
HOW SAMSON KILLED A THOUSAND MEN WITH THE JAWBONE OF TAURUS THE MESOPOTAMIAN ASTROLOGICAL ‘SCIENCE’ BEHIND JUDGES 15.15-19

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Abstract

Judges 15.15-19 asserts that Samson had killed a thousand men with the “fresh jawbone of a donkey” and that their slain bodies had fallen into “double heaps” — Samson naming the site Ramath Lehi, “Jawbone’s Height”. Soon after, the strongman implores Yahweh to quench his life-threatening thirst. The Judaic deity responds by spontaneously opening a spring in a ‘mortar’ at the site of the massacre, which Samson then names, ‘Caller’s Spring.’ The scene’s historic implausibility suggests that it was invented by its author(s), a scholar who had been exiled to Babylonia during the sixth century BCE. The current article cites circumstantial evidence implying that the Judges author’s experience in Babylonia was similar to that of the prophet Daniel. Namely, he was indoctrinated with Mesopotamian occult wisdom which included astrological arcana. Cuneiform astrological texts confirm that Mesopotamian astrologers envisioned the starry sky as ‘heavenly writing’ that imparted revelation through the medium of wordplay, what Assyrian king, Esarhaddon, called *lumāši*, or ‘constellation’-writing. Literary data indicates that puns discerned from within a star-god’s title were construed as an inviolable form of truth verification, which imparted unassailable facts regarding the nature of the star-god’s character, powers and history. The paper shows that a polysemous reading of the cuneiform signs used to write Taurus’ various titles renders ‘Little-Sun’, the Akkadian semantic equivalent to the Hebrew Šimšôn, ‘Samson’, as well as the terms ‘He-Found, a Fresh, Jawbone, Of, the Donkey, Kill, 1000, Man’. The conclusion argues that the Judges’ author utilized *lumāši*’constellation’ - writing puns as the impetus for this Biblical story, a point evinced by the direct correlation between puns in Taurus and the Hebrew words of Judges 15.15.

Keywords: wordplay, constellation, writing, Samson, jawbone

1. Introduction

The herculean exploits of Samson recounted in the Book of Judges are reported as genuine history. Yet one scene in particular has thrilled synagogue

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and church-going children while simultaneously perplexing science-minded theologians: Judges 15.15-19. There we find our strongman bound by his own countrymen and handed over to the Philistines as a prisoner. The “spirit of Yahweh” suddenly comes upon Samson and allows him to snap free of his bindings as if they were charred flax (15.14). Inexplicably within arm’s length lies the “fresh jawbone of a donkey”, which he then grabs and uses to kill a thousand Philistine men — their bodies falling neatly into “double heaps” (15.15-16). Samson then names the site of the execution Ramath Lehi, “Jawbone’s Height” (15.17). The prodigious execution has left our protagonist mortally dehydrated, and he “calls out” to Yahweh for water (15.18). The Hebrew deity responds by opening up a “hollow place” at the site of Lehi (“Jawbone”), from which waters flow. After drinking, Samson’s strength is revived and he goes on to name it En Hakkore, “Caller’s Spring” (15.19).

Scholarly consensus holds that the story is part of the “Deuteronomistic History”, i.e., the section of the Hebrew Bible that incorporates Deuteronomy and the Books of the “Former Prophets” [1]. And although Samson presumably refers to a charismatic, historical, Jewish “judge” that lived before the United Monarchy had been forged in the eleventh century BCE, the events recounted in his “Jawbone Slaughter” scene clearly drift into the preternatural [2]. A common theological hypothesis avows that the Book of Judges was the product of oral narratives associated with memorable historic leaders which had been collected after the Northern Kingdom of Israel’s fall to the Assyrians in 721 BCE, but which were not compiled into their final, written form until the sixth century BCE by a scholar (or scholars) that had been exiled to Babylonia [1; 1, vol. III, p. 1114; 2].

Therefore, Samson’s ‘Jawbone Massacre’ was inscribed no less than five centuries after this legendary Judaic leader had lived, by a Judaic writer (or writers) that had been exiled to Babylonia. The supernatural details that unfold within these verses indicate that it was not grounded in what we today conceptualize as ‘history’, i.e., events that actually took place. The implication being that the Judges’ author had invented this phantasmagorical scene, a view held by many respected scholars [1, p. 165, 167; 3-6].

The passage’s irrational details elicit a string of obvious questions. Of all the possible weapons the Judges’ author could have chosen for Samson, why the bizarre ‘fresh donkey’s jawbone’? And why claim that he dispatched a ‘thousand’ men with it instead of a lower, more credible figure? Moreover, why did the author of Judges make the preposterous assertion that Samson’s slain adversaries had fallen into two distinct heaps, apparently in situ? And just how did ‘waters’ suddenly flow out of a ‘mortar’ in a place called ‘Jawbone’/Lehi?

The current article aims to show that Samson’s execution of a thousand men with a donkey’s jawbone and its aftermath were based on secret, hermeneutical practices accessible to the Book of Judges’ author(s). And it was these hermeneutical techniques that inspired the irrational strand of props and details that comprise Judges 15.15-19.

The fact that the Book of Judges was compiled in the sixth century BCE by an author under Babylonian exile offers a vital clue regarding the basis for this incident. During the Babylonian subjugation Jewish scholars were taken hostage and indoctrinated with Mesopotamian occult wisdom, which frequently included astrological arcana. A prime example of this custom is seen with Daniel, a Jewish sage conscripted into the entourage of King Nebuchadnezzar II (Daniel 1.1-21); whom went on to become the supervisor of all the diviners and astrologers of that land (Daniel 5.11). A revered conviction of the Babylonian astrologer conceived the starry sky as ‘heavenly-writing’ that imparted inviolable wisdom through the medium of wordplay.

Moreover, Babylonian star atlases and astrological tablets indicate that one of Taurus’ cuneiform titles phonetically imparted ‘Little-Sun’, the semantic equivalent to the meaning of the Hebrew, *Šimšôn*, ‘Samson’. Astrological texts describe the Hyades asterism in Taurus as its ‘Jawbone’, and confirm that the Bull’s title was sometimes inscribed with a cuneiform sign that could also mean ‘Donkey’ — transforming the Hyades into the ‘Jawbone-of-the-Donkey’; while an additional homonym for the Hyades asterism also rendered, ‘Jawbone-of-the-Ass’. Polysemous readings for the cuneiform logogram for Taurus and its asterisms also yielded the terms ‘he-found’ and ‘divine weapon’, which would explain how the ‘Jawbone-of-the-Donkey’ came to be seen as Samson’s armament. Other puns encrypted in Taurus yield ‘Kill 1000 Man’, ‘Fallen’, ‘Double Heaps’, ‘Jawbone’s Height’ and ‘Spring-of-the-Calling-(One)’. Indeed, it will be shown that practically every Hebrew word from Judges 15.15-19 corresponds with wordplay enciphered in the cuneiform titles for Taurus or one of its asterisms.

To rediscover these correlates it is first necessary to take a closer look at the Book of Judges’ author(s), a scholar who had been exiled to Babylonia and whom — in all likelihood — was conscripted into colloquies with Babylonian astrologer-magicians in a manner similar to the indoctrination of Daniel.

2. Mesopotamian influence on Jewish sages during the Babylonian captivity

As noted above, Biblical scholars concur that Samson’s ‘Jawbone Massacre’ was part of the Deuteronomistic History that was inscribed by an author, or authors, that had been exiled to Babylonia sometime after the Kingdom of Judah had fallen to Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar II in 586 BCE [1, vol. IV, p. 1059]. Ezra 2.64 states that a total of forty-two-thousand-three-hundred-sixty were exiled to Babylonia by Nebuchadnezzar II. And the prophet Isaiah proclaims the destiny of many of these Jewish captives in 2 Kings 20.18, stating that they would “... become officials in the palace of the king of Babylon”.

The specific service that some of these Jewish exiles performed in the Babylonian king’s palaces is described in Daniel 1.1-21. There we find this Hebrew prophet and three of his countrymen taken into the entourage of

Nebuchadnezzar II for three years, where they were taught the ‘language and literature of the Chaldeans’ along with other forms of esoterica before directly serving this monarch. Daniel’s experience resembles a custom practiced by the Assyrians of northern Fertile Crescent and their Babylonian neighbours in the south, in which the foreign scholars of vanquished nations were taken hostage and inculcated with Mesopotamian occult wisdom [7].

The cuneiform title for such a ‘scholar’ is well attested, *ummânu* [7, 8]. And what they studied has also been well established. An *ummânu* was proficient in one, and frequently all, of the following ‘sciences’: *tušarru*, ‘celestial diviner (i.e., astrologer)’, *bârû*, ‘diviner (using animal entrails or oil)’, *āšipu*, ‘exorcist, healer-seer’, *asû*, ‘physician’, and *kalû*, ‘lamentation chanter’ [7]. The occult nature of these arts is underscored by the scholarly designation given to *ummânu* by late-nineteenth and early twentieth century scholars, ‘magician, astrologer, sorcerer’ [7, 9].

