

## **A Huge Window of God's Grace at Work in the Old Testament: The Meaning of the Verb צָעַק (Cry Out) in Judges**

### **Introduction**

For many people God in Old Testament (OT) works only on the basis of cause and effect, or as it is known, in Deut 28–30, “blessings and curses.” If Israel obeys God they will be blessed, but if they fail curses will ensue. While curses will fall upon the disobedient, God is slow to anger and merciful before judgment occurs. Yet, when temporal judgment occurs even that should be viewed as a merciful act, because God could exterminate Israel forever but does not (Lev 26:44; Deut 4:31). Instead, He uses judgment to discipline, which demonstrates divine love (Prov 3:11, 12; Heb 12:5-6).

Although Deut 28–30 are one of the most important chapters recorded to understand Israel's history,<sup>1</sup> one can come away thinking that God in the OT is unmerciful<sup>2</sup> unlike the New Testament (NT) by not extending huge periods of mercy

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<sup>1</sup> J. Dwight Pentecost, *Thy Kingdom Come: Tracing God's Kingdom Program and Covenant Promises Throughout History* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications), 105, says, “For understanding and explaining Israel's history as recorded throughout the Old Testament, there are perhaps no more important chapters than Deuteronomy 28–30.” See also pp 106-131.

<sup>2</sup> Marcion led this way of thinking which caused him to be expelled from the early church in A.D. 144 (Robert P. Meys, “Canon of the NT,” in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, vol. 1 [Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1979], 604.) He understood the God of the OT to be vindictive, rigid, and unmerciful by keeping an account on those who disobey Him that resulted in constantly punishing them (Justo L. González, *The Story of Christianity: The Early Church to the Dawn of the Reformation*, vol. 1 [New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1984], 61). As a result, Marcion set aside the OT as “the word of an inferior god” that should never be read in church (ibid., 61-62). See John Bright, *The Authority of the Old Testament* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1967), 62; John Knox, *Marcion and the New Testament* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1942) and E. C. Blackman, *Marcion and His Influence* (London: S.P.C.K., 1948); Adolf von Harnack, *Marcion, Das Evangelium vom fremden Gott*, 2 ed., (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs Verlag, 1924; reprint, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1960). Unfortunately, the thought of an ungracious God of the OT did not die in the second century, but a similar disparaging concept promulgated by Adolf von Harnack made its way into the modern era. Walter C. Kaiser Jr., *The Old Testament Documents: Are they Reliable and Relevant?*, (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 216, suggests that such people were “influenced by the intellectual climate of the nineteenth century, which did much to undermine any positive appreciation of the Old Testament. To these individuals, there was nothing more here than the natural evolution of man's ideas about God—crass and cruel as they are. Consequently, the Old Testament was viewed not only as being *sub-Christian* in that it failed to reach the ethical and theological heights of the New Testament. Though Harnack and Marcion were at odds on many issues, they found common ground when it came to

before Israel ultimately complies. In conservative circles many would not admit to such an ungracious concept of God in the OT. However, because of their views, few are unable to show long periods where God in the OT has acted gracious apart from unmet conditions. Hence, for many believers, God in the OT acts much harsher than He acts in the NT. This results in having a dwarf view of God unless one can show huge periods in Israel's rebellious history where God has acted abundantly gracious.<sup>3</sup>

Unfortunately because of how some have interpreted the word קָרָא (cried out) throughout Judges, one will understand one of these periods of 350 years (1400–1050 B.C.) of Israelite deliverance upon repentance to mean God's mercy will not come first until one obeys.<sup>4</sup> Although repentance in Judges seems to occur for short periods of time after God sends Israel deliverers, was God's initial deliverance conditioned upon repentance if *cry out* simply means a *call to help*? No doubt that continual blessings were based on obedience, but the issue here is whether God initially moved graciously to help before Israel repented. If the common interpretation of קָרָא in Judges is wrong this will show how God's grace in the OT encompasses long periods of time (because of His long-

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suggest reducing the OT to non-canonical status. See Harnack, *Marcion*, 221-22 quoted in Bright, *Authority of the OT*, 65. Other modern theologians that stood in the Marcionist tradition were Friedrich Delitzsch, Emmanuel Hirsch, Søren Kierkegaard, Rudolf Bultmann<sup>2</sup> and many more. Considerable debates exist about whether to classify Bultmann's view with Marcion. It seems that Bultmann only agreed with Marcion to the extent of giving less weight to the OT compared to the NT than most conservatives would give. See Bright, *Authority of the OT*, 69-72.

<sup>3</sup> Although *all* of God's dealings with men are based on grace, should one understand that God only shows grace to those who "repent?" This sounds like God's mercy is solely conditioned upon works.<sup>3</sup> Instead in many place God extends grace first in order to motivate people to repent of their sins, not the other way around (e.g., Neh 9:17; Ps 103:8-11; Joel 2:13; Jonah 4:2; John 5:2-14; 7:53–8:11).

