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"THE VOICE  
OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS"

WILHELM CASPARI<sup>1</sup>

KIEL, GERMANY

**H**ENRICH EWALD suggested that hebr. *qol* should be translated in sentences without a verb by an interjection like "listen!" or "hark!" thus avoiding the question whether a following noun was to be regarded simply as a genitive. An interjection is a reaction to a particularly strong influence. This influence is usually felt to be the stronger, the less it can be clearly defined. So there are sounds, with which you cannot, or at least not quickly enough, recognize whence they come. In the Old Testament sounds are often mentioned which produce distinctly emotional effects just because no fundamental distinction is made between perceptions caused by mechanical factors and by living ones. Moreover such a distinction is delayed by the revival of an indiscriminating animism. Under these circumstances it is even more difficult to draw a strict boundary line between sounds caused by human beings and those by animals, especially in two cases: viz., if either kind of living creatures appears as a whole group, or if animals and men appear together. If, however, the sound is produced by an individual the whole impression is influenced by the amount of reasoning faculty possessed by the individual, who has at its disposal not only instinctive, though conventional, improv-

<sup>1</sup> This paper was written in German and was translated into English by the kind helpfulness of my friend Prof. Dr. Arthur Kölbng, whom I give many thanks.

isations, but is also able to communicate notions combined with the sound to others by means of an articulated language spoken by a larger community. In this manner *qol*, which in the most primitive cases simply means "sound," becomes "voice" or even "readiness of speech."

Ps. 68 34; 77 18 *natan qol* means only "to utter a sound." 2 Chron. 24 9 (30 5) *natan*, however, and Ex. 36 6; Ezr. 1 1; 10 7 *he'ebir* tell of spreading a speech, which is quoted or supposed as known in the relation. The stress is laid on its content and purpose. Since, however, edicts of the government were made known by proclamation—there was no other way of publishing them, for *ça'aq* may even mean "official appearance"—the idea of sound seems to be implied even in cases where *qol* means "text." The king, who gives the order, is replaced by the subordinate who proclaims it. The latter lends his voice to the former; the former his authority to the latter. The individual character of the voice is of no account and that on principle. Thus the king who gave the order receives a mysterious inaccessibility. The respect for him becomes greater. Cautious and sensitive natures will overrate rather than underrate a mystery.

The person proclaiming the order is conspicuous in Job 3 18; Nah. 2 14,<sup>1</sup> and as officer of an establishment on a very large scale. In Ezek. 1, after a long descriptive passage, we find a speech opened by a miraculous resuscitation of the prophet. This brings him under the complete sway of him who utters the speech, and he quite acquiesces in this. Everything seen in the vision is eclipsed by the words because they appeal directly to the soul. Instead of its longwindedness the relation of the vision is clearly intended to give a vivid impression of the Lord of Lords. If the term "son of man" does not express the eminence of Him who speaks above all mankind exactly, it involves at least that in his sight the hereditary dignity of priest as well as the difference of age and rank among men are utterly insignificant. Before Him men are equal. In the term "son of man" man means nearly the

<sup>1</sup> Kennicott MS 262 without *qol*.

citizen of a country. In this connection we find the words 1 2<sup>a</sup>, "I heard a voice of one that spoke," or perhaps one should rather translate: "a speaking voice." Probably the personality of Him who speaks is not mentioned or characterized on purpose. Of course the reader knows quite well who He is. But he can quite enter into the feelings of the prophet who has the vision. The uncertainty implied by the words heightens the impression of awe.

