

# THE GRACIOUSNESS AND PLEASANTNESS OF GOD

by

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The goal of this paper is to demonstrate that the Hebrew word *nō'am*, when used in connection with God, denotes His gracious relationship to humans but also has additional associations. *Nō'am* refers to the pleasantness experienced in God's sanctuary, as a quality of the sanctuary itself and also as a perception of God's presence and His attractiveness. Biblical and extra-biblical passages are cited as support for these different meanings and associations. In addition, post-biblical *Hekalot* mystical literature attests to the continuity of the belief in the sensuous pleasures of the Divine realm and the use of *n'am*, among other terms, to indicate this.

We begin with Ps 90:16–17: *yērā'e ʔel-ʔāḥādeḳā poʔoleḳā wahāḏārēkā ʔal bēnēhem wiyhī nō'am ʔĀdōnāy ʔElōhēnū ʔālēnū umaʔāsē yādēnū kōnēnā ʔālēnū umaʔāsē yādēnū kōnēnēhū*, “let Your deeds be seen by Your servants, Your glory by their children; may the favor of the Lord, our God, be upon us; let the work of our hands prosper, O prosper the work of our hands.” It is clear that *nō'am* here means “good will, favor.” The psalm refers to God's anger in the past (*ʔap*, *hēmā*, v. 7; *ehṛā*, vv. 9, 11), and there is a plea for His steadfast love (*hasdeḳā*, v. 14). Parallel to *yēhī nō'am* there is a similar construction with *hesed* in Ps 33:22: *yēhī hasdeḳā . . . ʔālēnū* (Ps 33:22).

The biblical parallelism of *ṭōḥ* // *nā'im* (Ps 133:1, 147:1, Job 36:11) is well recognized, and this pair is also attested in Ugaritic (Fisher, 1972, p. 277). The similarity between Hebrew *ʔsh hesed* and Phoenician *pʔ n'am* has been noted, e.g., *wšmʔ ql wpʔ ly n'am*, “she heard my voice and did kindness to me” and *wpʔ nk lšš ʔdny n'am*, “I acted kindly toward the scion of my lord” (Gibson 1982, vol. 3, p. 94; Donner and Röllig, 1962, p. 10, line 8; p. 26, line A, i, 10). Akkadian *damiqta* / *dumqa* / *ṭabta epēšu* can also be compared (CAD, E, pp. 206, 208, 223).<sup>1</sup>

1. For the use of *ṭabtu* and *ṭōḥ* in the covenantal context, which is not the concern of this paper, see J. A. Fitzmyer, *The Aramaic Inscriptions of Sefire* (Rome, 1967), I, C, 4,

Nevertheless, the idea has been broached that *nō<sup>c</sup>am* in Ps 90 is to be understood as something more concrete than “good will, favor.”<sup>2</sup> Levenson has recently proposed (1985, pp. 61–67) that a number of biblical texts can be clarified on the hypothesis that *nō<sup>c</sup>am* is to be understood as an “affirmative omen.” Its regular meaning of “beauty, pleasantness” is too abstract to be meaningful in these passages. Thus, Ps 27:4 expresses the Psalmist’s wish to perform an augury in the Temple, and Levenson cites the use of *bqr* in the context of a priestly inspection of skin disorders (Lev 27:33) and, in rabbinic Hebrew, the examination of a sacrificial animal for blemishes (*Mish. Tamid* 3:4). He does not feel that there is enough evidence to speculate on the specific form of the augury. The *nō<sup>c</sup>am* of Ps 27:4 might possibly be an icon, a statue of YHWH as in Judg 17:1–6. The *hādār* of Ps 90:16, traditionally rendered “majesty, splendor,” is used in Ugaritic in parallel with *hlm*, “dream,” and denotes “apparition, revelation.” The word *nō<sup>c</sup>am* in Ps 90:17, he suggests, means “an affirmative omen.” He compares this with Akkadian *kittam šuknam*, “give a clear answer,” and *anna kīna*, “a firm ‘yes,’” and connects Hebrew *nō<sup>c</sup>am* in this sense with Arabic *na<sup>c</sup>am*, “yes.” The form of the omen, a sign of favor (*ṭōb*; Ps 4:7), might be a fire from God (*ʿōr pānekā*, “the light of Your face,” *ibid.*). In Ps 16:5–6, where the context is that of casting lots, a form of augury, Levenson suggests that *ne<sup>c</sup>imim* can mean “winning lots.” The form *ne<sup>c</sup>imōt*, Ps 16:11, is also to be understood as “winning lots.” Levenson further proposes that *ne<sup>c</sup>im* (*zēmīrōt yisrā<sup>e</sup>l*) in 2 Sam 23:1 be understood as “a person granted an affirmative omen.”

