

A Mari Prophecy and its Implications for Prayer, Law, "Calling Out," and the Stance of Poverty

Shalom E. Holtz

PRE-PUBLICATION COPY. CITE ONLY WITH AUTHOR'S PERMISSION.

In two Mari letters addressed to King Zimri-Lim, the king receives reports from an official named Nūr-Sîn, who writes from the city of Aleppo. There, according to both letters, Nūr-Sîn was approached by a prophet with instructions to write to the king with a message from the god Adad. While there are differences between Nūr-Sîn's two letters, their similar message to the king makes it clear that both refer to one and the same prophetic encounter.ⁱ

Item I.A contains the two versions of the core of this twice-reported prophetic message. Even a quick glance at the quotations—and I promise a more sustained look shortly—should suffice to prove why these texts have piqued the interest of scholars of biblical prophecy. Adad of Aleppo's call to Zimri-Lim for social justice certainly brings to mind the God of Israel's similar calls to His human royal representatives. Indeed, probably for this reason, these letters are said to provide, in the words of Jack Sasson, "the most intriguing correspondence between Mari and Hebrew prophecies."ⁱⁱ It is, therefore, understandable why the extensive scholarship on these letters has primarily addressed their significance for the political history of Mari, and their implications for understanding prophecy in the Hebrew Bible.ⁱⁱⁱ

My purpose today is to pursue the implications of this prophecy for biblical prayer. We might say, somewhat humorously, that I wish to think about divine-human communication in the reverse direction: from earth back to heaven. I will focus on the prophet's exhortation to the king to properly treat those who "cry out for justice." I will argue that these lines contribute to the legal understanding of prayer, by which I mean the conception of prayer as a legal appeal to God, analogous to the human-to-human experience of appealing to the king.

As far as I am aware, only Moshe Weinfeld has connected our texts to some of the relevant biblical materials, in a two-sentence paragraph in his book on *Social Justice in Ancient Israel and in the Ancient Near East*. Weinfeld's brief observations pertain to the analogy between God and the human king, both of whom are responsible for acting justly towards the oppressed who "cry out."^{iv} Today's discussion will, following Weinfeld, address the use of "crying out" as a term for prayer. It will also go beyond this topic, however, to encompass a feature of prayer, especially individual laments in the Psalms, that Amy C. Cottrill has usefully called "the language of self-abasement." Cottrill uses this term to characterize speakers' self-positioning as "oppressed" or "poor" and isolated from general society. Based on the Mari prophecy, I will interpret this "language of self-abasement" as another legal aspect of prayer.

Let us return to the Mari prophecy, item I.A, for a closer look. According to both letters, this prophecy imagines “wronged” people “calling out” (Akkadian *šasû*) to king Zimri-Lim and encourages him to support them. Noteworthy here is that the prophecy emphasizes an expressly adjudicatory context. This is most obvious in the use of the term for “judgment” (*dīnu*) in reference to both the “caller” and the king’s response to the call. The caller is a person with a legal case (*ša dīnim*), and the king is to respond as a judge, to “judge their judgment” (*dīnšunu dīn*).

Moreover, both versions of the prophecy use forms of the verb *ḥabālu* to describe the “wronged” individuals or what they claim. This particular language suggests a legal setting, too; a contemporary of Zimri-Lim, none other than the famous King Hammurabi of Babylon, uses the very same term-- *awīlum ḥablum*-- to describe a “wronged man,” who, in all likelihood, has been ill-served by the legal system. Item I.B, a quotation from the epilogue of Hammurabi’s Laws, shows that it is precisely that kind of adjudicatory “wrong” that Hammurabi imagines his laws correcting. Hammurabi’s stela will show the “wronged man” his “legal case” (Akkadian- *awātum* or *dīnu*).^v At Mari, then, the imagined petitioners are not just men or women in general distress. They are, rather, people who have been “wronged” by the very system meant to provide justice for them.

