

Article

What Are the “Long Nostrils” of YHWH?

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Abstract: The mention of YHWH’s “nostrils” (*’apayīm*) in the Bible is classically interpreted as a metonymy of the face and/or a metaphor for anger. The reference to their length and even to their elongation, however, rules out any entirely satisfying explanation in this semantic context. If this term is construed as a tuyère, as is identified in Dan 10:20, the use of *’apayīm* in Ex 15:8 becomes clear. This interpretation also explains the denotation of patience and loving-kindness as *’erek ’apayīm* (the so-called “long nostrils” of YHWH) because the air pressure generated by a blast from a tuyère (=its power) decreases proportionally to its length. Accordingly, the liturgical formulae that includes this expression (Ex 34:6; Num 14:18; Joel 2:13; Jon 4:2; Pss 86:15; 103:8; 145:8; Neh 9:17) praise YHWH for the forbearance of voluntarily restraining the power of his reaction to annoying events on earth. This interpretation also clarifies the use of *’ap/’apayīm* in Isa 48:9; Jer 15:15, and Nah 1:3. Furthermore, these last-mentioned instances reveal that beyond their metaphoric meaning, the divine *’apayīm* evoke an essential attribute of YHWH. The significance of these findings is discussed in view of the duality of anthropomorphic and aniconic representations of YHWH in ancient Israel.

Keywords: body of god; nostrils; tuyères; metallurgy; ancient Yahwism; metaphor theory

1. Introduction

In Biblical Hebrew, *’apayīm* (dual of *’ap*) unambiguously denotes nostrils, as reflected in the designation of the nose as *’ap* and the involvement of these *’apayīm* in the breath of man (Gen 2:7; Lam 4:20) and animal (Gen 7:22). Beyond these concrete denotations of nostrils, ten additional biblical verses evoke YHWH’s *’apayīm* (Ex 15:8; 34:6; Num 14:18; Joel 2:13; Jon 4:2; Nah 1:3; Pss 86:15; 103:8; 145:8; Neh 9:17). The simplest way to understand this expression is to identify it with the “nostrils of YHWH” and to integrate this image into a general context of anthropomorphic representation of the deity (Sasson 1983, pp. 93–94; Ritchie 2000, p. 61; Kim and Trimm 2014). A problem remains, however, because nine of the ten biblical mentions of the divine *’apayīm* deal with their length. Most of them belong to a liturgical formula that lauds YHWH’s “long nostrils” (*’erek ’apayīm*) and associates this singularity with divine loving-kindness (*hesed*) (e.g., Ex 34:6; Num 14:18; Joel 2:13; Jonah 4:2; Ps 86:15; 103:8; 145:8; Neh 9:17). Unlike the metaphor of YHWH’s long hand, which clearly reflects his power of intervention (Num 11:23), the mention of his “long nostrils” does not refer to any straightforward reality. Therefore, the meaning of this expression demands clarification.

2. The Current Approaches of the “Long Nostrils” of YHWH

2.1. Nostrils as Divine Organs

Scholars assume that YHWH was figured in a human or animal form in ancient Israel (Miller 1972, pp. 291–92; Dietrich and Loretz 1992; Schmidt 1995; Niehr 1997; Becking 1997; Lewis 1998, p. 46). This invites us to examine whether there is a link between *’erek ’apayīm* as long nostrils and divine patience/loving-kindness.

- *Theriomorphic representations*: The mention of YHWH's "long nostrils" may reflect a representation of the god as an animal that has long nostrils (e.g., an alligator, a dragon, or a bull). The identity of such an animal, however, is never related.
- *Nostrils as source of life*: Given the essential relation between *nostrils* and *life* (Gen 2:7), the "long nostrils" of YHWH may refer to his status of the master of life. YHWY's life-giving power, however, is never associated with *long nostrils* in the Bible.¹ Even his self-definition as a living/life-giving god, expressed in many prophecies, is not accompanied by any reference to his nostrils.²
- *Long-nostrils as lengthiness of breath*: The nostrils being essentially involved in breathing, the "long nostrils" of YHWH may evoke deep and slow breathing that characterizes quietness and calm, in contrast to the short and rapid breathing that accompanies stress, agitation, and anger (Dhorme 1963, p. 81; Schroer and Staubli 1998, pp. 105–6). If so, we would expect to see, in the Bible, some of the very many occurrences of YHWH's anger explicitly associated with short nostrils (*'apayīm*) and rapid breathing. No such linkage, however, exists. In texts reporting the stimulation of YHWH's intervention through the activation of his "nose" (e.g., Ps 18:8; Isa 30:30), for example, nothing alludes to or indicates an increase in the rhythm of breath.
- *Long nostrils and smell*: The fragrance/sacrifices smoked during the worship of YHWH are evoked as being smelt by YHWH (e.g., Gen 8:21; Ex 29:18, 25, 41; Lev 1:9, 13, 17; Num 15:3, 7, 10). In Ps 141:1–2, this aroma is expected to stimulate YHWH's beneficent predisposition toward his worshippers (Houtman 1992, p. 464; Ritchie 2000, p. 60). In Deut 33:10b, it is even explicitly associated with the divine nose ("They shall put incense in Your nose (*bē'apekā*), and whole burnt offerings on your altar"). Consequently, a mention of YHWH's long nostrils may potentially reflect YHWH's great sensitivity/receptivity to those who supply these fragrances as a preliminary to his merciful reaction.³ The problem remains that YHWH's "long nostrils" are never mentioned in the Bible in the context of ritual smoke, incense, and pleasing scent.

This overview reveals that the literal interpretations of *'erek 'apayīm* as *long nostrils* remain speculative or unsatisfying, making it unlikely that the god of Israel was praised for having long nostrils.

