# Abstract

Goal of the Study and Methodology

This study deals with divine anger and the ways in which it can be assuaged in the Pentateuch and its sources. The study’s overall conclusion is that the existence of the concept of “divine anger” in the Hebrew Bible in general and the Pentateuch in particular deserves reconsideration. In its place, we can point to a range of phenomena in biblical literature generally, and, specifically, in the various literary units that make up the Pentateuch, which are thematically connected through the application of divine power against the People Israel; and to a range of techniques applied by human beings, as well as God himself, in order to prevent, end, or temper these outbursts. The project is thus in conversation with three fields of Biblical Studies: biblical semantics, biblical theology, and the study of the Pentateuch.

The prevailing assumption in the research is that there is a given, unified, and transhistorical concept of “anger,” which is expressed by different terms in every language; the scholar’s task, as it were, is simply to locate, in each and every language, the particular terminology that expresses this singular concept. However, this assumption ignores the gap between the conception of emotions, including anger, in different cultures and in different times: first and foremost, the distinction between ancient cultures. It similarly ignores the rich semantic variation that exists within every language—in our case, in Biblical Hebrew.

This earlier assumption neither allows for a sufficient differentiation between biblical and modern conceptions of anger, nor does it enable us to identify the difference between various biblical phenomena. The Bible itself employs various words to describe these phenomena, but scholarship has unjustifiably grouped them all in a single category. On the other hand, because of theological considerations that are foreign to the intellectual world of the Bible, many scholars have presumed, or sought to demonstrate, that the Bible dichotomically distinguishes between “divine anger” and “human anger.” As a result, divine *ḥᵃrôn ʾāp̱*, for example, is treated exactly like divine *qeṣep̱*and *ka‘as*, but as different than mortal *ḥᵃrôn ʾāp̱*. However, the distinction scholars sought to demonstrate between divine and human anger has no real textual basis.

In an attempt to overcome these obstacles, the first part of this study offers a reevaluation of those terms that, according to the scholarly consensus, are connected to the concept of anger. This reevaluation is first and foremost semantic. It is based on a consideration of the context in which each word appears, the metaphoric weight of the various idioms, and morphological and syntactic distinctions, such as the verbal forms in which the words appear or the prepositions they employ. The appearance of idioms applied to the diety are not considered separately from their appearance in connection with human beings, but rather the contrary: understanding the phrase in interpersonal contexts serves as a foundation for understanding it in the context of divine-human relations.

Terminology is therefore the first axis through which this study differentiates between the range of phenomena that are customarily grouped together under the larger category “divine anger.” The second axis is the distinction between the Pentateuchal sources. While this axis plays a role in the first part of the study, it is the central consideration of the second part.

In recent decades, scholarship on the Pentateuch has seen a fundamental debate touching on both methodology and findings. The findings that had been accepted in the past, central among them being the classical documentary hypothesis—which states that the Pentateuch is composed of four independent works that were later redacted together—have been called into question and sometimes entirely abandoned. It is difficult to arrive at new points of agreement, or to reestablish the validity of the old, for the various schools of thought in Biblical Studies are also divided along numerous methodological lines. This situation increases the difficulty of research into the religious worldviews reflected in the Pentateuch, the central concern of the present study.

This study adopts the documentary hypothesis overall, with the essential methodological corrections proposed by the “neo-documentary” school. Despite the fact that the central goal of the study is not to prove the general validity of one model or another, it does offer ways to cope with and overcome the crisis in the study of the Pentateuch. This will be accomplished through a consideration of the appearances of “divine anger” in various Pentateuchal sources, in two ways. From a terminological perspective, the study examines which terms appear in each source. However, unlike the classical approach, there is no assumption that the meaning of all the terms is equivalent and that each source expresses a common concept in its own words, as it were. On the contrary, from the moment that it became clear that the terms differ in their semantic weight, it is possible and necessary to examine why a certain source prefers one term and avoids another, and in which way different sources use the same terms, from grammatical, syntactic, contextual, and, especially, conceptual perspectives.