The Mari texts' use of judgment language reflects a legal conception of the distressed people's actions. Their cry to the king is not simply one of anguish or oppression; it is a demand for legal relief from the highest authority in the land. Similarly, in the Bible, we find distressed characters "crying out" to people in power. For example, the woman whose son Elisha revived goes "to cry out (*liš'ôq*) to the king about her house and farm" (2 Kgs 8:3, 5).^{vi} She appeals to the highest authority, presumably to have her land restored to her. As in the Mari prophecy and Hammurabi's epilogue, "calling out" in Hebrew has an almost technical meaning, close to "raising a hue and cry" for legal relief.^{vii} Israelite petitioners, like their counterparts in the Mari prophecy, expected similar legal outcomes from their king.^{viii}

In the context of prayer, Hebrew terms for calling or crying to God reflect a conception of prayer as ultimate appeal. This is because those who cannot find redress by calling out to human authorities can call out to God. Item II.B, Deuteronomy's version of the law of the needy and destitute hireling-- illustrates this point vividly.^{ix} The impoverished worker, denied his wages, will "call out" to God, who will take up the needy man's case. Unlike the biblical characters who call out to the king, this destitute hireling bypasses human justice completely and turns to God, instead. In a manner quite like the king in the narrative, or, as

Weinfeld has already observed, Zimri-Lim in the Mari prophecy, God addresses the petitioner's case and finds against the unjust Israelite employer.^x

This law provides the crucial nexus between the human-to-human institution of "calling out" to the king for legal redress and the human-to-divine action of "calling out" to God in prayer. In prayer, humans, faced with the failings of human justice, present their cases to God, the ultimate arbiter. References to calling out to God in prayers themselves reflect this legal conception. Consider the two examples in item II.C, the first from the Book of Lamentations and the second from the Book of Habakkuk. The verses from Lamentations 3 trace a clear path from "calling out" to "judgment." They begin with several references to the speaker's call, and ask God to heed it. The speaker prays for God not only to take notice, but also to assume the role of judge: "Judge my case!"—שפטה משפטי. Here, the call to God amounts to a legal action in the divine courtroom, an appeal for justice from the ultimate judge.

These verses describe an ideal situation, when matters proceed as they should. God hears humans appealing for justice, and acts justly on their behalf. The next example, from the lament that opens the Book of Habakkuk, also connects the cry to God with justice, by exposing God's failure to heed. The prophet complains that God has not heard his cries and shouts. The result is a complete perversion of justice. For the system to achieve its desired ends of justice and societal wellbeing,

God must be available to hear the cries of the distressed. When God does not meet this expectation, the very rule of law fails, "justice never emerges," אֲלֹהִים-לֹא יֵצֵא לְנִצָּחַת, or, worse yet, "emerges twisted," יֵצֵא מִשְׁפָּט מְעֻקָּל.

In these two biblical prayers, the call to God appears alongside the overtly legal term for "justice" or "judgment" (*mišpāṭ*). This collocation underscores the idea of calling to God, through prayer, as a demand for adjudication. When speakers pray by "calling out" to God, they present themselves as appellants in the divine courtroom. Their situation is analogous to that of the oppressed workers in the biblical laws, who call out to God for justice.

This analogy extends beyond the terms used for prayer to the speakers' own self-presentation. Let us begin by considering item III.A, an Akkadian incantation to the god Girra, part of a ritual prescribed "if a ghost afflicts a person . . . and he continually has confusional states."^{xi} The speaker invokes Girra as the god-judge who provides justice for people who have been "wronged." Here, the speaker employs two adjectival forms (*ḥabli* and *ḥabilti*) derived from the very same verb (*ḥabālu*) that we have seen in the Mari prophecy. The speaker refers to "wronged men and women," in general, without explicitly mentioning the speaker's own situation. Still, this particular invocation, especially in combination with the subsequent demand for judgment, suggests that the speaker has been wronged and seeks redress in the divine courtroom.