2.2. Nostrils as a Metonymy of the "Divine Face"

'Apayīm is frequently used in the Bible as a metonymic allusion to the entire face (e.g., Gen 42:6; 1 Sam 20:41; Isa 49:23).⁴ Although a parallel reference to *'apayīm* as the divine face is never explicitly mentioned in the Bible, one may suggest that *'erek 'apayīm* should be understood not as YHWH's "long nostrils" but as his "long face." It has been suggested that "long face" is an expression of relaxation and friendliness that should reflect patience and loving-kindness (Gruber 1980, pp. 485, 503). This interpretation, however, is conditioned by the superposition of two distinct metonymies (*nostrils* for *face* and *relaxation* for *loving-kindness*), a feature that considerably obscures the understanding

¹ See, for example, the expression *hay* YHWH: 1 Sam 14:45; 19:6; 20:3; 20:21; 25:26, 34; 26:10, 16; 28:10; 29:6; 2 Sam 2:27; 4:9; 12:5; 14:10; 22:47; 1 Kgs 1:29; 17:1,12; 18:10, 15; 22:14; 2 Kgs 2:2, 4, 6; 3:14; 4:30; 5:16, 20; Jer 5:2; 12:6; 16:14–15; 23:7. The same absence characterizes the appellation *'ēlōhīm hayīm* (Deut 5:26; 1 Sam 17:26, 36; 2 Kgs 19:4,16; Isa 37:4,17; Jer 10:10; 23:36) and *'el hay* (Ps 42:3, 9; 84:3).

² See the expression *hay ānī* in prophecies in Isa 49:18; Jer 22:24; 46:18; Ezek 5:11; 14:16, 18, 20; 16:48; 17:19; 18:3; 20:3, 31, 33; 33:11, 27; 34:8; Zeph 2:9.

³ In the Septuagint, *'ap* is here translated as anger/wrath (ὀργή), an interpretation suggesting that incense is offered to YHWH in order to quell his threatening potential wrath. In fact, this treatment of *'ap* as being almost systematically associated with anger/wrath, when encountered in the divine context, eludes the problems inherent to any anthropomorphic representation of YHWH.

⁴ See (Brown et al. 1907, p. 60); (Koehler and Baumgartner 1994–2000, vol. 1, p. 77). On the basis of a comparison with Akkadian and Ugaritic, (Gruber 1980, pp. 486–87) assumes that *face* is the most frequent meaning of *'apayīm* in the Bible. David Clines (Clines 1993–2011, vol. 1, p. 355) concurs.

of such an expression. Furthermore, in Nah 1:3 *'erek 'apayīm* expresses neither loving-kindness nor relaxation but rather a powerful destructive mode of divine intervention (see below). This challenges the interpretation of this expression as a double metonymy evoking relaxation and loving-kindness.

2.3. Nostrils as Source of Metaphor

Metaphors emerge from the bonding of a target domain (*explanandum*) of generally abstract and/or complex nature with a source domain (*explanans*) of concrete nature closely related to the domain of sensory experience. Although metaphors have long been approached as rhetorical devices of didactic value, their importance in conceptual representations, cognition, perception, and communication has become evident only in recent decades (Lakoff 1993; Slingerland 2004; Kövecses 2008; Gibbs 2011). Metaphors are especially important in the emergence and development of metaphysical concepts, including the representation of a deity.⁵

Two possible interpretations may be suggested here. The first assumes a genuine “nose imagery” as the source of the metaphor, issued from the fact that our body, through its interaction with the environment, provides the most basic repertoire of source imagery for the emergence of conceptual metaphors (Slingerland 2004, p. 10). It remains unclear, however, how the image of long nostrils may serve as an explanans for the concept of divine mercy in some sources and for the mighty power of divine intervention in others (Nah 1:3). Alternately, nostrils may be approached as source imagery derived from the conceptual metaphor that associates *anger* with *nose* (*'ap*) (Kotzé 2004, p. 84). Thus understood, *'erek 'apayīm* denotes not the “long nostrils of YHWH” but rather his being *slow to anger*—having the characteristic of forbearance.

A problem remains, however. In contrast to *'ap*, the dual form, *'apayīm*, is never used alone in expressing divine anger. Consequently, this premise depends strictly on the interpretation of *'erek 'apayīm* in the context of patience and loving-kindness conditioned by its association with *hesed*. Another problem comes from the interpretation of the expression *'a'ārīk 'apī* (literally: *I will lengthen my nose*) in Isa 48:9. Its interpretation as “*I shall prolong my anger*” does not fit the general meaning of this verse and its oracular context (Gruber 1980, p. 504). These observations challenge the interpretation of both *'ap* and *'apayīm* as a metaphor for *anger*, at least in the context of their length.

These observations have led scholars to assume that the expression *'erek 'apayīm* as *long nostrils* sustains a metaphor of calm and loving-kindness that is incomprehensible today (Kim and Trimm 2014, p. 176). This may be true, of course, but another possibility should be examined before one reaches such a conclusion. The use of *'erek 'apayīm* may denote an essential attribute of non-organic nature that conditions the divine mode of action. This option emerges from the evidence that an organic appellation does not necessarily refer to a literal organ belonging to a literal body. Calling a deep valley, a *gorge*, for example, does not necessarily imply that this canyon is apprehended as the throat of some giant “landscape organism”. Similarly, one who speaks of the “foot” of a mountain neither implies the existence of a coherent organism-mountain nor urges a quest for additional organs. The expression merely reflects the anthropocentric manner of reference in human languages and should be approached in the manner of primary metaphors that are well integrated into human languages (Slingerland 2004, p. 10; Gibbs 2011, pp. 536–37).

Such feature is clearly identified in the description of YHWH’s “head” in Psalm 18 (=2 Samuel 22): “*Smoke went up from his nose, and devouring fire from his mouth; glowing coals flamed forth from him*” (v. 9). Several verses later, a violent emission of stones and coals of fire is reported as emanating from this divine face: “*Out of the brightness before him stones and coals of fire broke through his clouds*” (v. 13). This theophany leads to utter desolation and the evaporation of bodies of water: “*Then the channels of the sea were seen, and the foundations of the world were laid bare at your rebuke, YHWH, at the blast of*

⁵ For (Jäkel 2002, p. 23), “[...] the domain of the religious should be largely if not completely dependent on metaphorical conceptualization.”

the breath of your nose" (v. 16). Once gathered, these verses evoke the successive phases of a volcanic eruption—earthquakes (v. 8) followed by the emission of intense smoke, an increase in temperature (v. 9), explosions of the crater (v. 13), and a flow of lava that destroys and parches everything on earth (v. 16) (Koenig 1966, p. 5; Kraus 1988, pp. 260–61).

