WHO NAMES THE NAMERS?
THE INTERPRETATION OF NECROMANTIC TERMS IN
JEWISH TRANSLATIONS OF THE BIBLE

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To explore the womb, or tomb, or dreams; all these are usual
Pastimes and drugs, and features of the press:
And always will be, some of them especially
When there is distress of nations and perplexity
Whether on the shores of Asia, or in the Edgware Road.
Men's curiosity searches past and future
And clings to that dimension. But to apprehend
The point of intersection of the timeless
With time, is an occupation for the saint—
No occupation either, but something given
And taken, in a lifetime's death in love,
Ardour and selflessness and self-surrender.

(T.S. Eliot, *Four Quartets: The Dry Salvages*. V)

To open this contribution to honor Prof. Trebolle Barrera, I have
chosen a short fragment of T. S. Eliot's *Quartets*, as it brings
memories of some of my earlier conversations with Julio on poetry in
general and Eliot in particular, where I expressed a recurring
preference for *The Waste Land*, whereas he always leaned towards
the *Quartets*. Nevertheless, those conversations took me into re-
reading the *Quartets* and finding passages which shed a sort of poetic
intensity of a different color than the cruelest month of April, an
intensity which perhaps one may understand better after these years
of learning from and working with Julio on the text of the Bible, and
which the fragment above, and its assessment on apprehending the
*point of intersection of the timeless with time* could fitly describe. As
a sample of this academic connection which the teaching of Julio has
revealed and still reveals, I will turn in the present paper to another

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recurring conversation of ours, this time on the Hebrew Bible: the meaning of the Hebrew נאש, a mystifying puzzle which certainly we have not solved, but which to me constituted quite a bit of fascinating immersion into Ancient Near Eastern myth and ritual, paired with biblical literary, textual and linguistic analysis. Here I will not try to unlock the issue of the word's etymology, for sure. On the other hand, I will present a series of considerations on traditions of interpretation of the specialized mantic term, both in the Rabbinic world and in the history of the Septuagint and other versions of the Bible, and on how a comparative of these interpretations and translations, particularly in the historical books of Samuel and Kings, may reflect ideas of interest on mantic and necromantic practices in the cultures and communities in question, even though the נאש itself remains a conundrum.

1. The נאש ve Na'as in the Hebrew and Aramaic Tradition

Although this paper will focus on later developments of the basic (Hebrew) texts, I will begin my approach by presenting the passages of the Hebrew Bible which contain the words which originated that later complicated line (or, rather, mesh) of interpretation. Later, I will summarize briefly the main interpretations produced by the Jewish tradition, to conclude with a quick survey of the explanations presented in modern scholarship.²

1.1. Contexts and Distribution

The word נאש (either in singular or plural) appears in the following passages of the Hebrew Bible:

I. Pentateuch: 
1. Lev 19:31; 20:6; 20:27; Deut 18:11
II. Historical Books: 
1. 1Sam 28:3, 7 (x2), 8, 9; 2Kgs 21:6; 23:24; 1Chr 10:13; 2Chr 33:6

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