We can accept Levenson’s suggestion that *nō<sup>c</sup>am* may have a more concrete meaning that relates it to the sphere of the manifestation of God to the worshipper. We, however, must disagree with him as to the specific meanings that he assigns to this word in the various passages. There simply is not sufficient evidence to support a claim that *nō<sup>c</sup>am* denotes augury or extispicy. It is true that a favorable attitude on the part of God (the accepted understanding of *nō<sup>c</sup>am*) may be expressed in a favorable omen; cf. Ps 86:16–17: “turn to me and have mercy on

19; II, B, 2; pp. 74, 86; W. L. Moran, “A Note on the Treaty Terminology of the Sefire Stelas,” *JNES* 22 (1963), 173–76; Delbert Hillers, “A Note on Some Treaty Terminology in the Old Testament,” *BASOR* 176 (1964), 46–47.

2. An aggadadic tradition understands *nō<sup>c</sup>am* as meaning “the *Shekhinah*.” Moses wished for the people upon the completion of the sanctuary that the *Shekhinah* should rest upon the work of their hands, and they responded with *wiyhī nō<sup>c</sup>am ʾĀdōnāy ʾĒlōhēnū ʿālēnū*. Thus, *nō<sup>c</sup>am* is equated with the *Shekhinah* (*Midr. Shoher Tob*, Ps. 90). Another midrash equates it with the Divine *kābōd* (*Yalqut Shim<sup>c</sup>oni* on Ps. 90, #841).

me . . . show me a sign of Your favor (<sup>c</sup>*āsē-<sup>c</sup>immî ʾôṭ lēṭōbāh*) and Ps 16:7, 11, which can be read as referring to an oracle. The opposite situation is also attested where omens and responses are denied to one with whom God is angry (1 Sam 28:6). However, it is not compelling that we understand *nō<sup>c</sup>am*, which refers to the general attitude of good will, as a specific concrete term for an omen or answer, like ʾôṭ (Ps 74:9; 86:17) or *ma<sup>c</sup>āneh* (Mic 3:7).<sup>3</sup> Moreover, Levenson's concretization of "the light of YHWH's face" (Ps 4:7) as a favorable sign coming through the medium of fire, because God is described as a "devouring fire" in Deut 4:24, is not convincing. It is not necessary to interpret the imagery of God's shining face in such a literal manner, when its metaphorical sense of "Divine favor" is so well attested in biblical and Akkadian usage; cf. Num 6:25; Ps 44:4; 80:4, 8, 20; 89:16 and Akkadian *numur būnim* and *ina būnim namrūtīm* (*CAD, B*, p. 320). Levenson's relating of *nō<sup>c</sup>am* to Arabic *na<sup>c</sup>am*, "yes," appears to provide additional support for his understanding of Hebrew *nō<sup>c</sup>am* as "favorable answer," but, one may ask, how much weight can be assigned to the Arabic word as a basis for interpreting the Hebrew in the absence of strong external evidence? Moreover, why relate *hḏr* in Ps 90:16 to the Ugaritic *hḏrt*, "apparition, revelation," a parallel of *ḥlm*, "dream" (Keret, 2, 11), when no biblical usage of *hḏrt* in this sense is cited to substantiate ruling out the common understanding of *hāḏār*, "glory?"