The volcanic interpretation indicates that the description of YHWH's face in Ps 18:9 should not be interpreted as a component of YHWH's whole physiognomy. It is instead typically related to the volcanic mode of divine action: The *nose* (Ps 18:9) is probably an appellation of the chimneys from which hot gases mixed with volcanic ash emanate, and the mouth apparently corresponds to the crater of the volcano, which is likened to a mouth in many languages. By overlooking this reality, and by forgetting the importance of primary metaphors deeply integrated in the mode of expression, one brings misleading considerations into the question of how the Israelites represented YHWH. It also dismisses the evidence that the "figuration" of YHWH strongly depends on the nature of his theophany. Such fluidity in these figurations has been already identified (Sommer 2009, pp. 44–54). It does not necessarily reflect uncertainty about the figuration of YHWH or insinuate the coexistence of multiple traditions. Rather, it mirrors an attempt to conjure a multiplicity of theophanies of YHWH through human language.

These considerations suggest the possibility that, for the Israelites, the divine *'apayīm* and the question of their length has nothing to do with the nostrils through which their god breathes. It no longer expresses a metaphor about the deity. Rather, it may designate an inorganic reality approached as an essential attribute of YHWH, closely related to his theophany and/or mode of action. This eventuality is investigated here.

3. The Non-Organic Context of the Meaning of *'apayīm*

3.1. *'apayīm* in Ex 15:8

In the Song of the Sea, *'apayīm* is the divine force that pries the waters apart: "At the blast of your *'apayīm* the waters piled up—the floods stood up in a heap" (Ex 15:8a). This explicit mention of YHWH's exhalation recurs two verses later: "You blew with your wind; the sea covered them" (Ex 15:10a). Furthermore, both in this song and in the parallel narration (Exodus 14), the miracle of the Sea is not approached as a consequence of the anger of YHWH. For all these reasons, the translation of *'apayīm* in Ex 15:8 as *anger* is unlikely.⁶ Rather, the wonder here is apparently explicitly related to the blasting of a stupendously strong wind over the Sea, exactly as specified in Ex 14:21: "[...] and YHWH drove the sea back by a strong Qadīm's wind all night and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided." This is why such a preternatural wind has been likened to a Sirocco of exceptional intensity (Cassuto 1967, p. 175; Fitzgerald 2002, pp. 151–52; Grant 2009, p. 57).⁷

The translation of *'apayīm* as *divine nostrils* blowing an intense wind is, however, not entirely satisfying, because the image of air blown under pressure, in an anthropomorphic context of representation, should preferentially be associated with the mouth rather than the nostrils. This problem is avoided by interpreting *'apayīm* as a metonymic designation of the face, as already suggested (Jacob 1992, p. 429). One may, however, wonder why, from such an anthropomorphic perspective, the author of this song did not simply avoid the ambiguity by evoking the mouth. This is especially true in view of the phonetic proximity of *your mouth* (*pīkā*) and *your nostrils* (*'apeykā*), which renders such a transformation poetically unproblematic. These considerations suggest that neither the metaphorical nor the anthropomorphic dimension or meaning is expressed in Ex 15:8 through the mention of YHWH's *'apayīm*. Instead, this term apparently denotes something from which air may be blasted

⁶ The interpretation of *'apayīm* as *wrath* (θυμός) is encountered in the Septuagint translation and followed by some Medieval exegetes (such as Rashi), modern translations (e.g., KJV), and scholars (e.g., Koehler and Baumgartner 1994–2000, vol. 1, p. 77).

⁷ This interpretation was already defended by Medieval exegetes such as Saadia Gaon, Ibn Ezra, and Rashbam.

under strong pressure. The Song of the Sea does not refer to any volcanic event. For this reason, it is unlikely that the powerful wind emanates from volcanic chimneys that the author identifies as “divine nostrils”, in parallel with the description in Psalm 18. The mention of “divine nostrils” may refer to another inorganic structure.

3.2. The Nostrils of the Fabulous Creature in Job 41

The characteristics of the fabulous Leviathan, evoked in Job 41:19–21, recall in many points the fiery description of YHWH’s face as reported in Ps 18:8–16.

¹⁹Out of his mouth go flaming torches; sparks of fire leap forth.

²⁰Out of his nostrils comes forth smoke; as from a boiling pot and burning rushes.

²¹His breath kindles coals; and a flame comes forth from his mouth (Job 41:19–21).

Two elements differentiate Job 41 from Psalm 18, however. The first is the absence of volcanic imagery, the volcano being replaced by a “boiling pot” (*dûd nāpûah*) positioned on a hearth (v. 20). The second is the explicit mention of *nostrils* here instead of *’ap* in Ps 18:9. The effect of the blowing from these nostrils is reported in detail in the subsequent verse: this breath fans the fire in the hearth and stimulates the small flames that emanate from it. The image clearly fits the blasting of air on a hearth, which stimulates the combustion of glowing coals. If so, the *nostrils* of the fabulous creature are associated here with *tuyères*.

In Job 41:20, the nostrils are not called *’apayīm*, as expected. Instead, they are given a unique appellation, *nēḥīrayīm*. This choice is probably meaningful because the verb *nḥr* (qal) in Biblical Hebrew denotes the sound produced by the blasting of air in a furnace through *tuyères*. This is clearly revealed in Jer 6:29 through the expression *nāḥar mapûah* (=the bellows blow fiercely, ESV). The dual *nēḥīrayīm* apparently emphasizes the metallurgical dimension of the “nostrils.” If so, it stresses the symbolic homology that exists between the two.

3.3. *’apayīm* in Dan 11:20

In an oracle devoted to the conflict between Persia and Greece, Daniel foresees the following events: “Then shall arise in his place one [leader] who shall send an exactor of tribute for the glory of the kingdom. But within a few days he shall be broken, neither in *’apayīm* nor in battle. In his place shall arise a contemptible person to whom royal majesty has not been given. He shall come in without warning and obtain the kingdom by flatteries” (Dan 11:20–21).