However, a wider examination of the ways in which each source depicts YHWH’s powerful outbursts and the means that can prevent or minimize them, compel us to go beyond terminology to consider a wider literary, narrative, and theological context. This is accomplished in the second half of the study, dedicated to a wide-ranging discussion of selected Pentateuchal texts. A common tendency in scholarship today is to combine theological considerations in the philological analysis itself: what seems to be a gap or contradiction from a theological perspective is considered evidence for the complexity of the text and can, according to this perspective, serve as a foundation for the dating of textual elements and for the reconstruction of the consolidation of short textual units and even long literary passages. The present study develops and reinforces the opposing position, according to which philological analysis does not depend on theological analysis, but rather precedes and undergirds it. The precedence of the philological discussion to theological considerations ensures that the latter will be conducted on a firm foundation, more textually faithful and less subjective.

Main Findings

The first part of the study (chapter 1-3) reexamines what the research literature has called “terms of anger” in Biblical Hebrew, and the second part (chapters 4-6) deals with the analysis of selected texts from the Pentateuch, with the goal of understanding the different conceptions of what has been called “divine anger” and of the ways that it appeased in the Pentateuchal sources.

Chapter 1: *ḥārâ ʾāp̱*

The first chapter is dedicated to the phrase that is considered in the scholarship to be the most common term of anger in the Hebrew Bible, *ḥārâ ʾāp̱*. This phrase is also widespread in the Pentateuch (although it is not found at all the Priestly source; the possible reasons for this are discussed in the following chapters). First of all, it is necessary to recall and to develop the differentiation that, while it has been proposed in earlier studies, has often been forgotten or rejected—and which is not reflected in most of the translations, dictionaries, and research works—between two expressions, which differ in their meanings, that include the verb *ḥārâ*: the expression *ḥārâ lᵉ-*X, on the one hand, and the expression *ḥārâ ʾap̱* X or *ḥārâ ʾap̱* X *bᵉ-*Y, on the other (the signs X and Y represent the place of personal names, including the name of YHWH). The chapter proposes a three-fold distinction between these two expressions: semantic, hierarchical, and metaphoric.

From a semantic perspective, it becomes clear that the phrase *ḥārâ lᵉ-*Xdoes not indicate an active and aggressive response to a specific object, such as might deserve to be called “anger,” but rather a passive response, more similar to what we refer to as sadness, disappointment, vulnerability, or humiliation. In contrast, the expression *ḥārâ ʾap̱* X *bᵉ-*Ydoes indicate forceful harm to another—by deed or, at least, by word—that is more appropriate than the former expression to be considered anger. From a hierarchical perspective, the expression *ḥārâ ʾap̱* X *bᵉ-*Y appears almost always when X is of a higher status than Y: for example, a master versus a slave, a king versus a subject, a man versus an animal, and—keeping in mind the accepted hierarchy in antiquity—husband versus wife. On the contrary, the expression *ḥārâ lᵉ-*Xappears in different hierarchical contexts, but especially in a situation in which X actually has a lower position in the hierarchy. This distinction is valid as well in the case of God. For that reason, it would never be said that *ḥārâ ʾap̱* man *bᵉ-*YHWH, and it is almost never said directly that a *ḥārâ* has been *lᵉ-*YHWH; but we often find that *ḥārâ ʾap̱* YHWH *bᵉ-*man,and that *ḥārâ lᵉ-*man as a consequence of YHWH’s actions.

These distinctions lead us to a new understanding of the metaphor underlying both expressions. As earlier studies have recognized, the verb *ḥārâ* is connected to burning, but generally this fact is interpreted as reflecting the reddening of the face in the moment of anger. However, I claim that that expression *ḥārâ ʾap̱* X *bᵉ-*Y compares the forceful action of X to fire spewing from his nose and harming Y, whereas in the expression *ḥārâ lᵉ-*X the fire is not directed from X toward the other, but instead harms X himself (somewhat similar to the contemporary expression “a burning insult”).