Hence, when Daniel was conscripted into the retinue of Nebuchadnezzar II, he was taught the language of the Chaldeans, i.e., Akkadian (comprised of the dialects of Babylonian and Assyrian), and was indoctrinated in the forms of occult prognostication described above. The ‘Chaldeans’ (Hebrew: *kašdîm*) were Babylonians that lived outside the centralized political authority of the ruling monarch in Babylon. The Chaldeans occupied the lowland Tigris and Euphrates marshlands and were organized within a tribal political structure; one that assumed political control of Babylonia whenever power in the capital city of Babylon became weak [10].

In Daniel 5.11 the wife of Babylonian king proclaims, “There is a man in your kingdom who has the spirit of gods’ holy ones in him, and in the days of your father insight and intelligence and wisdom like the wisdom of gods was found in him. And the king, Nebuchadnezzar, your father — your father the king — appointed him chief of the magicians, enchanters, astrologers [and] diviners” (author’s translation, brackets inserted).

Although the conscription of Daniel and his three compatriots into the ranks of the Mesopotamian scholar-magicians was probably not a commonplace event [11], it does suggest that at least a few Judeans had similar experiences. The research of Jonathan Stökl implies that the sixth century BCE author of Ezekiel had also undergone a formal Babylonian scholarly education like the one experienced by Daniel [11, p. 223-252; 12]. Such intermittent conscriptions would result in small enclaves of Judaic sages edified with Mesopotamian astrological wisdom. I contend that sometime during his exile in Babylonia, the Book of Judges’ author was — like Daniel — enlisted into colloquies with Babylonian *ummânu*s working under Nebuchadnezzar II or one of his successors, where he was inculcated with secret astrological wisdom privy to only the astrologer-magician.

And it is in Babylonian astrological esoterica acquired by the Judges’ author that exposes a direct correlation between the exegetical astrological techniques and Samson’s ‘Jawbone Massacre.’

2.1. Reading the ‘Heavenly Writing’ of the stars

We have noted that the Fertile Crescent astrologer was one class of ummānu, ‘scholar, expert’, who was proficient in one or more of the occult arts that involved interlocation with the divinities and also included the astrologer, diviner, exorcist, physician and lamentation-chanter. The title of the Mesopotamian ‘astrologer’ was ʔupšarru, a term that literally meant, ‘writer, scribe’, and referred to an expert in the celestial divination series, Enūma Anu Enlil [7, 8, 13]. Babylonian and Assyrian scholars were adept at reading and writing in the highly complicated cuneiform writing system, a task that included mastery of their spoken tongue, Akkadian, as well as proficiency in the reading and writing of Sumerian, which was the ‘dead’ language of the southern Mesopotamian people from whom the Akkadian-speaking Babylonians and Assyrians adopted the cuneiform script. Proof of the latter is seen with the fact that many constellation and planet names retain their Sumerian, rather than Akkadian, spelling [14, 15].

Yet the astrologer’s reference manuals were not confined to just astronomical and astrological subjects, as they also included religious genres such as the Flood story, The Gilgamesh Epic, and the Babylonian-Assyrian creation epic Enuma Elish, a point evinced by the list of texts edited by astrologers serving the Assyrian king, Esarhaddon [13, p. 209-236; 16]. Crucial to the current article is the fact that astrologers were also well versed in the circa 1800-1600 BC bilingual Sumerian-Akkadian ‘dictionaries’ that listed a Sumerian logogram beside its Akkadian meaning; a Sumerian logogram consisting of a cuneiform sign or sign grouping for a Sumerian word, which was then used to represent an Akkadian word with the equivalent meaning [13, p. 209-236; 16; 17; J. Halloran, *Sumerian Lexicon 3.0*, 2006, 1, <http://www.sumerian.org/sumerlex.htm>]. Modern scholars typically transcribe Sumerian logograms into capital letters, a convention that will be applied to all Sumerian logograms and words in this article.

The Sumerian-Akkadian dictionaries indicate that the Sumerian logogram MUL (‘star’) stood for the Akkadian word kakkabu, ‘star’, as well as the terms šitirtu, ‘inscription’, and šitru, ‘writing’ [8, vol. 8, p. 45-46; 8, vol. 17(3), p. 144-145]. This point is highlighted by the entry, USAN šitir kakkabū, “Evening [is] the writing of the stars” [18]. Moreover, MUL was the common determinative used before the names of planets, stars, and constellations [19].

This offers a glimpse of the Babylonian-Assyrian astrologer’s worldview: each constellation, star, and planet was construed as a piece of ‘writing’. And because stars, constellations, and planets embodied deities this writing was numinous — literally the ‘writing’ of the star-gods. The concept is summarized by Francesca Rochberg, “The metaphor may be interpreted to express the idea that a written message was encoded in the sky, and that the message was a form of communication from the gods” [20].

This evolved into the conviction that the starry sky consisted of šitirti šamāmi, šitir šamê, or šitir burūmê, ‘heavenly writing’ [8, vol. 17(3), p. 144].

Hence the Babylonian-Assyrian ‘astrologer’/tupšarru was a highly literate ‘writer’ who envisioned the starry sky as a hallowed cuneiform ‘text’.

2.2. The pervasiveness of puns in cuneiform writing

Because they were adroit grammarians and linguists, Mesopotamian astrologers were well-aware of the manner by which polysemy emerged in their writing, a point illustrated in Figure 1. We have noted that the cuneiform sign MUL was a Sumerian logogram that represented the Akkadian word kakkabu, ‘star’ — yet also functioned as the logogram for the Akkadian šitirtu/‘inscription’ and šitru/‘writing’. In addition, MUL represented the Akkadian verb nabātu, ‘to shine brightly’ [8, vol. 11(1), p. 22]. MUL could also be read MULU, which represented the Akkadian word mulmullu, ‘arrow’ [8, vol. 10(2), p. 190-191]. Thus, when a Mesopotamian astronomer inscribed or read the cuneiform sign MUL it could potentially interject the meanings ‘star, inscription, writing, brightly-shining’ and ‘arrow.’

Moreover, the potential for polysemy increased due to the vast number of homophones (e.g., to, two, too) found among the Sumerian logograms. The expansive number of homophones in cuneiform writing necessitated that modern linguists devise a transliteration system which allows researchers to distinguish which cuneiform sign appears on a tablet [17, p. 70; <http://www.sumerian.org/sumerlex.htm>]. This scholarly convention is exemplified in Figure 1, which shows the different cuneiform signs that could be read ‘MUL’. The sign most frequently read ‘MUL’ does not have a subscript number; the second most frequent reading for the ‘MUL’ sign is transliterated MUL₂; the third most frequent reading for ‘MUL’ is transcribed MUL₃, and so forth. Furthermore, Mesopotamian astrologers utilized AB₂ as an esoteric form of ‘MUL’, which modern scholars transcribe as MUL_x [21]. Crucial for non-specialist readers to remember is that the subscript numbers and subscript x are a modern convention; a Mesopotamian astrologer would have read all of these signs as ‘MUL’.

In addition, the ‘MUL’ signs served as logograms for other Akkadian words, a fact already demonstrated with MUL. The cuneiform sign MUL₂ represented kakkabu/‘star’ and nabātu/‘shine brightly’, but could also be read TE and represented additional words including, uššu, ‘foundation’, simtu, ‘ornament,’ and saḫālu, ‘to pierce’ [Å.W. Sjöberg and E. Leichty (eds.), *The Electronic Pennsylvania Sumerian Dictionary*, 2006, <http://psd.museum.upenn.edu/epsd/nepsd-frame.html>]. MUL₃ stood for kuzāzu, ‘wood wasp’ [<http://psd.museum.upenn.edu/epsd/nepsd-frame.html>], but was also read SUR₃, the logogram for two Akkadian words that meant ‘watercourse’ [19, p. 388]. MUL₄ represented kakkabu/‘star’ and nabātu/‘shine brightly’ — but it was also read UL and stood for the Akkadian words, šātu, ‘distant time’, inbu, ‘fruit’, and ḫabāšu, ‘to be elated’ [8, vol. 11(1), p. 22; vol. 16, p. 116; vol. 7, p. 144; vol. 6, p. 8]. MUL₅ was an infrequent logogram for kakkabu/‘star’, but was commonly read IKU, which represented the Akkadian ikû, ‘field’ [19, p. 290]. And

although MUL_x could mean ‘star’, it was typically read AB₂ and represented the Akkadian *arḫu*, ‘cow’, and its homonym, ‘month’ [19, p. 396].