Here, *’apayīm* is paralleled with war/battle (*mīlḥāmā*). Therefore, it defines a reality that confers strength, a homolog to the use of strength in war for the amassing of additional power. Consequently, *’apayīm* can hardly be understood here as nose/nostrils and as a metonymy of face. Even treating it as a metaphor for anger (as it is generally translated) is inaccurate because the notion of anger belongs to the psychological domain whereas war relates to a mode of action. The interpretation of *’apayīm* as *tuyères* in this case dispels the resulting confusion. The *tuyère* being the metalworker’s instrument par excellence, its mention alone may become a metonymy for metallurgy. In the present literary context, it represents an increase in metallurgical activity for the fabrication of metallic weapons. The term *’apayīm* here refers to preparations for war (and, more generally, the imminence of a conflict), whereas the alternative term (*mīlḥāmā*) refers to a genuine conflict. The meaning of the statement in Dan 11:20 clarifies that the fall of the kingdom is due neither to fear following a preparation of war of a potential enemy, nor to any military defeat that led to capitulation.

This analysis of Dan 11:20 reveals that Biblical Hebrew used the word *’apayīm* to denote *tuyères* independently of any anthropomorphic association with nostrils. Consequently, *’apayīm*, as the source of the strong wind blown by YHWH on the sea (Ex 15:8), should be identified not as divine nostrils but as divine *tuyères*, independently of any representation of the “body” of YHWH. This finding invites us to reconsider the significance of the length of the *’apayīm*, which the Bible suggests in both a human and a divine context.

4. Re-Analysis of the Meaning of 'erek 'apayīm

'Erek 'apayīm is generally translated today as *slow to anger* and is understood as a euphemism for *patience* and *loving-kindness*. In this context, length becomes a figuration of the level of the threshold conditioning an explosively angry reaction to an irritating circumstance. Examination of the situation, in both the human and the divine contexts, reflects a more complex reality.

4.1. The 'apayīm Metaphor in Proverbs

In Proverbs, one encounters the metaphor of *short 'apayīm* in the context of *rashness* and *impulsivity* (Prov 14:17). The opposite situation, that of *long 'apayīm*, however, does not evoke passiveness, the postponement of an all-or-none irruption of explosive anger. In Prov 25:15, for example, the parallel between the two hemiverses suggests that 'erek 'apayīm is a gentle mode of action instead of patient passivity: "By long 'apayīm a ruler may be persuaded; a soft tongue will break a bone." If so, length does not obviate or even postpone the reaction; instead, it attenuates its strength. For this reason, the translation of 'erek 'apayīm as *long* (=slow) *in anger* is inappropriate here.

The meaning of this proverb, however, becomes clear if 'apayīm is identified as *tuyères*, because the pressure of the air blast from a tuyère is inversely proportional to the length of the tube.⁸ Consequently, long tuyères are less efficient than short ones in boosting the combustion in a furnace. Long tuyères are therefore appropriate for gentle processes (such as metal purification) and for processes that entail well controlled temperature (such as soldering). Their use also prevents excessive oxidation in furnaces and, in turn, the loss of elements (such as arsenic) that alloy with copper. For these reasons, long tuyères spontaneously project an image of the self-limitation of strength that the performance of gentle metallurgical processes requires.

The interpretation of 'erek 'apayīm as *long tuyères* is supported by the parallel in Proverbs between the length of 'apayīm and the length of wind. In Prov 14:29, 'erek 'apayīm is identified with wisdom whereas the contrasting characteristic is termed *short wind* (*qēṣar rūaḥ*).⁹ The antinomy between these two expressions confirms that the metaphor of the length of 'apayīm should in fact be interpreted in the context of short/long trajectory of wind, that is, in the context of a short or long tuyère.

4.2. Treatment of the Israelites in Isaiah 48

Isaiah 48:8–11 is an oracle that explains in detail the way YHWH intends to mend the Israelites.

⁸You have never heard, you have never known, from of old your ear has not been opened; For I knew that you would surely deal treacherously, and that from before birth you were called a wrongdoer (*pōšēa*).

⁹For my name's sake I will extend the length of my ap ('a 'ārīk 'apī), and my majestic power (*tēhīllātī*) I will restrain ('eḥēṭom) for you, that I may not cut you off.

¹⁰Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver; I have tried you in the furnace of affliction.

¹¹For my own sake, for my own sake, I do it, for how should my name be profaned? My glory I will not give to another.

This oracle begins (v. 8) with a complaint about the Israelites' innately treacherous nature (with a clear allusion to the substitution of Jacob for Esau as YHWH's people).¹⁰ It concludes (v. 11) with

⁸ The physical law of Darcy-Weisbach, the decrease in pressure of air circulating in a tube is proportional to its length and inversely proportional to its diameter. Being conditioned by the square value of air speed, this loss of air pressure is especially relevant for air blast in tuyères.

⁹ This parallel is confirmed by the expression 'erek rūaḥ replacing 'erek 'apayīm in Sir 5:11.

¹⁰ Jacob's attempts to be the first-born of Isaac and then to inherit the Yahwistic traditions are explicitly mentioned in Isa 43:27 as a fundamental sin of the Israelites' founding father. In Genesis, this sin emerges in Jacob's attempt to substitute for Esau

YHWH's need to enhance the people now that they are linked with his name and prestige. Between these two claims, YHWH specifies the way he intends to improve the Israelites (vv. 9–10). This process starts with the elongation of his 'ap in order to prevent the complete destruction of the people through his intervention (v. 9).

It remains difficult here to interpret 'ap simply as an expression of wrath because, in this case, the locution 'a'ārîk 'apî expresses escalation of the divine anger, a meaning that clashes with the literary context of this oracle (Gruber 1980, pp. 504–6).¹¹ Consequently, this expression is understood by most translators and exegetes as *I defer my anger* or *I remove my wrath* or even *I am patient*, although it is difficult to deduce this meaning from the Hebrew text.¹² In contrast, the idea of muzzling strength by lengthening fits perfectly here with the interpretation of 'ap as a set of tuyères ('apayîm). This assumption is confirmed by the metallurgical context of the next verse and the details of the process that ensues after YHWH lengthens his 'ap.

