# Is *ḥārâ* an Emotion?Reconsidering Anger in the Hebrew Bible

Ariel Seri-Levi

The Hebrew University of Jerusalem
and the David Yellin Academic College of Education

ariel.seri-levi@mail.huji.ac.il

### Abstract

It is common to assume that there is a group of words in Biblical Hebrew that all denote the emotion of anger. This article questions that assumption by means of a re-examination of the verb *ḥārâ*, which is understood to be the most commonly used term for anger. The first part of the article is devoted to distinguishing between the terms *ḥārâ lᵉ* and *ḥārâ ʾāp̱*: One describes a passive response, such as being insulted or frustrated, while the other describes the active response of a higher-ranking person directed at a person of lower rank. The second part focuses on the idiom *ḥārâ ʾāp̱* and demonstrates that this idiom does not denote an internal, spontaneous and uncontrollable emotion that prompts external action, but rather denotes the action itself, which may take various concrete forms. The literal and metaphoric meanings of the two expressions are clarified anew in light of these findings.

### Keywords

Emotions in the Bible, Anger, Biblical Semantics, Hierarchy

### 1. Introduction

The verb *ḥārâ* appears dozens of times in the Bible and is considered the most common way to signify anger in Biblical Hebrew.[[1]](#footnote-0) This consensus is based on the assumption that there is a single, unchanging, transcultural “concept of anger,” and that every language possesses “terms” whose role is to signify that concept. On the basis of this assumption, all the senses of the supposedly general concept “anger” are assigned — usually without sufficient critical examination — to the Hebrew verb *ḥārâ* and to additional expressions in Biblical Hebrew that are considered synonymous to it, such as QṢP̱, *ḥemâ*, and KʿS.[[2]](#footnote-1) All these expressions are interpreted as expressing the emotion of anger, which can be defined along general lines as an internal, subjective feeling, spontaneous and uncontrollable, which may often lead to, or be expressed by, aggression.[[3]](#footnote-2)

In this article, I intend to question these basic assumptions. I will focus on the verb *ḥārâ* with the aim of demonstrating that this verb does *not* denote the emotion of anger.[[4]](#footnote-3) I will do this in two stages. First, I will distinguish between the idiom *ḥārâ ʾāp̱* and the texts where the verb *ḥārâ* appears without the noun *ʾāp̱* but with the preposition *lᵉ*. The main difference between them, which has been noted but is not as widely known or as firmly and precisely grounded as necessary, is that *ḥārâ lᵉ* conveys a sense of feeling saddened, frustrated, or offended, while *ḥārâ ʾāp̱* is more like — but, as we will see, not identical to — what we would call anger. An additional difference, which has not yet been pointed out, is that in the idiom *ḥārâ ʾap̱ X bᵉ Y*, X is almost always of higher hierarchical status than Y, and is never lower; for the expression *ḥārâ lᵉ*, this is not the case. I will then discuss the metaphorical meaning of these idioms.

In the second part of the article, I will focus on the expression *ḥārâ ʾāp̱*. I will examine five biblical passages in which it is unreasonable to interpret this idiom as expressing emotion. This will lead to a new explanation of the idiom *ḥārâ ʾāp̱*, as an expression whose role is to define particular actions or words as an exercise of power in a hierarchical framework: The person whose *ʾāp̱* is *ḥōrê* is almost always the higher in status, and the action described as *ḥārâ ʾāp̱* is his *real-world* response to the actions or words of the lower-ranking individual.

### 2. ḥārâ ʾāp̱ vs. ḥārâ lᵉ

The verb *ḥārâ* appears 83 times in the Bible,[[5]](#footnote-4) and the noun *ḥᵃrôn* appears an additional 41 times. In most of these occurrences, the noun *ʾap̱* appears as the subject of the verb *ḥārâ* or in construct with the noun *ḥᵃrôn*, to which must be added several occurrences of the idiom *(bo)ḥᵒri-ʾāp̱*.

Scholars have observed that the verb *ḥārâ* tends to appear in the phrases *ḥārâ ʾap̱ X bᵉ Y* or *ḥārâ lᵉ*-Y, but in general they do not try to explain why there are two different idioms or what the difference between them is; the general assumption is that they are synonyms.[[6]](#footnote-5) Mayer Gruber does distinguish between these expressions, arguing that *ḥārâ ʾap̱ X bᵉ Y* expresses X’s anger at Y, while *ḥārâ lᵉ*-X expresses sadness or depression,[[7]](#footnote-6) but this important distinction has not been widely accepted.[[8]](#footnote-7) In this section, I will try to demonstrate this distinction, to understand the meaning of each idiom more precisely, and also to suggest two additional differences between them: one connected to their metaphoric meaning and the other to their use with regard to social status.

#### 2.1 The Meaning of ḥārâ lᵉ

The implication of *ḥārâ lᵉ* is not precisely sadness or depression, but more generally a feeling of being unjustly insulted or humiliated, as, for example, in the story of Cain and Abel:[[9]](#footnote-8)

Yhwh paid heed to Abel and his offering, but to Cain and his offering He paid no heed. *wayyiḥar lᵉ* Cain very much and his face fell. And Yhwh said to Cain, “Why is it *ḥārâ lᵉ* you, and why is your face fallen?” (Gen 4:4b-6)

In philosophical discussions of emotion, it is commonly accepted that a desire for revenge is one of the necessary components of anger.[[10]](#footnote-9) At its root, anger prompts one to act, even if the impulse to act is not always carried out. An additional characteristic of anger is the addressee: Anger is always directed *at* someone.[[11]](#footnote-10) The example of Cain does not match these requirements. Cain does not respond actively and aggressively toward Yhwh; instead, “his face falls.” Active aggression will arrive only in the next phase of the story, and it will not be directed at Yhwh but at Abel; it is important to distinguish between these two phases.[[12]](#footnote-11) Cain’s “face falling” is a passive response to the injustice that Yhwh did him when he rejected his offering; this is not anger but a feeling of burning with insult.

Similarly, in the case of Jonah we can see the feeling of being wronged that accompanies the appearances of *ḥārâ lᵉ*:

This displeased Jonah greatly, *wayyiḥar lᵉ* him. He prayed to Yhwh, saying, “O Yhwh! Isn’t this just what I said when I was still in my own country? That is why I fled beforehand to Tarshish. For I know that You are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in kindness, renouncing punishment. Please, Yhwh, take my life, for I would rather die than live.” Yhwh replied, “Is it that deeply *ḥārâ lᵉ* you?”

Now Jonah had left the city and found a place east of the city. He made a booth there and sat under it in the shade, until he should see what happened to the city. The God Yhwh provided a ricinus plant, which grew up over Jonah, to provide shade for his head and save him from discomfort. Jonah was very happy about the plant. But the next day at dawn God provided a worm, which attacked the plant so that it withered. And when the sun rose, God provided a sultry east wind; the sun beat down on Jonah’s head, and he became faint. He begged for death, saying, “I would rather die than live.” Then God said to Jonah, “Is it so deeply *ḥārâ lᵉ* you about the plant?” “Yes,” he replied, “so deeply *ḥārâ lᵉ* me that I want to die.” (Jon 4:1-9)

As with Cain, so too with Jonah *ḥᵃrôn* is a response to Yhwh’s actions. Here too it does not lead to the active response characteristic of anger but to the passivity and weakness characteristic of someone who is sad, insulted, or frustrated.[[13]](#footnote-12) Over and over again Jonah prefers death to life (4:3, 8, 9). Jonah is suffering: “This displeased Jonah greatly (*wayyeraʿ ʾel-yônâ rāʿâ g̱ᵉḏôlâ*)” (4:1) and the ricinus plant is provided to “save him from discomfort (*merāʿāṯô*)” (v. 6).[[14]](#footnote-13) Jonah does no injury; he is himself injured. Now let us compare this same *rāʿâ* “displeasure” (literally “evil”) when it appears in combination with the other idiom, *ḥārâ ʾāp̱*:

