

soul” that departed from the body during sleep,⁴⁴ Steiner shows the *nepeš* could be conceptualized as capable of flight. The representations of the Egyptian *ba* and the Mesopotamian *zaqīqu* as birds provide important comparative context (Steiner 2015, 55–58), but the biblical texts themselves also make use of THE SOUL IS A BIRD as a conceptual metaphor:⁴⁵ “how can you say to my *nepeš*, ‘Flee to the mountains like a bird?’” (Ps 11:1); “Our *nepeš* has escaped like a bird from the snare of the fowlers” (Ps 124:7). Isaiah 8:19 also describes the spirits of the dead chirping and cooing like birds.⁴⁶ Much like the Egyptian *ba*, the Hebrew *nepeš* could also be addressed by its owner in the vocative, suggesting a degree of independence. This is most common in the Psalms (Pss 103:1, 2, 22; 104:1, 35), with one of the most explicit examples in Ps 42:12: “Why are you dissolving, O my *nepeš*, and why are you restless within me?”

Steiner also argues for a separate component of the *nepeš*, namely the *nepeš habbāšār* (“*nepeš* of the flesh”), which was physically located in the blood (Lev 17:11). This concept is similar to that of the “body soul,” or the animating element that is native to the body and remains with it until decomposition.⁴⁷ This, according to Steiner, is to be distinguished from the animating *rūaḥ* which departed the body at death.⁴⁸ The *nepeš*, the *nepeš habbāšār*, and the *rūaḥ* appear to have survived the death of the body.⁴⁹ Later texts that elaborate on these concepts suggest the *rūaḥ* returned to the deity (Eccl 12:7), the *nepeš habbāšār* remained with the body, while the *nepeš* continued on as the deceased’s primary locus of agency and self.⁵⁰ Steiner has marshaled considerable support for recognizing a

⁴⁴ Steiner (2015, 23–42) argues that the sense of the two unique nouns in the enigmatic Ezek 13:18 (*kāṣātôt* and *miṣpāḥôt*) is not to be found in Akkadian, but in Mishnaic Hebrew, where they refer to pillowcases and pillow filling. The passage is not about women hunting lives with wristbands and headbands but using pillowcases and pillow filling to capture and ransom *nəpāšôt* that had departed from the body during sleep.

⁴⁵ Steiner attributes the two references to Lys 1959, 161.

⁴⁶ The two verbal roots are *spp* and *hgh*, which appear in Isa 38:14 associated with birds: “Like a swallow or a swift, so I chirped (‘*āṣapšēp*), I cooed (‘*ehgeh*) like a dove.”

⁴⁷ JoAnn Scurlock (2002, 3) describes the Mesopotamian *eṭemmu* as a body-soul, which may find support in the reference with in the Atrahasis to the *eṭemmu* originally being drawn from the flesh and the blood of the deceased deity (Atr. 1.2.215, 217). Cf. Abusch 1998, 372. For a review of the different typologies of the soul within a cognitive context, see Pyysiäinen 2009, 58–68.

⁴⁸ Steiner (2015, 84–85) also finds this concept of a distinct *pneuma* and *psychē* within the writings of Philo of Alexandria (Her. 55) as well as Josephus (Ant. 1.1.2.34).

⁴⁹ Yitzhaq Feder (2019, 417) argues that extra-biblical evidence “corroborates the view, suggested by numerous biblical texts, that the *nepeš* refers to the soul of the deceased which resides in the grave after death.”

⁵⁰ Job 19:26 may invoke the latter concept when it states, “After my skin is thus shredded, without my flesh I will see God.” Feder (2019, 421) states, “it seems reasonable to infer