

Demonology and the Occult in the Old Testament

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A. Old Testament Terms for 'Demons'.

Does the Old Testament in fact speak about demons? Checking Strong's Concordance¹ we find no references to demons. Yet there are four passages which speak about "devils". This is the translation of two different Hebrew words each being represented by two of the passages. *Shedhim* occurs in Deut. 32:17 and Psa. 106:37, *sa`tr/s^eirim* in Lev. 17:7 and 2 Chron. 11:15. This latter term is also translated as "satyr/satyrs" in Isa. 13:21 and 34:14.

1. *Shedhim*.

"Undoubtedly Hebrew *shedh* is to be connected with the Babylonian word *shedu*, a demon either good or evil."² Hence it appears that the references in Deuteronomy and Psalms to *shedhim* are pointing to the real existence of demons, spiritual beings to whom corrupt worship was given by the people of God.

Some would challenge this deduction. They see the term in the Old Testament as being borrowed from the ancient Near Eastern context, but with new content being poured into it in its biblical context. Hence Victor P. Hamilton quotes Y. Kaufmann: "When the gods of the nations are called *shedim* it is not meant that they are evil spirits, but that they are insubstantial shades, 'no-gods,' with neither divine nor demonic functions."³ If this is so, then, in the passages in Deuteronomy and Psalms at least, there is no indication of the reality of the demonic. So Hamilton contends, "One cannot help but notice the paucity of references to the

¹ James Strong, *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance*, Tulsa, Oklahoma: American Christian College Press, n.d.

² Victor P. Hamilton in *Theological Word Book of the Old Testament*, ed. R. Laird Harris, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), 2:906. Cf. *NIV Study Bible* note on Psa. 106:37.

³ Hamilton, *Wordbook*, 2:906.

demonic in the Old Testament and even where it occurs it is demythologized."⁴

Now it is true that the Old Testament demythologizes the pagan concepts of its historical context.⁵ It is also true that there are not many references to the demonic in the Old Testament. Yet we must be careful that we do not overlook references to the demonic where they do occur. Hence it is important to view these references in Deuteronomy and Psalms in their literary contexts to see whether or not it can be fairly said that they point to the reality of the demonic.

It appears from the context of Deut. 32:17 that Moses is speaking of real entities when he refers to *shedhm*.

They sacrificed to demons (*shedhm*), which are not God –
gods they had not known,
gods that recently appeared,
gods your fathers did not fear.

In the context they are called "gods". It is not that these "demons" do not have real existence but that they are not the true God (*lo' e'loah*).⁶ It is both wickedness and folly to worship such demonic beings. The usage in Psa. 106:37 is consistent with this understanding, and connects these "demons" with the idolatry of the Canaanites.

They sacrificed their sons
and their daughters to demons (*shedhm*)
They shed innocent blood,
the blood of their sons and daughters,
whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan...

⁴ Hamilton, *Wordbook*, 2:906.

⁵ Cf. Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*. (Milton Keynes, England: Word Publishing, 1987), pp. xlii–l.

⁶ It may be argued that the term *lo' e'loah* means "no-god" in the generic sense, hence implying non-existence of these *shedhim*, rather than "not the-true-God" in the specific sense, denying the status of the *shedhim* as true deity but recognizing their reality. The term *e'loah* is used sixteen times outside the book of Job. (In the more than forty times it is used in Job it refers to the true God.) In only six of these is it not used of the true God. More significant is the fact that the term is used earlier in this chapter (v. 15) where it certainly refers to the true God ("Jeshurun...abandoned the God (*e'loah*) who made him and rejected the Rock his Savior.") The contextual likelihood is that the term is used in the same sense in v. 17 as in v. 15.

Here is Old Testament witness to the same reality that Paul spoke of in his first letter to the Corinthians. "Do I mean then that a sacrifice to an idol is anything, or that an idol is anything? No, but the sacrifices of pagans are offered to demons, not to God..." (10:19-20) Hence we may justifiably conclude that the Old Testament in Deuteronomy 32 and Psalm 106 bears witness to the reality of spiritual beings to whom the Israelites gave false worship. The Old Testament bears witness to the reality of the 'demonic'.