Let not the Egyptians say, ‘It was with evil (*bᵉrāʿâ*) intent that He delivered them, only to kill them off in the mountains and annihilate them from the face of the earth.’ Turn from Your *ḥᵃrôn ʾāp̱*, and renounce the plan to punish Your people (*wᵉhinnāḥem ʿal-hārāʿâ lᵉʿammeḵā*). (Exod 32:12)

And I will break Elam before their enemies, before those who seek their lives; and I will bring evil (*rāʿâ*) upon them, My *ḥᵃrôn ʾāp̱*—declares Yhwh, by dispatching the sword after them until I have consumed them (Jer 49:37)

It is important to distinguish between the *rāʿâ* “evil” and the subject to which the verb *ḥārâ* is connected. While in the expression *ḥārâ* X *bᵉ* Y it is X who brings evil upon Y, in *ḥārâ lᵉ*-X the evil is done to X himself. *Ḥārâ ʾāp̱* denotes injury; *ḥārâ lᵉ* denotes being injured. Indeed, at least in general if not systematically, *ḥārâ ʾāp̱* frequently accompanies violence or physical punishment — anything from imprisonment by a human sovereign, to mass killing by God. In contrast, *ḥārâ lᵉ* is generally connected to responses in which words alone are used in order to express the feeling of being insulted or treated unjustly.

#### 2.2 The Hierarchical Context of ḥᵃrôn ʾāp̱

This distinction between injury and being injured is connected with the hierarchical framework which each of these idioms uses. As Ellen van-Wolde has noted, the expression *ḥārâ ʾap̱ X bᵉ Y* obviously involves considerations of status.[[15]](#footnote-14) X almost always outranks Y and is never outranked by Y.[[16]](#footnote-15) In contrast, *ḥārâ lᵉ*-X can be used in various status relationships, including those where X is of lower status.[[17]](#footnote-16) This distinction holds both among human beings and between humans and God. Let us illustrate this with a pair of verses of each kind.

When Rachel asks Jacob for sons, he responds sharply, and the text uses the expression *ḥārâ ʾap̱ X bᵉ Y*, as appropriate for the power relationship between them in a patriarchal society:

When Rachel saw that she had borne Jacob no children, Rachel became envious of her sister; and she said to Jacob, “Give me children, or I shall die.” *Wayyiḥar ʾap̱* Jacob *bᵉ* Rachel, and he said, “Can I take the place of God, who has denied you fruit of the womb?” (Gen 30:1-2)

By contrast, when Jacob’s own dignity is wounded by the search that Laban conducts in his tent and he directs harsh words at Laban, we find his feelings expressed by *ḥārâ lᵉ*-X, for Laban is his father-in-law and also his employer:

So Laban went into Jacob’s tent and Leah’s tent and the tents of the two maidservants; but he did not find them. Leaving Leah’s tent, he entered Rachel’s tent … *wayyiḥar lᵉ*-Jacob and he took up his grievance with Laban, and Jacob spoke up and said to Laban, “What is my crime, what is my guilt that you should pursue me? You rummaged through all my things; what have you found of all your household objects? Set it here, before my kinsmen and yours, and let them decide between us two.” (Gen 31:33, 36-37)

The second pair of texts that clearly illustrates the hierarchical distinction between the two uses of the verb *ḥārâ* is found in the story of Uzzah, who reached out to grab the Ark of God and was put to death by Yhwh. In this story the two expressions come one right after the other, so the difference between them is glaringly obvious:

*Wayyiḥar* *ʾap̱* Yhwh *bᵉ* Uzzah, and God struck him down on the spot for his indiscretion, and he died there beside the Ark of God. *Wayyiḥar lᵉ* David because Yhwh had inflicted a breach upon Uzzah; and that place was named Perez-uzzah, as it is still called (2 Sam 6:7-8)

Yhwh’s response to Uzzah’s action is described with *ḥārâ ʾap̱ X bᵉ Y*, while David’s response to Yhwh’s action is described, immediately afterward, with *ḥārâ lᵉ*-X, corresponding to the status of those involved — God on the one hand, human on the other. The semantic distinction that I suggested also holds: Yhwh injures Uzzah; David does not injure Yhwh but expresses his resentment at the injustice that was done to Uzzah. There is, of course, a connection between the status distinction and the semantic one: The higher-ranking individual can perpetrate violence as a direct response to what the lower-ranking individual has said or done. But this is impossible for the lower-ranking person; the most he can do is to express his sense of injury.

#### 2.3 The Metaphoric Meaning

We have seen that the idiom *ḥārâ lᵉ* expresses a feeling of being insulted, frustrated, or treated unjustly, which is frequently the province of those of lower status, while *ḥārâ ʾāp̱* denotes the forceful response of the higher-status individual. This analysis can serve as a key to a new understanding of the metaphoric meaning of the two expressions.

In the opinion of most scholars, the root ḤRH is related to ḤRR, which signifies “burning.”[[18]](#footnote-17) Unlike ḤRR, though, ḤRH is never used in the Bible non-metaphorically; but it does occur in the semantic field of “fire.”[[19]](#footnote-18) E.g., “In Your great triumph You break Your opponents; You send forth Your *ḥᵃrôn*, it consumes them like straw” (Exod 15:7) likens the destruction of the enemy at Yhwh’s hands to the burning of straw by *ḥᵃrôn*, which here apparently means a flame.[[20]](#footnote-19)

As for the word *ʾāp̱*, it usually means “nose,” but sometimes the entire face, especially in the dual form *ʾāp̱payim*.[[21]](#footnote-20) It too occurs in several texts related to burning: “Smoke went up from His nose, from His mouth came devouring fire; live coals blazed forth from Him” (2Sam 22:9 = Ps 18:9).[[22]](#footnote-21) These texts strengthen the standard scholarly explanation that the metaphor expressed by *ḥārâ ʾāp̱* is burning connected to the nose or face.[[23]](#footnote-22)

Usually the expression *ḥārâ ʾāp̱* is understood to refer to the heating or reddening of the face, an image that is used to express anger in various languages.[[24]](#footnote-23) The expression *ḥārâ lᵉ*- is understood in the same way, based on the assumption that *ḥārâ* by itself is a kind of shorthand for *ḥārâ ʾāp̱*. But I would like to suggest that the image of fire in the expression *ḥārâ ʾap̱ X bᵉ Y* is connected first and foremost to the injury being done to Y, not to anything that is happening to X.[[25]](#footnote-24) The expression *ḥārâ ʾap̱ X bᵉ Y*, which usually describes a higher-ranking individual exercising power over a lower-ranking one, likens this power to a fire coming forth from the nostrils of X and burning Y. The nose is the organ that sticks out from the face, and it is therefore suitable for depicting an active, outward-facing response. By contrast, in *ḥārâ lᵉ*-X, which indicates a passive response, the fire does not come forth toward another recipient, but the reverse: the fire comes from a cause external to X, and it burns X himself. Somewhat akin to the expression “a burning insult,” the expression *ḥārâ lᵉ*-X likens the feeling of being unjustly insulted or frustrated to a blazing fire that consumes the subject himself, as Jonah says: “so deeply *ḥārâ lᵉ* me that I want to die” (Jon 4:9).

We can now proceed to a more accurate understanding of the expression *ḥārâ ʾāp̱*. The assertion that this expression does not denote the emotion but the actual exercise of power, which might consist of a variety of concrete actions, will be clarified by a precise study of several texts where this expression appears. The next section of the article will be devoted to this study.