	MUL = <i>šīirtum</i> , “inscription,” <i>šīru</i> , “writing,” <i>nabāḫu</i> , “to shine brightly” MULU = <i>mulmullu</i> , “arrow”
	MUL ₂ = <i>kakkabu</i> , “star” <i>nabāḫu</i> , “shine brightly” TE = <i>uššu</i> , “foundation,” <i>simtu</i> , “ornament,” <i>saḫālu</i> , “to pierce”
	MUL ₃ = <i>kuzāzu</i> , “wood wasp,” SUR ₃ = <i>ḥarru</i> , <i>sūru</i> , “watercourse”
	MUL ₄ = <i>kakkabu</i> , “star,” <i>nabāḫu</i> , “shine brightly” UL = <i>šātu</i> , “distant time,” <i>inbu</i> , “fruit,” <i>ḥabāṣu</i> , “to be elated”
	MUL ₅ = <i>kakkabu</i> , “star” IKU = <i>ikû</i> , “field”
	MUL _x = <i>kakkabu</i> , “star” AB ₂ = <i>arḫu</i> , “cow, month”

Figure 1. The Sumerian logograms that were read ‘MUL’ (in capitals), an alternate logographic reading for each sign (in capitals), followed by the Akkadian words these logograms represented (in italics); sketch: Ashely McCurdy.

Hence, when a Mesopotamian magician read or inscribed one of the cuneiform signs read ‘MUL’ it could interject the words, ‘star, shining brightly, inscription, writing, arrow, foundation, ornament, pierce, wood wasp, watercourse, distant time, fruit, feeling-elated, field, cow’ and ‘month’ through punning. Remarkably, Figure 1 presents only a fraction of the various readings and meanings for the cuneiform signs read ‘MUL’.

The thousands of Sumerian logograms, their homophonous nature, their potential to be read in multiple ways, combined with Babylonian-Assyrian scholars’ penchant to attribute multiple Akkadian words to a single logogram resulted in an enormous opportunity for wordplay to emerge in cuneiform writing [22].

One form of punning definitely involved the ‘heavenly writing’ of the stars. In a monumental inscription Assyrian king, Esarhaddon (680-669 BC), wrote his name in lumāši, or ‘constellation’-writing. The passage reads, lumāši tamšīl šitir šumiya ēsiq šēruššun, ‘I carved on them constellations, the image [i.e., equivalent] of the writing of my name’ [8, vol. 9, 245; 23-25]. Although Esarhaddon never reveals why he chose to write his name in the cuneiform signs, words, and images that were used to spell and depict the constellations, S. Noegel cites texts that refer to ‘hidden words’, amāt niširti, as the ‘secrets of the gods’, pirištu ša ilī [26]. The implication being that Esarhaddon was communing with the deities in their own cryptic form of divine communication, namely, secret messages delivered by puns encrypted in the star-gods’ titles. M. Roaf and A. Zgoll have coined the term ‘astroglyph’ to describe lumāši-writing, and stress that this cryptic script was “derived from scribal knowledge of the forms of cuneiform signs, [and] from equivalences between Sumerian logograms and Akkadian words”, emphasizing that, “Such linguistic and visual puns ... are commonly found in the Mesopotamian world” [23, p. 291-292].

Esarhaddon’s use of lumāši-writing — i.e., enigmatic wordplays encrypted pictorially and linguistically in the constellation images and titles — implies an established scholarly tradition for encoding and deciphering such puns. And although Esarhaddon is the only ancient writer to specifically refer to lumāši-writing (i.e., ‘astroglyphs’), scholars have suspected that the use of similar symbols in temples constructed by his grandfather, Sargon II (721-705 BC), were also inscribed in constellation-writing [23, p. 267].

Here the remarks of A.R. George become pertinent: “Some of this esoteric scholarly lore was committed to writing, but it may be that much of it will always remain hidden from us because it was passed down orally as secret knowledge” [27].

I argue that by inscribing his name in lumāši, or ‘constellation’-writing, King Esarhaddon had inadvertently or intentionally disclosed an intimate trade secret of the Mesopotamian astrologer-magician: that constellations were a form of divine cuneiform ‘writing’ that could impart sacrosanct wisdom through the medium of wordplay.

2.3. Wordplay as revelation

And while today wordplay is regarded as a form of humour or witticism, cuneiform literature indicates that punning held a far more solemn role — frequently functioning as numinous inspiration. Noegel summarizes this phenomenon, “We tend to think of puns as a literary device — a sign of humour, rhetoric ... In antiquity, puns were not used in that way, because the conception of words was so different. Writing was considered of divine origin... Puns provided diviners with interpretative strategies...” [S.B. Noegel, professor of Biblical and Near Eastern Studies at the University of Washington, in *Why Freud Should Credit Mesopotamia*, N. Joseph (ed.), A&S Perspectives, Seattle, 2002]

The ‘diviners’ to whom Noegel refers were the ummânus — the ‘scholar-magicians’ that included the astrologer. He then postulates the rationale behind this conception: “... Perhaps because the written word evolved from pictographs in Mesopotamia, words were considered the embodiment of the object or idea they represented. While we read the word ‘dog’ and know that refers to a dog, ancient Mesopotamians would view the word ‘dog’ as a dog in a concentrated form. As a result, individual words contained the power of essence, in this case the essence of a dog. There was a whole envelope of information that came with every sign or part of a word.” [S.B. Noegel, in *Why Freud Should Credit Mesopotamia*]

Thus, because most cuneiform signs had multiple readings and meanings, almost every cuneiform word was ripe with potential forms of esoteric interpretations derived from polysemy and puns. And the discovery of such double entendre was believed to divulge a hidden aspect of the entity it described.

This seems to explain why Babylonian and Assyrian scholar-magicians — which included astrologers — embraced polysemy and puns with reverence, as if they had divulged a divine message illuminating a previously unknown aspect of the Cosmos. Such pun-based edification was often conceptualized as a revelation imparted directly from the gods to humanity, and was typically accompanied by fierce admonitions to secrecy [13, p. 209-236; 26, p. 70-76; 28].

A perfect example of pun-based enlightenment is seen with the Babylonian commentary asserting that the sky was made of water. It reads: šamê ša mê, “skies [mean] ‘of water’” [28, p. 33; 29]. Here, the possessive case Akkadian word for ‘skies, heavens’ (šamê) simultaneously spelled ‘of water’ (ša = ‘of’; mê = ‘water’) — a double meaning that reflected the ancient scholarly belief that the ‘skies, heavens’ were comprised of and fashioned from water. The solemnity of the discovery is seen three lines later, where the scholar-magician adds, “... a secret of the scholar. The uninitiated shall not see.” [28, p. 33; 26, p. 70-76] This pun-based Babylonian conviction regarding the heavens’ watery composition seems to be the impetus behind the irrational Genesis 1.7-8 claim that the Judaic deity had created waters that remained in the heavens [29, p. 113].

Significant here is the manner by which divine names were analysed for concealed puns that might disclose some previously unknown aspect of a deity. George writes: “In ancient cuneiform scholarship the writing of a name can be adapted to impart information about the nature and function of its bearer...” “... Babylonian scholars themselves were fond of the speculative interpretation of names in particular. This was not a trivial pursuit but a means of revealing profound truth about the nature and function of deities and their attributes.” [27]

The available evidence indicates that if a Mesopotamian astrologer-magician discerned a pun within a star-god’s name, he was inclined to construe this concealed meaning as a divine revelation imparted from Heaven [27; 28, p. 17, 49]; one that disclosed a previously unknown attribute or characteristic of that particular divinity.

Nowhere is this concept better illustrated than in Babylonian-Assyrian creation myth, Enuma Elish tablet VII. There Mesopotamian magician-scholars decoded wordplay from the fifty epithets for the supreme Babylonian deity, Marduk, and then arranged these puns into coherent statements that exposed facets of his identity and powers [30, 31]. Because the commentaries on puns given in Enuma Elish VII were an essential reference manual to Mesopotamian astrologers [13, p. 209-236; 16], we will analyse one astronomical line to illustrate how this practice was employed.

Line 126 of Enuma Elish VII reads: “The god Crossing [is] his star which in the heavens they caused to appear” [29, p. 114-115; 32].