2. *Sa`tr/s^e`trim*

The usual translation for *sa`tr/s^e`trim* is "he-goat, buck."⁷ R. Laird Harris comments, "In four cases this word was translated by the KJV "satyr" or "demon" (Lev 17:7; 2 Chr 11:15; Isa 13:21; 34:14). There is no need to go to this bizarre translation. NIV translates the first two instances as "goat idol," the last two as "goat" or "wild goat". The NASB is similar but uses "satyr" in II Chr 11:15."⁸ An examination of the contexts of the passages tends to support this contention and that the translation "demon" or "satyr" is not required in these places. Yet the English-Hebrew lexicons of Brown, Driver and Briggs, and of William Holladay give an alternative of "satyr" or "demon" for the word as used in the passages mentioned. A number of commentators also see references in these places to the demonic.⁹ Harrison supports this interpretation from the cultural context of the passage.

The allusion here is to the kind of goat worship practised in Lower Egypt, a form of idolatry with which the Israelites had evidently had some contact...It is extremely difficult for the modern western mind to conceive of the overpowering influence that evil spirits and demons exerted over all areas of life in the ancient world.¹⁰

⁷ Brown, Driver and Briggs, *Lexicon*, p. 972; cf. William L. Holladay, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1971), p. 353.

⁸ *Wordbook*, 2:881. It should be noted that in Lev. 17:7 the NASB has "goat demons" (mg. "goat-idols").

⁹ Eg. John E. Hartley, *Leviticus*, (Dallas: Word Books, 1992), p.272; Gordon J. Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1979), p.243; R. K. Harrison, *Leviticus: An Introduction and Commentary*, (Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 1980), p. 180. F. Leahy points also to Calvin, Luther, Barnes and Delitzsch as supporters of this view (Frederick Leahy, *Satan Cast Out* [Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1975], p. 65).

¹⁰ Harrison, *Leviticus*, p. 180.

On the other hand, after a concise and informative discussion of the issue, J. A. Alexander concludes,

The result appears to be that if the question is determined by tradition and authority, *sh'yrym* denotes *demons*; if by the context and the usage of the word, it signifies *wild goats*, or more generically *hairy, shaggy* animals. According to the principles of modern exegesis, the latter is entitled to the preference...¹¹

At best we must say that it is not certain that these four passages refer to the demonic. This in no way denies reference to the demonic in the Old Testament as the discussion on *shedim* has indicated. Rather, it is not to these passages that appeal should be made in determining the Old Testament view of the demonic.

B. Occult Practices.

A brief consideration of the Old Testament directions, especially in the Torah, regarding occult practices reveals above all else the centrality of the practical recognition of the sovereignty of Yahweh in any view of the reality of the 'demonic'. Occult practices were forbidden to the people of God.¹² Certainly such practices were prevalent in the social context from which the children of Israel had been delivered, as the accounts of the Egyptian magicians bear out.¹³ These accounts do not explicitly indict the influence of the demonic, though, in the context of the ancient Near East, there is a strong possibility that such influence would have been understood.¹⁴ But even in this context the focus is not on the "the ways and means" of the occult practices, but on the omnipotent power of Yahweh. The Old Testament does not spend a great deal

¹¹ Joseph Addison Alexander, *Commentary on the Prophecies of Isaiah*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1970), p. 284.

¹² Cf. Ex. 22:18; Lev. 19:26, 31; 20:6, 27; Deu. 18:9-14; 2Chr. 33:6; Isa. 8:19-20.

¹³ Exo. 7:11-12, 22; 8:18.

¹⁴ F. Leahy comments: "The Old Testament bears clear witness to demonic activity in the heathen nations, especially and significantly in ancient Egypt and Babylon" (*Satan Cast Out*, p. 69). More explicitly John I. Durham states:

The report that Pharaoh's "learned men"...are able to duplicate this wondrous deed is by no means to be taken as an indication that what is described here is nothing more than fancy sleight-of-hand...All such attempts to find "naturalistic" explanations for the wondrous deeds of the Book of Exodus...are not only misleading and impossible, but irrelevant as well. (*Exodus*, Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1987), p. 91.

of time commenting on the reality or otherwise of spiritual forces that may have been believed to be associated with these practices.¹⁵ Rather the Old Testament points away from these practices, since they were diversions from the true source of guidance to which God's people were called to be loyal. Hence Moses directs Israel,

The nations you will dispossess listen to those who practice sorcery and divination. But as for you, the LORD your God has not permitted you to do so. The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him. (Deu. 18:14-15.)