I propose that we seek other possibilities for the connotations of *nō<sup>c</sup>am*. We must examine the significance of the parallelism in Ps 90:16–17 in clarifying the meaning and associations of *nō<sup>c</sup>am*. In v. 16 *pō<sup>c</sup>al* and *hāḏār*, God's deeds and His glory, are in parallel; cf. Ps 111:3. The relationship between the two terms may be that through the acts of God (*pō<sup>c</sup>al*) His glory (*hōḏ, hāḏār, kāḏōḏ*) is revealed, e.g., Isa 35:2–4, "they shall behold the glory of the Lord, the splendor of our God . . . behold

3. An analogy may be drawn from Akkadian *damiqtu*, "favor," which can apply to many situations, in one of which it is in a genitive relationship describing an oracle, e.g., *ana panīja egirri damiqtim liqabbi*, "may a favorable *egirru*-omen be pronounced in my presence" (*CAD, D*, 65b; see reference, *ibid.*) The word *damiqtum* itself does not mean "omen" any more than Hebrew *ṭōḥ* or *nā<sup>c</sup>im* do. Similarly, *lēḥaqqēr* (Ps 27:4) has many possible applications, one of which might be "inspect exta." The semantic equivalent in Akkadian, *bu<sup>u</sup>*, "seek," can describe the activities of a *bārū*, e.g., *ana kakki libbi immeri lā tuba<sup>a</sup>*, "concerning warfare do not inspect the exta of the sheep" (*CAD, B*, 363a; see reference, *ibid.*), but *bu<sup>u</sup>*, like its Hebrew parallels *drš* and *bqr* (in parallel, Ezek 34:11), has other possibilities which have not been ruled out. More evidence is required in these specific cases to substantiate the claim that a word with a general applicability develops into a concrete, technical term. We have suggested that the parallelism of *bqr* and *ḥzh* in Ps 27:4 is of significance, leading to another conclusion.

your God will come with vengeance"; cf. also Ps 19:2, 104:1ff. Moreover, Ps 90:17, *wiyhî nō<sup>c</sup>am ʾAdōnāy ʾElōhēnū ʿālēnū*, "may the favor of the Lord, our God, be upon us," parallels *uma<sup>c</sup>āsē yādēnū kōnēnā ʿālēnū*, "let the work of our hands prosper." Both halves of the verse have the word *ʿālēnū*, which connects them. The relationship between *nō<sup>c</sup>am* and *ma<sup>c</sup>āsē yādēnū* is that God's kindly disposition (*nō<sup>c</sup>am*) is what expresses itself concretely in making firm "the work of our hands." Similar relationships between Divine favor and Divine acts may be seen in Ps 44:2-4, "our fathers have told us the deeds You performed in their time (*pō<sup>c</sup>al pā<sup>c</sup>altā ḥiy<sup>m</sup>mēhem*) . . . their arm did not give them victory but Your right hand, Your arm and Your good will, for You favored them" (. . . *wē<sup>c</sup>ōr pānēkā kī rēšūtām*); cf. also Ps 6:5 and 44:27.

But there is another way to view the parallelistic relationships. In Ps 90:16-17 we have a chiasmic structure:

*A po<sup>c</sup>ōlekā : B ḥāḏārēkā :: B' nō<sup>c</sup>am : A' ma<sup>c</sup>āsē yādēnū*

The two outside terms (A, A') refer, respectively, to the work of God, and the work of humans and are balanced. The two inside terms, B and B', *ḥāḏār* and *nō<sup>c</sup>am*, are now seen to be in parallel with each other. Hebrew *hōḏ wēḥāḏār* have long been seen as denoting the Divine aura, paralleling Sumerian *me.lám, ní.te, ní.ḥuš*, Akkadian *melammū, namrīrrū, rašubbatu* and *birbirrū*. The Sumerian, Akkadian and Hebrew terms have been studied by various authors.<sup>4</sup>