To comprehend this verse we must first know that the deity Marduk was embodied in the planet Jupiter, and that astronomical texts refer to Marduk-Jupiter by the Akkadian epithet, DINGIR *Nēbiru*, ‘the god Crossing’ — a title applied to this planet-god when he stood on the meridian and was therefore ‘Crossing’ the midpoint of the sky [15, p. 260, 311; 33]. Pun-seeking Babylonian magicians envisioned this Akkadian sobriquet artificially — as if it was a Sumerian logogram, DINGIR NE₂-BI-RU [30, p. 20]. They then combed through the cuneiform signs in search of wordplay that exposed some previously undiscovered aspect of this planet-god’s powers. Because they were expert grammarians, the astrologer-magicians were surely familiar with the astronomical passage from the star atlas ‘MUL-APIN’ which referred to Jupiter as *Nēbiru* ‘Crossing’, and described it as the “star of the god Marduk” [33]; thus the determinative DINGIR, ‘god’, was equated with the Akkadian *kakkabu*, ‘star’ [30, p. 12]. (The notion that the stars were deities is found in the earliest occurrences of the cuneiform script (circa 3000 BCE), in which the cuneiform sign for DINGIR ‘god’ is inscribed with the image of a star [34].) DINGIR was also read AN, the logogram that represented *šamē*, ‘the skies,’ in Akkadian [30, p. 12]. Sumerian-Akkadian dictionaries imparted that BI represented the Akkadian word *sû*, ‘his’ [19, p. 320; 30, p. 12]. Bottéro notes that by the first millennium BC the vowel in consonant-vowel signs such as RU had become multivalent, thus the RU sign in NE₂-BI-RU was also read RA, a nuance mentioned in the secret commentaries for this line [30, p. 17-18]; and RA represented *ša*, ‘which,’ and *ina*, ‘in,’ in Akkadian [8, vol. 17(1), p. 1; vol. 7, p. 141-142]. An ancient commentary for this line reads, ‘E₁₁ = *šūpû*’ [8, vol. 1, p. 202; 30, p. 12]. The impetus for the latter was probably founded on the knowledge that the written DINGIR *Nēbiru* referred to a star and therefore assumed the celestial determinative — a common form being MUL₂. MUL₂ was also read TE, which represented the Akkadian causative verb *šūpû*, ‘to cause to appear, shine’ [8, vol. 1(2), p. 201; 18, p. 1459]. The ancient author then concealed this fairly conspicuous pun by reporting that *šūpû* ‘cause-to-shine’ was represented by one of its alternate logograms, E₁₁. (Bottéro, [31, p. 16-17], asserts that the ancient commentary ‘E₁₁ = *šūpû*’ was founded on polysemous reading of an earlier epithet for Marduk given in line 9 (i.e., that the line 9 epithet TU-TU could be read DU₂-DU₂, which forms a homophone with E₁₁, which is a composite cuneiform sign comprised of DU₆-DU). However, the

frequent admonitions to secrecy surrounding pun-based enlightenment in cuneiform literature makes it more likely that the ancient writer noticed that Marduk's aspect as Jupiter imbued it with the celestial determinative MUL₂/TE ('star'), which was also a logogram for *šūpû*, a verb that was also represented by E₁₁ [8, vol. 1(2), p. 201]. The ancient author then concealed this knowledge from the 'unlearned' by reporting that E₁₁ served as the logogram for *šūpû*; a 'learned' magician-scholar would have surely know that the impetus was founded on the knowledge that DINGIR *Nēbiru* was a 'star'/MUL₂, a logogram that also meant *šūpû*'cause-to-shine'. Similar logic, in which $A = B = C$, therefore $A = C$, pervades the commentaries of Mesopotamian scholar-magicians [30, p. 24; 35].) The author(s) of *Enuma Elish* then conjugated the infinitive *šūpû* into the third-person plural, past-tense, *ušāpû*, 'they-caused-to-shine', to suit the grammatical needs of the pun [30, p. 12, 16-17].

Therefore, polysemous readings embedded in the cuneiform signs used to write the title DINGIR *Nēbiru* yielded the puns, *kakkabû*'star', *šu*'his', *ša*'which', *ina*'in', *šamê*'the skies', and *ušāpû*'they-caused-to-shine' (Figure 2). These puns were then arranged into a coherent statement that elucidated the relationship between the deity Marduk and his aspect as Jupiter, as well as the historic manner in which this relationship had become manifested in the Cosmos. This pun-based wisdom was then reported as factual history as verse 126 of *Enuma Elish* tablet seven:

DINGIR NE₂-BI-RU kakkab-šu ša ina šamê ušāpû
 "The God Crossing [is] his-star which in the skies they-caused-to-
 appear."

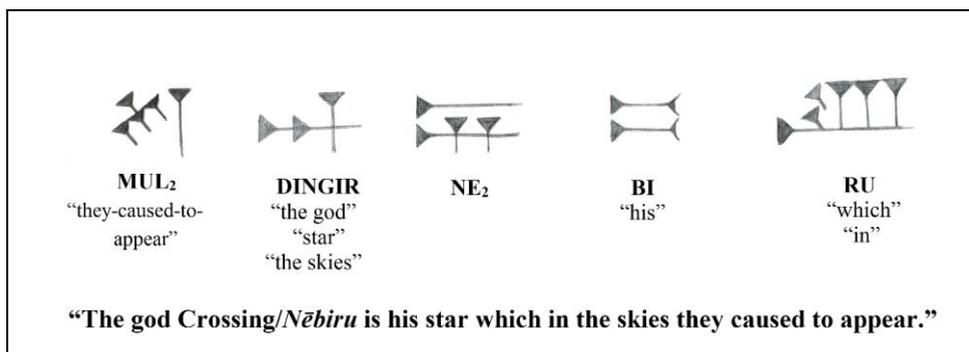


Figure 2. "The God Crossing/*Nēbiru* is his star which in the skies they caused to appear", sketch: Ashely McCurdy.

Crucial for the reader to comprehend is that the wordplays used to compose line 126 are just a smidgeon of the vast assortment of potential puns encrypted in the cuneiform signs used to write DINGIR *Nēbiru* (Figure 2). They were presumably chosen by the ancient Babylonian scholar(s) because it was believed that they communicated unassailable truth regarding the relationship between Jupiter at culmination (i.e., appearance at the meridian) and the god Marduk, as well as the historic manner in which this deity came to be embodied

in Jupiter. Other potential puns were omitted from this line. For example, NE₂ can render ‘paralyzed, dig, thick, press, oil, vessel, good’ and ‘pole’, yet all of these were excluded from verse 126.

In sum, the Babylonian-Assyrian ‘astrologer’/ṭupšarru was literally a ‘writer’ who envisioned the astral sky as a sacrosanct cuneiform ‘text’ that imparted divine messages via the polysemous readings of cuneiform signs — especially wordplay embedded in the title or epithet of a deity. And one of his most prized reference manuals consisted of the secret, scholarly commentaries on Enuma Elish tablet VII; commentaries that exemplified how to discern wordplay from the names and epithets of divinities and utilize them as revelations.

If we can accept — as a working hypothesis — that the Book of Judges author(s) was conscripted into colloquies with Babylonian astrologer-magicians and indoctrinated with astrological esoterica in a manner similar to Daniel, then we can rediscover what appears to be the arcane, Mesopotamian, astrological ‘logic’ upon which Samson’s ‘Jawbone Massacre’ was founded.

3. The prerequisite knowledge of the Judges’ author

A Judaic scholar taken hostage and enlisted into colloquies with Mesopotamian astrologer-magicians would have been indoctrinated to perceive the starry sky as ‘heavenly-writing’ that conveyed revelation through the conduit of wordplay, a practice exemplified in one of his sacred reference handbooks, Enuma Elish tablet VII. He would have been an expert grammarian, cognizant of each of the six-hundred cuneiform signs’ various readings and meanings, as well as the fact that each cuneiform sign had a ‘name’ — a point frequently referred to in the Sumerian-Akkadian lexical commentaries [36]. He would have also been familiar with the Sumerian-Akkadian dictionaries that listed a Sumerian logogram and its equivalent Akkadian meaning. Armed with the aforementioned skills, the Judges’ author was readily able to detect the layers of polysemy found in cuneiform writing; thereby exposing puns he would have been inclined to conceptualize as divine revelation.

Moreover, the Judges’ author would have also been privy to the astronomical texts that unequivocally describe Taurus as a deity [33, p. 67-69]. Because Taurus was a divinity akin to the planet-god DINGIR Nēbiru (Figure 2), its title could divulge epiphanies about the identity, nature, and experiences of this celestial Bull. Moreover, the Judges’ author would have been cognizant of the multitude of titles for Taurus, which included the Sumerian GU₄-AN-NA, ‘Bull-of-the-Heavens’, and PIRIG, ‘Bull’, alongside the Akkadian Lû, and Elû, ‘Bull’ [15, p. 72, 77; 7, vol. 9, p. 227; 7, vol. 1, p. 377]. He would have also been apprised that the sign name for the logogram GU₄/‘Bull’ was GUD [19, p. 337]. Such an elite scholar would have also known that the conspicuous Hyades asterism in Taurus depicted its Isu, ‘Jawbone’, which was comprised of the mandible and maxilla and therefore included the eye sockets and skull [15, p. 200; 7, vol. 7, p. 204]; and that the Sumerian terms equated with the Akkadian

Isu/'Jawbone' included ISSI and SI [7, vol. 7, p. 204]. A scholar of his magnitude would have also been apprised of the astrological tablets that described the Hyades as an Agû, 'Crown', and a Lē'u, 'Writing-Board' [8, vol. 1(2), p. 155; 8, vol. 7, p. 189; 34, p. 30; 15, no. 5; 8, vol. 9, p. 156; 15, no. 96], and that the Pleiades embodied the Zappu, or 'Bristle', of course hair along the nape of the zodiacal Bull's neck [15, no. 279; 37]. (For the Hyades as a 'Crown'/Agû see [7, vol. 1(2), p. 155, agû A; 7, vol. 7, p. 189, is lē, lexical section; 33, p. 30; 15, no. 5]. For the Hyades as a 'Writing-Board, Writing-Tablet'/Lē'u see [7, vol. 9, p. 156, lē'u; 15, no. 96].)