The remainder of the chapter focuses on the expression *ḥārâ ʾap̱* X *bᵉ-*Y and demonstrates that this expression does not indicate an internal, spontaneous, and uncontrollable emotion, but rather a category of action; this arises from a careful examination of several texts in which this expression appears and in which it is difficult to interpret in the accepted manner. For example, in YHWH’s words to Moses in the wake of the sin of the golden calf, “Now, let me be, *weyiḥar ʾappî* against them that I may destroy them, and make of you a great nation” (Ex. 32:10). It is not reasonable to interpret the verse as saying that YHWH asks permission from Moses to feel an internal, spontaneous, uncontrollable emotion. Moreover, if YHWH’s request to destroy the people reflects emotions and anger, it is only logical that the feeling of anger has already been awakened, and the desire to destroy the people is the result of that emotion.

For that reason, it is proposed—in light of this and other cases—that *ḥᵃrôn ʾāp̱* is not the feeling itself, but rather the nature of the action: the application of force against another as a response to an unacceptable act, in the context of a hierarchical relationship. *ḥᵃrôn ʾāp̱* is therefore not a concrete action like “walking” or “eating,” but it is also not an emotion like “grief” or “fear.” It is an expression that *characterizes* an action, and it is therefore always accompanied by a concrete description of the way in which the *ḥᵃrôn ʾāp̱* occurred. We find that it is mistaken to impose the modern concept of anger on the various expressions in which the verb *hara* appears, and that the difference between different expressions that are considered “terms of anger” is much more than an easily dismissible nuance.

Chapter 2: *qeṣep̱*

The second chapter deals principally with the word *qeṣep̱* and the verb *qāṣap̱*, as well as two further expressions that, it becomes clear, are related to that same semantic field: *ḥemâ*and *ʾāp̱*. In distinction to *ḥārâ ʾāp̱*, these expressions are not connected to burning but rather to the image of poison dripping out of the face. From a semantic perspective, the verb *qāṣap̱* indicates a judgmental response, especially in instances of disobedience, and it appears often in proximity to the root MRH. Two of the Pentateuchal sources, the Priestly source and the Deuteronomistic source, employ the root QṢP̱, and the bulk of the chapter is dedicated to a comparison between the ways in which each uses them, as opposed to other source’s use of a particular term, and other terms that appear in that particular source.

The centrality of *qeṣep̱*in the priestly literature, as opposed to the absence of the phrase *ḥārâ ʾāp̱* there, has been explained in the scholarship as part of the attempt, as it were, to develop a more abstract and less anthropomorphic conception of the divine. However, I argue that it is difficult to accept this explanation, among other reasons because P also does not use *ḥārâ ʾāp̱* to describe relations between human beings, and not only with the divine; moreover, D frequently uses both QṢP̱and *ḥārâ ʾāp̱*. A reexamination of the instances of the root QṢP̱ in P shows that the verb *qāṣap̱* serves also in descriptions of human relations, but only in the divine context does the noun *qeṣep̱* appear. *qeṣep̱* is destructive force, and the harm it causes goes far beyond the sinner alone to touch the entire community. This force is almost autonomous, and YHWH—in a clearly personified depiction—warns against the possibility of its eruption, for from the moment that it strikes, it goes out of his control, and only particular acts by human beings can contain it.

As compared with the unsatisfying explanations provided in the scholarship for the meaning of QṢP̱ in P, the meaning of this term in D seemingly remains uninvestigated. From the analysis of this chapter, it arises that this source links *qāṣap̱* and disobedience, and the impulsivity that *qāṣap̱* entails, while D directly ascribes the verb *qāṣap̱* to God. D also makes use of the verb *haqṣip̱* to depict the actions of the Children of Israel, who causes God to *qāṣap̱* against them; in one passage, *qāṣap̱* is expressed in the ultimately-unfulfilled wish to destroy the people. It becomes clear that D insists on a unique terminological distinction between *qāṣap̱* and *ḥārâ ʾāp̱*: the first appears in narrative depictions of the plagues that YHWH sent, or thought to send, against the people in the wilderness, while the latter serves to describe the future destruction. This reinforces the impulsive aspect of *qāṣap̱*, as is demonstrated in P, and, at the same time, the recognition that *ḥārâ ʾāp̱* does not indicate uncontrolled emotion but rather the application of reasoned and willed force.

