

Satan and the Snake

By

Yochanan Zaqantov

Many people hold to a belief that Satan is a real person. That Satan is the ultimate evil in opposed to YEHOVAH as the ultimate good. Some will even state that Satan is in a battle with Yehovah over the people of the earth. Where did this come from? How can we know whether there is a person called Satan? What does he/she do? Is he associated with the Snake in Genesis/Bereshit? What was the snake in the Garden in Eden? We will look at some of these questions and more to understand Satan and the snake in the Tanakh.

First lets look at the word satan as the verb. The word satan is Shin-Tet-Final Nun (שטן). It is found in the BDB on page 966 and in the NEHC on page 1205. There are six times the verb is used in all the Tanakh. It is reference number 7853

Zachar'yah/Zechariah 3:1

3:1 He further showed me Joshua, the high priest, standing before **the angel** (messenger/mal'akh מַלְאָךְ) of Yehovah, **and the Accuser** (vahassatan וְהַשָּׂטָן) standing at his right **to accuse him.** (lesit'no לְשִׁטְנוֹ)

Here we see a messenger but since this is a verb and not a noun this is just someone accusing on not a specific person. But earlier in the text it show the Noun Hassatan which one could arguer was a specific person who did accusing.

Tehillim/Psalms 38:21

21 And those who repay bad for good **oppose they me** (yis'tenuniy יִשְׁטְנוּנִי) because follows me good. (Interlinear Bible)

We see again the verb used to show one accusing.

Tehillim/Psalms 71:13

13 Let **my accusers** (sot'nei שֹׂטְנָי) perish in frustration; let those who seek my ruin be clothed in reproach and disgrace!

This verb shows a person who accuses or opposes another.

Tehillim/Psalms 109:4, 20, 29

4 They answer my love with **accusation** (yis'tenuniy יִשְׁטְנוּנִי) and I must stand judgment (prayer tefillah תְּפִלָּה).

Here the person accuses and the person being accused is placing himself in judgment through prayer.

20 May Yehovah thus repay **my accusers** (sot'nay שׂוֹטְנֵי), all those who speak evil (ra bad) against me.

Here he is asking Yehovah to judge the other doing evil (ra) or bad and repaying that person as they have done to him.

29 **My accusers** (sot'nay שׂוֹטְנֵי) shall be clothed in shame, wrapped in their disgrace as in a robe.

From these we can see that the actions of the person were to be against someone. They were opposed to them and were an accuser. From this we set an idea that satan the verb is the action of being against someone.

Now lets look at the reference to the masculine noun Satan. It is reference number 7854 and is Shin-Tet-Final Nun (שטן). It can be found in the BDB on page 966 and in the NEHC on page 1205. Since it is from the verb form we can know that the moaning will be one who opposes or accuses.

Human Satan

Shemu'el Aleph/I Samuel 29:4 (3-4)

3 The Philistine officers asked, "Who are those Hebrews?" "Why, that's David, the servant of King Saul of Israel," Achish answered the Philistine officers. "He has been with me for a year or more, and I have found no fault in him from the day he defected until now." 4 But the Philistine officers were angry with him; and the Philistine officers said to him, "Send the man back; let him go back to the place you assigned him. He shall not march down with us to the battle, or else he may **become** our **adversary** (lasatan לְשׂוֹטֵן) in battle. For with what could that fellow appease his master if not with the heads of these men?

Here we see noun Satan used in reference to David as an adversary. In the human form a man may be a satan. In other words, David would become one working against them.

Shemu'el Bet/II Samuel 19:23

23 But David said, “What has this to do with you, you sons of Zeruijah, that you should **cross (lasatan לַשָּׂטָן)** me today? Should a single Israelite be put to death today? Don’t I know that today I am again king over Israel?”

Here Avishai son of Zeruyah is called a satan /adversary by David. He is working against David. Again another example of a human being a satan.