And although the compiler of Judges lived more than five centuries after the historical Samson and presumably lacked any specific details regarding the events of his life — save that he was an illustrious Judaic leader — the aforementioned Mesopotamian astrological convictions provided an inviolable mechanism by which to 'rediscover' kernels of facts about this Hebrew personage. We will now see that polysemous readings encrypted in the titles of Taurus correspond with the Hebrew meaning of the name Samson, and divulge the existence of a 'donkey's jawbone' within this constellation.

4. The celestial identity of Samson and the 'Donkey's Jawbone' in Taurus

Samson is spelled Šmšwn in vowel-less Hebrew, derived from the root šmš, 'sun' [1, vol. V, p. 950]. Most scholars consider the – wn suffix an expression of the diminutive state, meaning that Šmšwn literally renders 'Little-Sun' — Samson's name conveying the notion that his essence embodied a smaller, anthropomorphic version of the Sun [1, vol. V, p. 950; 2, p. 225; 38]. This name can be traced to a lumāši-writing puns encrypted in Taurus' cuneiform spelling.

One of the common Akkadian titles for 'Bull', Lû, was also applied to 'Lion' — with Lû commonly represented by the logogram PIRIG [8, vol. 9, p. 227]. Sumerian-Akkadian dictionaries studied by Mesopotamian astrologers list Lû/'Bull, Lion' as a synonym with the more poetic word, Labbu, 'Lion' [8, vol. 9, p. 24; 18, vol. I, p. 526]; with one of the logograms for Labbu/'Lion' being PIRIG-TUR, literally, 'Little-Lion' [8, vol. 9, p. 24; 18, vol. I, p. 526]. Therefore, the Judges' author would have understood that Lû meant both 'Bull' and 'Lion', and was equated with PIRIG-TUR/'Little-Lion'.

Moreover, because the Mesopotamian astrologer was an adroit grammarian, he knew that the logogram PIRIG/'Lion, Bull' phonetically imparted PIRIG₂, the logogram more commonly read U₄, 'Sun' [<http://psd.museum.upenn.edu/epsd/nepsd-frame.html>, pirig₂]. Thus, a Judaic scholar-magician inculcated with Mesopotamian astrological arcana would have known that one of the logograms equated with Taurus, PIRIG-TUR, phonated the term, PIRIG₂-TUR, 'Little-Sun', which correlates with Samson's Hebrew name, Šimšôn, 'Little-Sun' (Figures 3, 4).

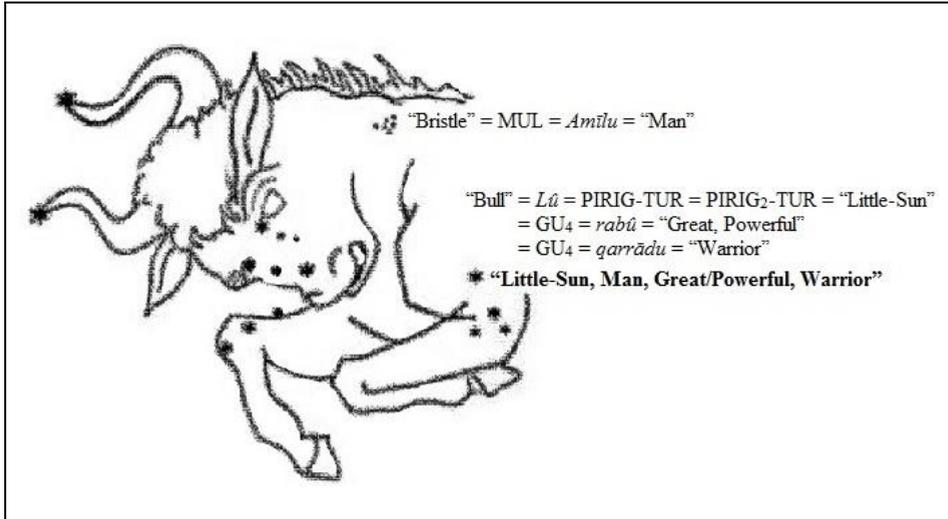


Figure 3. Puns enciphered in Taurus’ cuneiform titles correlate with Samson’s Hebrew name and aspect as a powerful warrior, sketch: Ashely McCurdy.

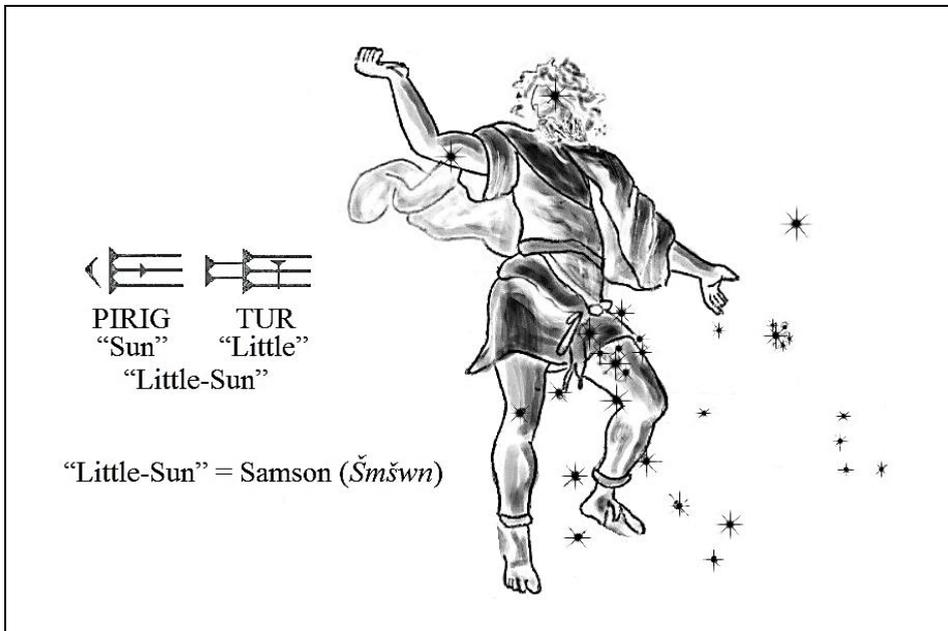


Figure 4. An Akkadian term for Taurus, *Lû*, was equated with the logogram PIRIG-TUR (‘Little-Lion’), which phonetically renders PIRIG₂-TUR, ‘Little-Sun’, the cuneiform semantic equivalent to the Hebrew *Šmšwn*, ‘Samson.’; sketch: Ashely McCurdy.

The impetus to anthropomorphize this constellation may have come from the ‘Bristle’/Zappu asterism on its neck, depicted by the Pleiades; which was spelled logographically as MUL (‘Star’), a logogram that also represented the Akkadian term *amīlu*, ‘man, human being’ [8, vol. 21, p. 49-50, *zappu*, lexical section; 8, vol. 1(2), p. 48, *amīlu*, lexical section; 15, no. 279] (Figure 3). The

compulsion to glamorize this ‘Little-Sun-Man’ as a heroic warrior may have come from Taurus’ common astronomical logogram, GU₄, which also represented *rabû*, ‘great, powerful’, and *qarrādu*, ‘hero, warrior’, in Akkadian [8, vol. 14, p. 27, *rabû*, lexical section; 8, vol. 13, p. 141, *qarrādu*, lexical section] (Figure 3).

The notion that Taurus was conceptualized as a ‘Donkey’ and possessed a ‘Donkey’s Jawbone’ can be traced to further puns. Sumerian-Akkadian dictionaries studied by Mesopotamian astrologers confirm that one of the common logograms for ‘Bull’ — PIRIG — was also read GIR₃ and represented the Akkadian *imēru*, ‘donkey’. (For PIRIG read GIR₃ see [19, p. 183, 402-403, no. 701]. For PIRIG = Lû/‘Bull, Lion’ see: CAD 9, 227, lû A, lexical section; For GIR₃ = *imēru*/‘donkey’ see [8, vol. 7, p. 110, *imēru*, lexical section; 18, vol. I, p. 375, *imēru*, lexical section].