Following the occult was treason against Yahweh, the great King. His people were to listen to his sovereign instruction only, as he spoke through his prophet.¹⁶ It is even allowed that there might even be those who could perform signs and wonders, although the source of this power is not commented upon.¹⁷ Rather again the direction is towards faithfulness to Yahweh himself. "It is the LORD your God you must follow, and him you must revere. Keep his commands and obey him; serve him and hold fast to him" (Deu. 13:4). If the wonderworker counsels treason against Israel's sovereign, the message was to be rejected along with the false prophet himself. Therefore in the face of occult practices there was only one direction. Faithfulness to Yahweh demanded that his word alone must be trusted and followed. All other avenues of direction were to be rejected.

¹⁵ As has been indicated already and will be shown more fully below, the Old Testament does speak of spiritual forces which affect the realm of mankind in a negative way. The point being made here is that the Old Testament does not dwell on an examination of the nature of these spiritual forces. Furthermore, it should not be assumed that all which claimed to be reliant on evil spirits was in fact directed by such. Therefore the present study does not dwell on the various terms used for the practitioners of the occult and the practices. Rather, more attention is paid to accounts where spiritual forces appear to explicitly mentioned as operative in the realm of humanity. In this way a clearer indication of the Old Testament teaching on spiritual realities should be able to be determined.

¹⁶ Cf. Isa. 8:19-20, where the previously given written law is to have the same function as the prophetic word.

¹⁷ Deu. 13:1-3. Notice also that here Yahweh remains in control over the false miracle worker, who is being used by Yahweh himself to test his people. This sovereign control by Yahweh is a feature of the cases considered below.

C. Possible Cases of the Negative Influence of the Spiritual Realm.

As has been noted above, "One cannot help but notice the paucity of references to the demonic in the Old Testament..."¹⁸ Yet there are accounts that naturally spring to mind in a discussion of this topic, accounts which not only give an indication of the reality of the spiritual world but also its possible effects on human beings.

1. Saul and the Evil Spirit from Yahweh.

A set of these accounts is connected with king Saul. 1 Samuel 16 is a key passage.

Now the Spirit of the LORD had departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD (*ru^ach ra`ah me'eth yhw^h*) tormented him. Saul's attendants said to him, "See, an evil spirit from God (*ru^ach ^elohim ra`ah*) is tormenting you. Let our lord command his servants here to search for someone who can play the harp. He will play when the evil spirit from God (*ru^ach ^elohim ra`ah*) comes upon you and you will feel better."...Whenever the spirit from God (*ru^ach ^elohim*) came upon Saul, David would take his harp and play. Then relief would come to Saul; he would feel better, and the evil spirit would leave him. (vv.14-16, 23.)

This passage can raise such problems that clear principles are overlooked. Without pretending to solve some major difficulties of the passage, from this passage it appears that:

- a. Evil spirits were real.¹⁹
- b. Such spirits were under Yahweh's control.
- c. Such spirits could affect people negatively. The affect of the spirit on Saul was to "terrify" or "torment" him.²⁰

¹⁸ Cf. note 3.

¹⁹ The past tense is used in this section to give the Old Testament "original reader" perspective and to allow for the possibility that some matters may have changed in the advance of redemptive history. The past tense is not used to imply the denial that any or all of the observations from the passage could not also be true for today.

²⁰ Holladay, *Lexicon*, "terrify", p. 45; NIV "torment", (cf. Brown, Driver and Briggs, "fall upon, overwhelm", p. 130. A scan of the concordance appears to support Holladay and NIV).

- d. If a person had been a recipient of the Spirit of Yahweh, the Spirit of Yahweh had to leave the person before the evil spirit could affect him.
- e. It was believed that music could remove the spirit and the torment and it is stated that this in fact happened.²¹
- f. Such spirits were not present at all times.