Melekhim Aleph/ I Kings 5:18 (16-18)

16 Solomon sent this message to Hiram: 17 “You know that my father David could not build a house for the name of Yehovah Elohayv because of the enemies that encompassed him, until Yehovah had placed them under the soles of his feet. 18 But now Yehovah Elohay has given me respite all around; there is no **adversary (satan לַשָּׂטָן)** and no mischance.

Here we see that Solomon refers to enemies around as Satans.

Melekhim Aleph/ I Kings 11:14, 23, 25

14 So Yehovah raised up an **adversary (satan לַשָּׂטָן)** against Solomon, the Edomite Hadad, who was of the royal family of Edom.

23 Another **adversary (satan לַשָּׂטָן)** that Elohim raised up against Solomon was Rezon son of Eliada, who had fled from his lord, King Hadadezer of Zobah,

25 He was an **adversary (satan לַשָּׂטָן)** of Israel all the days of Solomon, adding to the trouble [caused by] Hadad; he repudiated [the authority of] Israel and reigned over Aram.

Later because of his disobedience Yehovah caused to raise Satans against King Solomon. Here we have several men who are Satan to Solomon.

Tehillim/Psalms 109:6

6 Appoint a wicked man over him; **may an accuser (vesatan וְשָׂטָן)** stand at his right side;

Here David asks that Yehovah set for his enemies, a Satan to stand to accuse him. These were all examples of the men being named as satans. Even in Israel today the chief Prosecutor is referred to as HaSatan Godal (the great Satan). It is only those who try to make this exclusively a name think that this can only be a name of a Celestial Satan.

Divine Satan

Bamidbar/Numbers 22:22,32 (21-32)

21 When he arose in the morning, Balaam saddled his ass and departed with the Moabite dignitaries. 22 But Elohim was incensed at his going; so an angel (mal'akh messenger) of Yehovah placed himself in his way **as an adversary (lasatan לַשָּׂטָן)** [against him]. He was riding on his she-ass, with his two servants alongside, 23 when the ass caught sight of the angel (messenger) of Yehovah standing in the way, with his drawn sword in his hand. The ass swerved from the road and went into the fields; and Balaam beat the ass to turn her back onto the road. 24 The angel (messenger) of Yehovah then stationed himself in a lane between the vineyards, with a fence on either side. 25 The ass, seeing the angel (messenger) of Yehovah, pressed herself against the wall and squeezed Balaam's foot against the wall; so he beat her again. 26 Once more the angel (messenger) of Yehovah moved forward and stationed himself on a spot so narrow that there was no room to swerve right or left. 27 When the ass now saw the angel (messenger) of Yehovah, she lay down under Balaam; and Balaam was furious and beat the ass with his stick. 28 Then Yehovah opened the ass's mouth, and she said to Balaam, "What have I done to you that you have beaten me these three times?" 29 Balaam said to the ass, "You have made a mockery of me! If I had a sword with me, I'd kill you." 30 The ass said to Balaam, "Look, I am the ass that you have been riding all along until this day! Have I been in the habit of doing thus to you?" And he answered, "No." 31 Then Yehovah uncovered Balaam's eyes, and he saw the angel (messenger) of Yehovah standing in the way, his drawn sword in his hand; thereupon he bowed right down to the ground. 32 The angel (messenger) of Yehovah said to him, "Why have you beaten your ass these three times? It is I who came out **as an adversary (lasatan לַשָּׂטָן)**), for the errand is obnoxious to me [your way is contrary to me].

Here we see two things. The divine being a satan to Balaam. He stood against him. Neither time does reference him as HaSatan or "The Satan".

Diveri HaYamin Aleph/I Chronicles 21:1

21:1 Satan (שָׂטָן) arose against Israel and incited David to number Israel. 2 David said to Joab and to the commanders of the army, "Go and count Israel from Beer-sheba to Dan and bring me information as to their number." 3 Joab answered, "May Yehovah increase His people a hundredfold; my lord king, are they not all subjects of my lord? Why should my lord require this? Why should it be a cause of guilt for Israel?"