### 3. *ḥārâ ʾāp̱* as a Category of Action

The expression *ḥārâ ʾāp̱* always appears alongside descriptions of concrete, aggressive responses — verbal or physical. This state of affairs is apparently what led to the common understanding that this idiom signifies anger. This standard syntactic structure supposedly indicates that *ḥārâ ʾāp̱* denotes an internal, spontaneous, uncontrollable emotion, on account of which — as an expression of it or a result of it — comes the external response: the speech or action that express the anger. Let us look at two examples of this structure:

When his master heard the story that his wife told him, namely, “Thus and so your slave did to me,” *wayyiḥar* *ʾap̱pô*, and[[26]](#footnote-25) Joseph’s master had him put in prison, where the king’s prisoners were confined. (Gen 39:19-20a)

They forsook Yhwh and worshiped Baal and the Ashtaroth. *wayyiḥar ʾap̱* Yhwh *bᵉ* Israel, and He handed them over to foes who plundered them. He surrendered them to their enemies on all sides, and they could no longer hold their own against their enemies. (Jud 2:13-14)

Both examples fit the status relationship that we observed: The *ʾāp̱* of X *ḥārâ* at Y because of what he did. The chain of causality described here would seem to be this: In the first text, Joseph’s master hears what his servant is accused of, and as a result *wayyiḥar ʾap̱pô* — that is, he feels anger, as a result of which he has Joseph put in prison. So too in the second text: The Israelites serve other gods, and as a result *ḥārâ ʾāp̱* of Yhwh at Israel, that is, He was angry at them, and as an external expression of His anger He surrendered them to their enemies.

Even though this understanding arises intuitively from many texts, there are not a few texts which are quite difficult to explain if we assume that *ḥārâ ʾāp̱* denotes the emotion of anger. In what follows, I will discuss five examples of this kind. Based on these examples, I will advance an alternative suggestion: that *ḥārâ ʾāp̱* signifies not an emotion but a category of action. Just as punishment and vengeance are neither emotions nor specific actions but rather designate the social and moral context of concrete actions in the framework of a specific relationship — so too I will seek to demonstrate that *ḥārâ ʾāp̱* is the characterization of an exercise of power in response to words or deeds that are inappropriate in a particular power relationship.

*ḥārâ 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 *ḥārâ ʾāp̱* occurred. But this does not mean that the concrete action is the *result* of the *ḥᵃrôn ʾāp̱*. To ground and clarify this argument, we turn now to a discussion of the texts.

#### 3.1 ḥārâ ʾāp̱ as Controlled Action

One of the characteristics of an emotion is its spontaneity: No one chooses whether or not to feel a specific emotion; at most, one can choose how to *express* the emotion that one feels. In this, emotion differs from action, which is a result of the will.[[27]](#footnote-26) Yet in the story of the golden calf in Exodus, *ḥārâ ʾāp̱* is explicitly presented as the result of a decision. Yhwh informs Moses of his intention to destroy the people, and Moses dissuades him from doing so:[[28]](#footnote-27)

Yhwh further said to Moses, “I see that this is a stiffnecked people. Now, let me be, *weyiḥar ʾappî* *bᵉ* them that I may destroy them, and make of you a great nation.” But Moses implored Yhwh his God, saying, “Let not, O Yhwh, *yêḥᵉrê ʾappᵉḵā bᵉ* your people, whom you delivered from the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand … And Yhwh renounced the punishment he had planned to bring upon his people. (Exod 32:9-14)

According to the assumption that *ḥārâ ʾāp̱* denotes emotion only, it is difficult to understand the request “let me be, *weyiḥar ʾappî bᵉ* them,” since the possibility that Yhwh is asking Moses to permit him to feel a specific emotion is implausible. Moreover, if the threat of destruction implies divine anger, it would be reasonable to assume that this emotion has already been aroused, even though no verb in the text says so explicitly.

The upshot is that Yhwh does not destroy Israel as he had planned: “Yhwh renounced the punishment he had planned to bring upon his people” — and therefore Yhwh did not *ḥārâ ʾāp̱* at the people, as he might have. Yhwh דִּבֶּר, "planned" to inflict רעה, "punishment" — literally “evil” — that is, he intended that his *ʾāp̱* would *yêḥerê* but in the end decided against it, so his *ʾāp̱* did not *ḥārâ*. Apparently the *ḥᵃrôn ʾāp̱* described in this text is not an emotion but a mode of action: The text really says “*weyiḥar ʾappî* against them *in that* I destroy them.” Yhwh intended to destroy the Israelites through an action of *ḥᵃrôn ʾāp̱*, not as the *result* of *ḥᵃrôn ʾāp̱* that (as it were) he inwardly experienced.

#### 3.2 ḥārâ ʾāp̱ as the Conclusion of Direct Speech

In Numbers 12 we are told that Yhwh hears Miriam and Aaron speaking against Moses, with regard to his wife and his prophecy, and he summons the three siblings to the Tent of Meeting, intent on rebuking Aaron and Miriam for their words. From the way things play out, we might understand that Yhwh is angry at the two siblings, and *therefore* he rebukes them. But the placement of the expression *ḥārâ ʾāp̱* does not meet this expectation:

Suddenly Yhwh called to Moses, Aaron, and Miriam, “Come out, you three, to the Tent of Meeting.” So the three of them went out. Yhwh came down in a pillar of cloud, stopped at the entrance of the Tent, and called out, “Aaron and Miriam!” The two of them came forward; and he said, “Hear these my words: When a prophet of Yhwh arises among you, I make myself known to him in a vision, I speak with him in a dream. Not so with my servant Moses; he is trusted throughout my household. With him I speak mouth to mouth, plainly and not in riddles, and he beholds the likeness of Yhwh. How then did you not shrink from speaking against my servant Moses!” *wayyiḥar ʾap̱ Yhwh bᵉ them, and he departed.* As the cloud withdrew from the Tent, there was Miriam stricken with snow-white scales! When Aaron turned toward Miriam, he saw that she was stricken with scales. (Num 12:4–10)

If *ḥārâ ʾāp̱* is an emotion, this description is incomprehensible. We would expect Yhwh’s *ḥᵃrôn ʾāp̱* to be aroused at the words of the siblings, and then, *as an expression or outcome* of his *ḥᵃrôn ʾāp̱*, he would reprimand them and strike Miriam with scales. But our text presents these events in reverse order: First we hear the rebuke; only then are we told that *wayyiḥar ʾap̱* Yhwh, at which point he leaves. After his leaving is noted, it is clear that as he left he struck Miriam with scales. Did Yhwh begin to get angry only after speaking to Miriam and Aaron?[[29]](#footnote-28)

One solution that has been suggested for this exegetical problem is that the *ḥᵃrôn ʾāp̱* was actually aroused because of something that happened previously but is not mentioned in the text, which is saying that this anger continued: “*Still* incensed with them, Yhwh departed.”[[30]](#footnote-29) This interpretation is trying to preserve the assumption that *ḥārâ ʾāp̱* is an emotion and also to explain why it is mentioned only after the action prompted by the anger, but it is completely unsupported by the text. Another possibility is that the anger is expressed via striking Miriam with scales — but the object of the *ḥᵃrôn ʾāp̱* is “them,” in the plural, while the scales affected Miriam alone.[[31]](#footnote-30) The possibility that the anger is expressed by Yhwh’s departure is also implausible, because this would still leave unexplained why the anger is apparently aroused *after* the reprimand, since between the reprimand and the departure nothing happens.[[32]](#footnote-31) Licht’s succinct explanation is the most persuasive: “Apparently the meaning [of *ḥārâ ʾāp̱*] here is rebuke, and the punishment is mentioned only in the next verse; for if you do not explain it this way, you will find it difficult to see how Aaron was punished.”[[33]](#footnote-32)