Biblical counterparts to this self-presentation as "wronged," occur in prayers where speakers commonly describe their own situations using "the language of self-abasement." This is the phrase with which Amy C. Cottrill characterizes words and references to affliction, oppression and poverty, such as (*ānî* and *ʿebyôn*).^{xii} The speakers cast themselves in a role analogous to that of the "poor or destitute hireling" of Deut 24 or the imagined petitioners to King Zimri-Lim in the Mari prophecy, who seeks redress by "crying out" to the king. Their prayers are, accordingly, pleas for divine justice.

Cottrill observes that the speakers' adoption of the abased stance is "part of the performance of the role of the dependent client."^{xiii} Through our legal lens, we can refine Cottrill's patronage-based interpretation of the language of self-abasement. The clients' abasement (to adopt Cottrill's terms) is closely associated with legal difficulty. Throughout the Hebrew Bible, one of the main problems the poor face is attaining legal justice. Biblical texts caution against judging the poor unfairly, and condemn people who do.^{xiv} Given the close biblical association between poverty and the need to attain justice, the destitute typify those who might cry out for justice. Thus, people who cry out to God, in prayer, adopt the stance of those who would typically be the ones crying out, the poor.

In fact, just as some prayers associate crying out and the law, so do some prayers draw explicit connections between poverty and courtroom parlance.

Psalms 9–10—Item III.B-- commonly considered to be a single original poem, consistently depict God as judge. They elaborate on the theme that, in the words of Patrick Miller, "it is specifically as judge that the Lord recognizes and adjudicates the rights of the weak and the afflicted."^{xv} In this prayer, first-person speech is confined to 9:2–5 and 9:14–15, so we rarely hear the speaker's self-description. When we do, however, we find both self-abasement and adjudication. The speaker pleads as one oppressed-- "See my oppression (*onyî*) at the hands of my enemies!" (9:14). A connection to the law occurs near the beginning of the prayer (9:4), when the speaker turns to God with praise for anticipated salvation. The hoped-for relief is described in overtly judicial language: "for You have judged my case and my cause" (*āšîta mišpāṭî w^edîni*). For the speaker, it is specifically God's judgment that will bring about relief from oppression.

Alongside these limited first-person examples, frequent third-person, general descriptions of God's attention to the oppressed contribute to the speaker's own self-abasement. These descriptions suggest that the speaker finds a common cause with those who seek and have received divine aid. Here, too, we find that oppression and salvation are colored with a legal hue. The closing verses (10:16–18) present a perfect illustration of the nexus between kingship, law, crying out and poverty. The progression of these verses indicates that God's kingship (16) manifests itself in God's attentiveness to "the entreaty of the lowly" (17). As king,

God acts as judge to make matters right for these "downtrodden" individuals (18). Significantly, the verb "to judge" (*lišpôt*) emphasizes the legal aspect of God's response to the poor.

These later verses echo, in language and theme, earlier verses in the prayer (Chapter 9 verses 8–10). Again, the verses progress from God's kingship (by allusion to the throne in v. 8) to God's judgment (9) to God's protection of the downtrodden (10). Unlike in 10:18, the nations, rather than the "downtrodden," are the direct objects of judgment. Still, the juxtaposition between God's judgment in v. 9 and the downtrodden in v. 10 implies that God's protection is an aspect of God's judgment. When God judges, the poor benefit, and, to emphasize our point here, that benefit pertains to law.

We find a similar association of law and salvation for the abased near the end of Psalm 140, item III.C. As in Psalms 9–10, the speaker in Psalm 140 makes this connection as part of an expression of confidence in God's favorable response. Verse 13 states-- "I know that YHWH will adjudicate יעשה ה' דין the poor, render judgment (*mišpāt*) for the destitute".^{xvi} As in Psalms 9–10, this generally worded, third-person description implies that the speaker makes common cause with the poor (*ānî*) and needy (*'ebyônîm*). The speaker, like all abased individuals, has turned to God for justice and is confident in God's adjudication.