Chapter 3: *ka‘as*

In this third chapter it becomes clear that the root K‘S in the Bible does not in fact indicate what we call anger in post-biblical language. This is a surprising finding in light of the fact that in rabbinic literature and even in modern Hebrew, this root is the central expression used to indicate the emotion of anger. Not only that, but it is remarkable given the relatively wide distribution of the root in the Bible, especially in the combination *hiḵʿis ʾeṯ YHWH*, which is widespread in the Deuteronomic source and in the Deuteronomistic redaction layers in the Former Prophets and the book of Jeremiah.

In this chapter, I demonstrate that *ka‘as* in the Bible is a form of sadness or disappointment, specifically connected to jealousy. For example, one of the stories in which this root appears in high concentration is the story of Hannah’s barrenness (1 Samuel 1); here it is clear that *ka‘as* is not anger, but rather Hannah’s mounting distress as she faces the fact that Penina her rival wife was blessed with children. Like the expression *ḥārâ lᵉ-*X, *ka‘as* also mostly describes a passive reaction, and for that reason we principally find it in the transitive verbal form *hifil*: in the Bible, an individual can cause *ka‘as* to another—whether human or God—but that individual for his part is almost never actively *kôʿēs*. Nevertheless, it could be that he will *ḥārâ ʾāp̱* in/as the person who caused him *ka‘as*. We find that the expressions *ḥārâ ʾāp̱* and *ka‘as* are not interchangeable, and each one has a distinct meaning—unlike the prevailing assumption throughout the history of biblical commentary and scholarship regarding divine anger in the Bible.

The special connection between *ka‘as* and *qinʾâ* (“jealousy”)—which has been almost entirely unnoticed in the scholarship, and certainly not fully developed—is also an explanation for the fact that the phrase *hiḵʿis ʾeṯ YHWH* always appears, with no exception, in contexts of idolatry, and not in the context of other sins or other acts that arouse YHWH’s displeasure or lead him to respond violently. This is in contrast to all other so-called “terms of anger,” which appear in much more varied contexts. In order to explain the meaning of this link between *ka‘as* and *qinʾâ*, the chapter includes a novel discussion of the concept of jealousy and the relation between this concept and the root QNʾ in Biblical Hebrew; in this case as well, existing scholarship is lacking in both semantic precision and in its tendency toward anachronistic theological simplification.

In light of the recognition of the special meaning of *ka‘as*, we can sketch a kind of history of  *hiḵʿis ʾeṯ YHWH* in the Bible. In early sources, simply the worship of other gods provokes YHWH’s *ka‘as*, for the God of Israel is a jealous God who demands absolute and exclusive faith. D adds the claim that worshiping any idol, even if it is intended to represent YWHW, provokes YHWH’s *ka‘as*, for he prohibits his representation since anyone who bows down before a plastic figure is no different than an idolater. In the final stage, reflected in the Deuteronomistic redactional layer and in the book of Ezekiel, even the worship of YWHW outside the designated place is considered *ka‘as*.

Chapter 4: “If I Were to Go in your Midst for One Moment, I Would Destroy You”: Proximity, Danger, and Self-control in the Story of the Spies in J

Numbers 14:11-25 relates that, following the report of the spies and the reaction of the people, YHWH announces his intention to destroy the people, while Moses persuades him to not follow through on this intention. The aim of the fourth chapter of this study is to identify the mechanism that led to this apparently spontaneous eruption, and to analyze the way in which Moses succeeds in preventing it. Scholarship has long recognized that Numbers 13-14 combines two independent narratives, but there has been almost no attempt to deeply examine the non-priestly story against the backdrop of the literary work to which it belongs, that is, the Yahwist source in the Pentateuch. A canonical-hermeneutic reading, on the one hand, and a deconstruction of the text to innumerable components, on the other, do not enable us to identify the close narrative, linguistic, and theological linkage between the non-priestly story of the spies and earlier episodes in J, without which it is impossible to satisfactorily explain the intense eruption of divine anger in this story.