Is it really possible that “*wayyiḥar ʾap̱* Yhwh *bᵉ* them” describes not his anger, expressed in the actions that follow, but the rebuke that precedes it? Yes, indeed: It turns out that there are other biblical texts with this same syntactical structure, in which *wayyiqtol* form follows direct speech in such a way that is it difficult to interpret it as describing another action performed after the direct speech. Two examples:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| ויאמר לו אלהים שמך יעקב לא יקרא שמך עוד יעקב כי אם ישראל יהיה שמך **ויקרא את שמו ישראל:** ויאמר לו אלהים אני אל שדי פרה ורבה גוי וקהל גוים יהיה ממך ומלכים מחלציך יצאו: | Gen 35:10–11: God said to him, “You whose name is Jacob, you shall be called Jacob no more, but Israel shall be your name.” *Thus he named him Israel.* And God said to him, “I am El Shaddai. Be fertile and increase; A nation, yea an assembly of nations, shall descend from you. Kings shall issue from your loins.” |
| ויאמר אלהם יוסף אל תיראו כי התחת אלהים אני: ואתם חשבתם עלי רעה אלהים חשבה לטבה למען עשה כיום הזה להחית עם רב: ועתה אל תיראו אנכי אכלכל אתכם ואת טפכם **וינחם אותם וידבר על לבם:** | Gen 50:19–21:But Joseph said to them, “Have no fear! Am I a substitute for God? Besides, although you intended me harm, God intended it for good, so as to bring about the present result—the survival of many people. And so, fear not. I will sustain you and your children.” *Thus he reassured them, speaking kindly to them.*  |

In these two texts, the emphasized sentences relate to the words that were spoken in the previous sentences. They summarize the discussion, defining and in fact characterizing the preceding words as an action: naming in the one case, comforting in the other. Similarly, it appears that the sentence “*wayyiḥar ʾap̱* Yhwh *bᵉ* them” (Num 12:9) summarizes the words that Yhwh has just spoken to Aaron and Miriam. Just as the naming of Jacob as Israel was not a *result* of telling him that his name would no longer be Jacob, but these words themselves constituted giving him a new name; just as Joseph did not comfort his brothers *as an expression of* the words he spoke to them but rather comforted them by saying those words — so too here: the rebuke is not a *result* of the *ḥᵃrôn ʾāp̱* but rather the words of rebuke constitute the *ḥᵃrôn ʾāp̱*. The rebuke was the method by which *ḥārâ ʾap̱* Yhwh at Miriam and Aaron.[[34]](#footnote-33) The *ḥᵃrôn ʾāp̱* of Yhwh at Aaron and Miriam was, then, not an emotion but a category of action, directed outward; an exercise of power which in this case took the form of verbal rebuke.

#### 3.3 ḥārâ ʾāp̱ and Causality

The expression *ḥārâ ʾāp̱* is always accompanied by concrete action: verbal rebuke, punishment, or vengeance. The question is, what is the relationship between the *ḥᵃrôn ʾāp̱* and the action? According to the common assumption that *ḥārâ ʾāp̱* indicates an emotion, the answer is that it is the *cause* of the action, and the action is its *result*. But in the previous section we have seen that Num 12:9 does not fit this causal framework, since *ḥārâ ʾāp̱* appears *after* Yhwh’s rebuke of Miriam and Aaron, making it impossible to view the rebuke as a *result* of the *ḥᵃrôn ʾāp̱*.

A study of other appearances of *ḥārâ ʾāp̱* leads to a similar conclusion with regard to the causal relationship between *ḥārâ ʾāp̱* and its associated concrete action, whether verbal reprimand or physical violence. Now, causality need not always be expressed explicitly: Words like “if,” “then,” “therefore” do not always appear. But given all the biblical occurrences of *ḥārâ ʾāp̱*, if *ḥārâ ʾāp̱* is indeed an emotion that leads to action, we might expect to find at least a few cases where *ḥārâ ʾāp̱* is explicitly presented as the cause of the action associated with it. Yet there is not even a single such case. There is generally no word of causation in the texts where *ḥārâ ʾāp̱* appears; but when there are such words, they always align the *ḥārâ ʾāp̱* with the result, not the cause. *ḥārâ ʾap̱ X bᵉ Y* is never the cause of the action that X does to Y, but the result of something that Y did to X:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Connector | Cause | Result |
| You shall not ill-treat any widow or orphan. *If* you do mistreat them, I will heed their outcry as soon as (lit.: *if*) they cry out to Me, and *ḥārâ ʾappî* and I will put you to the sword, and your own wives shall become widows and your children orphans. (Exod 22:21-23) | *ʾim* "if' | mistreatment of orphans and widows | *ḥārâ ʾāp̱*; killing |
| *wayyiḥar ʾāp̱* God *at* (lit.: *because of*)his going; so an angel of Yhwh placed himself in his way as an adversary. (Num 22:22) | *ki* "because" | Balaam’s going | *ḥārâ ʾāp̱*; the angel’s placing himself |
| Assuredly, as straw is consumed by a tongue of fire and hay shrivels as it burns, their stock shall become like rot, and their buds shall blow away like dust. *For* they have rejected the instruction of Yhwh of Hosts, spurned the word of the Holy One of Israel. *That is why* *ḥārâ ʾap̱* Yhwh *bᵉ* His people, why He stretched out His arm against it and struck it, so that the mountains quaked, and its corpses lay like refuse in the streets. Yet his anger has not turned back, and His arm is outstretched still. (Isa 5:24-25) | *ki* "for"; *ʿal-ken* "that is why" | rejecting instruction and spurning the word of Yhwh | *ḥārâ ʾāp̱*; smiting the people (a variety of imagery) |
| All nations will ask, “*Why* did Yhwh do thus to this land? *Wherefore*that awful*ḥᵒri-ʾāp̱*?” They will be told, “*Because* they forsook the covenant that Yhwh, God of their fathers, made with them when He freed them from the land of Egypt; they turned to the service of other gods and worshiped them, gods whom they had not experienced and whom He had not allotted to them.*Wayyiḥar ʾāp̱* Yhwh *bᵉ* that land and brought upon it all the curses recorded in this book. Yhwh uprooted them from their soil in anger, fury, and great wrath, and cast them into another land, as is still the case.” (Deut 29:23-27) | *ʿal-mê* "why"; *mê* "wherefore"; *ʿal ʾᵃšer* "because" | forsaking the covenant with Yhwh — worshiping other gods | *ḥārâ ʾāp̱* (2x); destruction of the land and exile of the people |

In these examples *ḥārâ ʾāp̱* is indeed found in a causal framework, but always as part of the result and not as part of the cause.

Let us take a special look at the last example: If *ḥārâ ʾāp̱* is an emotion, we might expect to find a question in the form, “Why did X do such-and-such to Y?”, to which the answer would be, “Because *ḥārâ ʾap̱ X bᵉ Y*” — that is, following the accepted understanding, “Why did X do such-and-such to Y? Because X got angry at Y.” But here the structure is different: The question is, “Why did X *ḥārâ ʾap̱ bᵉ Y* and do such-and-such to him?”, and the answer is, “Because Y did such-and-such to X.” Two questions — “Why did Yhwh do thus to this land? Wherefore that awful *ḥᵒri-ʾāp̱*?” — relating to the self-same action: the exile and destruction to which Yhwh subjected Israel; nor do the answers to the question distinguish between *ḥᵃrôn ʾāp̱* and destruction, as if the former were the cause of the latter. Instead, both are presented on the same side of the causality equation.