In Isaiah 40 3 we hear of the Lord, who orders the road to be built for Him, and of the cryer who announces the order. Perhaps Perf. *qara* would be the better reading: "Hark! in the wilderness a voice has been heard, etc." As regards the matter, the cryer identifies himself with his master. In v. 6 the question [missing in Kennicott MS 1] may be merely an addition made for the sake of rhythm: *ma qara*, i. e., "what has been asked?" In that case the preceding Imp. must be read as Perf. as in v. 3: "The voice of Him, who spoke—or the speaking voice—has called and said, etc." Other commentators suppose that in v. 6 we have to think of another cryer. However this may be, in any case the Lord leaves it to his agent to announce his order, keeping aloof Himself in a mysterious manner. The agent is fully aware that he speaks only the order of his master. It would be superfluous for him to name his master in order to be differentiated from him. He does nothing of the kind. In this way the author serves two purposes at once, which cannot be formally combined at all, while it is just their antagonism that produced the strong effect on the hearer. On the one hand the transcendent Deity makes some one else speak in his stead, not deigning to speak Himself. On the other hand the awe inspired by the Deity guarantees the absolute obligation of the task, v. 3, and proves the validity of the words spoken in v. 6. Therefore it is essential for the author not to be obliged to differentiate between the speaker and God in any way. Having no use for a speaker beside God he leaves him entirely in the background.

If incidents happening between human beings are related, the first impression of the one on the other is produced by means of sound, Gen. 27 22, Judges 18 3 (where *qol* does not

mean "idiom")—cf. Jer. 10 22; Job 4 16; Dn. 8 16; 10 6. But it is by his voice that an acquaintance is most easily known again, especially if he is a person one esteems, Song 2 8, or fears, 2 Ki. 6 32. Such a one is not forgotten easily. This applies also to 1 Sam. 26 17. But the statement that Saul knew David's "voice," is probably to be attributed to a thoughtful reader; for in Kennicott MS 70 *gol* is omitted. We should not find the addition in nearly all the texts if it had not appeared appropriate to most readers: the idea was that on hearing a certain voice the hearer invariably endeavors to find out who it was that spoke. The essence of a vivid narration is to realize the emotions of those mentioned in the story for the hearer.

Professional scouts will always be particularly capable of interpreting mere sounds, Is. 52 8; Jer. 48 3; 51 54; also 4 15. If they have any doubts, they often tell people so, Jer. 4 31: "a voice as of a woman in travail." Zeph. 1 10 merely states the direction from which the sound came. Sometimes it is acknowledged that in spite of all endeavors nothing definite was to be found out, Dt. 4 12: "But ye saw no form; only ye heard a voice."

It only corresponds to the notions then current, that sounds to be explained by mechanical causes were still called "voices." So the rustling of the leaves, Lev. 26 36; the sound of rain, 1 Ki. 18 41; of the mulberry trees, 2 Sam. 5 24. The ancients had no difficulty to referring such sounds to some living being. God can make Himself heard by such noises just as well as by a cryer, nor is it necessary to define the character of the latter particularly. In Ezek. 1 25 we are prepared for the fact that God will speak in ch. 2. So far the visionary cannot hear any distinct words yet. If one remembers the relation of mount Sinai, Dt. 4 33, one well naturally takes the "voice speaking out of the midst of the fire" to be that of God. Because of the fact that this remains unsaid at first, the mysterious effect is heightened, Kennicott MS 5. By the omission of *elohim* the sentence becomes identical with Ezek. 1 28: "Did ever people hear a voice speaking out of" etc.? The fact that Jahwe "roars" Am. 1 2; Joel 4 16; Is. 42 13 reminds

us of the holy battle-cry *teru'a* (Ex. 32 17 f.) 1 Sam. 4 8; Jer. 4 19; 50 22. Though it is produced by the warriors or later on by the worshippers, the people shouting feel that their confidence and their solidarity of interests is heightened. The encouragement seems to them to be due to the assistance of their God and as a proof of His presence. Jer. 4 19 runs: "I cannot hold my peace, when I hear the sound of the trumpets (?);<sup>3</sup> my soul bursts (*subbera?* v. 20) with shouting; where the rent is it leaks out" (Ni. *nqr*). Considering this one may quote a preceding passage v. 19: "My bowels! I tremble with convulsions (*çivot*). My heart palpitates (*home*)."<sup>4</sup> These statements are usually thought to be symptoms of supernatural phenomena, experienced only by a prophet. In accordance with Jeremiah's general message the warlike sentiment lying in these words suggests decidedly the expectation of defeat. War cannot be avoided, is doomed to failure. Without it the nation would be better off.