<sup>4</sup> This is *not* a picture of grace but of a black and white contract. This is not to say that forgiveness conditioned on repentance is ungracious, for God's pardoning conditioned upon anything in itself stems from grace because it allows an avenue of escape that is undeserved. Yet, even while God waits for Israel to respond, He moves on their behalf before they respond, so as to motivate their obedience by His grace.

suffering) that motivates repentance instead of the usual incorrect black and white analyses of Deut 28–30<sup>5</sup> that disallows grace to come first before repentance occurs. Hence reassessing the common meaning of קָעַף in Judges is vital.

Before defining קָעַף in Judges, this article will discuss the *importance of the issue* and present seven areas of investigation then a *conclusion*: (1) Ancient Near East Use, (2) Etymology and Cognates, (3) Qumran’s Use (4) OT Usage Outside of Judges, (5) LXX Translation of the Word, (6) Usage in Judges, (7) Lexicon’s Definition and Other Works and (8) Conclusion.

### **Importance of the Issue**

Numerous commentators understand the verb קָעַף throughout Judges (e.g., in 3:9) translated “cried out” (NKJV, NIV, NET) to imply “repentance.”<sup>6</sup> In addition, numerous scholars interpret the phrase אֶל־יְהוָה יִקְרָא . . . יִזְעָקוּ as “always referring to the rejection of false deities and a return to God.”<sup>7</sup> Some scholars have even used the word

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<sup>5</sup> Pentecost, *Thy Kingdom Come*, 128-29, says: “It was out of compassion that God raised up judges, but His actual deliverance was based on the response of the people of Israel. Deuteronomy 30 stated the principle that God would remove the discipline whenever the people came to repentance. . . . When the load got too heavy to bear, however, they would cry to God, and it is this cry or ‘groaning’ that Judges 2:18 indicates is really an expression of repentance.” This sharp antithesis between the Mosaic and Abrahamic covenant that causes one to think that the former was devoid of grace is wrong.

<sup>6</sup> Donald K. Campbell, *Judges: Leaders in Crisis Times* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1989). 38, interprets יִזְעָקוּ in Judg 3:9 as follows: “Now Israel came to her spiritual senses and called on the Lord in repentance.” Brown Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown, “Judges,” in *A Commentary: Critical, Experimental, and Practical on the Old and New Testaments*, vol. 1. 3 vols. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1946; reprint, 1993), 76., interprets it the same: “In their [Israel] distress they had recourse to earnest prayer, accompanied by humble and penitent confession of their errors.” William MacDonald, *Believer’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Arthur L. Farstad (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1995), 267. also says the Lord acted: “In response to the penitent cry of His people, . . .” George Bush, *Notes on Judges* (New York: Newman & Ivison, 1852; reprint, Minneapolis, MN: James & Klock Publishing, 1976), 32. interprets cry out in Judg 3:9 by using Judg 10:10, 15-16 and says, “When they uttered fervent prayers coupled with penitent confessions of their faults, as is to be inferred from ch. 10. 10, and 15. [sic] 16.”

<sup>7</sup> Frederick E. Greenspahn, “The Theology of the Framework of Judges,” *Vetus Testamentum* 36 (October 1986): 391. notes the scholarly trend in fn 24 that interprets the phrase אֶל־יְהוָה יִקְרָא . . . יִזְעָקוּ as

“conversion”<sup>8</sup> to capture the concept, while others use the term “repentance,”<sup>9</sup> as mentioned above. Is this interpretation of  $\text{פָּנִי}$  in Judges correct? How does this view affect the meaning of the book of Judges if it is incorrect, since some think there is a four-part-pattern found in the book: idolatry leading to oppression followed by repentance leading to God’s deliverance?<sup>10</sup> Even more important: “How does this affect our understanding of God’s grace in the OT that in the NT is used as a motivating factor for obedience (Rom 12:1)?” Is God’s grace in the OT not used as a motivating factor to motivate obedience? This is highly important for those of a grace persuasion. Because if one has a skewed view of grace that motivates obedience in the OT, will that not affect one’s view of God in general? This is not to say fear is not used of God to motivate people to obey, because it is (cf. 2 Cor 5:11; Heb 10:31), but as a loving father God desires that people obey out of grace and love first, instead of fear, as numerous passages suggest (cf. Rom 12:1; 1 Cor 15:10; 2 Cor 5:14; 2 Cor 8:8-9; 2 Thess 2:16-17; Heb 4:14-16). One writer said best: “The most commonly used method of motivation is either fear or guilt. ‘If you don’t do such and such,’ we tell our children, ‘I’ll spank you.’ That’s fear. ‘If you don’t teach this Sunday school class, your priorities are all messed up,’

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such. Yet, he adds: “While certainly the implication of Judg. x 10, this is not the meaning of the statement elsewhere in the book.”

<sup>8</sup> Georg Fohrer and Ernst Sellin, *Einleitung in das Alte Testament* (Heidelberg: Quelle & Meyer, 1965), 230-1. See also his English translation: Georg Fohrer and Ernst Sellin, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1968), 212-13. Martin Buber, *Kingship of God*, trans. Richard Scheimann, 3d, newly enlarged ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), 68. also agrees.