Thus, polysemous meanings embedded in a logogram for Taurus (PIRIG/GIR₃) imparted that it was simultaneously a ‘Bull’/Lû and a ‘Donkey’/Imēru. Moreover, astrological tablets confirm that the Hyades, a prominent asterism within Taurus, was its *Isu*, ‘Jawbone’ [15, nos. 96, 200; 8, vol. 7, p. 188-189, is lē, lexical section]. Thus, wordplay disclosed that this *Isu*/‘Jawbone’ belonged to a ‘Donkey’ — a direct correlate to the Hebrew *lāhî-ḥāmôr*, ‘jawbone-of-the-donkey’, of Judges 15.15-16 (Figure 5).

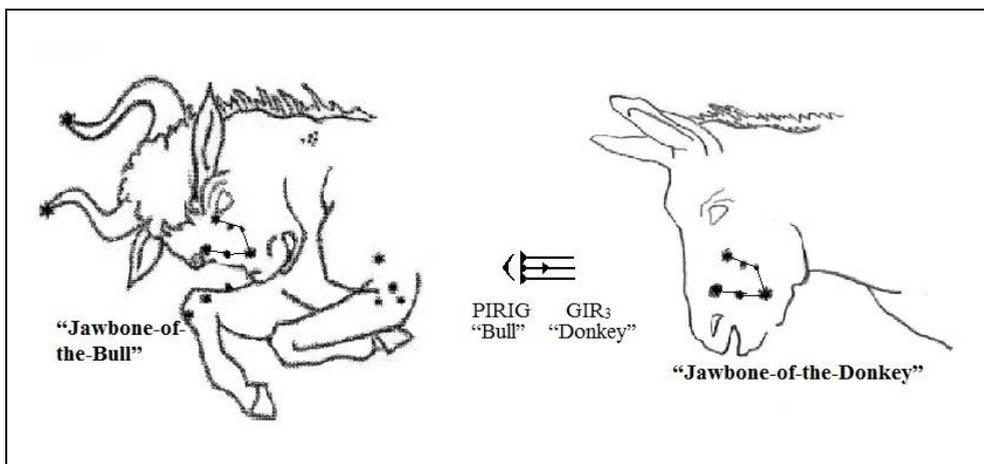


Figure 5. The Hyades asterism in Taurus depicted the Bull’s *Isu*, ‘Jawbone’. A common logogram for Taurus, PIRIG, was also read GIR₃, ‘Donkey’. This pun imparted that Taurus depicted a Donkey and thus the Hyades depicted the ‘Jawbone-of-the-Donkey’ (sketch: Ashely McCurdy).

The term ‘Donkey’s Jawbone’ is found in an additional astronomical pun. One of the Sumerian-Akkadian dictionaries studied by Mesopotamian astrologers equated the Akkadian *Isu*/‘Jawbone’ with the Sumerian word ISSI, which was inscribed IS-SI [8, vol. 7, p. 204, *isu*, lexical section]. The IS in IS-SI phonetically imparts the Akkadian construct form of *Isu*/‘Jawbone’ — with *Is* literally meaning ‘Jawbone-of-the’; while SI sometimes served as a logogram

for *imēru*, ‘donkey’ [8, vol. 7, p. 110, *imēru*, lexical section; 18, vol. I, p. 375, *imēru*, lexical section]. Thus, a Mesopotamian-trained Judaic astrologer seeking puns in the constellation titles would have noticed that one of the Sumerian terms for Taurus’ ‘Jawbone’ asterism, IS-SI, could also be read *Is-SI*, ‘Jawbone-of-the-Donkey’ (Figure 6).

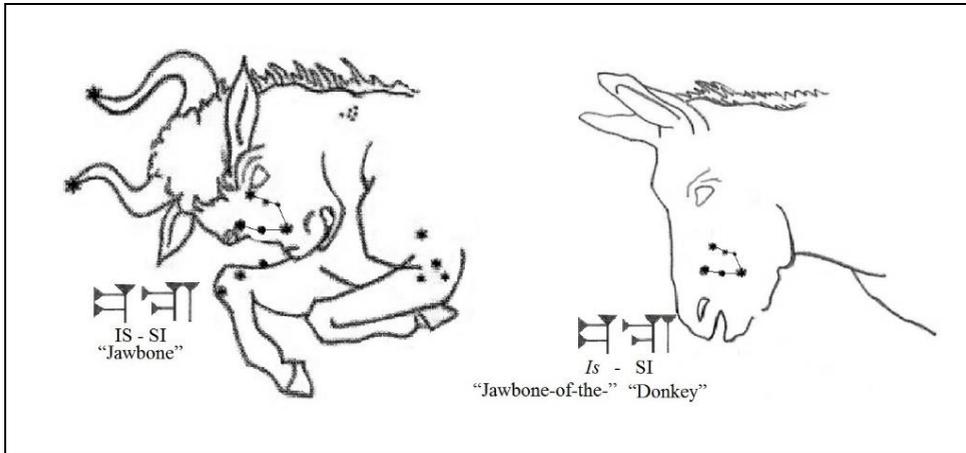


Figure 6. IS-SI, a Sumerian term for ‘Jawbone’, also imparted the Akkadian *Is-SI*, ‘Jawbone-of-the-Donkey’; sketch: Ashley McCurdy.

In sum, lumāši-writing puns encoded in Taurus phonetically imparted PIRIG₂-TUR, ‘Little-Sun’, the equivalent to the meaning of the Hebrew Šimšôn/’Samson’. And because one of the common logograms for Taurus (PIRIG) also rendered ‘Donkey’, the Jawbone asterism depicted by the Hyades could be conceived as a ‘Donkey’s Jawbone’ (Figure 5). Finally, a variant Sumerian spelling for ‘Jawbone’, IS-SI, imparted the pun *Is-SI*, ‘Jawbone-of-the-Ass’ (Figure 6).

When viewed from the perspective that the Judges’ author was a devout Jew inculcated with the Babylonian astrological precept that the starry sky depicted a divine, cuneiform ‘text’ and that divulged revelation through the medium of wordplay, it seems plausible that the aforementioned puns inspired a connection between Samson/’Little-Sun’ and Taurus; possibly compelling the Judges’ author to envision Taurus as Samson’s ‘astroglyph’, with further wordplay imparting the notion of a ‘Donkey’s Jawbone’.

We will now see how lumāši-writing wordplays may have inspired the Judges’ author to construe the Ass’ Jawbone as a ‘weapon’, and how this peculiar weapon was then used to kill a thousand men.

4.1. *Slaying a thousand men with the Jawbone of Taurus*

The prelude to Samson’s ‘Jawbone Execution’ is found in verses 14.1-20 and 15.1-14. After murderous encounters with the Philistines that included the killing of thirty of their men at the city of Ashkelon and another great slaughter

as revenge for the execution of his wife and father-in-law, our protagonist-warrior retreats to a ‘cave in the rock of ‘Êṭām’’. The Philistines come to Judah to take Samson prisoner. In an effort to avoid reprisal for Samson’s murderous rampages, three-thousand Jewish countrymen bind him in ropes and turn him over to their adversary. Upon his approach to the town of Lehi (Hebrew: Ləḥî, ‘Jawbone’) the Spirit-of-Yahweh comes upon Samson and melts away the ropes from his arms and hands as if they were charred flax.

Verse 15.15 reads: “And he found a fresh jawbone-of-a-donkey, and he reached out his hand and he grabbed it, and he struck down with it a thousand man.”

How the ‘Jawbone’ asterism in Taurus may have come to be perceived as a ‘weapon’ can be traced to two fairly conspicuous homophones. The first is seen with the logogram for ‘weapon’, TUKUL, which was also read GU₅ and GUD₇, thereby forging homophones with the word GU₄/‘Bull’ the latter’s cuneiform sign name, GUD [http://psd.museum.upenn.edu/epsd/nepsd-frame.html, tukul, gud].

The second can be traced to the Bull’s sign name, GUD, which represented eṭammu, ‘spirit of the dead’, a synonym with mītu, ‘spirit of the dead’ [8, vol. 4, p. 397, eṭammu; 8, vol. 10(2), p. 140] — a semantic correlation that would have been apparent to any Mesopotamian-trained astrologer. Several Sumerian-Akkadian dictionaries and lexical commentaries render mītu/‘spirit-of-the-dead’ with the older nominative case ending, -um, spelling it mi-i-tum, i.e., mītum [8, vol. 10(2), p. 140]. And here lies the polysemous pun: because the tum sign in the latter word can also be read ṭum [19, p. 319], mītum forms a homonym with mi-i-ṭum, i.e., mīṭum, ‘divine weapon, divine mace’ [8, vol. 10(2), p. 147]. Hence, the logogram for Taurus, GUD, was imbued with the meaning mīṭum, ‘divine weapon/mace’ (Figure 7). This correlates precisely with the manner in which Samson slew his thousand foes — using the donkey’s jawbone as a makeshift mace, i.e., a club used to smite enemies in hand-to-hand combat.