In Psalm 140, this verse comes closest to the speaker's own assumption of the abased stance. Unlike in Psalms 9–10, there is no first-person, self-reference to the speaker's own oppression or poverty, nor does it refer to the speaker's own "case" that God will adjudicate. Nevertheless, the speaker's plea, like the expression of confidence at the end of the chapter, also alludes to adjudication. The speaker prays for relief from an opponent described in verses 2 and 5 as *ʾādām raʿîš ḥ^amāsîm*. The Hebrew term *îš ḥ^amāsîm* recalls the word *ḥāmās* that Habakkuk "shouts" (1:2), in the passage from Habakkuk discussed earlier. Other biblical characters employ the word similarly, which suggests that it is a formal utterance used when "crying out."^{xvii} The psalmist's incorporation of this term in the plea aligns the prayer with other "cries." The speaker, like other abased individuals, seeks justice by crying out.

In all of the prayers surveyed here, the speakers assume the stance of individuals calling out to the deity for justice. In the Akkadian prayer, they present themselves as having been "wronged," and in Hebrew they take on an oppressed persona. Most striking, in all of the examples we have seen, are the legal terms that accompany the speakers' self-presentation. By pairing law and the stance of oppression or poverty, they situate their diminished position squarely within the courtroom context. Prayer's rhetorical conventions transform the speakers into the quintessential plaintiffs.

In conclusion, we have identified two ways in which the prophecy of Adad of Aleppo to King Zimri-Lim of Mari informs the legal understanding of prayer in the Hebrew Bible. The prophecy underscores the legal valence of "calling out," by urging the king to respond as an adjudicator. Thus, the prophecy opens our eyes to the connections, in prayers, between "calling out" and adjudicatory terminology. Similarly, in the Mari prophecy, those who "call out" do so because they have experienced a legal wrong and expect the king to provide justice. In prayers, speakers adopt the persona of these "oppressed" individuals, not only through their self-abasement, but, as importantly, by coupling this self-abasement with an expectation for divine adjudication.

A Mari Prophecy and Its Implications for Prayer, Law, "Calling Out," and the Stance of Poverty

I.A Mari Prophecy (Nissinnen, *Prophets and Prophecy in the Ancient Near East*, Nos. 1 and 2)

- Whenever a wronged man or a wronged woman (*ḥablum u ḥabiltum*) calls to you (*išassikkum*), stand by and judge their judgment (*dīnšunu dīn*). That is what I desire from you. (No. 1:53–56)
- Now hear a single word of mine: If anyone with a legal case (*ša dīnim*) calls out to you (*išassikkum*), saying, 'I have been wronged' (*ḥablāku*), stand by and judge his judgment; answer him fairly. This is what I desire from you. (No. 2:6'–11')

I.B The "Wronged Man" (CH xlvi, 3–19)

- May the wronged man (*awīlum ḥablum*) who has a (legal) matter (*ša awātam iraššū*) come before the statue of me, the king of justice, and may he read aloud my inscribed stela, and thus may he hear my precious pronouncements, and may my stela show him the (legal) matter (*awātam likallimšu*); may he perceive his case (*dīnšu līmur*); may he ease his heart.

II. "Calling Out"

II.A 2 Kgs 8:5–6

- . . . והנה האשה אשר-החיה את-בנה צעקת אל-המלך על-ביתה ועל-שדה ויאמר גחזי אדני המלך זאת האשה וזה-בנה אשר-החיה אלישע. וישאל המלך לאשה ותספר-לו ויתן-לה המלך סריס אחד לאמר השיב את-כל-אשר-לה ואת כל-תבואת השדה מיום עזבה את-הארץ ועד-עתה.

II.B Deut 24:14–15 (cf. Exod 22:21–22, 26; Deut 15:9)

- לא-תעשק שכיר עני ואביון מאחיד או מגרד אשר בארצך בשעריך. ביומו תתן שכרו ולא-תבוא עליו השמש ב עני הוא ואליו הוא נשא את-נפשו ולא-יקרא עליך אל-ה' והיה בך חטא.