#### 3.4 ḥārâ ʾāp̱ by Means of Other Actions

In Deuteronomy 29:23-27, discussed immediately above, there is additional evidence for the argument that action is always the means by which the *ḥārâ ʾap̱* occurs, rather than the result of it.[[35]](#footnote-34) To see this, we must focus on v. 26, “*wayyiḥar ʾāp̱* Yhwh at that land *lᵉhāḇiʾ* upon it all the curses recorded in this book,” and especially on the two verbs: *wayyiḥar* and *lᵉhāḇi* “to bring.” At first glance, the verse disproves the suggestion to view bringing the curse as the means by which *ḥārâ ʾap̱* Yhwh, since there are two separate actions mentioned here: *ḥārâ ʾāp̱* and bringing the curse.[[36]](#footnote-35) But this distinction is not grammatically correct. The syntax of the sentence is well-known in Biblical Hebrew. The second verb is in the form *l-* + infinitive construct, serving the first verb in the sentence adverbially, as in the following two examples using the same Hebrew syntax:[[37]](#footnote-36)

It is the season of the wheat harvest. I will pray to Yhwh and He will send thunder and rain; then you will take thought and realize what a wicked thing you did in the sight of Yhwh *by asking* (*lišʾôl*) for a king. (1 Sam 12:17)

When it was reported to Saul that the troops were sinning against Yhwh *by eating* (*leʾᵉḵōl*) with the blood, he said, “You have acted faithlessly. Roll a large stone over to me today.” (1 Sam 14:33)

The first example does not mean that the Israelites did a wicked thing in the sight of Yhwh and *as a result* asked for a king, but that asking for a king *was* the wicked thing that they did. Similarly, in the second example the people are not both sinning against Yhwh *and* eating with the blood; eating with the blood *is* the sin. Asking for a king is defined as acting wickedly in the sight of Yhwh, and eating with the blood is defined as sinning against Yhwh — in both cases we are speaking about a single action; the use of the infinitive construct in each case (*lišʾôl* “by asking,” *leʾᵉḵōl* “by eating”) explains in what concrete way the more general and “abstract” action of the first verb was done.

We should interpret Deut 29:26 in light of this same structure. There are not two separate actions here, *ḥārâ ʾāp̱* and bringing the curse; rather, we must understand it this way: “*wayyiḥar ʾāp̱* Yhwh *bᵉ* that land *by bringing* upon it all the curses recorded in this book.”[[38]](#footnote-37) Just as there are various actions the doing of which amounts to sinning or acting wickedly, so too Yhwh can perform *ḥᵃrôn ʾāp̱* on the people in a variety of ways. There is not a causal relationship between *ḥᵃrôn ʾāp̱* and the bringing of the curse in Deut 29:26. This then is additional evidence for the argument that *ḥārâ ʾāp̱* denotes a category of action rather than an emotion.

#### 3.5 Doing ḥᵃrôn ʾāp̱

The last piece of evidence for the claim that *ḥārâ ʾāp̱* does not refer to an emotion comes from the fact that it can occur as the object of the verb “to do”:

I will not do (*lōʾ ʾeʿᵉśê*) my *ḥᵃrôn ʾāp̱*, I will not turn to destroy Ephraim. (Hos 11:9)

Is it possible to “do” an emotion? In order to answer this in the positive, we must understand the verb *ʿ*SH *qal* in the sense of “express, bring to fruition, act in accordance with.”[[39]](#footnote-38) But it is doubtful whether this verbever carries this meaning in the Bible.[[40]](#footnote-39) It seems more plausible to understand the phrase in our verse as related not to the *origin* of the action, but to its *nature*. This emerges also from the parallelism: “I will not do *ḥᵃrôn ʾappî* / I will not turn to destroy Ephraim.”[[41]](#footnote-40) A similar pattern, with “doing” something parallel to a concrete action, occurs elsewhere as well:

And he said, “Yhwh, God of my master Abraham, grant me good fortune this day, and do kindness (*waʿᵃśê-ḥeseḏ*) with my master Abraham.” (Gen 24:12)

Then he who is indicated for proscription, and all that is his, shall be put to the fire, because he broke the Covenant of Yhwh and because he did an outrage (*ʿāśâ nᵉḇālâ*) in Israel. (Josh 7:15)

Just as bringing a suitable woman to Abraham’s servant constitutes the “doing” of kindness with Abraham, and breaking the covenant of Yhwh constitutes “doing” an outrage in Israel — so too destroying Ephraim constitutes “doing” the *ḥᵃrôn ʾāp̱* of Yhwh. Even a human being can “do” Yhwh’s *ḥᵃrôn ʾāp̱*: Samuel denounces Saul, “You did not obey Yhwh and did not do His *ḥᵃrôn ʾāp̱* upon the Amalekites” (1Sam 28:18).[[42]](#footnote-41) None of these cases presents one thing as cause and the other as effect, one as internal and the other as external. Instead, we find a concrete action, followed by a definition of the kind of activity that action represents.

Just so, *ḥᵃrôn ʾāp̱* can also be used as the object of “bring”:

And I will break Elam before their enemies, before those who seek their lives; and I will bring (*wᵉheḇeʾṯi*) disaster upon them, My *ḥᵃrôn ʾāp̱*—declares Yhwh. And I will dispatch the sword after them until I have consumed them. (Jer 49:37)

In this verse, the bringing of disaster and the bringing of *ḥᵃrôn ʾāp̱* are one and the same, and the details come only in the second part of the verse, the complete military defeat that the disaster will bring upon Elam. Moreover, syntactically *ḥᵃrôn ʾāp̱* is in apposition to *rāʿâ* “disaster”; the *ḥᵃrôn ʾāp̱* does not generate the disaster, it *is* the disaster. Again we see that *ḥᵃrôn ʾāp̱* designates a category of action — not an emotion.

### 4. Conclusion

This article presents several general conclusions with regard to the root ḤRH and the idiom *ḥārâ ʾāp̱* that contribute to the discussion of these specific expressions, to research on emotions in the Bible, and to the understanding of anger, human and divine, in the Bible.

First, it is necessary to distinguish between the idioms *ḥārâ ʾap̱ X bᵉ Y* and *ḥārâ lᵉ*-X. The former accompanies a direct response, forceful and often violent, and it is generally directed by a higher-ranking individual at a lower-ranking one. By contrast, the expression *ḥārâ lᵉ*-X denotes being grieved, insulted, or frustrated by at some injustice that was done to X. It is not accompanied by direct violence, and in some occurrences, but not all, it characterizes the lower-ranking person. This distinction is instructive of the fact that we must reconsider the category “terms of anger” and examine each of these terms afresh, without preconceived notions.

Recognition that the phrase *ḥārâ ʾāp̱* occurs with certain power relationships and not with others calls into question the assumption that it refers to an internal, spontaneous emotion. This assumption is incompatible with a number of texts from which we learn that *ḥārâ ʾāp̱* is not an emotion, and that the concrete actions mentioned in connection with this idiom do not constitute the external expression of such an emotion. The conclusion is that *ḥārâ ʾāp̱* is a *mode of action* aimed at someone else, always expressing itself through various concrete actions. The meaning of such an action derives not from the internal world of the characters but from the relationships between them. Further research will make it possible to apply this analysis further, with regard to additional expressions that are regarded as internal or abstract.

As for the metaphoric meaning, we must accept the widespread opinion that *ḥārâ ʾāp̱* denotes “burning of the nose,” but the site of metaphor is not in the reddening of the face of the one whose “nose” is “burning,” but the fire directed at the other side, the one at whom the nose is burning. This too leads to the conclusion that *ḥārâ ʾap̱ X bᵉ Y* does not describe the feelings of X as a result of the actions performed by Y, but rather X’s exercise of power over Y as a result of actions by Y that X looked upon unfavorably. This conclusion too may be valid with regard for other “anger” terms.