<sup>9</sup> See Geroge Ernest Wright, *God who Acts: Biblical Theology as Recital*, trans. God who Acts (London: SCM Press, 1952), 45. Robert Henry Pfeiffer, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, rev ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1948), 333. Bernhard W. Anderson, *Understanding the Old Testament*, 4th ed. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1966; reprint, 1986), 101. Norman Karol Gottwald, *A Light to the Nations: An Introduction to the Old Testament* (New York: Harper & Row, 1959), 167-8.

<sup>10</sup> Greenspahn, “Theology of Judges,” 385-95. develops and debunks this view.

That's guilt. Fear and guilt can be proper motives for the Christian, but grace is a far better motive for serving God and others."<sup>11</sup> Therefore, if צעף in Judges does not mean *repent* but a simple *cry for help*, it shows how God in all eras deals on the basis of grace first to motivate obedience in order to curtail judgment.

### Ancient Near East Use

In the ancient Near East (ANE) the Egyptian, Akkadian and West Semitic cultures use צעף terminology. Basically, the Egyptian verb *d'k* recorded in the 20<sup>th</sup> dynasty renders the term as a “cry” or “shout” of help that can be directed towards the heavens.<sup>12</sup> The Akkadian use of this word also stresses one's *loud cry for help*. Similarly in West Semitic cultures use צעף also meant a *scream, clamor* or an *outcry* for help in a time of distress.

Though there are no known cognates in Akkadian that resembles the Hebrew root of this verb, the two terms used are semantic equivalent to Hebrew usage.<sup>13</sup> Primarily, the verb *ragâmu(m)* is used as a legal complaint of accusation. The noun *rigmu(m)* has a broader semantic range of meaning: “to shout, cry, or lift the voice.” Usually people who utter such words are in distress for numerous reasons.<sup>14</sup>

In West Semitic culture except for the name צעק, the root word is unattested in Ugaritic. However, in Old Aramaic the substantives זקה and סקה for “cry” are well

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<sup>11</sup> *Biblical Studies Foundation*: <http://www.bible.org/docs/splife/fuf/fuf-11.htm>

<sup>12</sup> Gerhard F. Hasel, “צעף,” in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, ed. trans. David E. Green, vol. 4. 12 vols. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1974; reprint, 1990), 112-13.. Hasel suggests that this verb may come from “Hebrew loanwords” since there are similarities in the forms.

<sup>13</sup> See sections five and six for verses.

<sup>14</sup> Hasel, “צעק,” 113.

established, as in Arabic the primary forms of קָרַע for “cry, lament, and scream” and קָרָה “clamor, outcry, and call” are similar to Hebrew usages.<sup>15</sup>

### **Etymology and Cognates**

The same could be said of etymological and cognate equivalents of the term קָרַע (cry out). Nothing has changed the basic meaning of the word through time.

Two Hebrew root words קָרַע/קָרָה of West Semitic origins appear to be used synonymously (see Judg 10:1, 12, 14; Pss 107:6, 13, 19, 28; Job 35:9, 12; Neh 9:27ff.). Similarly, the verb קָרַע and substantive קָרָה (1 Sam 4:13-14; Jer 25:34, 36), or the terms קָרַע/קָרָה (Isa 65:14, 19) and substantives קָרָה and קָרָה (Gen 18:20ff.; Jer 48:3-5, 34; Neh 5:1, 6) were terms used parallel to each other carrying the same meaning. Hence, Hasel says, “The parallel use of different forms of the root in a wide range of OT books and their synonymy indicate that the difference between  $z^{\prime}q$  and  $s^{\prime}q$  in Hebrew appears to be purely orthographic.”<sup>16</sup>

### **LXX Translation of the Word**

The LXX translates the Hebrew root word קָרַע with various verbal forms: βοάω<sup>17</sup> occurs fifty-times, κράζω<sup>18</sup> forty-six-times and ἀναβοάω twenty-times.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid. See also A. H. Konkel, “קָרַע,” in *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis*, ed. Willem A. VanGemeren, vol. 1. 5 vols. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1997), 1131..

<sup>16</sup> Hasel, “קָרַע,” 114.

<sup>17</sup> E. Stauffer, “βοάω,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. index compiled by Ronald E. Pitkin, trans. Translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley, vol. 1. 10 vols. (Grand Rapids: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1964; reprint, 1999)., 625-28, points to five nuances of βοάω: (1) “to exult” (e.g., Isa 54:1), (2) “to proclaim a message” (e.g., Isa 40:3), (3) “to call out” (e.g., Isa 36:13), (4) “to raise an

However, all of these words continue to bear “witness at the same time to the fact that the basic meaning of ‘cry for help’ is central.”<sup>20</sup> Other Greek words used to convey crying out or calling are παραγγέλλω (Judg 4:10), καταβοάω (Exod 5:15), ἀνακράζω (1 Kgs 22:32), κραυγή (Isa 30:19), στενάζω (Job 31:38), καλέω (Judg 4:13), and κηρύσσω (Jonah 3:7). One can see the richness and nuances conveyed by Greek words to reflect the various semantic ranges of the Hebrew root word קָרָא.