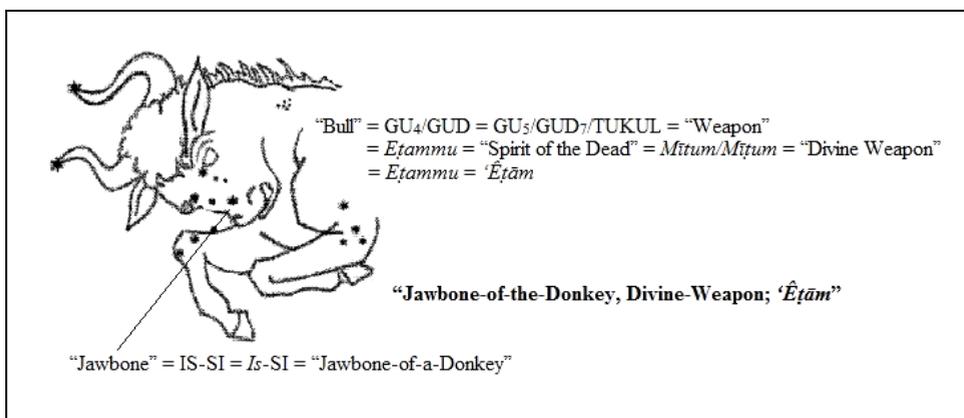


Figure 7. Homonymous constellation-writing puns in Taurus’ logographic spelling imparted the words ‘Jawbone-of-the-Donkey’, ‘divine weapon’, and ‘Êṭām’.

The latter assertion becomes even more plausible when we find that the Bull's lexical relationship to eṭammu/'spirit of the dead' (i.e., GUD = eṭammu) correlates with the heretofore unknown location of 'Êṭām — Samson's hiding place at the outset of the passage 15.8, 11 [4, p. 246; 2, p. 235]. If the Akkadian eṭammu was translated into Hebrew the nominative case ending (-u) would drop off, leaving eṭam, which can yield 'Êṭām in Hebrew.

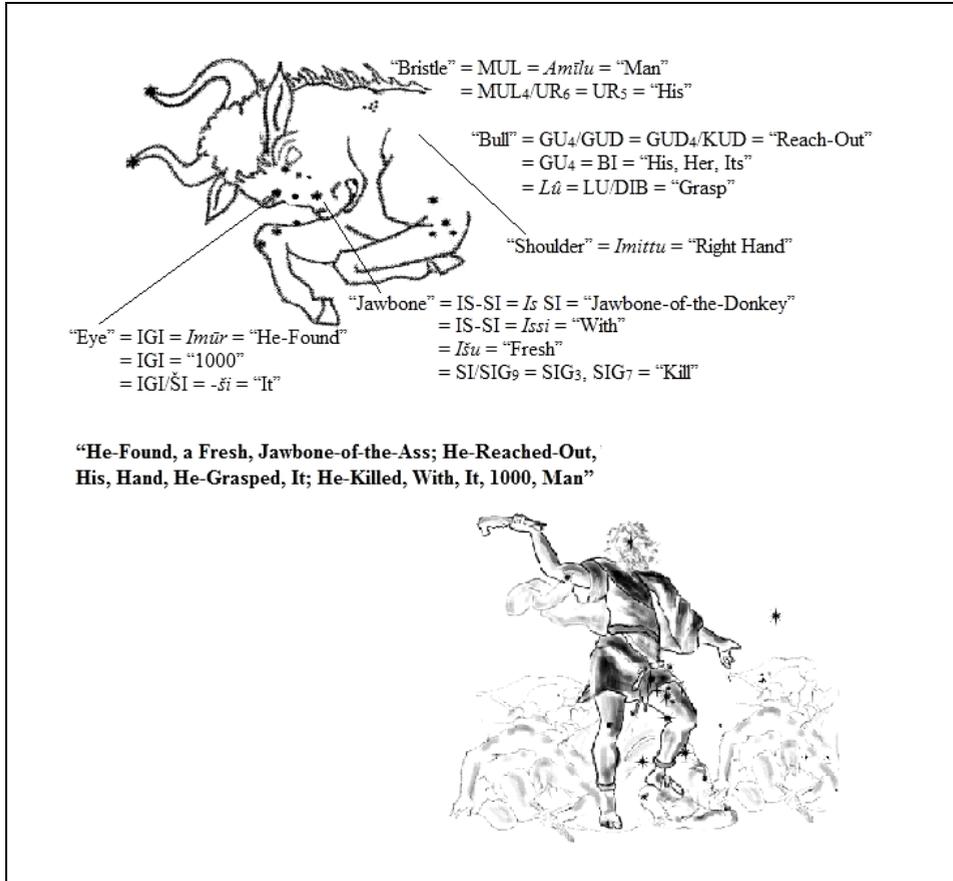


Figure 8. Constellation-writing puns correspond with every Hebrew word in Judges 15.15, sketch: Ashely McCurdy.

4.1.1. He-found

The Greek constellation we today know as Taurus originated in Mesopotamia [15, no. 77]. Jewish scholar-magicians indoctrinated with Mesopotamian astronomical esoterica would have presumably noticed that Taurus' brightest star, Aldebaran, depicted its southern 'Eye' [39, 40]. And the logogram for 'Eye' — IGI — also represented the verb *amāru*, 'to find' [8, vol. 1(2), p. 5-6, *amāru* A, 1, lexical section]. In fact, one exegetical commentary lists the Akkadian *imur*, 'he-found', as the equivalent to IGI [8, vol. 1(2), p. 6,

amāru A, lexical section]. Hence, a lumāši-writing pun encrypted in Taurus' bright 'Eye' star also rendered the Akkadian verb 'He-Found' (Figure 8).

4.1.2. 'A fresh jawbone-of-a-donkey'

The cuneiform equivalent to the Hebrew 'fresh' (tryh) may have come from the Jawbone asterism's infrequent alternate spelling as išu [15, no. 200; 8, vol. 7, p. 188, is lê; 18, vol. I, p. 389, isu]. The latter forms a homonym with a dialectical variant spelling for the Akkadian word 'fresh', iššu, which could be inscribed as išu since doubled consonants were not always indicated in cuneiform writing [8, vol. 4, p. 374-377]. (For doubled consonants not consistently shown in the cuneiform writing of a word, see [17, p. 72].) A Mesopotamian-trained astrologer would possess the grammatical prowess to discern the aforementioned homonymous readings in which an alternate spelling for the Akkadian word 'Jawbone' (išu) also embodied the word 'fresh' (išu/iššu).

All told, lumāši-writing puns in Taurus' Eye and Jawbone stars could impart, 'He-Found, a Fresh, Jawbone-of-an-Ass'; which correlates precisely with Samson's unlikely weapon in Judges 15.15 (Figure 8).

4.1.3. 'He-reached-out'

The Hebrew 'he-reached-out' (yšlh) bears an equivalent in the typical logogram for Taurus. A Mesopotamian-trained astrologer would have surely known that the sign name for GU₄ ('Bull') was GUD, and that the latter formed a homophone with GUD₄ — the logogram more commonly read KUD and which represented the Akkadian tarāšu, "to extend, stretch out (a hand)" [8, vol. 18, p. 208, tarāšu A, lexical section; <http://psd.museum.upenn.edu/epsd/nepsd-frame.html>, gud₄].

4.1.4. 'His-hand'

Tablet six of The Gilgamesh Epic confirms that the portion of the 'Bull-of-Heaven' that Enkidu threw before Ishtar was its imittu, 'shoulder', a mythical event that explained how Taurus assumed the misshapen appearance of a Bull that has been cleanly severed at the shoulder [8, vol. 7, p. 125, imittu C; 15, no. 77; 27, p. 628-629]. Imittu also meant, 'right hand' [8, vol. 7, p. 120, imittu A, 2].

The Hebrew 'his' comes from the third-person, masculine, pronominal suffix affixed to nouns, -w. Its correlate is found in the logogram BI, which represented the Akkadian third-person, singular suffix affixed to nouns and prepositions, -šu, -ša, 'his, her, its'. Figure 9 illustrates that the wedges used to write the logogram BI/'his' were embedded in the Late-Babylonian (600 BCE – 100 CE) logogram GU₄/'Bull' [1, p. 698, nos. 358, 4729]. If Noegel's earlier claim that each portion of a cuneiform word could be mined for exegetical

information, then it seems plausible that a Mesopotamian astrologer would have noticed that the wedges used to render BI/’his’ were embedded in the logogram GU₄/’Bull’ (Figure 9).