In the chapter, I point to the fact that YHWH’s words explicitly connect his dissatisfaction with the people not with the specific episode of the spies, but rather with a long chain of events in which the Children of Israel expressed their lack of faith in YHWH’s ability to provide for their needs. The subject of the people’s testing of YHWH and the lack of faith in him runs like a crimson thread throughout J, and is expressed also in Psalm 78, whose connection with J has long been recognized in the scholarship. If one were to ignore the original narrative sequence that leads to the story of the spies—both by isolating and focusing solely on the story, with no consideration of its context, and by the attempt to understand it within the framework of the canonical Pentateuch—the threat of destruction would indeed appear unmotivated and inexplicable. The recognition that, according to J, the absence of faith in his power offends YHWH most of all also explains the complicated rhetoric that Moses employs in the attempt to prevent the destruction of the people. Moses emphasizes that YHWH’s destructive act will not lead to an increase in belief in him, but will instead exacerbate the situation; and the partial forgiveness that YHWH provides at in the end is a means of grappling with this paradox.

The central concern of the chapter and its primary innovation is its attention to another matter that arises in the story, connected to the subject of lack of faith, which, I argue, is the central issue in the wilderness story in J: the presence of YHWH among the Children of Israel. The chapter presents fundamentally for the first time the way in which this issue dominates the J narrative: in the beginning YHWH accompanies the Children of Israel only as a pillar of fire and a pillar of smoke, and the Children of Israel doubt his power and the extent of his presence, wondering “Is YHWH present among us or not?” (Ex. 17:7). Accordingly, YHWH decides to descend upon Mount Sinai before the eyes of all the people, and from then on to be present himself in their midst, not in the pillars of fire and smoke. I argue that this is the reason for revelation at Mount Sinai in J.

However, YHWH’s desire to be seen by the people and to be present among them is accompanied by unrelenting ambivalence between the desire for and fear of intimacy. Accordingly, YHWH establishes numerous hierarchical boundaries for those who wish to gaze on him, and later even reneges on his intention to enter the promised land along with the people—but is convinced to do so nevertheless, even as he warns that this greater intimacy can cause spontaneous and destructive eruptions that will consume the people. According to J, we find that YHWH expects the unexpected: he expresses a recognition of his own lack of control, stemming from his awareness of the character of the Children of Israel and, no less, his own. This warning comes to fruition in the story of the spies.

The chapter concludes with a comparison between the story of the spies in J and the stories of spies elsewhere in the Pentateuch: in the priestly strata in Numbers 13-14, in the Deuteronomic source, and in the story of the Reubenites and Gadites in Numbers 32. The fact that only J reports YHWH’s desire to destroy the people reinforces the conclusion that one should understand this desire not against the background of the single story but instead only in the context of the J narrative in its entirety. The other Pentateuchal sources also tell of the danger that the people will be destroyed by their God, but each one attributes this danger to a different type of insult, and thus include this motive in a different narrative context, and each one also differently constructs the means to avoid this danger.

Chapter 5: Numbers 25—Methods of Assuaging Divine Anger in P and the Other Sources

Numbers 25 is an important text for understanding divine anger and the means to assuage it in the Pentateuch, but at the same time it stands as the center of the controversy between the rival schools in contemporary Pentateuchal studies. This chapter includes a detailed analysis of the chapter, both from the perspective of its literary composition, its formation, and its affinity with other biblical texts, and from the perspective of the various models of divine anger and the means for moderating it that are presented there. Thus it also represents an overall methodological contribution to the study of the Pentateuch.

Verses 1-5 are composed of two independent, cohesive, and clearly identifiable narrative lines. The first depicts the Children of Israel’s bowing down before the Canaanite god Ba‘al Pe‘or. According to this story, part of E, Moses himself appeals to the leaders of the people with the request to execute only those who adhere to the cult of Ba‘al Pe‘or; Moses swift action seemingly prevents divine intervention. D’s version of the episode (Deut. 4:3-4) is based on this story in E. Whereas D shares the view that all the sinners, and only the sinners, were killed, it ascribes their killing to YHWH.

The second story, that of the daughters of Moab, is part of J, and it is the precise and complete realization, practically and literally, of the warning that appears in J in Exodus 34:14-16. Here, too, J evinces its narrative and conceptual coherence. This story includes an unusual way of dealing with sin and quieting divine anger: a ritualistic execution of the leader of the people himself. This type of remedy for divine wrath has no parallel in the Bible apart from the story of the extermination of the Gibeonites in 2 Samuel 21, which is also discussed in this chapter of the study. In terms of the composition of Numbers 25, the exceptional demand for public execution is supporting evidence for the independence of this narrative, which, unlike recent scholarly opinion, I aim to prove is not a later addition to the story of Ba‘al Pe‘or, but rather, as mentioned, is part of J.