### **Qumran’s Use**

Even in Qumran’s usage, where the time period stems from 168 B.C. to A.D. 233,<sup>21</sup> the use did not change. The verb קָרָא occurs in the Qumran documents thirty-five times with its normal Hebrew meaning of “cry out.”<sup>22</sup> However, even when the word קָרָא appears in a context involving repentance, the normal Hebrew word for repentance (שָׁב) is added.

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outcry mostly of complaint” (e.g., Acts 17:6), and (5) “outcry of demons coming out of the sick” (e.g., used only once in Mark 9:26). This term is usually used as an outcry asking God for help.

<sup>18</sup> W. Grundmann, “κράζω,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Friedrich, trans. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley index compiled by Ronald E. Pitkin, vol. 3. 10 vols. (Grand Rapids: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1965; reprint, 1999), 898-903. In the LXX this word is used primarily to crying out to God for aid as βοάω. It occurs predominantly in the Psalms (e.g., Ps 21:5). It also appears to be used in (1) prayer of crying out to God (e.g., Ps 3:4), (2) of angels crying in praise to God (e.g., Isa 6:3-4), and (3) of the Servant of the Lord’s meekness portrayed by not crying out or raising His voice (Isa 42:2).

<sup>19</sup> Hasel, “קָרָא,” 115.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Otto Betz, “Dead Sea Scrolls,” in *The Interpreters Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. George Arthur Buttrick, vol. 4. 4 vols (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), 793.

<sup>22</sup> 1QpHab 1:2, 4, 15; 4Q163 f23ii:16; 4Q163 f40:2; 4Q165 f4:1; 4Q203 f8:9; 4Q204 f1vi:20; 4Q204 f4:2; 4Q206 f1xxii:4; 4Q206 f1xxii:7; 4Q206 f4ii:19; 4Q206 f4ii:21; 4Q365 f6ai:4; 4Q365 f6aai+6c:10; 4Q372 f1:15; 4Q380 f2:4; 4Q385a f4:9; 4Q387 f2ii:10; 4Q387 f4i:3; 4Q389 f8ii:3; 4Q462 f1:12; 4Q518 f31:2; 4Q530 f1i:4; 4Q530 f7ii:6; 11Q5 24:14; 11Q10 17:5; 11Q10 26:3; 11Q10 26:7; 11Q10 30:5; 11QT 59:6; 11QT 66:2; 11QT 66:7.

Figuratively, the land cries out due to the people's sins in 4Q203 f8:9. In 11QT 66:2, 7, a betrothed woman may cry out for legal help if she is raped. One may cry out to God in a time of distress for unconditional help as in 11Q5 24:14ff. The only place when the verb  $\text{נָעַק}$  appears contextually where it involves "repentance" is in 11QT 59:6-9. In 11QT 59:6, the people "cry out because of the heavy yoke. They will call, but I will not listen; they will cry out, but I will not answer." Until they "repent" God will not deliver them: ". . . they broke their covenant with Me and refused My law, becoming utterly guilty." Afterward they will return (11QT 59:8b-9). However, the author uses the common Hebrew word for "repent"  $\text{שׁוּב}$ .<sup>23</sup> Therefore, even where "repent" appears contextually an additional term is added to distinguish  $\text{נָעַק}$  from  $\text{שׁוּב}$ .

### OT Usage Outside of Judges

The verb  $\text{נָעַק}$  occurs seventy-four times in the Hebrew Masoretic Text.<sup>24</sup> The verb  $\text{נָעַק}$  appears in the Qal *perfect, infinitive, imperative, and imperfect*, Niphal *perfect and imperfect*, and Hiphil *imperative, infinitive and imperfect*.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Francis Brown, S. R. Driver and Charles A. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament with an Appendix Containing the Biblical Aramaic* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1906; reprint, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon with an Appendix Containing the Biblical Aramaic*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1979), 996-1000.

<sup>24</sup> Exod 2:23; Josh 8:16; Judg 3:9, 15; 4:10, 13; 6:6-7, 34-35; 10, 14; 12:2; 18:22-23; 1 Sam 4:13; 5:10; 7:8-9; 8:18; 12:8, 10; 14:20; 15:11; 28:12; 2 Sam 13:19; 19:5, 29; 20:4-5; 1 Kgs 22:32; Isa 14:31; 15:4-5; 26:17; 57:13; Jer 11:11-12; 20:8; 25:34; 30:15; 47:2; 48:20 [2x]; 48:31; Ezek 9:8; 11:13; 21:17; 27:30; Hos 7:14; 8:2; Joel 1:14; Jonah 1:5; 3:7; Mic 3:4; Hab 1:2; 2:11; Zech 6:8; Pss 22:6; 107:13, 19; 142:2, 6; Job 31:38; 35:9; Lam 3:8; Esth 4:1; Dan. 6:21 [Aramaic pael]; Neh. 9:4, 9:28; 1 Chr 5:20; 2 Chr 18:31; 20:9; 32:20.

<sup>25</sup> See Brown, *BDB*, 277. and Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, trans. M. E. J. Richardson, rev by Walter Baumgartner and Johann Jakob Stamm ed., ed. M. E. J. Richardson, vol. 2 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2001), 277. However, unlike *BDB* and HALOT George V. Wigram, *The New Englishman's Hebrew Concordance: Coded to Strong's Concordance Numbering System*, ed. Jay P. Green (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1984), 392. understands  $\text{נָעַק}$  in 2 Sam 20:5 to be imperatival.