Further principles can be added from the other accounts of Saul's affliction. These occur in 1 Samuel 18:10-11 and 19:9-10. In 1 Sam. 18:10-11 we see again evidence that the evil spirit was not with Saul all the time. Here the spirit "came forcefully upon"²² Saul. The result²³ of this was "prophesying" or "raving", i.e. ecstatic and abnormal behaviour.²⁴ It is important to note how alike behaviour motivated by Yahweh's "good" Spirit and that motivated by this evil spirit from Yahweh are, since Saul had prophesied earlier under the influence of the former (1 Sam. 10:10). Not all "supernatural" ecstatic behaviour was to be equated with the operation of the Spirit of the Yahweh. Also Saul tried to kill David when troubled by the evil spirit (cf. 19:9-10).

As well Baldwin make a useful observation about the connection between Saul's affliction and his moral behaviour prior to it. She says,

In the case of King Saul, it is important to note that the signs of mental illness began to occur only after the

²¹ The nature of the connection between the music and the departure of the spirit is not stated. It may be that the music was a benefit to the afflicted, rather than having a direct effect on the spirit. The spirit left as the afflicted's disposition was strengthened or calmed by the music. It should also be noted that the calming effect of music was not automatic (cf. 1 Sam. 18:10-11). For the association of music with the presence of (the spirit of) prophecy see 1 Sam. 10:5-6, 10; 2 Kgs. 3:14-15. In these cases music was the occasion for the presence positive spiritual influence, just as it was the occasion for the removal of a negative one as in the case of Saul.

²² *wattitslach ...'el* - In the same manner the Spirit of Yahweh came on David, although permanently, in 16:13 (cf. Jud. 14:6, 19; 15:14; 1 Sam. 10:6, 10 with 'al.)

²³ The NIV translation does not clearly show the connection between the coming of the evil spirit and the "prophesying" of Saul. In the Hebrew text this connection is made by means of the waw consecutive, with disjunctive clauses following, giving circumstantial information (so RSV, NASB, cf. Thomas O. Lambdin, *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew*, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1971), pp. 162-164).

²⁴ *wayyithnabbe* - "That Saul *raved within his house* could have been translated, 'Saul prophesied within his house', for the verb...regularly means to 'prophesy', and links this episode with his experience of ecstasy among the prophets (cf. 1 Sa. 10:10)." (Baldwin, *Samuel*, p. 130.)

confrontation with Samuel over the question of obedience to the divine command. This suggests that his illness was due to his rebellion against God...²⁵

Hence affliction by an evil spirit was subsequent to and as a result of rebellious disobedience against the divine King.

Now it may be that all this cannot be directly equated with the demon possession of the New Testament. It is true that "The wraps are taken off the demonic in the Bible in the Gospels and Revelation. That is to say, the demonic appears most profusely when Jesus is present."²⁶ There are differences between the symptoms of Saul's affliction and those of demoniacs recorded in the New Testament.²⁷ Yet the principles found in the foundational revelation of the Old Testament should be seen as background to that of the New Testament. They should not be set aside unless clearly superseded by later revelation. Therefore God's people need to consider whether or not the information about the spiritual world and its effects on humans is still operative and whether or not the principles of this portion of God's word still apply.

2. Saul and the 'Witch' of En-Dor.

Although the story is fairly well known, the main features of the account of Saul's visit to the 'witch of En-Dor' can be reviewed here. In I Samuel 28 we read that Saul was faced with a major battle with the Philistines in the North of Palestine. Extremely concerned to the point of terror, he sought divine guidance as to the action he should take. The usual methods of obtaining such divine guidance were unsuccessful. Therefore the king founds the location of and went to a woman who was a "medium" at En-Dor to gain the guidance he so desperately sought. It was Samuel the prophet who had been the mouth-piece of Yahweh to Saul. Although the prophet had died, in his desperation Saul was seeking his advice again, even through the illicit means of a necromancer. Disguising himself because he himself had driven such people from his kingdom, Saul went to the woman and asked her to "bring up" Samuel. Samuel appeared to the woman. At this point she reacted with fright, recognized Saul for who he was but was reassured by him that she would not be harmed. Asked what she saw, she

²⁵ Baldwin, *Samuel*, p. 123.