Now who stood up to incite David to count the people? A Satan or adversary.

Shemu'el Bet/II Samuel 24:1-3

24:1 The anger of Yehovah again flared up against Israel; and He incited David against them, saying, “Go and number Israel and Judah.” 2 The king said to Joab, his army commander, “Make the rounds of all the tribes of Israel, from Dan to Beer-sheba, and take a census of the people, so that I may know the size of the population.” 3 Joab answered the king, “May Yehovah Eloheykha increase the number of the people a hundredfold, while your own eyes see it! But why should my lord king want this?”

Here Yehovah moves David to count the people so that a plague may come upon the people. Yehovah is the one acting as an adversary/in opposed to Yisrael. So in this case Yehovah is the Satan.

Zachar'yah/Zechariah 3:1-2

3:1 He further showed me Joshua, the high priest, standing before the angel (messenger/mal'akh מַלְאָךְ) of Yehovah, and **the Accuser (haSatan)** standing at his right to accuse (lesit'no לְשִׁטְנוֹ) him. 2 But Yehovah said to **the Accuser (haSatan)**, “Yehovah rebuke you, **O Accuser (haSatan)**; may Yehovah who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! For this is a brand plucked from the fire.”

Here we see an instance of the use of HaSatan or the adversary. Here like what David asked for his foes. Yet, this accuser is not allowed to speak but instead he is being rebuked for accusing Jerusalem and the Priest of their wrong doings. The JPS tries to add the word for Angel of Yehovah in the beginning of verse 2 but it does not say that in the Hebrew. Yehovah is speaking of himself and referencing himself. Does this mean there is an Messenger of Yehovah called HaSatan? Or is it a title used for when a messenger is playing the role of chief accuser.

The Place most people think of Satan is in Iyov or Job. This all occurs in chapters 1 and 2.

Iyov/Job 1:6-9,12

6 One day **the divine beings (beni haElohim בְּנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים)** presented themselves before Yehovah, and **the Adversary (haSatan הַשָּׂטָן)** came along with them.

7 Yehovah said to **the Adversary (HaSatan הַשָּׂטָן)**, “Where have you been?” **The Adversary (haSatan הַשָּׂטָן)** answered Yehovah, “I have been roaming all over the earth.” 8 Yehovah said to **the Adversary (haSatan הַשָּׂטָן)**, “Have you noticed My servant Job? There is no one like him on earth, a blameless and upright man who fears Elohim and shuns evil!” 9 **The Adversary (haSatan הַשָּׂטָן)** answered Yehovah, “Does Job not have good reason to fear Elohim? 10 Why, it is You who have fenced

him round, him and his household and all that he has. You have blessed his efforts so that his possessions spread out in the land. 11 But lay Your hand upon all that he has and he will surely blaspheme You to Your face.” 12 Yehovah replied to **the Adversary** (**HaSatan הַשָּׂטָן**), “See, all that he has is in your power; only do not lay a hand on him.” **The Adversary** (**HaSatan הַשָּׂטָן**) departed from the presence of Yehovah.

Here we see that outside of Zachar’ yah the Hebrew word for HaSatan is used here in Iyov. Clearly having a conversation with Yehovah and rebutting the points that Yehovah make for his servant Iyov. So is this a name of a specific divine being or is it a title of any divine being in which Yehovah assigns the task to be an accuser/adversary.