In the Qal stem “cry and cried out in need” is the emphasis: (1) People *cry out in need* to God in Ps 22:6. (2) Jeremiah 11:12 says that Judah will *cry out to other gods* since God does not respond due to their wickedness (cf. vv 10, 14, 17). (3) Tamar *cried out in distress* after being raped by Amnon (2 Sam 13:19), and David *cried out in pain* after hearing of Absalom’s death in battle (2 Sam 19:5). (4) *Crying out to a king* is emphasized in 2 Sam 19:29, while (4) Job 31:38 refers to *crying out against man*. Thus, these texts clearly show that “confession” or “repentance” is not inherent in the meaning of the word.

The Niphal stem has one basic meaning. For example, 1 Sam 14:20 refers to a *call to gather together*.

In the Hiphil stem, one finds four different nuances to the use of the verb קָוַיְ. (1) In 2 Sam 20:5, the king told Amasa to command the people to *Assemble* for battle (NKJV; or “call,” NET). (2) People in Job 35:9 are *made to cry out* because of God’s might. (3) The king of Nineveh after Jonah’s admonition *caused a proclamation* warning to be made throughout the land to repent (Jonah 3:7ff). (4) In Zech 6:8, a *call to attention* (not “cried out,” NET) is the concept.

Only in four places contextually (1 Sam 12:8, 10; Ezek 27:30; Jonah 3:7; Esth 4:1) does repentance or some kind of action occur—either verbally or conceptually—that must be heeded for deliverance to transpire. However, in all four places the author adds a term or phrase implying that קָוַיְ by itself does not refer to “conversion” or “repentance.” For example, in 1 Sam 12: 8 Israel *cried out* to the Lord in distress because God gave them over to enemy nations (v 9) due to their idolatry. Yet, in 12:10, the phrase “we will serve You” is added as a precursor to deliverance. Hence this makes it clear that קָוַיְ is to

be distinguished. Though one should be careful not to overstate the case, for the content of crying out could include repentance, as found here. Yet, perhaps the reason the author added: “We have sinned . . . and we will serve You,” was because it was understood that it was not part of the inherent lexical meaning of the word.

In Ezek 27:30, immediately after the term “cry” the phrase indicating that repentance is added: “cast dust on their heads.” Again, the distinction is evident.

In Jonah 3:7, the king “proclaimed and published” (NKJV) throughout Nineveh that all should “turn [שׁוּב] from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands” (v 8). The clause carrying the common Hebrew term for “repent” following “proclaimed” clearly implies שׁוּב does not mean repentance.

In Esth 4:1, Mordecai learned of the decree to destroy all Jews, “he tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and ashes, and went out into the midst of the city.” Then, he “cried out with a loud and bitter cry.” Crying out here is clearly distinguished from tearing clothes and putting on sackcloth and ashes, which refers to distress. Thus, crying out expresses Mordecai’s verbal distress while tearing clothes refers to his physical expression of affliction. Yet, even here both expressions are distinct.

All expressions (apart from Judges which will follow) of the verb שׁוּב in the OT never refer to repentance but to a cry of affliction, distress or a call to assemble. When used in contexts implying a *turning* or *confession*, another term or clause is added to clarify the inherent lexical meaning, thus implying that שׁוּב never implies repentance.”

## Usage in Judges

The verb **צָעַק** occurs in Judges thirteen-times (Judg 3:9, 15; 4:10, 13; 6:6-7, 34-35; 10, 14; 12:2; 18:22-23). That is more than any other OT book. Therefore, correctly interpreting **צָעַק** seems crucial to understanding the theme of Judges since it also appears evenly distributed throughout the book.

The first use of **צָעַק** occurs in Judg 3:9 where contextually “the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD” by committing idolatry (v 7). As a result of the Lord’s discipline, He allowed all of the surrounding enemies to oppress Israel (as the phrase in v 8 **וַיִּמְצְרוּם בְּיַד** suggest). Hence when Israel “cried out” for help (from **צָעַק**)<sup>26</sup> to Yahweh, He “raised up a deliverer” (Othniel) for them. Yet, contextually no other condition appears from vv 7-11 as a precursor for God to deliver them. Thus, by God’s sheer grace Israel is delivered from their oppressors not by their repentance.<sup>27</sup> Yet, God’s grace motivated their obedience, or else how can one interpret long periods of the land having rest (3:11, 30; 5:31; 8:28) and Israel doing evil again (3:12; 4:1; 6:1; 10:6; 13:1) if the sin of idolatry was not curtailed. Thus, in all of the Judges cycles although the word *cry out for help* does not carry the lexical meaning of repent, after God responds to Israel’s call for help they respond in repentance.

Unfortunately, in a short time, “Israel again did evil in the sight of the LORD” (v 12). Again the cycle is repeated. The Lord allowed their surrounding enemies to

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<sup>26</sup> C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch’s, *Joshua, Judges, Ruth, I & II Samuel*, trans. James Martin, Commentary on the Old Testament in Ten Volumes, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1980). also interprets this as a simple *cry of help*.