In conclusion, a further possible contribution of this discussion is that it does *not* distinguish between divine anger and human anger. Though there may certainly be differences between the divine and human emotions — with regard to the causes of anger, the ways to prevent it, and so forth — the basic meaning of the expressions *ḥārâ lᵉ* and *ḥārâ ʾāp̱* does not depend on whether we are speaking about God or a human being. This insight is in opposition to the scholarly tendency to assert that there is a categorical distinction between human anger and divine anger — a distinction that rests on theological considerations more than it does on textual ones — and it has broad implications for dealing with other “theological” expressions in the Bible.[[43]](#footnote-42)

1. \* This article is based on a chapter of my doctoral dissertation, which I wrote at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem under the guidance of Prof. Moshe Halbertal and Prof. Baruch J. Schwartz; I am grateful to them for their guidance and support. Thanks are also due to (in alphabetical order) Dr. Netta Barak-Koren, Rachel Frish, Prof. David Lambert, Orit Malka, Hanan Mazeh, Dr. Omer Michaelis, and Kinneret Sadeh, who read previous drafts of the article and offered helpful suggestions for its improvement. This study was supported by The Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture.

For various lists of “expressions of anger” and the distinctions between them, see J. Bergman and E. Johnson, "אָנַף", *TDOT*, 1 (Grand Rapids, 1974), 348–360; Zacharias Kotzé, "Metaphors and Metonymies for Anger in the Old Testament: A Cognitive Linguistic Approach", *Scriptura* 88 (2005), 118–125; Ellen van-Wolde, "Sentiments as Culturally Constructed Emotions: Anger and Love in the Hebrew Bible", *Biblical Interpretation* 16 (2008), 7–14; Matthew Richard Schlimm, *From Fratricide to Forgiveness: The Language and Ethics of Anger in Genesis* (Wiona Lake, 2011), 193–201; Deena E. Grant, *Divine Anger in the Hebrew Bible* (CBQ 52; Washington, 2014), 21–39. Despite the length of time that has passed since its publication, the most important and comprehensive study remains Mayer I. Gruber, *Aspects of Nonverbal Communication in the Ancient Near East,* (Rome: Biblical Institute, 1980) 2, 480–553. [↑](#footnote-ref-0)
2. Even in studies that map out the terms and theorize on the differences between them, the authors do not distinguish between them in their own writing: all of the terms are translated identically and treated, at the most, as different aspects of the same phenomenon. For example, the entry “Wrath of God” in the Interpreters Dictionary of the Bible (B. T. Dahlberg, *IDB,* 4 [Tennessee 1962], 903–908) opens with a categorization of the terms (ibid., 904, sec. 1) but this categorization is ignored throughout the ensuing discussion. The same applies to the following entries: G. A. Herion, “Wrath of God (Old Testament)”, *ABD*, 6 (New York 1992), 991–996; J. Goldingay, "Anger", *NIDB,* 1 (Nashville, 2006), 156–158. The study by Bruce Edward Baloian, *Anger in the Old Testament* (New York 1992), 5–7, contains a brief survey of the terms, but in his opinion “[T]he use of a particular word, although conveying special nuance, is not found to enunciate a special theological meaning” (5). Schlimm discusses expressions of anger at length, treating the differences between them and the semantic fields to which they belong (*From Fratricide to Forgiveness,* 65–88, 193–201), but in his interpretive discussions of narratives in the book of Genesis, which employ his methodology in treating divine anger, he does not generally discuss the differences between the terms; furthermore, he includes within the corpus texts that do not include any of the terms under discussion (such as the Hagar narratives [Gen 16 and Gen 21]: ibid., 154-158). Grant’s study also opens with a categorization of “expressions of human and divine anger” (*Divine Anger in the Hebrew Bible*, 21–39), but in the remainder of the discussions throughout the book barely any notice is taken of the differences between the terms and they are all understood as signifying the general concept of “anger.” Andrew J. Riley (*Divine and Human Hate in the Ancient Near East: A Lexical and Contextual Analysis* [Piscataway 2017], 111–112) argues that the verb *sn’* does not carry a specific meaning in the semantic field of “negative emotion,” which, in his opinion, includes the words *‘anaf*, *ḥārâ*, *ka’as*, *mi’es*, *ni’atz*, and several others. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
3. For a discussion of Aristotle’s seminal definition of anger, see Martha C. Nussbaum, *Anger and Forgiveness: Resentment, Generosity, Justice* (New York, 2016), 17–21. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
4. In making such a claim, this article joins a series of studies treating expressions of “emotional” or “internal” states and offering new interpretations of them; the majority of these studies argue said expressions should be viewed as intersubjective events rather than intrasubjective ones, or as actions rather than emotions. See: W. Moran, “The Ancient Near Eastern Background of the Love of God in Deuteronomy,” *CBQ* 25 (1963) 77–87 (Cf. Jacqueline E. Lapsley, "Feeling our way: Love for God in Deuteronomy", *CBQ* 65 [2003], 350–369); G. A. Anderson, *A Time to Mourn, a Time to Dance:‎ The Expression of Grief and Joy in Israelite Religion* (University Park, 1991); Jonas C Greenfield, “Adi balṭu: Care for the Elderly and its Rewards,” in *‘Al Kanfei Yonah: Collected Studies of Jonas C. Greenfield on Semitic Philology*, eds. Shalom M. Paul, Michael E. Stone and Avital Pinnick (Boston, 2001), 912–919; Baruch J. Schwartz, “The Bearing of Sin in Priestly Literature,” in *Pomegranates and Golden Bells: Studies in Biblical, Jewish and Near Eastern Ritual, Law and Literature in Honor of Jacob Milgrom,* ed. David P. Wright, David Noel Freedman and Avi Hurvitz (Winona Lake, 1995), 3–21. For more recent and general discussions, see Françoise Mirguet, "What is an 'Emotion' in the Hebrew Bible? An Experience that Exceeds Most Contemporary Concepts", *Biblical Interpretation* 24 (2016) 442–465; David A. Lambert, "Refreshing Philology: James Barr, Supersessionism and the State of Biblical Words", *Biblical Interpretation* 24 (2016), 332–356; idem, “‘Desire’ Enacted in the Wilderness: Problems in the History of the Self and Bible Translation” in *Self, Self-Fashioning and Individuality in Late Antiquity*, eds. Maren Niehoff and Joshua Levinson, (Tübingen, forthcoming). One of the methodological innovations of the current study is the suggestion that we see the phrase *ḥārâ ʾāp̱* as a *category of action*, which is expressed through various concrete actions, as will presently become clear. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
5. We should likely add to this list Gen 3:16a: “And to the woman He said, ‘I will make most severe your pangs in childbearing; In pain shall you bear children’,” since the word *ve-heronech* can be read as *va-haronech*; see A. B. Ehrlich, *Mikrâ Ki-Pheshutô,* vol. 1, (New York 1969), 10–11 [Hebrew]. For a recent discussion and numbering, see Tzvi Novick, “Pain and Production in Eden: Some Philological Reflections on Genesis iii 16”, *VT* 58 (2008), 235–244, esp. 237–238. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
6. See, for example, *ḥārâ*, BDB, 354; Schlimm, *Anger in Genesis*, 197-98; Grant, *Divine Anger in the Hebrew Bible*, 24-27. In *Dictionary* 1, HALOT, 351, the meaning is listed as “to become ill-humoured (in the face of Yahweh)” only in cases where the phrase “*ḥārâ lᵉ*-X” expresses a human response to divine acts: 1 Sam 15:11; 2 Sam 6:8 (=1 Chron. 13:11); Jon 4:4-9. However, as we will see below, this assertion should be expanded to include cases dealing with interpersonal relations. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
7. Mayer I. Gruber, "The Tragedy of Cain and Abel: A Case of Depression", *JQR*, 69 (1978), 89–97; idem, *Aspects of Nonverbal Communication*, 1, 370–379. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
