1.2 IV: 17-18: *l tnġṣn pnth l ydlp tmnh*, a description of Kotar fighting the sea in the Baal sagas. William Moran, “A Note on Ps 119:28,” *CBQ* 15 (1953), 10; Mitchell Dahood, "Hebrew-Ugaritic Lexicography III", *Biblica* 46 (1965), 311-312; Leslie C. Allen, *Psalms 101-150*, WBC, Waco 1983, 135. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. HALOT: 223 brings two senses for the verb: 1) to flow, 2) to lack sleep and be depressed. DCHR, 440-441 brings four different meanings: 1) to be sleepless, 2) to flow, 3) to collapse, 4) to be bent over. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. E.A. Speiser, “The Semantic Range of *dalāpu*,” *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 5/2 (1951), 61, 64-66. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. Personal communication with S. Cheval. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. HALOT: 490. See also Pope’s commentary on Job 14:15 in M.H. Pope (AB), 102, “will become pale from desire and yearning.” For the *niphal* see Gen 31:30. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)