²⁶ Hamilton, *Wordbook*, p.906.

²⁷ See Willem Berends, "The Biblical Criteria for Demon-Possession" in *Westminster Theological Journal*, Spring 1976, pp. 344-345.

indicated it was a "divine being"²⁸ whom, on description by the woman, Saul recognized as Samuel. The prophet's message to Saul was wholly negative for the king. He and his sons were to die the next day and the Israelites to be defeated by the Philistines.

It may be thought that this incident not only is evidence for the reality of the world of spirits but also indicates that contact with this world was a reality at least in Old Testament times. The woman was a *ba`alath-'obh* ("mistress of necromancy",²⁹ v. 7). Now an *'obh* has been defined as a ghost³⁰ or a prophesying spirit of the dead.³¹ The woman of En-Dor was understood to be one who could contact such a spirit and gain information via this contact.

The Ancient near Eastern background to the word suggests that spirits were supposedly called from pits in the ground.³² Hence the request of Saul that the woman "bring up" Samuel (v. 8, cf. v. 11). Hence it appears that Saul knew of the practice and believed that it could work (although he may have so desperate that he would try anything). The question is, Is this an example of necromancy working? If so, it would suggest that the Old Testament is a witness here to the existence of a spiritual world which can be contacted by occult practices.

Yet one must seriously question whether 1 Samuel 28 is an example of necromancy at work. W. A. M. Beuken, in a close reading of the text of I Samuel 28, shows that the text indicates the control of Samuel as Yahweh's prophet in this situation.³³ He points out, among other things, that it is significant that there is no record of the woman performing any ritual before Samuel's appearance. This suggests that in fact Samuel appeared to her before she could attempt to "bring up" anyone. Her fright connected with Samuel's appearance is consistent with her not

28 *e'lohim*.

29 Francis Brown, S. R. Driver and C. A. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1953), p. 15.

30 Brown, Driver and Briggs, *Lexicon*, p. 15.

31 William L. Holladay, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1971), p. 6.

32 Harry A. Hoffner, "'obh" in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, eds. G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringren, trans. John T. Willis, rev. ed., (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1977), 1:131.

33 W. A. M. Beuken, "1 Samuel 28: The Prophet as the "Hammer of Witches" in *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*, 6 (February 1978), pp. 3-17.

being in control of the situation.³⁴ Hence Samuel is not under the control of the necromancer but rather precludes her activity by his sudden arrival. His appearance then is not as a ghost, able to be manipulated by the medium, but as an authoritative prophet of Yahweh.³⁵

The thrust of the account of I Samuel 28 therefore is not whether or not there is a realm of spirits contactable by mediums. Rather its intention is to remind God's people that such avenues of direction, whether real or imagined, were not for their king and therefore not for them. They were to listen to the voice of Yahweh alone, as he spoke through his prophets.³⁶ Understood thus it cannot be said that the account of I Samuel 28 indicates the reality of necromancy.

The incident does not tell us anything about the veracity of claims to consult the dead on the part of mediums, because the indications are that this was an extraordinary event for her (the woman), and a frightening one because she was not in control.³⁷

The reality of the occult and the influences of spiritual forces in the realm of mankind is not denied, but in fact is not addressed. Hence the reality or nature of demonic influence cannot be determined from this portion of the Old Testament.

³⁴ The connection between the woman's fright, her seeing Samuel and her recognition of Saul is not immediately clear. Keil and Delitzsch give a plausible explanation of this part of the account:

These words imply most unquestionably that the woman saw an apparition which she did not anticipate...Her recognition of Saul when Samuel appeared may be easily explained, if we assume that the woman had fallen into a state of clairvoyance, in which she recognised persons who, like Saul in his disguise, were unknown to her by face. (C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Books of Samuel*, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1956), p. 262.

³⁵ That the dead Samuel was to appear in this way raises its own problems, but, following the interpretation given here, it is obvious that it is Yahweh who is in control and the demonic is entirely excluded.