Words in parallel do not necessarily have identical meanings, a point Levenson recognizes (1985, p. 65), and *nō<sup>c</sup>am* does not necessarily denote what *ḥāḏār* does. There exist different views on the semantic relationships of words in what is called "synonymous parallelism." Geller (1979, pp. 34-42), who seeks to arrive at the deep structure underlying the two parts of a parallelistic verse, enumerates several types of relationship that can obtain between the two terms. One of these is a list, where the two terms are not identical but share a common semantic range, e.g., *ʾkl*, "eat," and *šth*, "drink." Kugel (1981, p. 51) argues that the B term goes beyond the A term, emphatically "seconding" it. Berlin (1985, pp. 88-96) holds that parallelism is related to the process of word association. If the two terms are not semantically identical, one of several possibilities is that there is a semantic continuation in the B term,

4. Oppenheim (1943, pp. 31-34), Cassin (1968, pp. 79ff.), Weinfeld (1982, *TWAT* 4:27-32; 1983, pp. 131-36, 143-45), Mendenhall (1973, pp. 32-66) and Waldman (1972, pp. 7-13; 1984, pp. 614-18; cf. also *TDOT* 1:164-65 and *TWAT* 2, cols. 357-68, 375-79).

a progression of thought through a term which has a perceived association with the first term.

I would suggest, following Berlin, that the two terms, *nō'am* and *hādār*, are related through an association of thoughts, such as outlined above. When we find *nō'am*, "favor," together with *hādār*, "Divine glory," that is, the glory of God manifested, we may suggest the following relationship: the Divine favor makes possible the manifestation of God's glory in history or as a vision of God's presence. Thus, we suggest that several concepts are associated in Ps 90:16–17: God's good will, His acts and His presence or manifestation.

There are also Akkadian passages where the good will of the god and being in his/her presence are associated, e.g., "because you are gracious [I gaze upon your face]; because you are merciful [I stand before you]" (*aššum muppalsāta ātamar [panīka] aššum rēmenīka [attaziz maḥarka]*) (Ebeling, 1953, text 114, 16–17). Ps 16:11 is roughly paralleled by the Akkadian passage: "at your right is justice, at your left grace" (*imnuḫ mišāri šumēlukkī dumqu*) (Ebeling, 1953, text 60, line 17).

Pleasantness and Divine presence are associated in Ps 16:11: *šōba<sup>c</sup> šēmāḥōl ʿel-pāneḳā nē'imōl biyminēḳā neṣaḥ*, "in Your presence is perfect joy, delights are ever in Your right hand."<sup>5</sup> One way to interpret the "right hand" of Ps 16:11 is as a metaphor describing the support and guidance which God gives; cf. Ps 18:36, 63:9, 138:7, 139:10. Another possibility is to see the "right hand" as a place, metaphorically, in God's presence where His favor is experienced; cf. Ps 110:1, *šēḫ liymīnī*, "sit at my right hand." Dahood (1965, p. 91; Gordon, 1965, text 51, v, lines 107–110) points out the Ugaritic parallel where one is being feted at the right hand of Baal, e.g., *št alp qdmh mra wtk pnh r<sup>c</sup>db ksu wyltb lymn aliyn b<sup>c</sup>*, "an ox is set before him, a fattened one directly in front of him. A throne is placed and he is seated to the right of victor Baal."

Like the image of the right hand, the image of the face also conveys the sense of the presence of God. The "face to face" image occurs in Deut 5:4 and 34:10; cf. also *peh ʿel-peh*, "mouth to mouth," Num 12:8.<sup>6</sup>

5. The parallel words *šōba<sup>c</sup>* and *nō'am* are conjoined in the Azitawadda inscription, e.g., *wkn bymtu kl n<sup>m</sup> ldnm wšb<sup>c</sup> wmn<sup>m</sup>*, "in my days the Danunites had everything good and plenty to eat and well being" (Donner and Röllig, 1962, p. 26, lines A, i, 5–6; *ANET*, p. 653).