The metallurgical process evoked in verse 10 has been identified by many scholars as cupellation, the method of purification, mentioned in many other biblical sources, that YHWH prescribes for the Israelites (e.g., Jer 6:29, Ezek 22:17–22, Zech 13:9, and Mal 3:3, see Koole 1997, p. 572; Blenkinsopp 2000, p. 290). This process, mainly used for silver, is performed in a crucible where the metal is molten and lead is generally added to bond impurities and remove them. During this process, heavy metals become oxidized and combine with lead so that they aggregate on the bottom of the crucible or evaporate (Robinson 1915, p. 486; Nriagu 1985, p. 668). In Isa 48:10, however, it is specified that YHWH purifies the Israelites not through cupellation (the normal process for silver) but via another process involving a furnace (kûr). In Proverbs, this mode is clearly differentiated from cupellation: “The cupel (mašrēp) is for silver, and the furnace (kûr) is for gold, and YHWH tests (ûbōhēn) hearts” (Prov 17:3).¹³

Cementation is the only gold purification technique occurring in a furnace that was known in antiquity. Its use for gold purification is identified both in Egypt and in Mesopotamia, during the Bronze Age (Levey 1959, pp. 33–35; Notton 1974, p. 53). This technique consists first of coating the gold fragments to be purified with a special cement; it continues with sealing this preparation in an earthenware vessel and placing it in a furnace (Hunt 1976, p. 27). Whereas the cupellation process occurs within a few hours at high temperature (1000–1200 C), cementation requires temperatures of about 800 C and lasts for days (Notton 1974, pp. 53–54). If so, the divine purification that Isaiah prescribes for the Israelites is gentler than the violent and destructive process of cupellation, in which the metal totally melts (e.g., Ezek 22:20). This fits precisely the description of YHWH lengthening his tuyères in verse 9. Even the mention of kûr 'ônî (generally translated as *furnace of affliction*) fits this interpretation: extended over a lengthy time lag, this process may be identified as a long, painful but non-lethal treatment (=non-melting process preserving the shape) that leads to improvement by purification. By interpreting 'a'ārîk 'apî in Isa 48:9 as *I will lengthen my tuyères*, we may understand the singularities of this oracle and its message without any need to emend the text.

4.3. The 'ap-Lengthening in Jer 15:15

Another mention of YHWH's “lengthening of 'ap” is encountered in Jer 15:15. Here again, it is generally interpreted as an expression of divine patience/forbearance: “YHWH, you know; remember me

as first born (see Gen 25:25–26). The conflict recurs in the story of the birth of Peretz (=Jacob) and Zerah (=Edom), in Gen 38:29. cf. (Zakovitch 1981, pp. 127–35).

¹¹ Nevertheless, this interpretation is promoted by the Septuagint, which translates 'ap as θυμός (indignation/ferocity) after emending 'a'ārîk (=I will elongate) into 'ar'ekā (=I will show you [my indignation]). cf. (Koole 1997, p. 571). This interpretation is, however, hard to reconcile with the literary context of the oracle.

¹² For recent translations, cf. (Koole 1997, p. 552); (Brueggemann 1998, p. 103). This interpretation, already suggested by medieval exegetes, is performed on the basis of a mingling of 'ap as *anger* and hîm (=to muzzle). cf. (Kotzé 2004, p. 84).

¹³ A similar mention is found in Prov 27:21: “The cupel (mašrēp) is for silver, and the furnace (kûr) is for gold, and a man is tested by his praise.”

and visit me, and take vengeance for me on my persecutors. In your forbearance (lě'erek 'apēkā) take me not away; know that for your sake I bear reproach" (ESV). If this verse is a supplication for the intervention of YHWH against Jeremiah's enemies, as is generally assumed (Craigie 1991, p. 209), we would expect to find the opposite situation in the Jeremiah complaint: a verb expressing passivity attached to the deity's patience/loving-kindness toward the sinners. Jeremiah, however, does not enunciate this contrast. Instead, he mentions a divine action specifically targeted on him through the locution "Take me not away" (Jer 15:15). This feature reveals that the subject of the divine treatment evoked through 'a'ārīk 'apī is Jeremiah, and not the sinners. This challenges the classical interpretation of 'a'ārīk 'apī as metaphor of divine patience in regard to sinners.¹⁴

A reference to Isa 48:9 clarifies this point. There, the expression 'a'ārīk 'apī refers to a long and painful process of metal purification by cementation, performed by YHWH. Extrapolating this meaning to the present context transforms Jer 15:15 into a supplication by Jeremiah, who asks YHWH not to expose him to a (new?) process of (moral) purification involving prolonged suffering, likened to metal purification by cementation. Jeremiah justifies his request by noting that such a painful process would lead him to perdition in the face of his persecutors; hence he implores YHWH to focus his power and action on them instead of on him.

This interpretation finds support in Jeremiah's protestation of innocence in the verses that follow, in which he emphasizes the purity of his heart ("Your words became to me a joy and the delight of my heart", v. 16a), his closeness to YHWH ("I am called by your name", v. 16b), and his faithful obedience to the prophetic charge (I sat alone because your hand was upon me, v. 17b). By these devices, Jeremiah argues that the prolongation of his purification process is unnecessary. This is precisely the meaning that emerges from the subsequent verse, in which the prophet complains about the indefinite extension of the painful purification process that he has already been enduring for much time: "Why is my pain unceasing, my wound incurable, refusing to be healed?" (v. 18a). The present interpretation is confirmed in the subsequent verse, which reports the divine answer: "If you bring forth the precious (yāqār) out of the worthless (zōlēl), you shall be as my mouth" (Jer 15:19aβ). This response refers explicitly to a purification process that separates the precious from the vile, as is required for Jeremiah to become a prophet of YHWH. Here, however, the god accepts Jeremiah's supplication to stop the painful process on the grounds that he has endured it enough. As a substitute, Jeremiah is asked to find by himself the way to achieve his "purification process" if he wishes to carry out a prophetic mission.

The reference to metal purification by cementation, a process requiring a reduction in strength of the (divine) fire, clarifies the meaning of the length-of-'ap metaphor, generates an appropriate interpretative context for all these verses, and even attests that the prophets apparently underwent a painful and prolonged process of "moral purification" ahead of their mission.

5. YHWH's 'apayīm: Metaphor or Reality?

As we have shown, the image of elongation of tuyères expresses the idea of diminution of powers. As claimed in Proverbs, this approach reflects wisdom. For YHWH, this reduction of power is a necessity for the performance of a purification process that would preserve the integrity of both the nation and its individual members. In both the human and the divine contexts, however, the foregoing examples invite us to treat the length of the tuyères as a metaphor for an intentional self-restriction of power. The question, then, is whether some references to the divine 'apayīm denote a literal modality of divine action. The answer is sought in a reference to YHWH's long 'apayīm in the Nah 1:2–6 oracle:

2A qannô ' and avenging god is YHWH; Avenging is YHWH and wrathful;
YHWH takes vengeance on his adversaries, and keeps wrath for his enemies.