<sup>27</sup> Daniel I. Block, *Judges, Ruth*, The New American Commentary: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture, ed. E. Ray Clendenen, vol. 6 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 153. says, “This outcry is not to be interpreted as a penitential plea; it is simply a cry of pain, a cry for help.”

overtake them (as the terms  $\text{וַיִּהְיוּ}$  and  $\text{וַיִּנָּחֵם}$  in v 13 suggest), and again in v 15 “Israel cried out [from  $\text{וַיִּצְעַק}$ ] to the LORD.” Afterwards, God again “raised up a deliverer for them” (Ehud). Contextually (seen from vv 12-30), Israel’s deliverance again comes unconditionally by God’s mere grace.<sup>28</sup>

The cycle recurs again. After Ehud died, Israel “did evil in the sight of the LORD” (4:1). Hence God allowed their enemies once more to defeat them (as the phrase  $\text{וַיִּמְכְּרוּם} \dots \text{בְּיַד}$  suggest). Immediately, “Israel cried out [from  $\text{וַיִּצְעַקְהוּ}$ ] to the LORD.” Although  $\text{וַיִּצְעַקְהוּ}$  replaces  $\text{וַיִּצְעַק}$  here, both terms are used synonymously (see Etymology and Cognates section).<sup>29</sup> In Judg 4:10 and 13, the verb appears, but as call (v 10) to gather (v 13) for battle. The pattern seen previously is not followed here. The text simply mentions Deborah, as a prophetess, “was judging Israel at that time.” Nevertheless, Israel is delivered once more by God’s grace (cf. 4:4–5:31).

As seen above, the recurring formula is repeated again: “Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD” (v 1). Again, it resulted in the Lord allowing (suggested by the recurring use of  $\text{וַיִּרְא}$ ) Israel’s enemies to oppress them (vv 2-5). Hence Israel “cried out” (in vv 6-7, from  $\text{וַיִּצְעַק}$ ). Then again God heeded unconditionally their plea by sending them a deliverer named Gideon (cf. 6:8–8:35). The verb  $\text{וַיִּקְרַע}$  appears in Judg 6:34-35 as a Niphal imperfect rendered “gathered” (or “summoning,” NET) similar to  $\text{וַיִּצְעַקְהוּ}$  and  $\text{וַיִּצְעַקְהוּ}$  in the Niphal perfect translated in 18:22-23 “gathered together” (NET). However,

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 159. Block affirms that “this is not a cry of repentance or a pleas for forgiveness; it is simply a cry of pain, a plea for divine aid.”

<sup>29</sup> Koehler and Baumgartner, *HALOT*, 277. say that  $\text{וַיִּצְעַק}$  is “by-form of  $\text{וַיִּצְעַק}$ .”

the Qal imperfect קָרָא rendered “I called” (or “I asked,” NET) in 12:2 is much softer than the term “cry out” implies.

Thus, the only time in Judges where a condition to repent appears conceptually in context expressing the content of קָרָא occurs in 10:10-16. Normally in places in the OT where the content of *cry for help* involves repentance (as seen above), it is expressed. In fact, one can safely say that anytime *crying out* involves something other than a simple *cry for help* it is expressed contextually since the term קָרָא does not carry this lexical meaning.<sup>30</sup> Hence, everywhere in Judges where קָרָא appears devoid of any content expressing it, one must interpret it as simple *cry for help* (inherent in the lexical meaning) that is obviously based on some type of faith.

Typically, the pattern shown above recurs again: “Israel again did evil in the sight of the LORD” (v 6, and see 10b). Again, God allows (suggested by the term נָתַן in v 7) Israel to be oppressed by their enemies. Then Israel “cried out [from קָרָא] to the LORD” (v 10). For the first time<sup>31</sup> in the entire book<sup>32</sup> Israel confesses, “We have sinned

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<sup>30</sup> NT passages where *cry out* involves more than a simple cry for help the content of this crying out is stated contextually: Matt 3:3; 8:29; 9:27; 14:30; 15:22; 20:30-31; 21:15; 27:23, 46, 50 [cf. John 19:30 and Luke 23:46 for the content of this cry here]; Mark 5:7; 9:24; John 1:15; 7:28, 37; 12:44; Acts 7:60; 14:14; 16:7; 17:6; 19:28; Rev 14:15; 19:17. However, in other places it simply means a cry of joy or mourning (Mark 5:5; 9:26, 38; Acts 7:57; 8:7; 14; Gal 4:27; Rev 10:3; 12:2) or cry of help without expressing the content involved (Luke 18:7) and with the content expressed (Matt 9:27-29; 14:26, 30; 15:22-23, 28; 20:31).

<sup>31</sup> Since Israel felt they had exhausted God’s grace by their meager repentance after God graciously delivered them numerous times, for the first time they become serious now by *confessing* and *committing up front* before God delivers them again, and finally put away their idols which they have kept all along while God continued delivering them. Thus, it becomes evident that until now, they had not made a serious commitment: “Faced with mounting difficulties, Israel *finally* confessed her sin and cried out for help,” Herbert Wolf, “Judges,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992).