But one must be careful not to strain the interpretation of the text. If a national and religious war, a holy one, is to be, all selfish emotions must cease; there is no room for cool reasoning. The warrior gives himself up entirely to God's command and guidance. The battle is fought with such excitement, that the fighters lose all free will. The fighting is dominated by instinctive actions of the crowd. The first of them is the elementary shout raised by them. From this moment the combatant has no longer any will of his own. While others are not conscious of this fact, the prophet clearly realizes it in his own case. Perhaps we should call it war-psychosis. The ancients did not see anything morbid in it. Some of them were at least aware of the loss of selfconsciousness, thinking it perfectly justifiable. The little they were conscious of it they managed to express in a vow. Vow may be a matter of a moment. Jeremiah's words only imply that

<sup>3</sup> According to Volz dependent on the verb. "*Wē (šōfar)*" Kennicott MS 180 seems to be a little sophistical.

<sup>4</sup> Shifting *nafši*, Volz prefers fem. It would be better to omit *nafši* altogether, following Kennicott MS 176, if one does not assume a case of *aberratio oculi*.

there will be occasion for such a vow; therefore they are a prophecy. They describe the average citizen and warrior, who has lost all self-control. He cannot help becoming merged in the fighting community. It becomes a mere crowd and a matter of which God disposes just as He chooses. Without taking up his residence in the individual soul as the mystic will have it, He is yet in the midst of the army. Everything is at stake. The excitement is essentially the same in character as that which is felt when one approaches God, Is. 6. Instead of any idle attempts at protecting oneself, which reason would suggest, it finds vent in an irrational manner. Even ritual precautions may be neglected. The warrior is beside himself. In him the feeling of subjection under higher power and at the same time of devotion to the higher task, which he experiences as a mere member of his community, is paramount. Probably the difference between this attitude of mind and mysticism is easily observed.

Noisy excitement of riotous crowds is often found at festivals, 1 Sam. 15 14; 1 Kg. 1 40; Is. 51 3. Then something extraordinary is in the wind; in expectation of it the crowd begins to rave. Sometimes these symptoms may indeed be preliminary to some disaster, Is. 13 4; Jer. 3 21; 9 18; Zech. 11 3; Lam. 2 7; Job 15 21. For the mood of the raving crowd is certainly not yet inspired by the coming event. Perhaps we should be inclined to take the martial ardour for enthusiasm and confidence in victory. In this respect that warlike excitement is still vague and ambiguous. Therefore the fear of imminent calamity is not antagonistic to it. But Jahweh's worshippers are ever ready to admit that other religious communities may have similar experiences. Excitement in others the Mosaic community regards simply as analogous to their own, even if it should be consciously directed against Jahweh, Ps. 74 23. Those taking part in it are "other gods." It is only a more advanced theism which is able to trace analogous phenomena back to other gods. We must however try to appreciate duly the mentality of a preceding time; since it too had a share in forming the vocabulary of the O. T.

Frequently the sound comes only from a certain locality

which is empty. It may owe its origin simply to an echo. The view of the world of those times was, however, not content with such an explanation. The said locality may be a ravine or dilapidated dwelling or a corner between tombs. The mere sight suggests the question: *ubi sunt qui ante nos?* The perception of the sound is accompanied by a feeling of uneasiness, which peoples the locality fancifully with unfriendly spirits, Jer. 31 14; Ezek. 37 7; Zeph. 2 14. If the place is haunted by animals, these might have produced the sounds. Even though a sober judgment is fully aware of this, the animals may belong to the unclean ones. The mysterious powers behind them are unknown and therefore avoided. Nevertheless they are not "other gods" like, e. g., Baal, 1 Kg. 18 26, 29. Human blood too may cry out, Gen. 4 10. Besides, we all live surrounded by the atmosphere, which may be regarded as coherent, at least occasionally. The question arises what is happening if noises are heard from above, especially claps of thunder and other atmospheric noises, 1 Kg. 18 41. There must be some living cause for them. This may be realized also if an expected sound is not heard, 2 Kg. 4 31.