II.C "Calling Out" and Adjudication in Prayer

- Lam 3:55–59

נה קראתי שמך ה' מבזר תחתיות. נו קולי שמעת אל-תעלם אנך לרוחתי לשועתי. ני קרבת ביום אקראך אמרת אל-תירא. נח רבת אדני ריבי נפשי גאלת חיי. נט ראיתה ה' ענתתי שפטה משפטי.

- Hab 1:2–4

ב עד-אנה ה' שועתי ולא תשמע אזעק אליך חמס ולא תושיע. ג למה תראני און ועמל תביט ושד וחמס לנגדי ויהי ריב ומדון ישא. ד על-כן תפוג תורה ולא-יצא לנצח משפט כי רשע מכתיר את-הצדיק על-כן יצא משפט מעקל.

III. "Self-Abasement" and Adjudication in Prayer

III.A KAR 267:27–30 (Scurlock, *Ancient Magic and Divination* 3, No. 119)

Girra, you are mighty and furious,
You [set aright] gods and kings, you judge the case of the wronged man and woman (*tadân dēnu ša ḥabli u ḥabilti*),
[At my case], stand by, like Šamaš, the hero,
Judge my case, decide my decision (*dīnī dīn purussāya purus*)!
Remove [the evil ghost] from my body, so I may proclaim the praise of your great godhead.