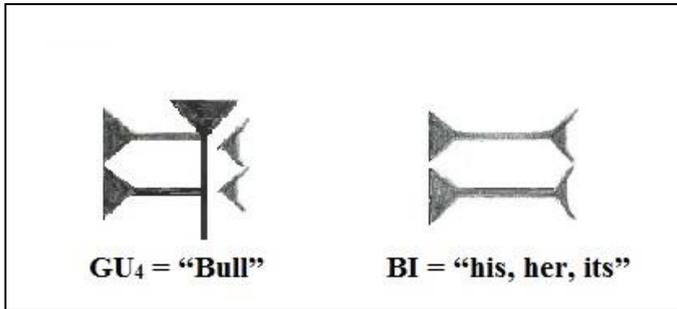


Figure 9. BI, the cuneiform logogram representing the Akkadian suffixes ‘his, her, its,’ was embedded within the wedges used to write GU₄/’Bull’ at the time the Judges’ author was writing; sketch: Ashley McCurdy.

The word ‘his’ was also encrypted phonetically in the ‘Bristle’ of Taurus, which was sometimes inscribed MUL₄, a logogram whose variant reading was UR₆. (For the Zappu/’Bristle’ of Taurus (i.e., the Pleiades) represented by the logogram MUL₄, see [37]. For MUL₄ read as UR₆ see [19, p. 182, no. 698].) The latter forged a homophone with UR₅, the logogram that represented šû, ‘his’ [8, vol. 17(3), p. 153] (Figure 8).

After conjugating tarāšu/’stretch out’ for coherence as exemplified throughout Enuma Elish VII, the constellation-writing puns encrypted in Taurus yield, ‘He-Stretched-Out, His, (Right)-Hand’ (Figure 8).

4.1.5. ‘He-grabbed-it’

The Hebrew has yq̄h̄h, with the terminal –h serving as the feminine pronominal suffix meaning ‘it’ [41]. Although several puns may have imparted the notion of ‘grasping, grabbing’, the simplest correlation is found in Taurus’ Akkadian spelling, Lû, which was pronounced exactly like the logogram LU. When the Judges author was writing, LU was inscribed exactly like DIB, one of the logograms for tamāḥu, ‘to take hold of’. (For the cuneiform signs LU and DIB inscribed identically after 1000 BCE, see [19, p. 428, nos. 812, 813] and for DIB = tamāḥu see [8, vol. 18, p. 107, tamāḥu, lexical section].) Hence, ‘Bull’/Lû phonetically imparted DIB, ‘take hold of’, Moreover, Taurus’ bright ‘Eye’ star, Aldebaran, was written with the logogram IGI, which can be read ŠI, the phonetic equivalent to –ši, the third-person, feminine, pronominal suffix attached to verbs.

After conjugating the verb for relevance the lumāši-writing puns encrypted in Taurus yield, ‘He-Grasped, -It’ (Figure 8).

4.1.6. 'He-struck-down-with-it a thousand man'

The Hebrew 'he struck down' (yk) comes from the verb *nākāh*, 'to smite' [42]. One of the logograms for 'Jawbone', SI, could also be read SIG₉, which phonated the Sumerian SIG₃ and SIG₇ — logograms that stood for *maḥāṣu* in Akkadian, 'to kill' (For SI read SIG₉ see [<http://psd.museum.upenn.edu/epsd/nepsd-frame.html>, si] and for SIG₃ and SIG₇ = *maḥāṣu* see [8, vol. 10(1), p. 71-72, *maḥāṣu*, lexical section].) The Hebrew rendered 'with it', *bāh*, bears a correlate in the Sumerian spelling for 'Jawbone' — ISSI — which forged a homonym with the Akkadian *issi*, a dialectical variant of the word 'with'. (For *issi* as a variant form of *išti*/'with', see [8, vol. 7, p. 283, *išti*; 18, vol. I, p. 401, *išti*].) And we have seen that BI, the third-person, feminine pronominal suffix attached to nouns and prepositions, represented -ša, 'her, it', was embedded in the wedges used to write GU₄/'Bull' (Figure 9).

The Hebrew has 'a thousand man' ('lp 'yš). The word 'thousand' was encoded in Taurus' bright 'Eye', IGI, a logogram that also represented the number '1000' [19, p. 406-407, no. 724]. Earlier we saw that the cuneiform correlate to 'man' was found in Taurus' 'Bristle'/MUL, a logogram that also meant *amīlu*/'man' (Figure 3).

After conjugating the verb for coherence the constellation-writing puns embedded in the cuneiform terms for Taurus impart, 'He-Found, a Fresh, Jawbone-of-an-Ass; He-Reached-Out, His, Hand, He-Grabbed, It; He-Killed, With, It, 1000, Man'; puns that correlate with the Hebrew in Judges 15.15 (Figure 8).

5. Conclusions

I cannot adhere to any dogmatic interpretations regarding the proffered correlates between Samson's 'Jawbone Massacre' passage and wordplay in the cuneiform titles for Taurus; and concede that there is no way to conclusively prove that the Judges' author(s) utilized these puns as the basis for the story. Furthermore, I acknowledge that a sceptical eye seeking a 'testable' hypothesis could rightly argue that the puns enciphered in Taurus' cuneiform titles were subjectively selected from a much larger pool of potential cuneiform puns encrypted in the titles for the Bull and its asterisms; thus I have 'cherry picked' my data (i.e., the celestial puns) to match the corresponding Hebrew words found in Judges 15.15-19. Ironically, the latter criticism underscores the very nature by which puns were employed as exegetical tools in ancient Mesopotamian literature, i.e., ancient Babylonian-Assyrian scholars arbitrarily selected and utilized certain wordplays as exegetical enlightenment from among a much wider selection of potential puns — discarding the others; a point discussed above with DINGIR Nēbiru (Figure 2).

Yet an almost one-to-one correlation does exist between the polysemous readings of the cuneiform titles for Taurus and its asterisms, and the Hebrew words found in Judges 15.15. Moreover, the plausibility that the aforementioned

puns served as key components of Samson's 'Jawbone Massacre' increases when we delve into what is known about the compilation of this passage. The Judges' author was a Jew exiled to Babylonia after Nebuchadnezzar II's defeat of Judah in 597 BCE. As evinced by the experiences of Daniel and Ezekiel, some Jewish scholars were conscripted into the esoteric teachings of the Babylonian *ummānu*, 'scholar-magicians' — whose skillset often included mastery of Mesopotamian astrological arcana. The title of the Mesopotamian astrologer, *tuṣarru*/'writer', betrays his grammatical prowess; their commentaries elucidating that the starry sky was perceived as a divine cuneiform 'text' or 'heavenly writing' that imparted inviolable, exegetical wisdom through the conduit of wordplay — what Assyrian king, Esarhaddon, called *lumāši*-, or 'constellation'-writing.

And while recollections of an historical *Šimšôn*/'Samson' may have lingered in the cultural memory of the exiled Judeans, the more than five-hundred year separation between his historicity and the penning of the Book of Judges had erased any factual knowledge of his exploits — save that he was a renowned leader of the pre-monarchical Judaic people. Although such an historical reconstruction would seem impossible today, the Judges' author had been edified with Mesopotamian astrological esoterica, which availed him to the ultimate exegetical tool: knowledge that the starry sky depicted a divine cuneiform 'text', and that the Babylonian star-gods that comprised this 'text' channelled inviolable truth to humanity through the medium of puns enciphered in their titles and epithets.

Wordplay encoded in Taurus' appellations phonetically imbued the Bull with the term 'Little-Sun', a direct correlate to the meaning behind the Hebrew *Šimšôn*/'Samson'. Here lay a heavenly testament imparting that Samson was embodied in Taurus. Additional constellation-writing puns in Taurus exposed the terms 'divine-weapon, divine mace', 'a fresh jawbone of an ass', and 'he-found' — implicating how Samson came upon such a bizarre weapon. I contend that the author(s) of Judges noticed the aforementioned wordplays, which compelled him to equate the historical Samson with the zodiacal Bull and to envision its 'fresh Jawbone' asterism (the Hyades) as his weapon. In accordance with his Babylonian astrological training, he then sought out polysemous readings and puns in the multitude of cuneiform titles for Taurus and its asterisms in an effort to elucidate how the astral Samson was interrelating with 'the fresh jawbone of an ass'. Once discovered these puns were arranged into coherent grammatical units and translated into Hebrew. The final product — proffered above — became Judges 15.15, which explained how Samson 'found a fresh Donkey's Jawbone' and used it to 'kill a thousand man'.

And while a modern thinker's knowledge of natural law and use of sound reasoning precludes the possibility of a single man killing a thousand men with a fresh ass' jawbone in hand-to-hand combat, the Judges' author was not encumbered by such science-minded constrictions. To him, the mere fact that the aforementioned wordplays were encrypted in Taurus' cuneiform titles verified that they were indeed aspects of this star-figure's history.

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