³⁶ This is entirely consistent with the message of Deut. 18:9-20.

³⁷ Joyce Baldwin, *1 and 2 Samuel: An Introduction and Commentary*, (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1988), p. 159.

3. The Lying Spirit from Yahweh.

There is another instance of the negative influence of the spiritual world on the human. In 1 Kings 22 we read of a vision of Micaiah in which he sees the spiritual cause of the false prophesy which deceived King Ahab into going to his death.

Micaiah continued, "Therefore hear the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on his throne with all the host of heaven standing around him on his right and on his left. And the LORD said, 'Who will entice Ahab into attacking Ramoth Gilead and going to his death there?'

"One suggested this, and another that. Finally a spirit³⁸ came forward, stood before the LORD and said, 'I will entice him.'

" 'By what means?' the LORD asked.

" 'I will go and be a lying spirit in the mouths of all his prophets,' he said.

" 'You will succeed in enticing him,' said the LORD. 'Go and do it.'

"So now the LORD has put a lying spirit in the mouths of all these prophets of yours. The LORD has decreed disaster for you."

As in the accounts of Saul in 1 Samuel, this passage suggests a number of realities.³⁹

- a. There was a world of 'supernatural' beings.
- b. These beings were under Yahweh's control.
- c. From them could come those who could influence people into prophesying, and prophesying a lie.

It can be seen that these conclusions are consistent with those drawn from the accounts of Saul. Again it is clear that, while there

³⁸ *haru^{ah}* - the presence of the definite article has encouraged some commentators to identify the spirit here as "the Spirit of prophecy" rather than as a single spiritual being (eg. Kell, de Vries, Wiseman). Such a conclusion is not necessary from the use of the article, which, in certain cases, should be translated as indefinite in English (cf. *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, ed. E. Kautzsch, 2d. Eng. ed. A. E. Cowley, [London: Oxford University Press, 1910], 126 *q, r*; Bruce K. Waltke and M. O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, [Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1990], 13.5.1e.)

³⁹ These points appear to be clear implications of the account even if the vision of Micaiah was an accommodation of heavenly realities to the human eye.

were "supernatural" spiritual experiences, not every one of these was positive for the recipient. Yet along with this it is equally clear that even such negative experiences were under the control of Yahweh, and, in this case, were directed by Yahweh himself.⁴⁰

D. Satan in the Old Testament

On the basis of New Testament revelation Satan or the Devil can be seen as the leader of those spiritual beings opposed to God and his will.⁴¹ Satan does not get a big press in the Old Testament. Still, there are three passages where he is explicitly mentioned. In each of these it is clear that he was under the control of Yahweh and used by him for his own purposes. This is obvious in Job 1 and 2. Here, as is well known, Satan had access to the throne room of Yahweh and must report to him of his activities (1:6-7; 2:1-2).⁴² True to his title as "the accuser",⁴³ Satan sought to discredit Job before Yahweh (1:9-11; 2:4-5). Yahweh allowed Satan to test Job to show that Job's righteousness was not motivated by the prosperity that appeared to be Yahweh's reward but was the product of faith in Yahweh. After the first two chapters Satan disappears, but clearly, by the end of the book, the test had been endured and Satan was proved wrong. The point for our study is that Satan was under the control of Yahweh and could do nothing without his permission.

This limitation on the activity of Satan is consistent with the picture in Zech. 3:1-2. Again acting as the accuser, Satan sought to discredit Joshua the high priest but was thwarted by Yahweh's action. Finally, the subordinate relationship of Satan to Yahweh is seen in a comparison of 2 Sam. 24:1 and 1 Chr. 21:1. Here the action attributed to Yahweh in the first passage was attributed to Satan in the second. Although the Chronicler appears to be seeking to show that Yahweh cannot be accused of morally wrong

⁴⁰ Again the difficulty of the LORD having a direct hand in something "evil" arises. Yet, in any explanation of this, care must be taken not to weaken the clear Old Testament thrust that Yahweh is very much in active control of all that goes on in his world (cf. Amos 3:6; Isa. 45:7). This awesome truth of the active, all embracing sovereignty of God is a presupposition of a biblical world-and-life view not to be minimized in the reality of spiritual warfare.