The bulk of the chapter is dedicated to a discussion of the story of Pinhas (v. 6 and following). The commonly held opinion in Pentateuchal scholarship today, including among some scholars of the documentary school, is that this story was written as the continuation of two narratives lines that are woven together in the first verses. In contrast to this view, my discussion in this study makes clear that one should not see the story of Pinhas as a continuation of the stories of Ba‘al Pe‘or (E) and the daughters of Moab (J) or as a combination of them, but rather as an integral part of the priestly source, which does not reflect a familiarity with the non-priestly components of the chapter. This analysis has wide-reaching consequences, both with regards to contemporary debates over the redaction of Numbers, and over the basic methodological question of how one can determine whether a particular non-unitary text is composed of different layers that built up one on top of the other, or derives from the combination of independent sources.

The recognition that the story of Pinhas belongs to the priestly source allows and compels us to examine it against the backdrop of the priestly conception of *qeṣep̱*.

It becomes clear that the story of Pinhas does not concern idol worship or intermarriage, but rather with the topic that is discussed and developed throughout P: strangers’ proximity to the holy. An examination of the story of Nadav and Avihu (Lev. 10:1-7), the instructions preceding the journey (Num. 1:48-54), and the act of Korah and his followers and the unfolding of events in its wake (Num. 16A-17) reveals both the mechanism of *qāṣap* that is enacted when a strange flame or individuals approach the altar and its cult, and how the eruption of *qāṣap* can be prevented by a seemingly magical action by the priest. In both examples of *qāṣap* actually bursting forth—Pinhas, and before him Aaron (Num. 17:6-15)—God’s own words testify that priestly action prevented the total destruction of the people. Like the prophet in other contexts, overall the priest aids YHWH navigate situations on a loss of control. However, he does so not by means of arguments but instead through a direct action that removes the *qāṣap* itself.

Chapter 6: “These are Your Tents O Israel”: The Golden Calf and the Threat of Destruction in E and D

Like the story of the spies in J, the story of the golden calf in Exodus 32 likewise includes YHWH’s declaration of his desire to destroy the people. The ascription of this story to E is unquestioned among scholars following the documentary hypothesis, and it is well rooted in the narrative context of the story of the transmission of the law in this source. However, many scholars have unjustifiably assumed that the conversation between YHWH and Moses about destroying the people (vv. 7-14) is not an original part of the story; on account of the seeming duplication between it and a second conversation between them (vv. 31-34), the generally accepted view, arrived at on stylistic grounds, is that it is a deuteronomic or deuteronomistic addition. However, closer analysis shows that there is no duplication between the two conversations between YHWH and Moses: In their first conversation, YHWH admits to Moses that he wishes to destroy the people and changes his mind following Moses’ words. In the second conversation—in light of YHWH’s consolation at destroying the people and Moses’ recognition of the severity of the transgression—they discuss the possibility of “bearing” the transgression, and this time Moses’ request is denied and YHWH punishes the people for their transgression.

The dependence of the report in Deuteronomy 9-10 on the story in Exodus 32 is agreed on by most scholars, but there has been almost no discussion of these descriptions in the context of their sources, in particular not against the backdrop of E. This is true both of the analysis of each story within the context of its own source and the comparative analysis of both. The latter issue is discussed as if it entailed the relationship between two independent stories. This is often accompanied by willful blindness to the fact that the textual situation here is not one short story that is based on another, but rather two passages that are part of two longer literary compositions, each of which has its own style, plot, and theological worldview; the later of these two compositions is largely, but not specifically, based on the former.