<sup>32</sup> Block, *Judges*, 346. He adds in fn 13: “This contrasts with 2:4, which has them weeping in response to the divine messenger’s announcement of the withdrawal of Yahweh’s support, and 6:10, which describes no response at all to God’s scolding.”

against You, because we have both forsaken our God and served the Baals!” In v 14, after God recounts previous deliverances from vv 11-13, He responds ironically in a sarcastic remark: “Go and cry out [from צַעֲזֵי] to the gods which you have chosen; let them deliver you in your time of distress.” However, since all of the previous times God responded upon Israel’s simple cry of help, to draw further upon God’s grace they now raise the stakes at the front end: Israel confesses (v 15) and turns from idolatry to serve God (v 16). One must not confuse God’s following (10:17–11:33) and former deliverances, as being conditioned upon repentance. Daniel I. Block expressed that Israel did “not realize that by providing deliverers and deliverances in the past, what is right [i.e., the destruction they deserved] had been suspended for what was gracious [i.e., the deliverance they did not deserve].”<sup>33</sup>

Thus, since the only time in Judges an added clause or term to imply confession and repentance occurs when צַעֲזֵי appears, it implies both concepts are mutually exclusive and should be distinguished. Others have also made the same observations: “Whenever [צַעֲזֵי] appears associated with repentance or confession of sins (Judg 10:10; 1 Sam 12:10; Neh 9:28) that repentance or confession is explicitly expressed by some additional clause or second verb, a factor which implies that [צַעֲזֵי] by itself cannot and does not carry any idea of repentance.”<sup>34</sup> Moshe Weinfeld also noticed that when speaking of צַעֲזֵי “there is nothing in this expression as such that necessarily suggests repentance. The Israelite naturally appeal to God in their tribulations

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 348.

<sup>34</sup> Dale Ralph David, *A Proposed Life-Setting for the Book of Judges* (Ann Arbor, MI: Michigan University Microfilm, 1978), 50.

and their cries do not express repentance unless this is explicitly stated.”<sup>35</sup> Nevertheless, as seen before, God graciously delivers Israel once more (as He did throughout the book) in order to elicit an obedient response.

One should not understand God’s gracious dealings with men even when they are in active sin to imply He does not care about sin no more than God’s grace encourages sin (Rom 6:1). Even worse, one ought not read into the Judges account that because *crying out for help* does not imply repentance it means people have no intention of turning from idolatry. Such a thought disregards the stronghold that idolatry may have on individuals that in the Christian’s daily life becomes anything that takes the place of God. If God were to wait for people to put away this form of idolatry before dispensing grace, few would ever experience God’s deliverance on a daily basis.<sup>36</sup> Acts 19:19 shows how believers practicing occultism and idolatry took around two years (since this was the length of Paul’s ministry, 19:10) before burning their magic books. Perhaps these believers had no intension of turning from their sin at the time, but God continue to work with them until they did.<sup>37</sup> This picture of grace is what took place in Judges as God continue to deliver them followed by short periods of repentance until Israel finally decided in 10:10, 16 to destroy their idols.

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<sup>35</sup> Moshe Weinfeld, “The Period of the Conquest and the Judges as seen by the Earlier and Later Sources,” *Vetus Testamentum* 17 (1967): 107.

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<sup>37</sup> I. Howard Marshall, *Acts*, The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, ed. Leon Morris (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1980; reprint, 2002), 312, understands this and says: “Christians are not fully converted or perfected in an instant, and pagan ways of thinking can persist alongside genuine Christian experience; the history of the church in Corinth shows that Christians took some time to be persuaded that sexual immorality and idol-worship were ultimately incompatible with Christian faith (1 Cor 6:9-11).”

## Lexicon's Definition and Other Works

Will the lexicons and other works agree with these finds? BDB defines the word קָרָא as “cry, cry out [and] call.”<sup>38</sup> HALOT also defines as a “call to help,” “summon,” and to “raise a battle cry.”<sup>39</sup> TWOT also renders קָרָא as “cry,” “cry out,” and “call.”<sup>40</sup> NIDOTTE interprets קָרָא as a “call for help,” “call to arms, assemble, rally together.” In the Hiphil it sees it as a “summon” and a “raise cry of lament.”<sup>41</sup> Indeed, the lexicon's definition and other works concur with the facts documented here.

## Conclusion

Thus, it is unfounded to claim the verb קָרָא in Judges translated “cried out” implies “confession, conversion or repentance.” This interpretation of קָרָא in Judges is incorrect? Therefore, the four part cycle that some see in Judges as idolatry leading to oppression followed by repentance leading to God's deliverance is more apparent than real.<sup>42</sup> Hence Frederick E. Greenspahn said:

The theological implication, therefore, is that God's response is occasioned not by Israel's religious fidelity, but rather by her need, just as it was at the time of the exodus. This is far removed from the concept of reward and punishment, reflecting instead a theology of election and grace, that is to say God's free and unconditional commitment to Israel, a commitment which is not ultimately bound

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<sup>38</sup> Brown, *BDB*, 277.

<sup>39</sup> Koehler and Baumgartner, *HALOT*, 277.