¹⁴ As Gruber (1980, p. 507), observes, "[...] Jeremiah's plea in vv. 10, 15–18 is based not on his perception of the Lord's patience toward his persecutors but on his being the object of divine anger."

³YHWH is 'erek 'apayīm and great in power, and will by no means clear the guilty.

YHWH, in whirlwind and tempest is his way, and [in] cloud of dust are his feet¹⁵.

⁴He rebukes the sea and makes it dry; and all the rivers he dries up;

Wither Bashan and Carmel! The bloom of Lebanon withers!

⁵The mountains quake before him; the hills melt;

The earth heaves before him, the world and all that dwell therein.

⁶Before his indignation who can stand? Who can endure the heat (ḥārôn) of his 'ap?

His wrath is poured out like fire, and the rocks are pulled down by him.

This oracle, just like Psalm 18, identifies the divine mode of intervention as a volcanic eruption: it is characterized first (v. 3) by meteorological perturbations (whirlwind and tempest) and by the subsequent release of volcanic ash (a cloud of dust). These preliminaries are followed (v. 4) by the emission of a gas so hot that it evaporates bodies of water and obliterates vegetation, by earthquakes (explosion of the crater), and by a flow of lava that destroys the landscape and every living being (vv. 5–6). The realistic nature of the description indicates that this oracle should not be treated as a metaphor for YHWH's powerful intervention. Rather, it emphasizes volcanism as being one of the most essential modes of action of the deity.

A parallel is stressed in Exodus between YHWH's volcanic theophany at Sinai and the fire of a furnace (Ex 19:18) (Amzallag 2014). In view of this homology, the mention of divine 'apayīm in the preliminary phase of the volcanic eruption, in Nah 1:3, suggests that it should be approached as the result of a metallurgical melting of the mountains performed by YHWH's 'ap (see Nah 1:6). A volcanic eruption becomes the consequence of the *authentic* work of divine tuyères, which causes the mountains to melt exactly as it would melt stone in a furnace. This realistic representation of divine tuyères is confirmed by the account of the way YHWH melts the foundations of mountains, the preliminary phase of a volcanic eruption: "For a fire is kindled by my 'ap, and it burns to the depths of Sheol; it devours the earth and its increase, and sets on fire the foundations of the mountains" (Deut 32:22).

In the context of the Nahum oracle, which centers on YHWH's volcanic wrathful vengeance, 'erek 'apayīm (v. 3) can hardly be interpreted as expressing *compassion* and *loving-kindness*. YHWH's great power combined with his 'erek 'apayīm should no longer be construed as the deity's ability to self-restrain, postpone, or even diminish the intensity of his destructive powers. The reason is the explicit mention of his avenging action in the same hemiverse. This is confirmed by verse 6, which evokes not the divine restraint but the incommensurate destructive consequences of this reaction.¹⁶

These considerations suggest that the mention of the length of the divine tuyères means something different in Nah 1:2–6 than it does in the other cases, where extending the tuyère weakens the blasting process and the intensity of the response. Here, the assertion of YHWH's great power (*gēdāl kōaḥ*), immediately after the mention of his long tuyères (v. 3a), rules out the association of the tuyères with the deity's self-imposed diminution of power. Rather, in the context of divine intervention on earth, this nexus of long tuyères and conspicuous strength is probably created in order to specify that the

¹⁵ The expression *wē'ānān 'ābaq raglāyw* is generally translated as "clouds are the dust of his feet," but this translation is challenged by rhetorical considerations stressing the parallel between *bēsūpā ūbīšē'ārā* and *'ānān 'ābaq*. Furthermore, in absence of any description of rain, it is unlikely that the reference is of a genuine cloud. Finally, the feet are expected to stay on the earth, exactly as a cloud of dust, and not as water clouds which stay high in the sky.

¹⁶ To conciliate these points, v. 3 has been translated as: "YHWH is slow in anger but great in power, and he certainly does not leave unpunished." By this means, the expression "great in power" is introduced to counterbalance the first premise ("slow in anger") and prepares the way for the following proposition concerning the forthcoming divine intervention; cf. (Spronk 1997, pp. 36–37); (Christensen 2009, p. 221). This interpretation, however, implies the conjunction "but" between these two counterbalanced locutions, which is not found in the MT version. This is why an interpretation that avoids such an emendation of the text should be preferred.

great distance between heaven (the site of blowing) and earth (the target) does not obviate YHWH's capacity to unleash a powerful volcanic eruption of destructive nature.

The importance of such precision is confirmed by a doubt about YHWH's very ability to intervene from his celestial abode. This questioning of divine intervention is explicitly exposed in the opening verse of Psalm 10: "*Why, YHWH, do you stand far away? [Why] do you hide yourself in times of trouble?*" Thereafter, the psalmist reveals the opinion of his opponents, who deny the ability of YHWH to intervene on earth (v. 4): "*The wicked [says]: from the height of his 'ap (kěgōbah 'apô), He [YHWH] will not seek [us]; God is absent from all his thoughts.*" It appears, from this verse, that the main argument of the "wicked" for pursuing their way is not the denial of existence/kingship of YHWH but the fact that his 'ap is far away, in heaven. This simple evidence precludes any possibility of harmful intervention of YHWH on earth and authorizes man to ignore YHWH's requests.

Centering the debate about divine action on the height of the deity's 'ap indicates that this act of metallurgical blasting was regarded as YHWH's main way of expressing his anger. This conclusion is confirmed by the explicit promise, in the subsequent verse, that YHWH will successfully blast upon his enemies despite the height of his 'ap. "*His ways writhe (yāhîlû) at all time, Your judgments are on high, against him; All His enemies, He [YHWH] will blast (yāpāh) on them.*" (Ps 10:5). If so, Psalm 10 and Nahum 1:2–6 make the same claim: YHWH's power is so strong that the lengthy trajectory of the divine tuyère does not vitiate it altogether. Nahum exploits the fact of volcanic eruptions on earth to demonstrate that this divine blasting power remains potent enough to provoke such a destructive reaction.