Iyov/Job 2:1-4,6-7

2:1 One day the **divine beings** (**benei haElohim בְּנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים**) presented themselves before Yehovah. **The Adversary** (**HaSatan הַשָּׂטָן**) came along with them to present himself before Yehovah. 2 Yehovah said to **the Adversary** (**HaSatan הַשָּׂטָן**), “Where have you been?” **The Adversary** (**HaSatan הַשָּׂטָן**) answered Yehovah, “I have been roaming all over the earth.” 3 Yehovah said to **the Adversary** (**HaSatan הַשָּׂטָן**), “Have you noticed My servant Job? There is no one like him on earth, a blameless and upright man who fears Elohim and shuns evil. He still keeps his integrity; so you have incited Me against him to destroy him for no good reason.” 4 **The Adversary** (**HaSatan הַשָּׂטָן**) answered Yehovah, “Skin for skin—all that a man has he will give up for his life. 5 But lay a hand on his bones and his flesh, and he will surely blaspheme You to Your face.” 6 So Yehovah said to **the Adversary** (**HaSatan הַשָּׂטָן**), “See, he is in your power; only spare his life.” 7 **The Adversary** (**HaSatan הַשָּׂטָן**) departed from the presence of Yehovah and inflicted a severe inflammation on Job from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head.

Here we see that Iyov stood up to the first test and now another test is set for him. The Adversary is now to not take his life but to cause him suffering up to the taking of his life. Notice that Yehovah says to the Accuser that he accused him for no reason since he did not curse Yehovah but blessed him. Iyov had to pass two tests.

So how can we tell if this is a title or a name. In the verses, listed above we see haElohim. We know that Yehovah’s name is and that Elohim is what he is. But lets look at other references. HaElohim is used over 366 times in the Tanakh. So we will look at just this one.

Bereshit/Genesis 6:9

9 This is the line of Noah.—Noah was a righteous man; he was blameless in his age; Noah walked with God (ha'Elohim **הָאֱלֹהִים**).

Bereshit 17:18

18 And Abraham said to God (ha'Elohim **הָאֱלֹהִים**), “O that Ishmael might live by Your favor!”

So looking at this, it could be a title like “The God”. Like there is not other Elohim besides him. In the case of HaSatan it would be like “The Adversary/Accuser”. The one who is the chief accuser or assigned to do that.

So in all these verses we never saw a reference to a snake. You would think that if HaSatan were as snake/serpent that it would refer to him in that way.

So let's look at what is the serpent in the Tanakh. In Hebrew the word is nachash (nun-chet-shin **נָחָשׁ**). It is reference number 5175 and is found on page 809 in the NEHC and on page 638 in the BDB. It is a serpent or snake.

So the account of the snake in the book of Bereshit is found in chapter 3.

Bereshit/Genesis 3:1-4,13-14

3:1 **Now the serpent (vehaNachash **וְהַנָּחָשׁ**)** was the shrewdest (arum cunning) of all the wild beasts that Yehovah Elohim had made. He said to the woman, “Did Elohim really say: You shall not eat of any tree of the garden?” 2 The woman replied to **the serpent (haNachash **הַנָּחָשׁ**)**, “We may eat of the fruit of the other trees of the garden.

3 It is only about fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden that Elohim said: ‘You shall not eat of it or touch it, lest you die.’” 4 And **the serpent (haNachash **הַנָּחָשׁ**)** said to the woman, “You are not going to die,

The snake was just one of the beasts of the field that Yehovah made. Thus, this is not a supernatural creature but an animal. It does not explain why it could talk but that it did indeed talk. Indeed this particular snake had intelligence in that it was cunning or smart.

13 And Yehovah Elohim said to the woman, “What is this you have done!” The woman replied, “**The serpent (hanachash **הַנָּחָשׁ**)** duped (deceived) me, and I ate.” 14 Then Yehovah Elohim said to **the serpent (hanachash **הַנָּחָשׁ**)**, “Because you did this, More cursed shall you be Than all cattle (beasts of the field) And all the wild beasts: On your belly shall you crawl And dirt (dust) shall you eat All the days of your life.

Again this is not a supernatural being but an animal of all the animals that were created by Yehovah. It was not any snake but a specific snake.

Shemot/Exodus 4:3 (2-4), 7:15

2 Yehovah said to him, “What is that in your hand?” And he replied, “A rod.” 3 He said, “Cast it on the ground.” He cast it on the ground and it **became a snake (leNachash לְנַחֲשׁ)**; and Moses recoiled from it. 4 Then Yehovah said to Moses, “Put out your hand and grasp it by the tail”—he put out his hand and seized it, and it became a rod in his hand.