6. The image occurs in the Sumerian composition *Enmerkar and Ensuhkešdanna* (Berlin, 1979, pp. 40–41, lines 31–32; *ibid.*, p. 67), e.g., "he may see Inanna at night in a dream; (but) I will commune with Inanna 'face to face'" (*gá.e 4Inanna.da gir.babbar.ra.na KA mu.da.ba.e*). The editor, Adele Berlin, points out that the contrast between a dream vision and a direct revelation brings to mind the difference between God's revelation to other

What is important is that *neʿmôl* in Ps 16:11 refers not to the disposition of God but to the experiencing of pleasantness by the worshipper.

In Ps 27:4 *nōʿam* appears as a more concrete entity, something to be looked upon, e.g., *lahāzôl bēnōʿam-YHWH ulēbaqqēr bēhēkālô*, “to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord, to frequent His temple.” The verb *bqr* can also mean “seek, examine, look after” (2 Kings 16:15; Ezek 34:12), perhaps bringing the semantic ranges of the two verbs in the verse somewhat closer. Elsewhere, the verb *hzh* is used to indicate a kind of viewing or mystical contemplation of the Divine glory (Ex 24:11, Ps 17:15, 63:3, 65:5, Job 19:27). We suggest that the *nōʿam* of Ps 27:4 is a concrete entity rather than a kind of relationship.

We suggest several possibilities. The pleasantness (*nōʿam*) is a word denoting the temple itself, is something found in God’s temple, or is a quality of God’s person. Let us consider these possibilities. There is a parallelism between *nōʿam* and *hēkāl*, suggesting that the Divine abode, *hēkāl*, can also be called *noʿam*, “the pleasant place,” and this, of course, can be gazed upon. Indeed, in a Ugaritic passage the dwelling place of a god is called “pleasant” (*nʿm*), e.g., “in the midst of my mount godly Zaphon; in the sanctuary, mount of my portion, in the pleasance, the hill I possess” (*btḳ ḡry il špn bqdš bḡr nḥly bnʿm bgbʿ tlyyt*) (Gordon, 1965, *nt*, iii, lines 26–28; *ANET*, p. 136).

Divine glory and the quality of beauty are associated with the Temple, in the Bible, e.g., “glory and majesty are before Him; strength and splendor are in His Temple” (Ps 96:6; cf. 1 Chr 16:27). Sumerian temples are described as having a pleasant odor and as being residences of joy and satisfaction to the gods who dwell in them, e.g., “house, your pleasing odour is (like) mounds of vines” (é šim.zu [k]ur.geštin.na) (Sjöberg and Bergmann, 1969, p. 30, line 223), and “there he built for him his beloved *gigunû* amidst (sweet odors) of cedar perfume” (šà.ba gigunu ki.ág.ni šim.erin.na mu.na.ni.dù) (Thureau-Dangin, 1907, p. 68, lines v, 18–20 [Gudea, Statue B]). However, although the *nōʿam* of Ps 27:4 may plausibly be a term for the Divine dwelling or for what is experienced in it, we must go further and ask whether it may not denote the beauty of God Himself, a quality of His person. The different senses need not be mutually exclusive. The Vulgate reflects this idea: *ut videam pulchritudinem Domini*, “to behold the beauty of the Lord (*Psalmi iuxta*

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prophets and to Moses, as described in Num 12:6–8. We can suggest further that the Sumerian passage also recalls Ps 17:15, *ʔāni bēšedeq ʔehēze pānekā ʔēšbēʔā bēhāqīs tēmūnātekā*, “then I, justified, will behold Your face; awake, I am filled with the vision of You.”