I argue that one should understand the sin of the golden calf in E against the backdrop of the issue that preoccupies this source: the mediation between heaven and the created world or the representation of YHWH on earth. The story of the golden calf in E does not only address the relations between YHWH and Israel, but also the relations between YHWH and Moses and Moses and Israel. Unlike J or P, E presumes that YHWH permanently resides in heaven and does not descend among the People Israel, neither during their journey in the wilderness nor in their future home in the Land of Canaan. This theological worldview necessitates the organization of means of enabling YHWH’s presence and representation on earth in the present—meaning, for the wilderness generation—and in the future, during and after their entry into the Land of Canaan. During the wilderness period, the mediation between YHWH and the Children of Israel is accomplished by Moses, who is considered by the Children of Israel for that reason to be God’s manifestation on earth. The calf is intended to replace Moses as YWHW’s representation; on those grounds, its construction is an expression of a lack of faith in both YWHW and Moses. Moses’ special status is also a key to understanding his role in preventing YHWH’s intended destruction, but also his failure to convince YHWH to pardon the sin of the Children of Israel.

D shares the premise of E that YHWH resides in heaven, however D intensifies the conflict over the means of representation and mediation, and in exchange moderates the opposition to YHWH’s physical presence on earth in certain situations. D’s staunch opposition to YHWH being represented on earth is expressed, among other ways, in a lessening of Moses’ stature, and the phenomenon of prophecy as a whole is presented in D as a method that was approved after the fact, as it were. In light of this perspective, the golden calf in D is in no sense a replacement for Moses, but instead an illegitimate attempt to represent YHWH. As D presumes that the plastic representation of YHWH is impossible, the construction of the calf is considered worshiping other gods, which, according to this source, is a justification for destroying Israel. The chapter shows how D’s perspective is expressed in this source’s reconstitution of the story of the calf in E, both through subtle but significant changes of phrasing and in larger changes to the structure of the plot. At the same time, the chapter will consider how D also uses passages that belong to J in a more limited, but literarily and theologically targeted way.

Conclusion

This study questions the unity of the concept of “divine anger,” and points to a variety of different phenomena in biblical literature overall, and in the Pentateuchal sources in particular, that are commonly included under this rubric. This is accomplished in two ways: first, through a differentiation between various expressions in biblical Hebrew, which existing scholarship has viewed as synonymous but are proven to be distinct: not just in their nuances, but also exhibiting clear semantic differences. And second, a differentiation between the ways in which the four Pentateuchal sources depict divine anger: its causes, its mechanisms, and the means of assuaging it, in accordance with the conception of the divine reflected in each source and its literary and conceptual character. This also makes evident the gap—in terms of the conceptualization of emotion, action, and hierarchy, as well as the figure of God—between the biblical sources and later expressions in Judaism, Christianity, and in modernity.

Future studies can elaborate in several directions on the findings and methods that were demonstrated in this work:

1. A reexamination of other “emotional” and “theological” terms in the Bible, based on morphological, syntactic, and contextual distinctions, and not on post-biblical theological, psychological, or conceptual assumptions.
2. An examination of the development of the concept of “divine anger” as a theological-exegetical category in ancient Judaism and early Christianity and the analysis of the influence of this concept in modern Biblical Studies.
3. An up-to-date, thorough, and detailed analysis of other texts that lie at the center of the discussion of the different approaches to the study of the Pentateuch, and a discussion of the central methodological issues in the field, such as: independent sources versus redactional layers, and the relation between philological analysis and dating and a consideration of theological worldviews.
4. A continuation of the study of the theology of the Pentateuchal sources based on an appreciation of the narrative continuity and coherence of each source. For example, the literary and ritual role of the Ark in different sources.
5. A consideration of the consequences of the understanding of the mechanisms of anger in the Pentateuchal sources on the formation of the religious experience in the time of the sources’ authors themselves. Was the eruption of divine anger and the mechanisms to prevent and contain it, as well as the religious background that explains them, consigned by the narrators to the distant mythical past of the wilderness or were they relevant also in their own time? And if the latter, entirely or only partially, symbolically or realistically?
6. A study of divine anger and the ways of assuaging it in other biblical works, examining whether, and to what degree, the concepts that arise from the Pentateuchal sources, as demonstrated in this study, are also reflected in other strata of biblical literature.
7. A thorough comparison of the concepts presented here regarding divine anger with ancient Near Eastern literature, on the one hand, and post-biblical stages of Jewish thought, on the other.