At first the O. T. draws no strict line between noises caused by Jahweh and by the other gods. The older idea, without being indifferent to them, does not attempt to bring them into any relation to official worship; on the other hand the number of those brought into relation to God is gradually increasing. Also if a heathen religion, 1 Sam. 6 8, traces back many happenings to gods, it still regards a number of such as not due to the influence of deities. However many special spheres of power may appertain to deities, a complete distribution of the world among gods is not accomplished. It is hardly right to say that where the power of the gods ends, destiny begins. Was not the deity even subordinated to destiny? Even outside the sphere of action claimed by deities the power of destiny may be acknowledged, or the belief in a first originator, etc. Has Islam, for instance, succeeded in permeating the space not taken up by God? Considering this we may assume that many kinds of sound are gradually supposed to have been caused by God, until in the O. T. they



are associated consciously with God. This is especially the case with thunder, Ex. 20 18; Ps. 77 18 f.;<sup>5</sup> Job 37 4 f.<sup>6</sup> Finally the voice of God, Is. 6 8; 66 6; Mi. 6 9; Ex. 9 28 is substituted for it. Sometimes, as in the last passage and 1 Sam. 12 18, the plural is used, which is frequently regarded as individualising, the idea being that there had not been only one sound but several, each of which might be considered as a separate unit. Or the plural is supposed to have been used in order to heighten the impression, Ps. 93 4. The plural gains a special significance when interpreted as contrasted with the One God. Modern appreciation of O. T. religion is so advanced that this point of view is sure to gain ground. Whether the number is heard successively, or whether each individual sound is to be attributed to some special living force, is no longer essential or even distinctly supposed. But the Holy One is recognized as necessarily superior to a multitude, and it is just in this that the act of believing consists, at the spiritual level of the time, which anticipates the monotheistic one.

"Above the voices of many waters mighty,<sup>7</sup>  
Above the breakers of the sea mighty,  
The Lord on high is mighty." Ps. 93 4.

Quite similarly Job 28 26:

"When he made a decree for the rain  
And a way for the cloud charged with thunder."

For even according to this assertion atmospheric phenomena are a host of hypostases, though short-lived ones, subjected to the Lord. The question is, since what time is their subjection thus supposed? Aetiological thinking may have been capable of asking thus even in its earliest stage. In this way the trace of an older view of the relation of such forces to God is revealed: He has first subjected them. This may have been related in form of a myth, which is supposed to

<sup>5</sup> Kennicott MS 650 B v. 19 *legol*, to give a better sense.

<sup>6</sup> In three MS (Kennicott) *gol* is suffixed. MS 100 *'omo* instead of *geomo*, perhaps noteworthy.

<sup>7</sup> *'adir* without ending, cf. Kennicott MS 36, 121; on the other hand 214 referring to Jer. 26 22.

have happened at the beginning of the present world. With the same right the actual thunderstorm might be regarded as an absurd revolt against the power of God. Lightning and thunder or the breaking of the wave are interpreted as the downfall of a giant, cf. Luke 10 18. This is most graphically expressed in Ps. 29 1:<sup>9</sup>

"Give<sup>9</sup> unto Jahweh glory and strength, o ye sons of God(-s)"<sup>10</sup> is an invitation to compliance, whether without a struggle of the strong one with the strong, or after one of the parties has been defeated. Who and where those are who are bidden to yield, we are not told.<sup>11</sup> So much seems certain, that even then they are no longer regarded as thunder-demons. For according to vv. 3 ff.<sup>12</sup> God's mere voice<sup>13</sup> is sufficient to bring water, trees, mountains to their senses. Coming across a splintered trunk after a thunderstorm one concludes that it had been rash enough to join in a revolt and had naturally been defeated.

<sup>9</sup> Mowinckel, *Psalmstudien* II, p. 48.

<sup>10</sup> Apparently König („gestehet zu“) gives a similar meaning; he supposes it to be a mere statement of facts. For what should angels have to concede to God, not being on such terms with Him at all?