*Hebraicum*), and this is reflected in the NJPS translation. Contemplation of the Divine presence as a prized goal is mentioned in several passages: “and they saw (*wayir’û*) the God of Israel . . . they beheld (*wayehēzû*) God” (Ex 24:10–11); “I shall behold You (*hāzîîkā*) in the sanctuary and see Your might and glory” (*lir’ôl ʿuzzēkā ukēbōdekā*; Ps 63:3). It has been shown (Waldman, 1972, pp. 6–8; 1984, pp. 407–8) that ʿōz, like *kābôd* and *hōd wēhādār*, denotes the Divine aura. The desire to see God’s glory or person (*kābôd* can mean both) is expressed by Moses (Ex 33:18). The use of the *Nipʿal* vocalization of the root *rʰh* by the Masoretes, with the sense “appear before the Lord,” covers an original understanding of that verb in the *Qal*, “to see the Lord” (Ex 34:23; Deut 16:16; Ps 42:3) (Ginsburg, 1897, pp. 457–59).

Akkadian and Ugaritic passages speak of the personal beauty and charm of gods. One Ugaritic text opens by invoking “the gracious gods” (*iqra ilm nʿmm*) (Gordon, 1965, text 52, lines 1, 23), while another compares the beauty of Lady Hurriya with that of the goddesses Anat and Ashtoreth, e.g., “whose fairness is like Anat’s fairness, whose beauty like Ashtoreth’s beauty” (*dknʿm ʿnt nʿmh tsm ʿttrt tsmh*) (Gordon, 1965, Krt, lines 291–93; *ANET*, pp. 144–45).

The Old Babylonian hymn to Ishtar, using other vocabulary, declares that “she is wrapped in charm and loveliness, adorned with attractiveness and sexual appeal” (*šāt mēleşim rūʿamam labšat zaʿnat inbi miqiam u kuzbam*) (Thureau-Dangin, 1925, pp. 170, 172, lines 5–6). Another goddess is “adorned with attractiveness, laden with awe-inspiring sheen” (*kuzbu* [H1.L1] *ulluḫat malāt namrirri*) (Ebeling, 1953, p. 152, line 3).

Deut 4:15 states that the Israelites saw no form, but this contrasts with the account of what the elders of Israel saw (Ex 24:11). We must consider in this connection a passage which attributes beauty to God, e.g., Isa 33:17, *melek bēyopyô tehēzenā ʿēnekā*, “When your eyes behold a king in his beauty.” Support for the identification of this king with God is afforded by the continuation (v. 22): “The Lord shall be our ruler, the Lord shall be our prince, the Lord shall be our king.” We are concerned here with the language describing God’s beauty. We cannot state with any certainty what was actually perceived by the person said to behold God, whether it was a direct vision of God or of the glory covering His person.<sup>7</sup> Post-biblical interpretations follow the path of avoiding direct mention of the Divine person. The Targum on Isaiah accepts that the king of v. 17 is God and that His beauty is the Divine

7. The various possibilities of theophany and perceptions of corporeality are discussed by Eichrodt (1967, vol. 2, pp. 15–45).

glory: *yat yəqar šəkinat melek ʿolmayaʾ bətušbahtēh*, “the glory of the presence of the Eternal King in His majesty.” Rashi, too, understands the beauty of the king as the radiance of the Shekinah: *zīw šəkinātō šel māqôm*. However, Isaiah may have meant something more direct. What he deemed impossible and punishable by death in his impure state, viewing the Lord (Isa 6:5), will become possible in the purified state of the nation after the national purge (cf. also Isa 4:4–5). The beauty (*yôpî*) of God may be associated with His glory (*hādār*), as both terms are found in Ezek 16:14. We may suggest that, if God can be described in the Bible in terms of the traditional warrior imagery of the Ancient Near East (Exod 15:3, Zeph 3:17, Ps 24:8), then He may also be described with the imagery of attractiveness (*nōʿam*) and beauty (*yôpî*). The qualities of beauty and heroism are associated in *Aqhat*, *nʿmn ʿmq nšm*, “handsome one, strongest of men (Gordon, 1965, 2 *Aqht*, line vi, 45).