Here the Rod becomes a supernatural snake. Why do I say that? Because this was a rod and Yehovah made it become nachash not like the magicians in Pharaoh’s court who took snakes and made them rods.

7:15 Go to Pharaoh in the morning, as he is coming out to the water, and station yourself before him at the edge of the Nile, taking with you the rod that turned **into a snake (lenachash לְנַחֲשׁ)**.

Another word for snakes is used also in chapter 7 which is Tanin (verse 9,10, and 12). The word is showing a supernatural snake in this case in that Yehovah gave power to the staff to change. The staff had power to do many wonders or miracles besides being a snake.

Shemot/Exodus 7:9-12

9 “When Pharaoh speaks to you and says, ‘Produce your marvel,’ you shall say to Aaron, ‘Take your rod and cast it down before Pharaoh.’ It shall turn **into a serpent (letanin לְתַנִּין)**.” 10 So Moses and Aaron came before Pharaoh and did just as Yehovah had commanded: Aaron cast down his rod in the presence of Pharaoh and his courtiers, and it turned **into a serpent (latanin לְתַנִּין)**. 11 Then Pharaoh, for his part, summoned the wise men and the sorcerers; and the Egyptian magicians, in turn, did the same with their spells; 12 each cast down his rod, and they turned **into serpents (lataninim לְתַנִּינִים)**. But Aaron’s rod swallowed their rods.

Here the rods or snakes of the Egyptians were swallowed up by the snake /rod of Yehovah.

Bamidbar/Numbers 21:6,7,9

6 Yehovah sent **seraph serpents (hanachashim haseraphim fiery serpents/snakes הַנְּחָשִׁים הַשֵּׂרָפִים)** against the people. They bit the people and many of the

Israelites died. 7 The people came to Moses and said, “We sinned by speaking against Yehovah and against you. Intercede with Yehovah to take away **the serpents** (**hanachash** הַנָּחָשׁ) from us!” And Moses interceded for the people. 8 Then Yehovah said to Moses, “Make a *seraph* figure and mount it on a standard. And if anyone who is bitten looks at it, he shall recover.” 9 Moses made a **copper serpent (nachash nachoshet serpent of copper** נָחָשׁ הַנְּחֹשֶׁת) and mounted it on a standard; and when anyone was bitten by a **serpent (hanachash** הַנָּחָשׁ), he would look at the copper serpent (**nachash nachoset** נָחָשׁ נְחֹשֶׁת) and recover.

One of the punishments was fiery snakes brought against the people.

Devarim/Deuteronomy 8:15

15 who led you through the great and terrible wilderness with its *seraph serpents* (**nachash seraph** נָחָשׁ שֶׁרָף) and scorpions, a parched land with no water in it, who brought forth water for you from the flinty rock;

Moshe recounts the snakes that befell them.

Melekhim Bet/II Kings 18:4

4 He abolished the shrines and smashed the pillars and cut down the sacred post. He also broke into pieces **the bronze serpent (nachash hanachoshet** נָחָשׁ הַנְּחֹשֶׁת) that Moses had made, for until that time the Israelites had been offering sacrifices to it; it was called Nehushtan (nechush'tan נְחֻשְׁתָּן).

Here the staff that Moshe made has to be destroyed because the people are treating it as an idol.

Yeshiyahu/Isaiah 27:1

27:1 In that day Yehovah will punish, With His great, cruel, mighty sword Leviathan (liv'yatan) the Elusive **Serpent (nachash** נָחָשׁ)—Leviathan (liv'yatan) the Twisting **Serpent (nachash** נָחָשׁ); He will slay the Dragon (tanim 8577) of the sea.

Even Liv'yatan is a serpent or snake of the sea. Tanim is related to the same root as tannin, which we saw, was another term for snake. It is translated as dragon but it appears to be another word for snakes. Even in places Tanin is translated as dragons but we see it is a snake.