III.B Psalms 9–10

- א לְמִנְצָחַ עַל-מוֹת לִבּוֹן מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד.
- ב אֹדְהָהּ בְּכָל-לִבִּי אֶסְפְּרָה כָּל-נִפְלְאוֹתָיִךְ.
- ג אֶשְׁמַחָהּ וְאֶעֱלֶצָה בְּךָ אֲזַמְרָה שְׂמֵךְ עֲלִיּוֹן.
- ד בְּשׁוֹב-אוֹיְבֵי אַחֲזֹר וְכַשְׁלוֹ וַיֵּאבְדוּ מִפְּנֵי־ךָ.
- ה **כִּי-עֲשִׂיתָ מִשְׁפָּטִי וְדִינִי יֵשֶׁבֶת לִכְסֵא שׁוֹפֵט צְדָק.**
- ו גְּעַרְתָּ גוֹיִם אֲבִדְתָּ רָשָׁע שְׁמֵם מַחִיתָ לְעוֹלָם וְנָעַד.
- ז הָאֹיֵב תִּמְנוּ חֲרָבוֹת לְנִצָּח וְעָרִים נִתְּשַׁתְּ אֲבָד זִכְרָם הִמָּה.
- ח **וְה' לְעוֹלָם יֵשֶׁב בּוֹנֵן לְמִשְׁפָּט כְּסֵאוֹ.**
- ט **וְהוּא יִשְׁפֹּט-תִּבְלַב בְּצִדְקָה יִדִּין לְאֲמִים בְּמִישְׁרִים.**
- י וַיְהִי ה' מִשְׁגֵּב לְדָוִד מִשְׁגֵּב לְעֵתוֹת בְּצָרָה.
- יא וַיִּבְטַחוּ בְּךָ יוֹדְעֵי שְׂמֵךְ כִּי לֹא-עֲזַבְתָּ דְרָשֵׁיךָ ה'.
- יב זָמְרוּ לְה' יֵשֶׁב צִיּוֹן הַגִּידוּ בְּעַמִּים עֲלִילוֹתֶיךָ.
- יג כִּי-דָרַשׁ דָּמִים אוֹתָם זָכַר לֹא-שָׁכַח צַעֲקַת עַנְוִים.
- יד חֲנֻנִי ה' רָאָה עַנְיִי מִשְׁנֵאֵי מְרוֹמָמִי, מִשְׁעָרֵי מוֹת.
- טו לְמַעַן אֶסְפְּרָה כָּל-תְּהִלָּתֶיךָ: בְּשִׁעְרֵי בַת-צִיּוֹן אֲגִילָה בִישׁוּעָתֶךָ.
- טז טְבַעְנוּ גוֹיִם בְּשַׁחַת עֲשׂוּ בְרִשְׁתְּ-זוֹ טִמְנוּ נִלְכְּדָה רַגְלָם.
- יז נוֹדַעַה' **מִשְׁפָּט עֲשֵׂה** בְּפַעַל כְּפִי נֹקֵשׁ רָשָׁע הַגִּיּוֹן סָלָה.
- יח יֵשׁוּבוּ רָשָׁעִים לְשִׂאוֹלָה כָּל-גוֹיִם שְׁכַחִי אֶ-לֵהִים.
- יט כִּי לֹא לְנִצָּח יִשְׁכַּח אֲבִיוֹן תִּקְוַת עַנְיִים תֵּאבֵד לְעַד.
- כ קוֹמָה ה' אֶל-יַעֲזֵ אֲנוֹשׁ יִשְׁפֹּטוּ גוֹיִם עַל-פְּנֵיךָ.
- כא שִׁיתָה ה' מוֹרָה לָהֶם יִדְעוּ גוֹיִם אֲנוֹשׁ הִמָּה סָלָה.
- כב לָמָּה ה' תַּעֲמֹד בְּרִחוּק תַּעֲלִים לְעֵתוֹת בְּצָרָה.
- כג בְּגִאֲוֹת רָשָׁע יִדְלַק עַנְיִי יִתְּפֹשׂוּ בְּמִזְמוֹת זֹו חֲשָׁבוּ.
- כד כִּי-הִלַּל רָשָׁע עַל-תְּאֲנוֹת נִפְשׁוֹ וּבִצְעַ בְּרָךְ נֶאֱחָה'.
- כה רָשָׁע כְּגִבְהַ אֶפֶס בַּל-יִדְרֹשׁ אֵין אֶ-לֵהִים כָּל-מִזְמוֹתָיו.
- כו חִילּוֹ דָּרְכוּ בְּכָל-עַת מְרוֹם מִשְׁפָּטֶיךָ מִנְּגִדוֹ כָּל-צוֹרְרָיו יִפְיַח בְּהֵם.
- כז אָמַר בְּלָבוֹ בַּל-אֶמוֹט לְדֹר וְדֹר אֲשֶׁר לֹא-בָרַע.
- כח אֵלָה פִּיהוּ מְלֵא וּמְרָמוֹת וְתִדְ תַּחַת לְשׁוֹנוֹ עֲמַל וְאָנוּן.
- כט יֵשֶׁב בְּמֵאֲרֵב חֲצָרִים בְּמִסְתָּרִים יִהְרֹג נְקִי עֵינָיו לְחִלְכָה יִצְפֹּנוּ.
- ל אֲרָב בְּמִסְתָּר כְּאֲרִיָּה בְּסִכְהָ יִאֲרָב לְחִטּוֹף עַנְיִי יַחֲטוֹף עַנְיִי בְּמִשְׁכּוֹ בְּרִשְׁתּוֹ.
- לא יִדְכָּה יִשְׁחַ וְנִפְלַ בְּעַצוֹמָיו חַל כְּאִים.
- לב אָמַר בְּלָבוֹ, שְׁכַח אֶ-לֵהִסְתִּיר פְּנֵיו בַּל-רָאָה לְנִצָּח.
- לג קוֹמָה ה' אֶ-לֵנִשְׂא יִדְכָּה אֶל-תִּשְׁכַּח עַנְוִים.
- לד עַל-מָה נֶאֱחָ רָשָׁע אֵלֵהִים אָמַר בְּלָבוֹ לֹא תִדְרֹשׁ.
- לה רָאֵתָה כִּי-אַתָּה עֲמַל וְכַעַס תִּבְיִט לְתַת בְּיָדֶךָ עֲלִיךָ יַעֲזֹב חִלְכָה יִתּוֹם אַתָּה הֵייתָ עוֹזֵר.
- לו שָׁבַר זְרוּעַ רָשָׁע וְרַע תִּדְרוֹשׁ-רָשָׁעוֹ בַּל-תִּמְצָא.
- לז ה' מְלִךְ עוֹלָם וְנָעַד אֲבָדוֹ גוֹיִם מֵאֲרָצוֹ.
- לח **תְּאֲוֹת עַנְוִים שְׁמַעְתָּ ה' תִּכְיִן לִבָּם תִּקְשִׁיב אֲזָנֶךָ.**
- לח **לְשִׁפְט יִתּוֹם וְדָד בַּל-יוֹסִיף עוֹד לְעָרֵץ אֲנוֹשׁ מִן-הָאֲרָץ.**