8. Most studies ignore this possibility, though a few allow for it, for example Nahum M. Sarna, *Genesis* (JPS; Philadelphia, 1989), 33; and more recently Ellen van Wolde, *Reframing Biblical Studies: When Language and Text Meet Culture, Cognition, and Context* (Wiona Lake, 2009), 66. Grant (*Divine Anger in the Hebrew Bible*, 68-69) addresses Gruber’s claim regarding *ḥārâ lᵉ* and arrives at the conclusion that “[T]he phrase does not itself mean sadness. Rather, *ḥārâ lᵉ* expresses anger that is *associated* with sadness” (emphasis in the original). [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
9. The title of Schlimm’s book, *From Fratricide to Forgiveness: The Language and Ethics of Anger in Genesis*, is based on the assumption that the Cain narrative is a story of the first feeling of anger in the book of Genesis (the last, in his opinion, is the Joseph narrative, which ends in reconciliation). In his interpretation, the Cain narrative exemplifies the dangers anger poses to a moral life (ibid., 134-135). Grant, too (*Divine Anger in the Hebrew Bible*, 67-69) sees the Cain narrative as a case of anger between family members that leads to killing. Although she acknowledges that the case does not support her claim that anger between family members does not generally end in killing, she still reads the Cain narrative as a story about anger. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
10. See Nussbaum, *Anger and Forgiveness*, 21–27. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
11. See Robert C. Solomon, *True to Our Feelings: What Our Emotions are Really Telling Us* (New York, 2007), 19–20. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
12. Verse 8 describes the first instance in which Cain addresses Abel directly (on the content of Cain’s words to Abel, see Ronald Hendel, *The Text of Genesis 1–11: Textual Studies and Critical Edition* [New York and Oxford, 1998],46–47; compare Pamela Tamarkin Reis, “What Cain Said: A Note on Genesis 4.8”, *JSOT* 27 [2002], 107–113). It is self-evident that the murder is a result of the rejection of Cain’s offering, although the one who caused the violence -- Yhwh -- is not the victim. For an analysis of the link between the rejection of Cain’s offering and the murder of Abel that does not use the category of anger, see Moshe Halbertal, *On Sacrifice* (Princeton, 2012), 19–22. The directing of the violence towards a third party in the case of *ḥārâ lᵉ* is also found in a description of Saul, who, insulted by the song of the women, develops a hatred for David (1 Sam 17:7-9): “The women sang as they danced, and they chanted: ‘Saul has slain his thousands; David, his tens of thousands!’ *wayyiḥar lᵉ* Saul very much and he was greatly vexed (*wayyeraʿ bᵉʿenāyw*) about the matter. For he said, ‘To David they have given tens of thousands, and to me they have given thousands. All that he lacks is the kingship!’ And from that day on Saul kept a jealous eye on David.” The structure is similar: A (Cain/Saul) is insulted by the fact that B (Yhwh/the women) offer preferential treatment to C (Abel/David), but, since anger against B and the desire to take revenge against that party is not appropriate in the given situation, A does not act against B but rather against C. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
13. For the assumption that the text refers to anger, see for example Julius A. Bewer, *Jonah,* ICC, 56–62 (in *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi and Jonah* [Edinburgh, 1912]); James Limburg, *Jonah,* OTL (London, 1993), 88–89. For a detailed discussion, resulting in a similar conclusion to the one presented here, see Jack M. Sasson, *Jonah,* AB (New York, 1990), 272–275. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
14. Further evidence that *ḥārâ* is closer to sadness than anger is the fact that when the situation is reversed, the result is happiness: when the ricinus plant provides Jonah with shade, he feels “great happiness” (v. 6). In other verses, too, *ḥārâ lᵉ* and *ḥārâ be-einei* are related to *‘e.tz.v* (Gen 34:7; 45:5), which is the polar opposite of s.m.h. (see for example Prov 15:13). [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
15. van Wolde, *Reframing Biblical Studies,* 68. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
16. The exception is Elihu, who *ḥārâ ʾapo* at Job and his friends even though they are his elders (Job 32:2, 3, 5). [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
17. For cases in which X is of a lower status in the hierarchy, aside from the examples to be brought presently, see the discussions of Cain and Jonah above, as well as 1 Sam 15:11; 2 Sam 3:8. For cases in which X outranks Y, see Num 16:15; 1 Sam 18:8 (on this example also see note 13 above). It is worth noting that, in these cases, the usual understanding of *ḥārâ lᵉ* is maintained, that is, the state of being frustrated or insulted and not actively responding to injury with anger. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
18. See for example BDB, 359. For ḤRH as signifying burning, see Ezek 15:4-5; 24, 10-11; Ps 102:4; Prov 26:21. Ehrlich has already attempted to refute the connection posed by most interpreters between *ḥārâ* and burning, using a comparison to the Arabic cognate to argue that *ḥārâ* does not indicate burning but rather shortening or contraction, according to which understanding *ḥārâ ʾāp̱* is the opposite of *he’erikh* *ʾāp̱* (Ehrlich, *Mikrâ Ki-Pheshutô,* 83–84). According to Greenstein, who supports Ehrlich’s claim, the connection between *ḥᵃrôn* and burning is a secondary development: *ḥᵃrôn* by itself alludes to the phrase *ḥᵃrôn ʾāp̱*, which in his interpretation signifies anger; since anger is itself associated with burning, *ḥᵃrôn* became indirectly associated with burning -- but the primary and basic meaning of *ḥārâ ʾāp̱* is, according to Greenstein, contraction (Edward L. Greenstein, "Some Developments in the Study of Language and Some Implication for Interpreting Ancient Texts and Cultures", in *Semitic Linguistics: The State of the Art at the Turn of the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Shlomo Izre'el [Israel Oriental Studies, 20; Winona Lake 2002], 441–479: 456–7 n. 23). This explanation, however, does not suit other expressions of fire emerging from the nose, including some that do not use the verb *ḥārâ*, and is even less compatible with our conclusion thus far that the verb *ḥārâ* followed by *ʾāp̱* does not signify anger at all, though it does suit the metaphorical understanding of burning, as we will see presently. An additional problem in this approach is the fact that the texts never directly contrast *ḥārâ ʾāp̱* with *he’erikh* *ʾāp̱*. We might expect that, alongside the descriptions of divine *ḥᵃrôn ʾāp̱* or human requests to “return from Your *ḥᵃrôn ʾāp̱*” (Exod 32:12), we would also find the statement that Yhwh *he’erikh* *ʾāp̱o* or human requests that He do so, but such parallel phrases never appear. It seems, then, that we should reject the position of Ehrlich and Greenstein for the more widespread one that *ḥārâ* signifies burning and not contraction. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
19. Gruber, *Non-Verbal Communication,* 2, 491–492. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
20. The verse "בְּטֶרֶם יָבִינוּ סִּירֹתֵיכֶם אָטָד כְּמוֹ־חַי כְּמוֹ־**חָרוֹן** יִשְׂעָרֶנּוּ" (Ps 58:10) is difficult to interpret. Gruber (ibid., 492) translates it as “Before your pots feel the thorn whether green or cooking he will whirl it away,” in which reading *ḥᵃrôn* signifies something burning with fire, as opposed to something living. For a similar interpretation, see Mitchel Dahood, *Psalms II*, AB (Garden City, 1968), 62–63. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
21. *ʾāp̱* II, sec. 1, HALOT, 4b, 77. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
22. See also Deut 29:19, 32:22, Jer 15:14, Ps 74:1. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
23. According to Amzalleg, “Beyond Nose and Anger,” *ʾāp̱* in these contexts does not signify anger but rather belongs to the semantic field associated with the divine power to cause natural phenomena. The implication of his argument is that this would include cases in which the verb *ḥārâ* appears as well. Though many of his interpretations are convincing, he does not sufficiently address the fact that the phrase *ḥārâ ʾap̱* is used in relation to both Yhwh and humans. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