<sup>40</sup> Leon J. Wood, “קָרָא,” in *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, ed. Bruce K. Waltke, vol. 1. 2 vols. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), 248.

<sup>41</sup> Konkel, “קָרָא,” 1131.

<sup>42</sup> Ramond B. Dillard and Tremper Longman III, *An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1993), 124-25, seem to interpret “cry out” as a simple claim of help, not repentance.



to Israel's own actions. There is neither idolatry nor repentance, just sin, suffering, and salvation.<sup>43</sup>

Thus, the investigation of the (1) Ancient Near East Use, (2) Etymology and Cognates, (3) Qumran's Use (4) OT Usage Outside of Judges, (5) LXX Translation of the Word, (6) Usage in Judges, (7) Lexicon's Definition and Other Works allows one to conclude the following: The term  $\text{קָרָא}$  in Judges cannot be assumed to include repentance.<sup>44</sup>

Instead,  $\text{קָרָא}$  in Judges reflects a simple cry of help that implies no repentance or commitment on the part of the nation that caused God's grace to work for Israel. The NT also shows how in numerous occasions people cry out to God for aid based on mercy where repentance of sins is not involved just mere faith in God's power to help (cf. Matt 9:27-29; 14:26, 30; 15:22-23, 28; 20:31). Hence one should view God's grace in the OT (as in the NT) as the *main motivating factor that works*—prior to any commitment—on the believer to get him or her to obey. 1 John 4:19 says it this way: *We love Him because He first loved us*. One can see God's grace again at work first on those that *cry out* for help in Luke 18:7 even if undeserving.<sup>45</sup> Thus, although some have interpreted Bultmann

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<sup>43</sup> Greenspahn, "Theology of Judges," 394-95.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.: 392. Thus Greenspahn also concludes: "Thus 'crying out' to which the word refers cannot therefore be assumed to include repentance. Indeed, one could reasonably argue that the cries so described have no spiritual or theological component, but are simply 'the loud and agonized 'crying' of someone in acute distress, calling for help and seeking deliverance."

<sup>45</sup> John Nolland, *Luke 9:21–18:34*, Word Biblical Commentary, ed. David A. Hubbard and Glenn W. Barker, vol. 35B (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1993), 871. refers to the qualifying statement at the end that says: "though He bears long with them." Though this term has attracted numerous interpretations, Nolland concludes: "The reference to God being long-suffering remains obscure until we look at how that verb [bears long] is used of God in the OT. There we find that it expresses an aspect of the generosity of God in his dealings with his People. He does not lash out at the sins of his People, but rather exercise restraint (the word involved is often translated as 'slow to anger' in the OT). On a strict scale of justice, God's own People may not deserve the vindication that they crave. But, while God may well discipline his recalcitrant People, he works for their vindication in the end."

to have Marcionist tendency, he at least understood that grace was the motivating factor under girding the law providing the basis for obedience: “The people are not constituted as a people by first obeying the Law but, rather, God’s grace precedes, so that obedience is always to occur through faith in God’s prevenient and electing grace. God’s grace constitutes man’s relationship to God and provides the basis of his obedience.”<sup>46</sup>

Because people have not understood the gracious character of God to be at work along with His holy character demanding obedience as described in Deut 28–30, many have missed huge windows where God’s grace is at work. For example, in 2 Chr 36:21, one can see how God’s grace was at work for 490 years allowing Israel to respond. That is, because Israel did not let the land rest every seventh year (cf. Lev 25:1-7; 26:34), but worked it, God through Jeremiah (in 25:9-12) condemned them to 70 years of exile to Babylon allowing the land to lie fallow for all the years it had missed. This suggests that the sentence of 70 years of captivity corresponds to the number of every 7<sup>th</sup> year that the land had not been observed, or a sum-total of 490 years that shows a huge window where God’s grace was working.<sup>47</sup> Thus, the same can be said of the time of Judges. By

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<sup>46</sup> Rudolf Bultmann, “The Significant of the Old Testament for the Christian Faith,” in *The Old Testament and the Christian Faith: Essays by Rudolf Bultmann and others*, The Preacher’s Library, ed., Bernhard W. Anderson (London: SCM Press, 1963), 23.

<sup>47</sup> J. Barton Payne, “1, 2 Chronicles,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: with The New International Version of the Holy Bible*, ed., Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 8 14 vols. (Grand rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1988), 559, says, “This produces a total figure of 70 times 7 or 490 years; and the idea is that of making up for half a millennium of neglected sabbatical rests.” See also G. F. Oehler, *Theology of the Older Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, n.d.), 34. Although this seems to be the case, Martin J. Selman, *2 Chronicles: A Commentary*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, ed., D. J. Wiseman (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 550, believes, “The seventy year period is probably best understood qualitatively rather than quantitatively, as a symbol of a human lifespan” (cf. Ps 90:10). Perhaps this is true, but contextually the close association of seventy years of rest with the Sabbath’s rest the land had not enjoyed seems to suggest a correspondent period of violation. Or else why mention, “As long as she lay desolate she kept Sabbath,” if that period of length had not been violated before?

interpreting תשובה in Judges as “repentance” people have missed a huge—350  
years—window of God’s grace at work in the OT.