By gathering these quotations, we discover the existence of a genuine debate, in ancient Israel, over the efficiency of YHWH's intervention on earth in view of the necessary long length of his 'ap and the consequent loss of pressure. The nature of this debate confirms that the Israelites treated the divine tuyère not only as a metaphor but also as a genuine divine reality.

6. Discussion

6.1. About The Anger Metaphor of Divine 'apayīm

Thus far, three possible meanings of 'apayīm have been taken into consideration: literal (*nostrils*), metonymic (for *face*), and metaphoric (for *anger*). The last-mentioned possibility serves as support for the interpretation of 'erek 'apayīm not as YHWH's "*long nostrils*" but as his *patient* and *merciful* character. For this reason, long 'apayīm has been systematically treated as a metaphoric expression. This interpretation, by far the most popular among scholars, captures well the imagery of "hot fluid in a container" as a common conceptual metaphor for anger (Lakoff and Kövecses 1987; Kövecses 2008, p. 169).¹⁵

In biblical Hebrew, the existence of such a conceptual metaphor is supported by the definition of *anger* as *hēmâ*, as is especially frequent in the divine context (e.g., Lev 26:28; Num 25:11; 2 Kgs 22:13; Isa 27:4). Exactly as this conceptual metaphor would lead one to expect, YHWH's anger is imagined as a hot liquid in a cup (Isa 51:17, 22) that may be poured onto his enemies (Jer 10:25). Furthermore, the typical description of divine anger through the combination of 'ap and *hēmâ* (literally: *nose* and *heat*, e.g., Deut 9:19, 29:22, 27; Isa 66:15; Jer 7:20, 21:5) spontaneously invites us to interpret the nose/nostrils in the context of this conceptual metaphor. Even the interpretation of 'apayīm as tuyères accommodates such a metaphoric context effectively because tuyères are the tools that allow heat to build up and even to liquefy solid substances that are placed in the furnace.

These considerations promote an interpretation of 'apayīm in the context of the conceptual metaphor of anger. They even fit very well with the use of the expression 'erek 'apayīm in the

¹⁵ The expression *wē'ānān 'ābaq raglāyw* is generally translated as "*clouds are the dust of his feet*," but this translation is challenged by rhetorical considerations stressing the parallel between *bēsūpā ūbīšē'ārā* and *'ānān 'ābaq*. Furthermore, in absence of any description of rain, it is unlikely that the reference is of a genuine cloud. Finally, the feet are expected to stay on the earth, exactly as a cloud of dust, and not as water clouds which stay high in the sky.

liturgical formula that praises divine mercy and patience, even though the specific meaning of the metaphor remains unknown to us. Not all instances, however, fit such an interpretation. The curious representation of 'ap/'*apayīm* in variable lengths, in Isa 48:9 and Jer 15:15, invests this metaphoric dimension with difficulties due to the contrasting meanings expressed through this imagery. Another problem stems from the property of unidirectionality in the characteristic relationship in a metaphor between the target (X) and the source (Y).¹⁸ Such a situation is not always observed concerning the divine 'apayīm, which are sometimes approached as integral to YHWH's *modus operandi* (Ex 15:8 and Nah 1:3 for 'apayīm and Ps 10:4 for 'ap). Therefore, it seems that something real, identified as 'apayīm, belongs to the divine sphere, and is apparently associated with YHWH's *modus operandi* through winds (Wiggins 1999).

6.2. 'apayīm as Divine Tuyères

The identification of 'apayīm as *tuyères*, in Dan 11:20 reveals that the association of long nostrils with patience, self-restriction of power, and gentle treatment results from a physical reality: the decrease in air pressure (and, consequently, of blasting strength) proportional to the length of the tuyère. Such reference to this physical process is obviously metaphoric in Proverbs where it is juxtaposed with human behavior. Where the deity is concerned, however, the situation is not so simple. A metaphoric use of tuyère may be accounted for in Isa 48:9 and Jer 15:15 because neither the entire nation nor the individual prophet is expected to endure a genuine process of purification by cementation. Beyond this metaphoric use, however, a genuine action of YHWH through tuyères is assumed in Nah 1:2–6 and Ps 10:4–5. The many other quotations in the Bible about the deity's volcanic *modus operandi* suggest that these occurrences should not be approached as eccentric representations of YHWH's activity.

This conclusion is supported by the volcanic imagery associated with the expression of divine anger. Here again, the conceptual metaphor of anger as “hot liquid in a container” does not suffice to explain this representation. The reason is the mention of YHWH pouring this hot liquid (=lava) on his enemies and then unleashing extensive destruction (Isa 13:9–10, 42:14–15; Ezek 22:31; Hos 5:10; Amos 9:5; Zeph 3:8) and even modifications of the landscape (Isa 40:4; Job 9:5). This description of the specific devastating consequences of the volcanic expression of anger reveals that volcanism is approached as a genuine theophany of YHWH (e.g., Isa 63:19; Ps 97:5) and not simply as a metaphor of his mode of action (Koenig 1966; Dunn 2014; Amzallag 2014). The nexus in the Bible of the divine 'ap and a volcanic mode of action (Grant 2015, p. 148; Amzallag forthcoming) is therefore not surprising. The cohesiveness of such a linkage is revealed by the metallurgical connotations of volcanism in Antiquity, reflected, among other evidences, in the *exclusive* homology that exists between the flowing of lava from a volcano and the release of slag from a furnace during the smelting process.¹⁹ The identification of active volcanoes as workshops of gods of metallurgy confirms this homology.²⁰ In the Bible, the analogy of the smoke rising from Mount Sinai (imaged as of an erupting volcano) following YHWH's presence and the smoke of a furnace (Ex 19:18) also stimulates such a parallel. Therefore, the association of divine 'apayīm with volcanic activity that expresses divine theophany and mode of action confirms the identification of this organ as a tuyère and its mention, in some of Biblical sources, as physical reality rather than a metaphor.

¹⁸ “In this connection,” stresses (Jäkel 2002, p. 22), “the relation between the elements X and Y is irreversible, the metaphorical transfer having an unequivocal direction.”