<sup>11</sup> To accommodate the numerus (König *ad* Ps. 29) is possible; but to interpret the *vocativus* after 89 so would be against the principles of the history of O. T. literature. Rather a formula foreign to Jahwism in itself could get a harmless meaning by change with seeming synonyms. After Gunkel *ad* Ps. 29 "sons" means a lower rank. In the Psalm he thinks it to be a given fact. The plural of "God" no longer conveys to the Psalmist any meaning; this being so he must preserve some traditional formula once fraught with meaning. There is, however, no reason to consider such formulas implicitly pre-Jahwistic, non-Israelitic, etc. Jahwism had time enough to purge itself by criticism of such incongruous views.

<sup>12</sup> That according to the older views of nature thunder is the voice of the deity (Gunkel p. 123) ought no longer to be maintained. The question is rather what character the animation of nature had before the special features of a divine being had been developed.

<sup>13</sup> Therefore the comparison with cattle is neither funny nor baroque (Gunkel *ad* vv. 5 f.); it simply expresses the idea that God's enemies are able to move independently.

<sup>14</sup> From old-Israelitic time Gunkel quotes only Ps. 18 to prove the thunder is God's voice. But, in spite of this, thunder enjoys no privilege in comparison with other atmospheric phenomena.

In fact, God's power within the cosmos is so great that it seems advisable to side with Him in any case. Against the elements, especially when they are in revolt,<sup>14</sup> man's efforts would be of no avail anyhow. So by addressing well meant words to the elements he proves his loyalty to God. The seemoon, which can be raised by none but God, may be regarded from another point of view, reconcilable with this certainty, as a tangle of fugitive demons, endeavoring in vain to escape from God. But the divine fighter deals such powerful strokes that sparks fly and even flames burst forth, v. 2. Nevertheless the author, whom Gunkel (p. 125) ingeniously supposes to be a native of the northern kingdom, does not give a clear description of the individual adversaries. Possibly once sparks and flames may have been understood quite differently. The adversaries are fiery bodies. When God clears them,<sup>15</sup> they fall asunder. But the author merely adopts this expression without sharing the original point of view.

In Ps. 29 several views of the world are deposited in layers as it were. This is suggested expressly by v. 9 a.<sup>16</sup> For obviously no enmity against God is attributed to the "hinds." On the contrary the sentence is a direct appeal to God, on whose assistance man, too, is dependent in the turmoil of the elements, to help the defenceless. Thus Ps. 29, which has preserved so many records of development, becomes a charm against thunderstorms approved by frequent use. According to Gunkel, v. 11 is preexilic.<sup>17</sup> The eschatological interpretation of the Ps. requires no refutation.

<sup>14</sup> Afterwards (König p. 106) it would be superfluous to address the elements. The only thing to do would be to give thanks to God. V. 10 does not make it necessary to assume a chronological order of the preceding statements. The arrangement of the sentences is caused by the verbs. Gunkel p. 125 thinks the Psalm was recited by two choirs. The apparatus would be too clumsy.

<sup>15</sup> Subsequently it could be suggested that the flames had been caused by this act of God (Gunkel, König). But this view presupposes too monotheistic a character for the Psalm.

<sup>16</sup> The conjecture: „Er scheucht die Gemen mit Feuerflammen" (Gunkel) seems preposterous.

<sup>17</sup> Gunkel (p. 125) does not know what to make of 1 *consecutivum*.

Three stages in the conception of unaccountable sounds may be clearly discerned:

1. The spontaneous motion of the beings producing the sounds shows itself as opposition to God, which the latter vanquishes.
2. The beings are adherents and servants of God.
3. They are acts of God.