⁴¹ Cf. Matt. 25:41; Rev. 12:9

⁴² Satan's reply that he was "roaming through the earth and going back and forth in it" (1:7; 2:2) is an indication that Satan was not considered omnipresent.

⁴³ Cf. Brown, Driver and Briggs, *Lexicon*, p. 966.

actions, it also shows, when compared with the account in 1 Samuel 24, that Yahweh was behind the activity of Satan. By implication, here too Satan's actions are circumscribed by the power and will of Yahweh.

Therefore, when speaking of Satan, the Old Testament shows him as an opponent of God's people. Yet the Old Testament also indicates that his power was strictly limited by the will of Yahweh, the universal sovereign. If Satan, who was later shown to be the leader of the realm of evil, was limited thus, it would follow that any the spiritual forces affecting mankind negatively were similarly limited. Certainly this conclusion is consistent with what has been seen in the other accounts examined above. Commenting on Job 1:6, Francis I. Andersen sums up the Old Testament view of the relationship of Yahweh to the forces in his universe.

Throughout the Old Testament the Lord is represented as the Creator and Ruler of the universe, which is inhabited by a numerous community of beings, its 'hosts'...The 'host of heaven' (e.g. I Ki. 22:19) consists of all superhuman beings...As God's attendants these creatures are called 'messengers' or 'angels' (e.g. Gn. 32:2; cf. Ps. 103:20) or 'slaves' (Jb. 5:1)...Another name for these beings is the sons of God or, simply, gods' (Ps. 97:7) or 'spirits' (Zc. 6:5)...Since in Israel only the Lord received divine honours, His supremacy is never in doubt. He presided over the meeting like a king on his throne...The incomparable Lord has no colleagues...Nor is there any hint in the Old Testament of an alien order of spirits or demons with a rival realm outside the Lord's dominion...the terrible *Satan* is only another of *the sons of God*.⁴⁴

In the spiritual battle, then, Yahweh's sovereign control is never in doubt. The forces of evil opposing God's people are real, yet are under his power, are limited by it and caused to execute his will. This is the revelation of the Old Testament to the people of God. If they were relying on Yahweh, they were relying on the one who controlled any evil force that might do them harm.

⁴⁴ Francis I. Andersen, *Job: An Introduction and Commentary* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1976), pp.81-82.

Conclusions:

It is realized that not all the Old Testament data which could have bearing on the question of demonology has been examined. Yet certain conclusions may be drawn from the study above.⁴⁵

1. The Old Testament bears witness to the reality of spiritual beings who influenced human beings and were, at times, worshiped by them.
2. Such spirits, like all of creation, were under Yahweh's sovereign control. In the spiritual battle, then, Yahweh's sovereign control was never to be in doubt. The forces of evil opposing God's people were real, yet were under his power, were limited by it and caused to execute his will.
3. Such spirits could affect people negatively (e.g. tormenting or terrifying, causing false prophecy.)
4. If a person had been a recipient of the Spirit of Yahweh, the Spirit of Yahweh had to leave the person before such a spirit could affect him.
5. At times music could remove a spirit and its torment from an affected person.
6. Such spirits were not necessarily present at all times.
7. Not all "supernatural" ecstatic behaviour was to be equated with the operation of the Spirit of the Yahweh.
8. Affliction by a spirit could be subsequent to and as a result of rebellious disobedience against the divine King.
9. In the face of occult practices, possibly including signs and wonders, there was only one direction. Faithfulness to Yahweh demanded that his word alone must be trusted and followed. All other avenues of direction were to be rejected.

Now it may be that some of these principles are no longer applicable in the light of further revelation. Yet, being drawn from the Old Testament, the foundational revelation of God's will, in so far as they are faithful to that revelation and not modified by subsequent revelation, they are to rested upon and applied wherever the circumstances are able to be validly equated with those of their original setting.

⁴⁵ Of course the following conclusions are not considered the final pronouncement on the issue of the demonic in the Old Testament. Also it may be that some of the conclusions will be considered to apply in a less general way than has been stated. If this is so, any modifications should be made only on the basis of the application of appropriate biblical data