24. See, for example, Grant, *Divine Anger in the Hebrew Bible,* 23–24; van-Wollde, *Reframing Biblical Studies,* 66, 71. On the connection between anger and heat in other languages, see George Lakoff and Zolian Kövescses, “The Cognitive Model of Anger Inherent in American English”, in *Cultural Models in Language and Thought*, eds. Dorothy Holland and Naomi Quinn (Cambridge 1987), 195–221. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
25. Van-Wollde (“Sentiments as Culturally Constructed Emotions”, 11) interprets anger in the Bible as fire going forth from the face of X and consuming Y; however, she nevertheless connects this with X’s sensation of heat. The discussion in the next part of the article will further emphasize the nature of *ḥārâ ʾap̱* as an external action and not an internal emotion. In addition, van-Wollde accepts Gruber’s distinction between *ḥārâ ʾap̱* and *ḥārâ lᵉ* (*Reframing Biblical Studies*, 66) but, like nearly all scholars, continues to relate to *ḥārâ ʾap̱* as expressing anger alonside many other terms. I would argue, however, that it is not sufficient to remove a particular term from the list; rather, we must dismantle the list altogether. We must further clarify the unique meaning of each term, distinguishing between their various semantic fields, without assuming that each of them refers to anger. For example, as Gruber has already pointed out (*Non-Verbal Communication,* 2, 513–553), the terms *ʾāp̱*, *hamah*, *za’am*, and *ketsef* belong to the semantic field of venom and liquids exuded by the face -- that is, based on a different metaphor from that of *ḥārâ ʾāp̱*. What’s more, as I intend to show in another study, the root K.’.S does not signify anger at all but rather a form of insult derived from jealousy. Grant posed a similar hypothesis regarding *ḥārâ ʾāp̱* but limited its applicability to divine *ḥārâ ʾāp̱*. In her opinion, when the term *ḥārâ ʾāp̱* appears in relation to humans it expresses the heating of the face, that is, it describes the experience of the anger itself; in contrast, when the same term refers to God, it describes the destructive effects of the anger on the party that aroused it: “אני אמצא את הניסוח המקוריו” (Grant, *Divine Anger in the Bible*, 26-27). It is difficult to accept, however, the claim that the same term belongs to two different semantic fields or expresses two different similes. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
26. NJPS renders it “so” in keeping with the assumption that Joseph’s imprisonment is a result of his master’s *ḥᵃrôn ʾāp̱*. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
27. Alternately, it is possible to try to control the situation that arouses an emotion; see for example Solomon, *True to Our Feelings,* 190–200. Solomon, however, despite the fact that the title of his chapter refers to the assumption that “Emotions happen to us” as a “myth,” acknowledges that “It should be obvious that it is not simply a decision to be angry or not” (ibid., 192). [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
28. On the general phenomenon of prophetic intercession with the goal of changing a divine decision, see Yohanan Muffs, “Who will Stand in the Breach? A Study of Prophetic Intercession”, in idem, *Love and Joy: Language and Religion in Ancient Israel* (New York, 1992), 9–48. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
29. According to Jacob Milgrom, the divine anger had already been aroused when Yhwh heard the words of Miriam and Aaron (Num 12:2), but this is only mentioned after the fact in order to teach “that God’s anger did not abate but only mounted during the confrontation” (*Numbers,* JPS [Philadelphia, 1990], 97). Another possibility mentioned by Milgrom is that the reference to hearing their words itself indicates anger and the words “*wayyiḥar ʾap̱ Yhwh bᵉ them*” signifies the punishment -- in his opinion, the scales or the desertion that follows. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
30. Following NJPS. NRSV renders, “And the anger of the LORD was kindled against them, and he departed,” a translation that does not offer any solution to the problem. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
31. Accordingly, the opinion appears in the Talmud that both of them were struck with scales (TB Shabbat 97a): “*wayyiḥar ʾap̱ Yhwh bᵉ them, and he departed* implies that Aaron too was struck -- these are the words of R. Akiva.” [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
32. According to R. Yosef Bekhor Shor, Yhwhwas angry at them because they did not find an answer to the words of rebuke. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
33. Jacob Licht, *A Commentary on the Book of Numbers [XI–XXI]* (Jerusalem, 1991), 45 [Hebrew]. This opinion too appears in the Talmud (note 35 above): “this [*bᵉ them* in Num 12:9] refers to mere rebuke.” [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
34. This structure characterizes additional acts, considered as “abstract” or “emotional,” that tend to appear before or after the mention of the concrete act by which this relationship is expressed, as in the use of the verb *ḇāzâ*: “When the Philistine caught sight of David, he scorned him (*wayyiḇzehû*), for he was but a boy, ruddy and handsome, and the Philistine called out to David, ‘Am I a dog that you come against me with sticks?’” (1Sam 17:42–43a); “Jacob then gave Esau bread and lentil stew; he ate and drank, and he rose and went away. Thus did Esau spurn (*wayyiḇez*) the birthright” (Gen 25:34). [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
35. For a detailed analysis of this passage in context, see David, Frankel “’Why did the Lord Do Thus to this Land?’ Deuteronomy 29:21–28 in Historical and Textual Contexts,” *Hebrew Studies* 52 (2011), 137–70. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
36. See for example NJPS: “So the Lord was incensed at that land *and brought* upon it all the curses recorded in this book.” [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
37. For a description of the phenomenon and additional examples, see GKC § 114 *o*; Baruch J. Schwartz, *The Holiness Legislation: Studies in the Priestly Code* (Jerusalem, 1999), 211 n. 28 [Hebrew]. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
38. Cf. NRSV: “so the anger of the Lord was kindled against that land, *bringing* on it every curse written in this book”. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
39. So NJPS renders “I will not *act on* My wrath”. Gruber translates it as “I shall not *activate* my anger,” explaining that the expression *ḥᵃrôn ʾāp̱* signifies “the physical manifestation of anger, a ‘burning of nose/face’, i.e., the red appearance of the face of a light-skinned person when she/he is angry”. See Mayer I. Gruber, *Hosea: A Textual Commentary,* (Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies, 653; London and New York, 2017), 480. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
40. See *HALOT*, 2, 892. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
41. For a similar argument regarding this text see Nissim Amzallag, “Beyond Nose and Anger: A Reinterpretation of 'ap in YHWH's Context”, *Revue Biblique* 125 (2018), 5–28: 8; Amzallag, however, limits this conclusion to divine *ḥᵃrôn ʾāp̱.* [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
42. Cf. Amzalleg, “Beyond Nose and Anger”, 9–10. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
43. This far-reaching problem finds expression in a great number of theological studies, commentaries, and lexicons. It exceeds the current discussion and I intend to address it elsewhere. Regarding anger, for now it will suffice to mention the groundbreaking article by Yohanan Muffs, “Who will Stand in the Breach?” (appearing originally in Hebrew in 1984), which showed great sensitivity in describing various phenomena of divine violence without attempting to diminish the humanness of the Biblical God. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)