Is. 40 3-6 represents, as is to be expected, consciously only the third stage. But the former stages are to be traced in it too. First an official of God (v. 3) summons the exiles to the building of a road. To such a labor they were very likely often pressed by the Neo-Babylonian Kingdom. The question is whether the official summons only the exiles. The answer depends not only on whether *bamidbar* belongs to *gol*, as is supposed in the New Testament, or, as parallelism suggests, to the following *panu*. What v. 4 commands surpasses all the boastfulness of the vainglorious inscriptions on buildings and is beyond the power of man. For this the ready help of natural forces is required. In the wilderness they were the given hearers of summons. The mere summons by one, who is not even God himself but only his agent, implies their subjection. Thus the idea of an instantaneous victory over the elements is still delicately suggested. The second stage is however just on the point of being raised to the third: "the mouth of the Lord has spoken," v. 5. This assertion may be justified by the context without any reference to any passage outside Deutero-Isaiah: Jahweh having given his commands for departure the latter takes place irrevocably and as previously settled.

"May the world vanish!," vv. 6-8, the decree of our God is fulfilled. Though this idea is expressed with great lyrical vividness, it is just for this reason the more difficult to grasp and define. In the first place, we must give up the historical interpretation of v. 7 b, which has even been added to the text: Judaea is the grass. It is methodically out of keeping with the text v. 6, where grass is only predicate, i. e., a statement about the quality of another subject, but not a subject itself about which some statement is made. Ancient

and primitive feelings of the nomad, of which Israel was ever susceptible, are renewed in vv. 6, 7 b. For the grass is not regarded as a mere accessory and contrasted with the ordinary durability of the world, but as a valued possession without which those who live by their herds and flocks cannot do. When consumed by the animals it imparts to them also its transitoriness; so that they are easily destroyed by the wind of Jahweh. Thus the final triumph of God over the universe is sketched with a few bold strokes. The universe shall no longer be spared to be in His service, but it is disabled and even annihilated to prevent it from revolting again. God's sufficient weapon, which gains the victory, is the wind. This idea is sometimes completed, e. g.: a *ruah* originating from God, here however it is simply designated by the *gen. auct.*: "the breath of the Lord." This implies that there are also other winds; nor is this denied. But they are such as are not worth tracing back to God.

In a similar way nature and the word, which in itself is even more transitory, are contrasted with each other, Ps. 107 20. Whenever the word comes from God it participates in His eternity. Blades of grass bend down as they wither. His "word shall stand for ever." Perhaps it is this very word, which has doomed the grass to fade. By its action against blades of grass it certainly does not overtask its strength; it is able to overcome the whole universe.

So the "word," v. 8, seems to alternate with "wind," v. 7. The dependence on the force issuing from God is even intensified. A word is nothing but a momentary utterance of the speaker. And yet, when it is God who speaks it is everlasting in comparison with the world, is *dynamis* in its highest. In the word the unlimited possibility of new realities is contained. Such sovereignty does Deut.-Isa. show on the third stage. It is there that he feels at home. Its sublimity rests on the latent duration of the two preceding ones. Thus the surpassing height of the third becomes evident.

Deutero-Isaiah's chapters are rich in such religious revivals or recapitulations. They characterize Deutero-Isaiah's religiousness as that of a layman. It required an exceptional

intensity of religiousness to comprise so many different stages of development. A man of chiefly intellectual nature would have got rid of the antiquated stages. In a theologian (the term by which Deut.-Is. is frequently described) this would be quite becoming. But this characterisation of Deut.-Is. ignores the recapitulations. They are well worthy of special treatment and discussion.

The favorite expressions of Old Testament religion and morals show clearly the history of their development. At the back of the bare sound there is the living force of the vernacular, in the development of which many generations took their share, till at last a final meaning was fixed expressing a particular truth. Accordingly, the importance of personal author in our modern sense decreases. Considering the insignificance of his authorial share, he should rather be termed a mere writer. Every interpretation of his writings which disregards the general influence of the vernacular is doomed to failure. Thus in the phrase "voice of one who crieth," we have an echo of ideas, which could no longer prevail in the face of any clear notion of God. Their deficiency in clearness is amply made up for by vividness, directness, honesty of purpose, as well as emotional grandeur. The value of a belief in God must not be judged by the logical clearness and consistency of what is said about God, but rather by the intensity of the personal emotion of the faithful believer. In this respect the history of the religious idea comes to life again in his use of the phrase, grants to him something imperishable and sublime, and brings home the everlasting solidarity of the believers.