¹⁹ Dieterle (1987, p. 5) elaborates on this homology as follows: “[...] Among the apparatus of the forge, there is no doubt that it is the furnace that corresponds to the volcano, since the molten slag flowing from it is profoundly like the flow of the molten lava from a volcano ...”

²⁰ Hephaestus, the Greek smith-god, is called the Prince of Etna (Euripides, *Cyclops*, v. 600). His “servants,” too—the Cyclops—dwelled in the vicinity of the Etna and Lipari volcanoes. Their metallurgical activity was supposed to occur at the heart of the volcano (Scarath 1989). The Etruscan and Roman counterparts of Hephaestus (Sethlans and Vulcan, respectively) are also fully identified with active volcanoes. Furthermore, a homology between metallurgy and volcanism is clearly evidenced in the mythologies of Central and Northern Europe (Dieterle 1987, pp. 3–6).

Here too, this imagery cannot be construed as an extension of the metaphor that identifies the divine anger with a hot liquid because the volcanic dimension of the Sinai theophany does not reflect any expression of anger. More generally, metallurgy has been identified as an activity essentially related to YHWH, independently of any expression of anger (Amzallag 2009). This is revealed, for example, in the Ezekiel vision of the celestial universe as a giant furnace in Ezekiel 1 (Driver 1951; Amzallag 2013, pp. 164–66) and by the representation of the sun as a giant loop of molten metal that issues from the daily activity of such a celestial furnace (Amzallag 2015a, pp. 86–89). It is further confirmed by the Biblical representation of YHWH's *kābôd* as a hot heavy liquid from which an intense radiance, which has been identified as molten metal, emanates (Amzallag 2015a). Moreover, furnace re-melting—the recycling of rust copper without any loss of matter—is approached in the Bible as an essential attribute of YHWH that conditions his mode of action and even eschatological processes (Amzallag 2015b).

This metallurgical dimension of ancient Yahwism is also supported by the vision of YHWH dwelling in mountains of copper (Zech 6:1–6) and the mention of his origin in the Arabah and Sinai (Deut 33:2; Judg 5:4; Hab 3:3), regions known for their large-scale production of copper in Antiquity. It is further confirmed by the pre-Israelite cult of YHWH among the Kenites, who have been identified as Canaanite metalworkers (Blenkinsopp 2008; Day 2009; Mondriaan 2011). All these considerations demonstrate that the mention of tuyères cannot be explained as simply a source of metaphors of divine anger. In many cases, they should rather be considered as essential attribute of YHWH and an explanans of his theophany and mode of action.

6.3. The Dual Representation of the Body of YHWH

The definition of the body as a cohesive organic entity leads systematically to an anthropomorphic representation of the body of YHWH. Smith (2015, p. 473) explicitly stresses this problem: “A definition of ‘body’ for biblical material without reference to the human body would not account for the central role that the human body plays in biblical anthropomorphism generally and in biblical representation of God’s body in particular.” The foregoing observations reveal that the concept of YHWH’s body should not be restricted to such definition. Even the definition of the body as a coherent entity positioned at a specific place at a specific time should be revisited. A first level of divine representation, of anthropomorphic nature, probably refers to the body of god as a coherent “organic” supernatural entity. This representation, however, is probably less frequently put forward in the Bible than is generally presumed, because the mention of a divine organ does not necessarily refer to any organic whole.

The term *kābôd*, for example, illustrates the complexity of this situation. *Kābôd* is frequently used in the Bible to evoke the “body” of YHWH (Sommer 2009, p. 60). This body, however, of fiery and radiant nature, is far from being organic (Sommer 2009, p. 60; Smith 2015, p. 473). The identification of *kābôd*-YHWH as molten metal, with shapelessness as an essential characteristic (Amzallag 2015a), indicates that its bodily dimension of meaning probably expresses no anthropomorphic feature. It rather promotes molten metal to the rank of an attribute of YHWH so essential that it should be considered “organically” attached to him.

The case of YHWH’s “nostrils” reflects another dimension of complexity in representing the body of YHWH. Here, this appellation does not aim for a figuration of a YHWH who has a large nose or long nostrils. It rather reflects the identification of tuyères with nostrils in Biblical Hebrew.

The relationship between the two, however, appears unrestricted to such a primary metaphoric level. Rather, *ʾapayim* is used to evoke both literal tuyères that belong to a divine blowing apparatus and to provide a source for the metaphor of divine patience and mercy.

It seems that these two levels (literal and metaphoric) even intermingle in some sources, yielding two superimposed levels of (complementary) meaning. This duality is reflected in the evidence that the conflation of organs (nostrils) with instruments (tuyères) as something inherent to their common appellation as *ʾapayim* is not an unavoidable consequence of such homonymy. The reason is that tuyères have another name in Biblical Hebrew, *ʾôpan*, which lacks all ambiguity with organic functions

(Amzallag and Yona 2016). Consequently, the choice of *'apayīm* to denote the divine tuyères, instead of *'ōpan*, is probably intentional. Exactly as for *kābôd*, this organic transformation of tuyères, generated by the nominative *'apayīm*, elevates them to the class of attributes of YHWH that are as essential as the organs of a living body. It also promotes a basic anthropomorphic representation of the Israelite god with long nose/nostrils, to which are superimposed additional treatments of the deity and his “body” referring to his genuine identity, his essential attributes and his mode of action, as already suggested (Hendel 1997, p. 209). Through an apparently naive bodily description of YHWH, this latter process generates an esoteric layer of knowledge with the help of homonymy and wordplays. Such a dual reality may explain why the biblical authors are so cautious to avoid identifying YHWH’s body with its human counterpart (Miller 1972, pp. 291–92; Smith 2015, p. 483). It may also explain the coexistence in ancient Israel of a concrete anthropomorphism of the god with an “immanent” anthropomorphism in which bodily terms are used in a purely metaphorical meaning, without referring to a whole divine body (Hamori 2008, pp. 26–34). It may even account for the superposition of “[...] three types of divine bodies, based on different scales, locations, and setting in life: a natural ‘human’ body; a superhuman-sized ‘liturgical’ body, and a ‘cosmic’ or ‘mystical’ body” (Smith 2015, pp. 471–72). Consequently, the coexistence of aniconic and anthropomorphic traditions in ancient Israel (Lewis 1998, p. 50) does not necessarily imply a conflict between the two, at least until the end of the First Temple period.

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