Yeshiyahu/Isaiah 65:25

25 The wolf and the lamb shall graze together, And the lion shall eat straw like the ox,
And the serpent's (nachash וְנָחָשׁ) food shall be earth. In all My sacred mount
Nothing evil or vile shall be done.

Again the food of the snake will be the dirt/dust of the earth. This would be the fulfillment of the curse given to hanachash in Bereshit.

Yiimeyahu/Jeremiah 8:17

17 Lo, I will send **serpents (nachashim נְחָשִׁים)** against you, Adders that cannot be charmed, And they shall bite you

A metaphor of the invading armies to come upon the people for their actions which Yehovah will send.

Amos 9:3

3 If they hide on the top of Carmel, There I will search them out and seize them; And if they conceal themselves from My sight At the bottom of the sea, There I will command **The serpent (hanachash הַנְּחָשׁ)** to bite them.

If you check out the other verses you will not find a reference to the Snake as Satan. Now you might ask, why did it speak to Chava? Maybe it was a test to see whether they would follow the one command they had. We also know that this snake was not super natural because it was compared with the other beasts of the field. Some might ask, well was not the snake an adversary to Chava, Adam and Elohim in working against them. Yes, it was an adversary but it is never called satan nor is it even as HaSatan. So where did this idea come from. If it was not the Tanakh. So lets go out side the Tanakh to find this.

Revelations 12:9

And the great dragon was cast out, *that old serpent*, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

Revelations 20:12

And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years,

The Christain testament writers took the idea of the deceiver snake from the Garden in Eden and the concept of an adversary and combined them to make this mighty deceiver who is battling for the souls of humanity. Even the great dragon which tanim is sometimes translated as a dragon is taken from the Tanakh.

There is no linkage in the Tanakh for HaSatan and Nachash. The snake in the garden was simply that a snake. No the question of the a names divine messenger called HaSatan can be argued that it can also be a title of an messenger who acts for Yehovah when he wants them to be.

Instances of Messengwers (malakhim) acting for Yehovah.

Shemu'el Bet 24:15-17

15 Yehovah sent a pestilence upon Israel from morning until the set time; and 70,000 of the people died, from Dan to Beer-sheba. 16 But when the angel (messenger) extended his hand against Jerusalem to destroy it, Yehovah renounced further punishment and said to the angel (messenger) who was destroying the people, "Enough! Stay your hand!" The angel (Messenger) of Yehovah was then by the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite. 17 When David saw the angel (messenger) who was striking down the people, he said to Yehovah, "I alone am guilty, I alone have done wrong; but these poor sheep, what have they done? Let Your hand fall upon me and my father's house!"

the same account in Diveri HaYamin Aleph/I Chronicles 21:

14 Yehovah sent a pestilence upon Israel, and 70,000 men fell in Israel. 15 Elohim sent an angel (messenger) to Jerusalem to destroy it, but as he was about to wreak destruction, Yehovah saw and renounced further punishment (repented about the bad/evil) and said to **the destroying angel (messeger) (lamalakh hamash'chit)**, "Enough! Stay your hand!" The angel (messenger) of Yehovah was then standing by the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite. 16 David looked up and saw the angel (malakh) of Yehovah standing between heaven and earth, with a drawn sword in his hand directed against Jerusalem. David and the elders, covered in sackcloth, threw themselves on their faces. 17 David said to Elohim, "Was it not I alone who ordered the numbering of the people? I alone am guilty, and have caused severe harm; but these sheep, what have they done? Yehovah Elohay, let Your hand fall upon me and my father's house, and let not Your people be plagued!"

The job of this messenger was to destroy. The Ha identifies him as the one specifically doing the destroying. This may also be a good relationship to understand how HaSatan could be the one who accuses. Also, indicates that HaSatan is also controlled like in the case of Iyob/Job and not an agent of evil acting against Yehovah.