As a postscript, it should be noted that post-biblical midrashim, primarily those of the *Hekalot* type, describe the Divine realm of heaven with an abundance of detail, specifying its physical and sensual pleasantness. In this literature, some of the restraints of the Bible are eliminated, and parallels with extra-biblical material can be seen. It is not clear what were the lines of contact or influence. For example, a midrash in the name of Rabbi Joshua ben Levi (*Yalqut Shimʿoni*, *Bereshit*, #20) describes the future reward, including the radiance of the gates of the garden of Eden, of the faces of the angels (*zīw pənēhem kəzôhar hārāqīʿa*) and the righteous being clothed in clouds of glory (*ʿănēnē kābôd*). Each righteous person is covered with a canopy laden with precious stones and before him run rivers of milk, wine, balsam and honey. There are myriads of fragrant trees (*ʿāšê bəšāmîm*) and multitudes of angels who sing in a sweet voice (*qôl nāʿîm*). At the revelation of God at Mount Sinai, according to Targum Pseudo-Jonathan to Exod 19:19, Moses received an answer from God “in a sweet and glorious voice, filled with pleasantness” (*bəqal nāʿîm uməšabbah ʿunēʿimāṯāʾ malyāʾ*).

The mystical midrash, *Seder Rabba Di-Bereshit* (Wertheimer, 1952, p. 41) depicts Michael, the great prince, offering up incense upon the altar in the fourth heaven, *zəbûl*. Another text, *Maʿaseh Merkavah* (Wertheimer, 1952, 59–60), lists among the concentric circles of heavenly forces “rains of perfumes” (*gišmê bəšāmîm*). This midrash also stresses the sweetness of song when it includes among the myriad angels in the heaven called *ʿArabot* those who “roar pleasant melodies” (*šôʿagê nēʿîmîm*) and those who put forth “the glory of song, songs of sanctification and sweet melodies” (*pəʿer šîrîm wəšîrôṯ qədušā ʿunēʿîmôṯ*). Parallels to this span many centuries. Ugaritic literature also describes

sweet songs (*n<sup>c</sup>m*) sung before a god, e.g., “and Baal when he gives life gives a feast, gives a feast to the life-given and bids him drink; sings and chants over him, sweetly serenades him” (*kb<sup>c</sup>l kyḥwy y<sup>c</sup>šr ḥwy y<sup>c</sup>šr wyšqynh ybd wyšr <sup>c</sup>lh n<sup>c</sup>mn*) (Gordon. 1965, <sup>c</sup>nt, lines i, 18–22); *ANET*, p. 136). Returning to the mystical literature, *Pirke Hekalot Rabbati* (Wertheimer, 1952, p. 77) describes the angels in Heaven preparing garments of triumph and crowns for the righteous, studded with precious stones, and mixing all kinds of spices (*meraqqēḥîm kol minê bēšāmîm*).

The personal beauty of God is spoken of in *Pirke Hekalot Rabbati* (Wertheimer, op. cit., 83, chap. 10), which describes “an attractive face, a glorious face of beauty, a face of flame (*pānîm nā<sup>3</sup>îm pānîm ḥādûrîm šel yôpi pānîm šel lehābāh*), the face of the Lord, God of Israel.” Further in this text (*ibid.*, p. 89, chap. 13), the angels, in their enthusiasm, hug and kiss God (*mēgappēpôṭ umēnašqôṭ*), and the *ʿArabot*-heaven splits because of the “king of glory, radiance beauty, form” (*meleḵ ḥāḏar zîw yôpi tô<sup>c</sup>ar*).

In summary, I have suggested that *nō<sup>c</sup>am* in Ps 90:17 may not be identical with God’s glory but is often associated with His manifestation and presence. If the basic meaning of *nō<sup>c</sup>am* is “pleasantness, favor, good will,” this meaning may be associated with God’s presence, which is an expression of His good will. In Ps 27:4 *nō<sup>c</sup>am* is something more concrete than a favorable relationship. It may denote the sanctuary itself, the pleasantness of the sanctuary or God’s personal beauty. These may be gazed upon. Parallels from Sumerian and Akkadian literature support the denotation and connotations of *nō<sup>c</sup>am* suggested here. Postbiblical Targum, midrash and mystical *Hekalot* texts are quite concrete and literal in their depictions of Divine beauty and pleasantness.

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