The biblical texts refer to the *mētîm* ("dead"[67]), *'ôb* (traditionally "medium," but perhaps "ancestor, image"[68]), *yidʿōnîm* ("knowing ones"[69]), *'iṭṭîm* (meaning unknown, but likely cognate with Akkadian *eṭemmu*, "body spirit/ghost"[70]), and *rəpā'îm* ("benefactors" or "noble ones"?).[71] While there was likely a broad spectrum of conceptualizations of these entities, where they came from, and any threat or benefit they posed to the dead, they appear only in reference to their relationship to the living (Hays 2015, 183–84), and most frequently in the rhetorical denigration or marginalization of their power over or within the world of the living (Bloch-Smith 1992a, 121–22). This oft-repeated refrain suggests representative portions of ancient Israelite and Judahite societies believed or feared they exercised precisely such power.[72] If the etymological roots of *yidʿōnîm* are any indication, for instance, the dead, and particularly one's deceased kin, may have been thought to have special access to strategic information.[73]

This perception of special access raises a critical point that will provide a segue into the next section's discussion. The nature, function, and treatment of the dead overlaps in significant ways with that of deity. The Hebrew Bible's repeated—though not unilateral—denunciations of the powers of the dead to influence the living suggests that the perception they had such power was salient enough to demand direct engagement. The clearest example of the power of the dead to heal is likely the story of the corpse thrown into Elisha's tomb being revivified upon contact with his bones (2 Kgs 13:20–21). While this reflects the perception of the capacity of Elisha's bones to retain divine agency and its healing power, the story denies Elisha any agency, and merely suggests YHWH's own agency (or some generic divine agency) remained residually in the prophet's bones.

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existence of apotropaic objects and amulets in Judean burial contexts from the preexilic period and later reveals a concern that can only vaguely be inferred from biblical texts, namely the fear of the threat posed to the spirit of the dead by disturbances and looting."

[67] Isa 26:14; Ezek 24:17; Ps 106:28.

[68] Lev 19:31; Deut 18:11; 1 Sam 28:3, 7–9; 2 Kgs 23:24; Isa 19:3; 29:4. The "ancestor, image" gloss comes from the etymological connection with Egyptian *ỉbwt* made in Hays and LeMon 2009; cf. Hays 2015, 171–73.

[69] It always appears in conjunction with *'ôb* (Lev 19:31; Deut 18:11; 1 Sam 28:3, 9; 2 Kgs 23:24; Isa 8:19; 19:3).

[70] Isa 19:3 is the only occurrence.

[71] Isa 14:9; 26:14; Ps 88:11; Prov 9:18. On the most likely etymology of *rəpā'îm*, see Galbraith 2019, 215–17.

[72] Leviticus repeatedly prohibits consulting the dead (Lev 19:31; 20:6, 27). Isa 18:11–12 condemns anyone who "consults [*š'l*] an *'ôb*," or "inquires [*drš*] of the *mētîm*." Eccl 9:5 asserts that the dead know nothing.

[73] Kerry Sonia (2020, 67 and n. 5) refers to "privileged information," which she describes as "information that the living attain only through divine assistance, such as knowledge of the future."