III.C Psalm 140

א לְמִנְצַחַת מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד.
ב חֲלֹצֵנִי ה' מֵאֵדֶם רַע מֵאִישׁ חַמְסִים תִּנְצְרֵנִי.
ג אֲשֶׁר חָשְׁבוּ רְעוֹת בְּלִבְכֶּל-יוֹם יְגוּרוּ מִלְחָמוֹת.
ד שָׁנְנוּ לְשׁוֹנֵם כְּמוֹ-נֶחֱשׁ חֲמַת עֵכָשׁוֹב תַּחַת שִׁפְתֵימוֹ סֵלָה.
ה שְׁמַרְנֵי ה' מִיַּד גִּישָׁע מֵאִישׁ חַמְסִים תִּנְצְרֵנִי אֲשֶׁר חָשְׁבוּ לְדַחּוֹת פְּעָמַי.
ו טָמְנוּ גֵאִים פֶּחַ לִי וְחֻבְלִים פָּרְשׁוּ רֶשֶׁת לִיד-מַעְגָּל מִקְשִׁים שָׁתוּ-לִי סֵלָה.
ז אֲמַרְתִּי לֵה' אֵ-לֵי אֶתֶּה הָאֵל יְיָהּ ה' קוֹל תִּחְנֹנְנִי.
ח אֶ-לֵהִים אֶ-דְּנִי עוֹ יִשׁוּעָתִי סִכְתָּה לְרֹאשִׁי בְּיוֹם נָשָׁק.
ט אֶל-תַּתְּנוּ ה' מֵאֲנִי רֶשֶׁע זָמְמוֹ אֶל-תִּפְקֵן רוּמוֹ סֵלָה.
י רֹאשׁ מְסֻבֵי עֲמַל שִׁפְתֵימוֹ יְכַסִּימוּ.
יא יְמוּטוּ עֲלֵיהֶם גְּחִלִים בְּאֵשׁ יִפְלֹם בְּמַהֲמֹרוֹת בַּל-יִקוּמוּ.
יב אִישׁ לְשׁוֹן בַּל-יִכּוֹן בְּאֶרֶץ אֲנִשׁ-חַמְסֵרַע יִצְוֹדְנוּ לְמִדְחַפֹּת.
יג יִדְעֵתִי בִי-יַעֲשֶׂה ה' דִּין עֲנִי מִשִּׁפְטֵ אֲבִינִים.
יד אֲךָ צְדִיקִים יוֹדוּ לְשִׁמְךָ יִשְׁבּוּ יִשְׁרִים אֶת-פְּנֵיךָ.

ⁱ Jack M. Sasson, "The Posting of Letters with Divine Messages," in *Florilegium Marianum II: Recueil d'études à la mémoire de Maurice Birot* (ed. D. Charpin and J.-M. Durand; Mémoires de NABU 3; Paris: SEPOA, 1994), 314–316.

ⁱⁱ Jack M. Sasson, "About 'Mari and the Bible,'" *RA* 92 (1998):119.

ⁱⁱⁱ For complete bibliography, see Martti Nissinen, *Prophets and Prophecy in the Ancient Near East* (SBL-WAW 12; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 17–18; 21. For additional biblical discussions, besides Sasson's, see Avraham Malamat, *Mari and the Bible* (Studies in the History and Culture of the Ancient Near East 12; Leiden: Brill, 1998), 111 n. 6; Bertrand Lafont, "Le roi de Mari et les prophètes d'Alep," *RA* 78 (1984):7–18; and Raymond P. Gordon, "From Mari to Moses: Prophecy at Mari and in Ancient Israel," in *Of Prophets' Visions and the Wisdom of Sages: Essays in Honor of R. Norman Whybray on His Seventieth Birthday* (ed. H. A. McKay and D. J. A. Clines; JSOTSup 162; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 77–78.

^{iv} Moshe Weinfeld, *Social Justice in Ancient Israel and in the Ancient Near East* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1995), 49, with additional literature in n. 14.

^v Martha T. Roth, "Hammurabi's Wronged Man," *JAOS* 122 (2002):38–45.

^{vi} Other examples of "crying out" to the king occur in 2 Sam 19:29; 1 Kgs 20:39; and 2 Kgs 6:26.

For a similar situation before the king, with the regular verb of speech ^l*mr*, rather than a verb of calling, see 2 Sam 14:12 (Boyce, *Cry to God*. 28–40). In much the same way, the widow of the prophet "calls out" (*ṣā^aqā*) to Elisha for relief (2 Kgs 4:1). For discussion of the legal aspects of these situations, see Bovati, *Re-Establishing Justice*, 314–328 and Magdalene, *Scales of Righteousness*, 143, 150.

vii Richard Neslon Boyce, *The Cry to God in the Old Testament* (SBLDS 103; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), 25–40.

viii Compare Moshe Weinfeld, *Social Justice in Ancient Israel and in the Ancient Near East* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1995), 49, with additional literature in n. 14.

ix For similar reminders elsewhere in biblical legislation, see Exod 22:21–22, 26; Deut 15:9.

x Boyce, *Cry to God*, 41–42.

xi KAR 267:27–30. A critical edition, with textual parallels, can be found in Jo Ann Scurlock, *Magico-Medical Means of Treating Ghost-Induced Illnesses in Ancient Mesopotamia* (Ancient Magic and Divination 3; Leiden: Brill, 2006), 356–358 (No. 119).

xii Amy C. Cottrill, *Language, Power, and Identity in the Lament Psalms of the Individual* (Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies 493; New York: T & T Clark, 2008), 114. Cottrill (115, n. 52–58) collects many references from the Psalms. To these, add forms of the verb *d-l-l* in Ps 79:8; 116:6; 142:12; forms of the verb *ʿ-*n-y** in Isa 64:11; Ps 88:8; 90:15; 102:24; 119:71, 75, 107; and constructions with the nominal form *ʿonî* in Ps 9:14; 25:18; 31:8; 44:25; 119:50, 92, 153; Lam 1:9; 3:1, 19. Also related are descriptions and invocations of God as savior of the oppressed and the poor, e.g., I Sam 2:8 (//Ps 113:7); II Sam 22:28 (//Ps 18:28); Jer 20:13; Ps 14:6; 34:7; 68:11; 107:41; 140:13.

xiii Cottrill, *Language, Power, and Identity*, 122.

xiv E.g., Exod 23:6; Deut 24:17; Isa 1:17, 23; 10:1–2; Jer 5:28; Ezek 22:29.

xv Patrick D. Miller, "The Ruler in Zion and the Hope of the Poor: Psalms 9–10 in the Context of the Psalter," in *David and Zion: Biblical Studies in Honor of J.J.M. Roberts* (ed. Bernard F. Batto and Kathryn L. Roberts; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2004), 194. Also see Notker Füglistner, "Die Hoffnung der Armen ist nicht für immer verloren': Psalm 9/10 und die sozio-religiöse Situation der nachexilischen Gemeinde," in *Biblische Theologie und gesellschaftlicher Wandel: für Norbert Lohfink, SJ* (ed. Georg Braulik, et. al.; Freiburg: Herder, 1993), 105.

xvi Compare Ps 25:9.

xvii Jer 20:8; Job 19:7. Compare Isa 60:18; Jer 6:6–7.